

The true taste of Paradise
Can Mrs Johnny Depp really be
as perfect as she seems?



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Revealed: the lost
photographs and letters

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One woman's fight to save
the life of her daughter

Surreal or what?
Inside Fornasetti's home

FOOD

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treat 'em to terrine

stella

The son of the artist and designer Piero Fornasetti has turned the family home into a living museum of his father's work, crazy trompe-l'oeil cloud murals and all.

But the effect, writes ANGELINA VILLA-CLARKE, is anything but dull or gloomy

Surreal life is here

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD POWERS



Above: a Fornasetti table and chair with classical motifs in the library. Opposite: in the guest room Fornasetti cloud wallpaper, Nuvole, is used with bright

blue paint. A massive 19th-century gilded mirror hangs above the 1950s Fornasetti Paladiana chest; a 20th-century classically inspired stool stands nearby

From the outside Barnaba Fornasetti's turn-of-the-century villa in the elegant Città Studi area of Milan looks like a typically affluent Italian home. You might imagine discreet modern sofas, carefully chosen lamps and a sleek wood kitchen. But what would the neighbours say if they could see inside? For here lives a man with butterflies all over his kitchen floor, table and walls, a bedroom lined in black and white clouds and a bathroom with a beckoning arm for a floor; a man, in short, whose whole house is a homage to the surreal.

The Fornasetti name first became famous in the 1950s when the work of Barnaba's father, Piero, an artist and designer, became hugely popular. Piero had been at art school with the surrealist artist Giorgio de Chirico and the architect Gio Ponti, and made his mark by his use of surreal imagery on ordinary household items. But come the minimalist 1990s, his over-the-top style and decorative motifs were unfashionable and it is only recently, thanks to Barnaba, that they are on the design radar again. Along with the striking



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Above: the guest room with its Fornasetti Architettura chest. Hanging above the lace-covered bed is a framed collection of Sardinian wedding loaves. Above right: the hall with Fornasetti furniture and a 19th-century chandelier



Fornasetti wallpaper, now licensed to Cole & Son, the Themes and Variations collection of ceramic plates are perhaps the most famous. Created in 1961, the 350 different designs feature close-ups of the face of the opera singer Lina Cavalieri

At first glance it looks as though the house has remained untouched since the 1960s, although it turns out that Barnaba has worked on many of its rooms since taking it and the business over 20 years ago. Despite his changes it remains (purposefully) a museum mainly to his father's work, with Fornasetti creations everywhere.

Barnaba and his artists work in the upstairs studio with its huge wall mural, an adaption of the Mediterranea wallpaper, which has a large stylised sun that beams over the mountains of papers and

old family furniture. But a room especially dear to his heart is the newly decorated guest room, once his parents' bedroom, which is papered in an unforgettable Fornasetti black and white cloud wallpaper, with the remainder painted a deep royal blue. 'I wanted this room to be a dreamscape where you can escape from your consciousness. If you sleep here I want you to go on a journey.' Though one does wonder whether, with so much to look at, his guests manage to get much sleep. Resting on the oak parquet floor are vintage Fornasetti pieces - such as the 1953 Palladiana and Architettura chests of drawers - and above the antique brass bed, which is dressed in an old family lace bedspread, is a framed collection of Sardinian wedding breads, also resembling lace. 'I like details and for each room to have a narrative,



a sense of continuity,' says Barnaba. And there is. Each room has its own identity and even colour - this one blue, the living-room green, the kitchen white. In one red bedroom even the books are scarlet, having been picked out to match the walls.

Wander downstairs, via a crazy corridor lined with cupboards covered in a tropical-hued trompe l'oeil of birds, and across a travertine floor in shades of pink, and you'll find the hub, and perhaps the highlight, of the house - the all-white, butterfly kitchen. It's an incredible space and couldn't be more different to the rest of the villa. It's a wonderfully airy room filled with light and opening out to the garden. But it's the delicate butterflies adorning the floor tiles, cabinets and 1950s Fornasetti Atelier table and chairs that are so unusual. The décor is made all the more striking,

Clockwise from left: in the studio, Barnaba's 1940s desk by Garibaldi, a contemporary of Gio Ponti, stands in front of an adapted version of Mediterranea wallpaper; butterflies flutter against a background of newsprint all over the kitchen; the green sitting-room with leather chesterfield and rug by Fornasetti for Roubini



more masculine even, as the bespoke design is underlaid with a newsprint from Italian broadsheets. It took Barnaba six years to complete (the space was once a porch on the side of the house) and he wanted the kitchen to have a fresh, outdoorsy feeling, albeit with a Fornasetti twist.

Concrete stairs lead up to the book-lined living-room, its walls a vibrant, mossy green, where two oversized, vintage white leather chesterfields surround a monochrome Pavimento rug by Fornasetti for Roubini and where the architectural-print shades on 1970s wooden column lamps cast a soft glow.

It is an eccentric and exciting home, one in which you could lose yourself for hours. Barnaba has made it his own, despite his father's strong personality embedded in its fabric. ●

Fornasetti plates and room scents are available from Selfridges (selfridges.com), wallpapers from Cole & Son (cole-and-son.com) and furniture from Milk Concept Boutique (milkconceptboutique.com)