

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL ROOMS IN THE WORLD

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

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A curated selection by the international editors of *Architectural Digest*
edited by Marie Kalt

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Certain words come to mind as I page through this book—words like *openness, inclusion, diversity, collaboration*. Yes, the spaces in this volume, chosen by the editors of *Architectural Digest* around the globe, are an escapist delight. They are as elegant, sophisticated, dramatic, and gloriously playful as any rooms you're likely to see. But taken together they suggest to me more than a series of masterworks in the art of interior design. They suggest a powerful new way of looking at the world and how to live in it.

There has been much talk of globalism in our era—it is a word used by politicians and economists and cultural figures in myriad ways. But whatever your perspective, it is undeniable that we live in an age of incredible interconnectedness and movement. National identity is largely what you make of it. Where we feel we come from, who we are, what country we call home—these are ideas that are changing all the time.

And the spaces we live in are extensions of who we are. The rooms in this book, curated from the archives of ten editions of *Architectural Digest*, representing nine countries and the Middle East, remind me that creative influence knows no borders. It is as exhilarating to see Old World glamour in a New York townhouse as it is to perceive the cool currents of American modernism in a chic home in Hangzhou. This is a book of globe-trotting fantasy and romance—you long to be in that book-crowded room in a 1930s house in Shanghai, that wood-paneled study in Eiderstedt, that open-air garden room in Ciudad de México, that lush townhouse on the Place des Vosges.

Indeed these *are* the most beautiful rooms in the world. They burst with color, with art, with maximalist fun, and with ethereal restraint. They bring a sense of intimacy and the familiar, even as they transport us to new places. They remind us of the power of interior design—and leave one feeling optimistic about how much we can learn from each other.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Anna Wintour." The signature is fluid and cursive, with a period at the end.

Anna Wintour
*Editor-in-Chief, Vogue; and US Artistic Director
and Global Advisor, Condé Nast*

AD

ITALY

Harmonizing styles and eras: the transcendence of Italian style

In modern décor, Italian style is not just an aesthetic canon: it is a state of mind. Its forefather, Gio Ponti (1891–1979), the architect, product designer, and interior designer, master of century-long creative ferment, wrote:

“I cherish the dream of a living, silent house that continually shapes itself to the versatility of our life, indeed fosters it with a hundred resources that we architects will teach, in order to enrich that life with light walls and furnishings.

A variable house, simultaneously full of memories, hopes, courage, and acceptances. A house ‘to be lived in’ when we have good fortune but also in times of sadness, with all it offers in steadfast faith and in an open, variable way, opening windows to allow the sun, the moon, and other heavenly bodies to enter along their course; all is in motion, those who descend and those who rise in the mystery of growth, and who knows what they will see. . . .

Art, architecture, and design should merge to create an environment that is capable of providing not so much comfort seen in its mechanical application of standards of measurement, which guarantee a minimum vital space, but instead the comfort necessary to also nurture the spirit of modern man, as we are taught by the Italian classical tradition.”

Above all, he noted, “The Italian home is without complications, outside and inside; it welcomes furnishings and beautiful works of art, and requires order and space between them, not crowding or hodgepodge.” Though radical at the time they were written in 1973, those words neatly capture the interiors illustrated in these pages. From Milan, Rome, Turin, Florence, and Naples to the provinces and remote locales like Pantelleria, these houses—variously the result of restoration, renovation, or new construction—stand out for their harmonious, cultured juxtaposition of age-old and contemporary, almost always elevated by

a savvy composition of antiques and contemporary artwork, archaeological relics, classics of 20th-century design, and avant-garde experiments.

These interiors illustrate how the Italian approach to home décor is truly unique: there is an erudite play on styles and eras, inspirations and references, without slipping into fusion or hybridization, because its through line is about creating comparison and dichotomy, and reconciling differences through emotion. The process of eliciting convivial, comfortable, culturally stimulating spaces is a complex maneuver, entailing many seemingly dissonant factors.

Expressing the transcendence of Italian style—and highlighting and optimizing its many ingredients without missing its inherent irony—is the purpose of this chapter. These homes open a door to new perspectives on culture and tradition, as well as the present, while skirting the common (and relatively ubiquitous) pitfalls of false antiquity and modern ugliness. Likewise, the interior designers behind them invite the reader to attune to their sensibilities for understatement and theatrical flair, wisdom in composition, refinement, and good taste. The familiar embraces the new, ingenuity keeps company with intellectual refinement, and a counterpoint emerges between the enclosure and everything inside it. We must divine the clients’ desires amid all this complexity and draw our own conclusions about the narratives in order to appreciate, as Ponti wrote, “the kinship between the very many things that are the expression, ornament, or instrument of our life, and of our fascinating home.” *Benvenuto a casa.*



Ettore Mocchetti
Editor-in-Chief, AD Italy



Padua

In the historic center of the city, a duplex apartment in an 18th-century building looks onto an inner courtyard. Its refined, minimalist interior by Gionata Dal Pozzo and Mattia Cudiferro features an artful arrangement of design objects and furnishings set against the simple, quiet harmony of white walls and floors.

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Milan

Very contemporary furnishings dialogue with a classical setting. At the edge of Milan, Cinzia Boffo Dal Pozzo came up with a nimble synthesis for a 15th-century villa, with décor that uses contrast to dramatic effect. Modern and contemporary artworks set a decisive tone, ranging from a trompe l'œil fresco to a more austere, linear aesthetic.

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