

ELLE DECORATION No 357 JUNE 2022

CHANGE BEGINS AT HOME

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# The big reveal

*Sealed behind a metal door for 40 years, this hilltop palazzo in Umbria was forgotten and unloved, until one intrepid architect chose to step inside*

Words **MARTINA HUNGLINGER** Photography **MADS MOGENSEN**



Living room, opposite A 'Fortuny' floor lamp by Mariano Fortuny for Palladio stands in the corner of this grand, frescoed room, which also houses a 'Charles' sofa by Antonio Chierici for B&B Italia, a yellow lacquered credenza from Arterre and a 'Zerocento' coffee table by Déstrée. The green chair is vintage and the storage unit beside it is the 'Composita' by Kartell. Above Vintage letters from a store in Chicago decorate the wall above a 'Ghost' daybed by Paola Navone for Gervasoni. The floor lamp is by Diesel for Poscarini ▶





**Reception room** Charles Williams' giant 'Aster' pendant light for Focolina Arte hangs above a pair of 'Tully-Too' chaises longue by Patricia Urquiola for R&B Italia. Urquiola also designed the 'Fergana' side table for Moroso. The print is a detail of a work by Caravaggio. **Opposite, from top** The charming streets of Monteleone and a collection of yellow chairs (from left: the 'Comback' chair by Patricia Urquiola for Kartell, Naoto Fukasawa's 'Déjà-vu' for Magis, and a 'DSR' by Charles and Ray James for Vitra) placed around a vintage dining table

## 'It was as if someone had dined and left at once, leaving everything as it was,'

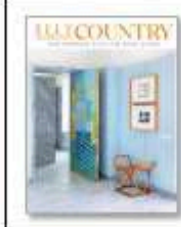
says architect Patrizio Fradiani, recalling the first time he entered his new home, which had been sealed behind a heavy metal door for almost half a century. 'The furniture and tableware were all covered in a thick layer of dust. It looked like a film set; truly fascinating, but also really bizarre. I couldn't open the shutters, so I saw the entire apartment by torchlight.'

It was an unconventional and slightly *Scooby-Doo*-like introduction to the 14th-century palazzo, but for Patrizio and his husband, Mark, it would have taken more than a few cobwebs to dissuade them from buying the largest and grandest residence in the building. Located in the medieval Umbrian mountain town of Monteleone d'Orvieto, the property offered a connection for Chicago-based, Italian-born Patrizio, who had holidayed with his family in the area as a child.

Once the home of prominent olive-oil producers, the palazzo had been broken up into separate apartments in the years before it was abandoned. Keen to retain a link to the past, the couple were selective about which of the original features they wanted to keep, restore, change or let go. Of course, there was never any debate over whether to preserve the numerous frescoes, which vary from Roman-Pompeii scenes to Victorian chinoiserie and even tropical influences. They provide an important link to the history of the building and the area – some of the walls even revealed craftspeople's drawings and notes. 'One mocking sketch showed a former landlord in a crusader's hat, riding an ostrich,' says Patrizio, clearly amused.

When it came to modernising the interior, he took inspiration from the well-preserved yellow- and blue-tinted glass walls that mark the entrance to the original bathroom. You can see their influence in new divisions and additions throughout the property, from the sunny glass headboard in the main bedroom to the acid-bright shower screen in one of two new bathrooms. 'I like to keep the shell of a house neutral and add colour at the very end – with the presence of an armchair, a carpet or a cushion,' explains Patrizio, whose contemporary choices add a playfulness to the period details on display.

Renovations now complete, Patrizio and Mark choose to spend their days here relaxing and taking strolls through the surrounding olive groves. On the way back to the palazzo, wandering through the town's cobbled streets, they often come across the local women, who sit in the shade of the alleyways, mingling and chatting. The sight takes Patrizio back to his youth. 'If my grandmother were still alive,' he says, 'she would probably be out there doing the same.' *The apartment is available to rent through Luci Stays for parts of the year; [lucistays.com](http://lucistays.com)*



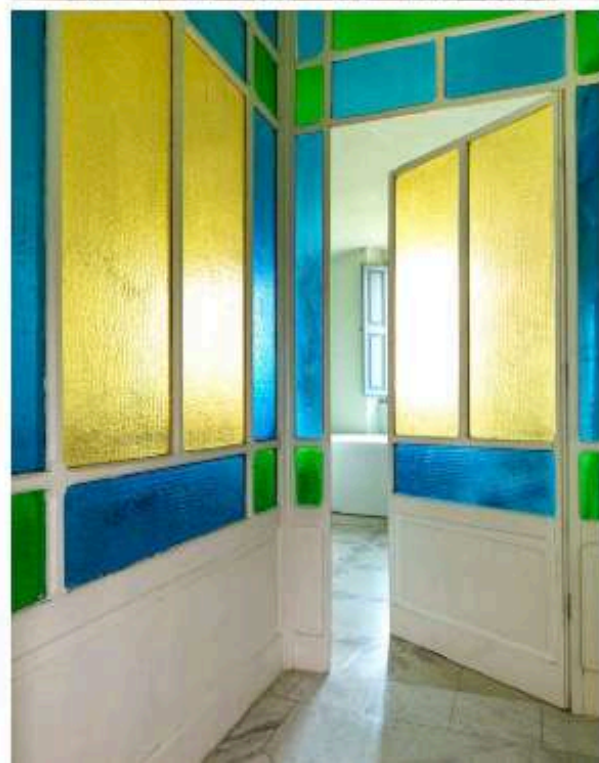
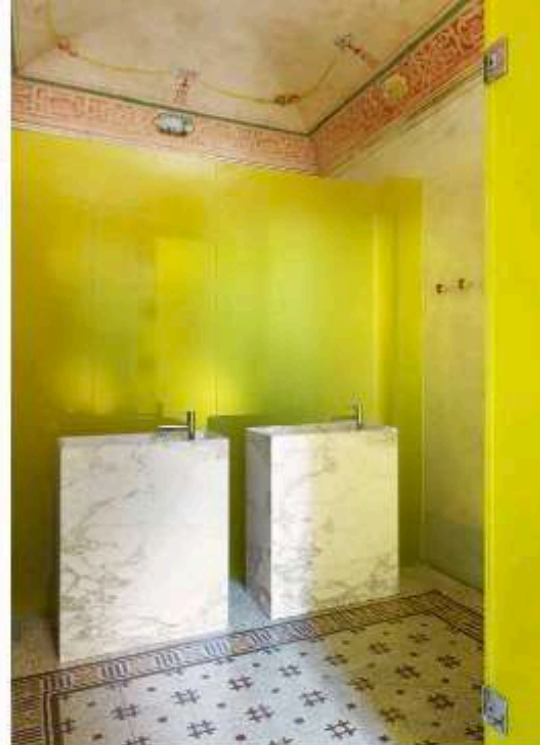
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**Kitchen** Finished in a combination of white lacquer and stainless steel, this cabinetry from Gruppo Eurocucini adds a contemporary edge to the space's rustic charm. Opposite, check out from top left: The original winding staircase. The bathroom, which features twin custom-made marble basins, taps by Rubinetterie Treemme and a luminaire of yellow glass (designed as a nod to the coloured glass at the entrance to this room). A wall of art in the main bedroom, where a 'Ghesu' chaise longue by Paola Navone for Circonvallazione and a 'Val-Fal' side table by Patricia Urquiola for B&B Italia, Bernabeu '260' wall light by Paolo Rizzotto for Flos and a trio of artworks by Russell Marshall >





Main bedroom. Wardrobes at bottom. The yellow glass screen that also acts as a headboard. The 'Ghost' bed is by Paola Navone for Gervasoni and the matching bedside lamps are the 'China' by Niccolò Galante for Poltrona. See [Stockists page for details](#)

Contemporary choices, such as cushions and the headboard, add a playfulness to the period details on display

