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**Kelly
Wearstler**

*The baubles,
the boys
—
the Beverly Hills estate
she calls home*

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110 FEATURES

82 The Art of the Upgrade

A graceful Manhattan conversion proves that staying put can be the best move of all

100 Spring Picnic

Lighthearted tablescapes for outdoor celebrations evoke a dreamy walk through a wildflower meadow

110 It's Kelly Wearstler's World

Behind the scenes at her Beverly Hills mansion, the iconic designer is refreshingly down to earth

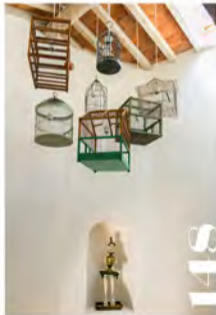
148 One Thousand Years of Solitude

A remote Italian hill town reveals a renovation where history melds with sleek modernity

ON THE COVER Kelly Wearstler with sons Oliver and Elliott in her Beverly Hills residence. Photographed by Coral von Zumwalt. Hair by Leland Ferrell. Makeup by Kristee Liu.

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The ancient Italian hill town
of Civita di Bagnoregio.

ONE THOUSAND YEARS OF SOLITUDE

A remote Italian hill town reveals a breathtaking renovation that melds historical texture and the sleekest modern comforts

Written by Karen Valentine • Photographed by Bob Coscarelli

A quiet moment amid the stone-walled houses and cobblestone streets.



In the Lazio region of Italy, halfway between Rome and Florence, an unforgettable detour awaits. As you curve around the town of Orvieto and meander past farms, you enter the scruffy commune of Bagnoregio and head down its one-way cobblestone streets. On the far side of town, past an outcrop of volcanic tuff, a narrow footbridge dips into a canyon, leads up into the sky, and ends at what appears to be a crumbling village balancing precariously on a peak.

The ancient Etruscan settlement of Civita di Bagnoregio (total number of year-round residents: eight) was established some 2,500 years ago. The

only way to get to it is by walking a quarter mile up the footbridge and hiking a 45-degree angle to the 12th-century entrance arch. Its hilltop location kept the town isolated from Bagnoregio—and, indeed, from the world at large—and its population rapidly declined after the original entrance bridge was bombed during World War II. Yet this very isolation also kept Civita's architecture intact. The bridge was rebuilt in the 1960s; more recently, an influx of creative types has given the town new life and helped reinvent it into a one-of-a-kind retreat brimming with intrigue and beauty.

Architect and designer Patrizio Pradiani first



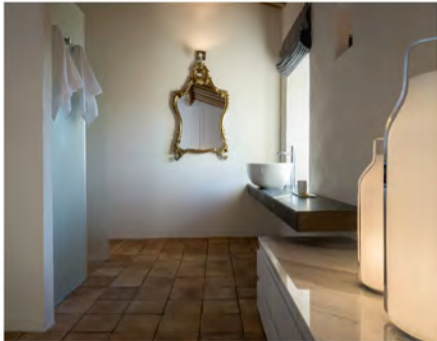
The quarter-mile-long footbridge that leads to the town.



The narrow, pedestrian-only lanes are traversed by the occasional donkey cart bearing supplies.



Geraniums are the unofficial flower of the region, found in almost every window pot.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE
A modern sink bowl by Galissia rests on a counter made from basalt stone sourced two miles away. Picture windows carved into three-foot-deep walls provide sweeping views across the canyon to the town of Lubiano. Italian candleholders discovered in Mexico by an antiques dealer finally make it back home.



IKEA bed linens and a pair of Eero Saarinen side tables are illuminated by custom light fixtures.



The cliffside scenery adds drama to the formal Italian garden.

stumbled upon the secluded spot some 20 years ago during a college trip with friends. He rediscovered it with his partner in 2011 after finishing a restoration project nearby. "We fell in love with the town suspended between earth and sky," says Fradiani, who was born and raised in Italy but now lives in Chicago. "It almost brought us to tears, knowing that a place like this could still exist away from modernity and urban noise." They were so entranced by their visit that they purchased a property to convert into a vacation rental—thus *Doemus Civita* was born.

Located on a cobblestone street mere steps from the town gates, the simple peasant home was in a disastrous state. The roof was leaking; wires were dangling; rooms had been oddly subdivided. Beneath the house, a series of Etruscan tombs and an ancient Roman water cistern hewn four stories deep into the rock were eerily abandoned. Still, the couple could see the potential in what remained, from the rustic wooden beams and textured walls to the terra-cotta floors and hand-carved stone fireplace. Fradiani, who had undertaken similar renovations, began work shortly after the purchase. "It became an exercise in making 2,500 years of architectural history feel organic and livable," he says.

The structure of the main house was preserved with as many original features and materials as possible. What couldn't be salvaged was "fused with modern elements and romantic touches that

The archway at the end of the subterranean space opens to the garden, with a bright reveal to the sunlit valley below.



The birdcage chandelier at the top of the staircase emphasizes the room's height.



ABOVE LEFT Light fixtures from Chicago artist Michael Darin—made from upcycled bicycle rims, glass vials, and zip ties—were transported as carry-on luggage. ABOVE RIGHT The stair's hand-forged railing was crafted by Mario Loreti, Civita's resident metalmith.



felt complementary but not plagiaristic," says Fradiani. The caves were converted into stylish spaces that act as points of discovery along four twisting sets of stairs leading down from the main house. First comes a glorified landing with space for artwork; next, a meditation room; then, a wine cellar stocking 400 bottles sourced within a 70-mile radius; and, finally, a cliffside garden revealed only after workers had cleared an abundance of ivy and unruly blackberry shrubs. At the end of the garden, a second cave system encloses a streamlined pool, a kitchen for entertaining, and a gallery-like space for contemporary art.

It's clear that Fradiani has found his design calling. Buoyed by the property's transformation, he is already planning his next project: the restoration of an aristocratic property in Umbria filled with frescoes. But for guests of Domus Civita, the real magic comes in the interaction between house and village. At dusk, after the day-trippers have departed and the streets are deserted save for the town elders conversing in the piazza, it's remarkably simple to drop into an authentic Italian way of life—one, you could imagine, not too dissimilar from that of Civita's original residents so many centuries ago. **L**

In the master bedroom, garden windows provide natural light until dusk, when the Tolomeo Classic lamps by Artemide take up the job.





ITALY FOR INSIDERS

Fradiani shares his tips on five experiences not to miss

Gardens of Villa Lante. The exquisitely preserved Renaissance-era landscapes provided inspiration for Fradiani's design of the formal cliff garden at Domus Civita. Every aspect is well proportioned and richly detailed: dripping grottos that flow to grandiose fountains; summer pavilions; secret gardens; topiaries; sculptures; and a perfectly square parterre.

La Parolina. A 40-minute drive north from Civita, the restaurant is run by one of only two female chefs in Italy awarded a Michelin star. Fradiani can also coordinate group cooking classes on-site.

Lago di Bolsena. This volcanic lake was formed some 370,000 years ago; its shores are a popular destination for Italian families who love splashing

in the cool waters and sampling gelato from the stands that line the boardwalk. Inland, visit La Rocca Mondeschi della Cervara, a castle built between the 12th and 14th centuries, and the Basilica di Santa Cristina, whose catacombs date back to the fourth century.

Orvieto. A picturesque 20-minute drive from Civita, the vibrant hill town has a multitude of restaurants, shops, and sights to explore. Not to be missed are the frescoes by Luca Signorelli inside the 14th-century Orvieto Cathedral; they are thought to be the inspiration for Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* in Rome's Sistine Chapel.

Osteria al Forno di Agnese. Authentic Italian home cooking within Civita's walls.



Hand-carved niches in the tuff now serve as spots for candles.



Domus Civita's stone façade is punctuated by windows that glow after dark.



Getto lamps by FLOS sit underneath a vintage American map of Europe.



One area of the subterranean cave system possessed the ideal temperature for storing wine in the open. The 400-bottle display was created by drilling metal dowels into the walls.



The residence's original cellar now houses the master suite's bathroom and sitting area.





A boarded-up passageway makes a wonderful frame for a bookcase.



A mix of 20th-century chair designs achieves unity in white. The "hanging garden" wall triptych strikes a verdant note.

SAPORE



The minimalist kitchen was fabricated by a local company, Stosa. Countertops are made from Calacatta marble.



STEAL THIS LOOK

Design ideas from Domus Civita to try in your own home

Round-table dining. To foster conversation during large group meals, a circular surface is the ideal setup. Unite a collection of mismatched chairs by painting them crisp white.

Birdcage chandelier. Birds can be pesky house pets, but their cages make elegant light fixtures. Scour flea markets for an assortment of vintage cages, selecting both wood and metal designs. Give them a good cleaning, and paint if needed. Electrify them with store-bought cord kits and hang them in multiples over an entrance or a stairwell for a dramatic effect.

Hanging garden. Make your own indoor green wall that requires no maintenance. Search flea markets or eBay for vintage letterpress drawers and purchase an assortment of dried and preserved moss from local garden stores. Forage around your neighborhood for small pebbles and some dry soil. Arrange the items in the drawers, mixing and matching textures to create a varied miniature landscape. Once you are satisfied with the placement, use a glue gun to secure the items to the drawers. Add picture wire to the back and hang.



The green Lazy chairs, white Fat Fat nesting tables, and Bend-Sofa are all from Patricia Urquiola's collection for B&B Italia. The patterned sofa pillows were made from vintage fabric.

Virginia creaper creates a curtain of green amid a timeless facade. OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The glazed bathroom mirrors were sourced from local flea markets and antiques stores. A cobblestone lane leads to a view of the canyon. The statue that sits in a light well was once part of an oversized mantle clock. Simple grey linen curtains act as a room divider between the master bedroom and its sitting area.

