



# Inspiration, eclecticism and contemporary art

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Accents of colour, dynamism and light. Located in the heart of Milan's Porta Venezia area, the private home of Tiziano Vudafieri and his wife Catherine Vautrin is a spacious loft in a traditional Milanese court-yard apartment block from the last century.

By selecting and working cleverly with a mix of classic design pieces and contemporary artwork, the couple have turned an abandoned glassworks into a space that narrates the story of who they are. Architect and fashion manager by day, collectors by night, Vudafieri and Vautrin give shape to their intellectual curiosity by regularly restyling the interiors of their home, with this latest version being the fourth one in 12 years.

Transforming 340 square metres across three gentle split levels, the project is designed around an internal patio. It is both a place to live (a modern-day bourgeois house, as the owners say) and also a container where art is regularly employed to skilfully transform the spaces within.

In the penultimate restyle, radical change to the functional layout of the living and dining areas was brought about by the inclusion of a gigantic bronze Tour Eiffel by Aldo Mondino Two years before that, the house was handed over to artist Gabriele de Santis, who over the course of six months gave it a total overhaul as part of the art initiative Case Chiuse (a programme of exhibitions staged in private and inaccessible places, opened up to the public only for the duration of the exhibition).

For years this very dialogue with art has been a key theme in the design mantra of Vudafieri-Saverino Partners. Established in 2000 by Tiziano Vudafieri and Claudio Saverino, the Milan/Shanghai-based



architecture firm boasts collaborations with fashion brands such as Delvaux, Pucci, Tod's, Louis Vuitton, Kenzo, Roger Vivier, Moschino, and Sonia Rykiel.

The firm has also significantly redefined functional and aesthetic canons in the restaurant industry, working with Michelin-starred chefs such as Alessandro Negrini and Fabio Pisani (of Il Luogo di Aimo e Nadia), Pierre Gagnaire, Hervé Bourdon, Enrico Bartolini, and Andrea Berton, and being responsible for a number of other innovative restaurant concepts in Milan as well as further afield too.

## The design concept

The loft is a contemporary space that embodies the highly personal vision of the architect and his wife. Sharing a passion for art and collecting, the couple's home is a portfolio of artwork and iconic, vintage items that they have purchased, stumbled upon and gathered together over the years, all showcased alongside bespoke Vudafieri design pieces.

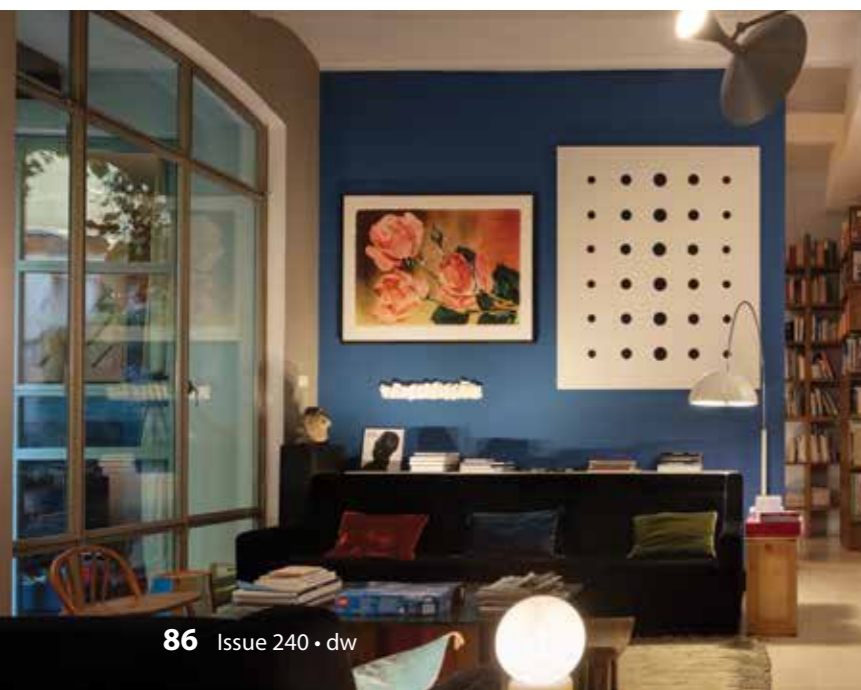
The apartment plays on the relationship between high and low levels: the internal courtyard acts as a central point and light well, while stairs, walkways and passages create a sense of dynamism. As a result, the floor plan is distinctly unexpected, packed with ingenious transition spaces and surprises. An array of different places to spend time in, Vudafieri explains.

The open-plan, interconnected rooms are in constant communication with one another, with the living and dining areas stitched together seamlessly; the addition of large glass surfaces (which take their form from those of the former glassworks) serves to further consolidate this idea of a visual bridge. The interiors are elevated through the use of transparency and natural light, and are elegantly paired with original features such as the Catalan vaults that gently define the ceiling.

## Colour restyling

Over the years, the interiors have undergone a number of make-overs, from changes in wall colour to the position of artwork and furniture. The most recent of these involves a major change in colour scheme.

Designed in the 1930s and 1950s for Salubra, Le Corbusier's monochrome wallpaper features unexpected colour palettes that



are off-the-beaten-track when it comes to modern décor: it was the discovery of this that gave Tiziano Vudafieri the idea to transform some of the walls into expansive monochrome surfaces. Blue and red walls dominate the large central hub, but the chromatic theme also continues with the lime green of the entrance, the greyish blue of the kitchen, and the green of the master bedroom. As the owners say, these are colours that are almost taken from neoclassical London interiors, and this further highlights their eclectic spirit.

The artwork changes continually and is also installed in line with Vudafieri's concept of "eclectic equilibrium". In the living and dining area, the blue surface acts as a backdrop to an abstract canvas by Swiss artist John Armleder, placed harmoniously alongside a large rose by emerging Polish artist Marzena Nowak, and a plaster frieze by esteemed artist Paolo Icaro. The deep red wall displays a drawing, a collage and an oil painting by Nick Devereux, which are placed near a neon installation by Victor Man and two 18th-century portraits of Catherine Vautrin's ancestors.

The same principle can also be seen in the design pieces. Beside Aldo Mondino's bronze sculpture "Gerusalemme" sit iconic designs by Luigi Caccia Dominioni: black velvet Sant'Ambrogio sofas, LT10 and Porcino floor lamps, and two extremely rare glass vases, all produced by Azucena in the 1950s and 1960s. The marble and wood table between the two sofas is by Ettore Sottsass (Vudafieri's very first design maestro) for Ultima Edizione. This is teamed with Sasso lamps by André Cazenave for Atelier A (a radical Parisian collective from the 1960s), Marteen Baas's Clay Furniture bench for Rossana Orlandi, and Le Corbusier's Lampe de Marseille grey wall light produced by Nemo Lighting.

In the centre of the dining area a bespoke Vudafieri Tratto table is teamed with 1960s Danish teak chairs and a glass sculpture by Droog Design. On the table is a rechargeable Tetatet lamp by Davide Groppi.

#### Nature and a secluded central garden

The patio at the centre of the structure is a green oasis and the very heart of the project. Designed by Vudafieri with architect Lorenzo Bini and created by landscape architect Alessandro Nasti, this secluded garden combines plants, wood and stone with design elements such as 1960s Danish fiberglass chairs by Flotötto or the Corallo armchair designed by the Campana Brothers and produced by Edra. Overlooked by windows and terraces, the space is visible from all rooms and can be accessed from the living area or from the bedroom area, thereby making it almost an additional room outdoors.

#### The kitchen

With glass doors to both the dining area and the patio outside, the kitchen is flooded with light and serves as a laboratory for the architect and a space where he can cook up another of his passions. Along with his wife, Vudafieri is a key figure in the Milan restaurant industry and has been behind the design of a number of dining establishments and bistros (Dry, Égalité and Röst). He places huge emphasis on the kitchen as a space for working and socialising and this inclination can be seen in the presence of combined different-temperature fridges (homage to the assembled furniture pieces of Bertrand Lavier, Vudafieri states) and unusual kitchen equipment such as the Irinox blast chiller. This is a domestic environment that has been created with design in mind but also so it can function well as a space for family and friends too. The central wooden table is crafted from the trunk of a Lebanon cedar by Fratelli Bianchi, furniture artisans from Cantù (Como) who were also behind the bespoke production of all the furniture and internal doors, and the kitchen. It is paired with



Othmar Barth Sella chairs from 1962 and a glass-orb chandelier with brass structure, a prototype by Federico Peri and produced by Nilufar. The space is delicate and light, just like the Le Corbusier blue-grey colour chosen for the walls.

#### The master bedroom.

The master bedroom is a dusky, protective space with green walls and ceiling that create a sense of timelessness and reflect the greenery of the terrace and the external patio, accessed via the vast floor-to-ceiling window. In contrast with the brick-red floor, the green wall draws the eye to a series of photos by Linda Fregni Nagler entitled Mourning, Massimo Bartolini's photo Talking with Lisa, Umberto Riva's Robot lamp for FontanaArte, an early 20th-century Murano pendant light and a large 1960s table lamp, all of which express a sense of eclectic equilibrium and narrate both past and present.

#### Gallery passageways

The stairwells and passageways are treated as rooms unto themselves and not merely in-between spaces. Flooded with a bright orange colour, the stairs that connect the main area to one of the two guest bedrooms include a stunning collection of vases by Wilhelm Wagenfeld (1900-1990), a designer and teacher of Bauhaus who was not very well-known in Italy but had major exhibits at places such as MoMa. The stairs with a transparent balustrade leading up to the other guest room act as a gallery space for a series of oil paintings by French artist Vincent Ruffin (Galérie Olivier Castaing).

#### VUDAFIERI-SAVERINO PARTNERS

Vudafieri-Saverino Partners is a creative atelier whose work ranges from architecture and interior design to retail, hotellerie and restaurant design.

Based in Milan and Shanghai, the Studio, founded and run by architects Tiziano Vudafieri and Claudio Saverino, in its twenty-year career has developed projects in almost every country and continent, always adopting an attentive approach to face the major issues of the contemporary culture, city, landscape and society.

Every space designed - residential, commercial, industrial or mixed-use - expresses the close relationship between the values of the client and those of the context, creating a meticulous composition of form and function, sign and detail. The result is a project method that combines the identity of places with a specific "storytelling strategy".

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