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VERANDA

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la dolce vita

ITALIAN RIVIERA VILLA

ARCHITECTURAL RENOVATION & INTERIOR DESIGN BY PIERO CASTELLINI
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Many foreigners' dreams of Italy tend to be landlocked.

visions of Tuscan hill towns or Roman ruins. This is a funny thing, given the fact that most of Italy's boundaries are coastline. One particularly dreamy stretch of the coast is the verdant peninsula of Portofino. "This is where the Genovese traditionally took their holidays," explains Milanese architect Piero Castellini Baldissera during a visit to his latest project, a country villa that he has lovingly restored, perched on the hills above the port town and sea.

"Although the townspeople from Portofino were fishermen and lived from the sea, the Genovese had country villas here, which were the basis for working farms," says Castellini. In fact, this stately villa was the headquarters for a sizeable grove of olive trees. "The warm waters of the Mediterranean have created a microclimate along this coast, which gave birth not only to magnificent botanical gardens but also to incredibly good olive oil and wines."

When Castellini was first called in to transform this *casa padronale* into a vacation home for Milanese clients, he realized it was a dream job. "The site itself couldn't have been better, facing out to Punta Portofino with pines, olives and cypresses planted toward the edge of the cliffs and blue sea and sky." But the house itself still retained its working origins, and the ground floor was host to several olive presses and other agricultural artifacts. "We cleaned this out and swept away all the internal walls to create large open spaces while at the same time restoring the magnificent original vaulted ceilings."

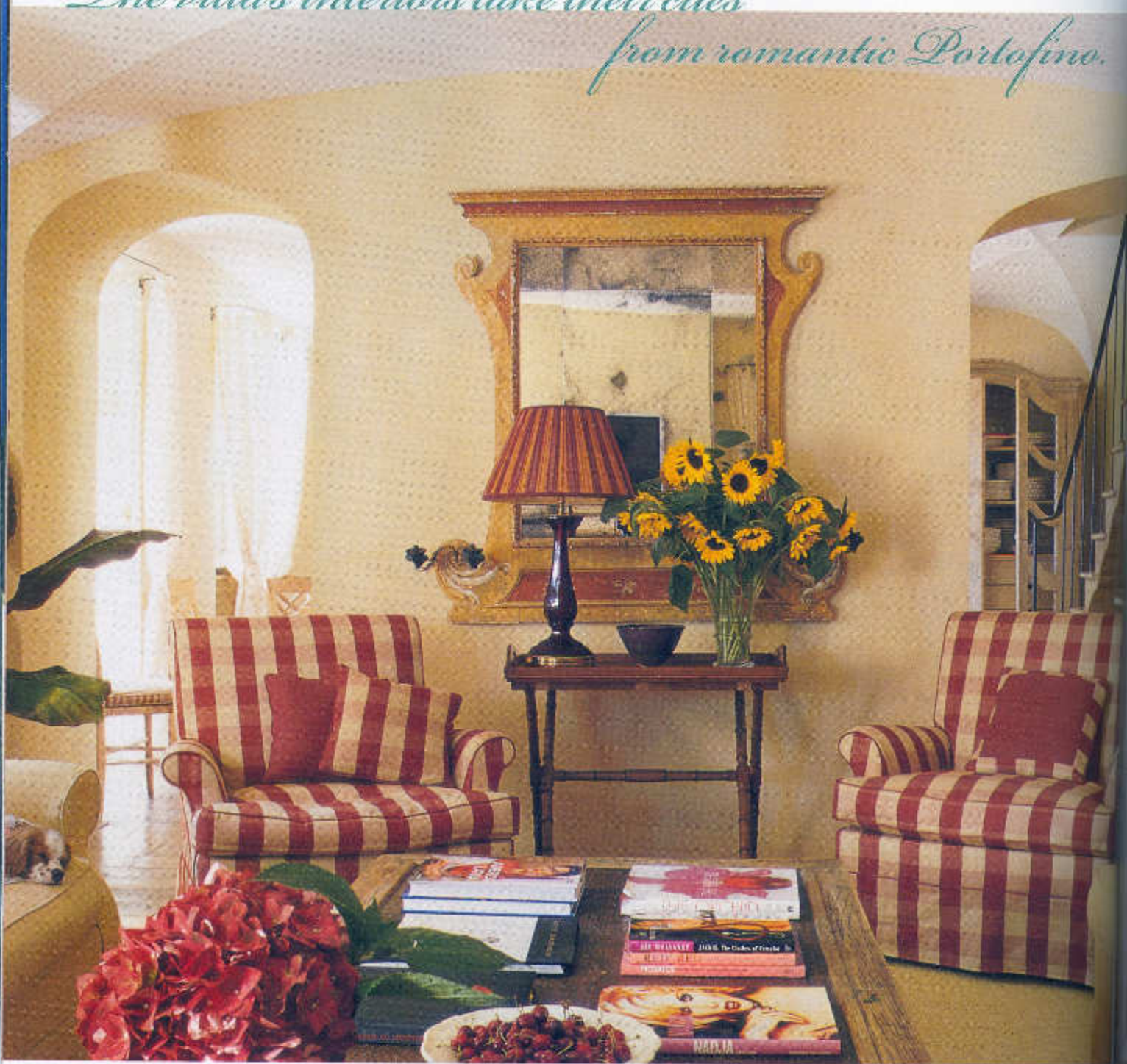
OPENING PAGES: The blue waters of the Ligurian coast melt into the sky beyond Punta Portofino. ABOVE: The villa, renovated by Piero Castellini, is painted a specific tone typical of this area. OPPOSITE: Ground-floor living area, originally used to make olive oil, opens onto garden. Vaulted ceilings restored. Fireplace by Castellini with wood-covered iron hood by local artisan. Sofa, also designed by Castellini, in his C&C Milano fabric. Mattress cushions in silk flank fireplace.







*The villa's interiors take their cues
from romantic Portofino.*



PRECEDING PAGES: French oak dining table, c. 1800, inset with Delft tiles from Holland and France. Louis XVI mirror from Genoa. Traditional Tuscan 19th-c. chairs, a favorite of Castellini, in his C&C Milano linen stripe. ABOVE: Intimate sitting room used as a library and music room. Two chairs, designed by Castellini, in linen. Mirror, 18th c., originally from a church altar. English mahogany table, c. 1800. OPPOSITE: Staircase of wood with iron banister. Cupboard doors from Provence and Tuscan lacquered console, both c. 1800. Floor planks salvaged from mountain house in northern Italy.





ABOVE: Guest room curtains, bed cover and pillows in C&C Milano linen. RIGHT: In another bedroom, Castellini designed canopy beds of cast iron and wood. Curtains, bed linens and quilted throws in various stripes by Castellini. At foot of bed, wooden chairs from Chiavari. BELOW: Tub in wood base made of same antique pine planks used for flooring throughout villa.







The owners, based in Milan, are involved in the beauty industry, and their work is very much inspired by the colors and perfumes of coastal flowers and other plants. "Together we decided to bring this vibrancy of tone inside the house as well." After opening up spaces in the living area, Castellini endowed the walls with a color that echoes the yellow sand of nearby beaches. Blue linen fabric, produced by his company, C&C Milano, covers overstuffed sofas. "The focus of the room is the large fireplace at one end," says Castellini, who designed the unique mantelpiece constructed of iron and wood panels. "The sculptural form recalls both local ship-building techniques as well as cupolas on bell towers in town."

Most of the upper floor is devoted to bedrooms, several of which have canopy beds draped in C&C fabrics in a mixture of cotton and linen of different weights and colors. "The pleasure of working with these fabrics is that I can use different ones from the same collection, knowing that they will all harmonize and work together. Since we make linen sheets, even the bedding becomes an integral element in the design of the bedrooms."

For help in making the most out of the dramatic garden, the clients and Castellini turned to world-renowned garden architect Paolo Peyrone. Antique roses cover the long wooden pergola at the edge of the main lawn, framing the view out over two wooden tables used for entertaining. Since the property is sloped, the garden is a series of terraces down the hill, each providing an opportunity to watch the endlessly fascinating spectacle of the coast below. □

ABOVE: "My inspiration for this guest room was the green of the olive trees and the surrounding fields," says Castellini. Bedcover, hangings and cushions coordinate in his fabrics. Four-poster is a military camp bed from early 19th c. OPPOSITE: Castellini used more of his fabrics for linens and headboard of this bed, which he also designed.





ABOVE: The view of Punta Portofino is a main reason the owners chose this property. RIGHT: Wooden pergola stretches length of terrace and is part of garden designed by landscape architect Paola Peyrona. Antique roses provide shade and lovely fragrance. Iron chairs, originally used in outdoor cinemas, with cushions in linen. BELOW: Hillside garden is a series of terraces.



