



DESIGN INTERIORS

Home advantage

Stephen Todd speaks to the duo behind some of Europe's most glamorous abodes.

It's a short stroll from Carl Pickering's architecture studio on the right bank of Rome to his most recently unveiled project: a sumptuous Renaissance-era residence on the left bank, rigorously updated for contemporary living.

Crossing the Tiber on a crisp spring morning, bells ring out from 16th-century campanile as you turn into the Via Giulia, the kilometre-long street commissioned by Pope Julius II in 1508 that showcases some of the Eternal City's most enduring and noble edifices.

Pickering pauses before entering the historical portico and climbing to the second-floor home of French-Italian art collector Guja du Chêne de Vère, his long-standing friend and client.

A heavy steel front door glides open to reveal a vault-like metal vestibule that sets the tone for a vast 600-square-metre apartment dripping with history while

avowedly of the here and now. Ornately coffered ceilings hover high above cool grey marble floors upon which modern sculptures and contemporary furniture sit like so many glamorous monoliths.

This is the particular alchemy of a Carl Pickering interior: spaces that appear to have always existed – even when they have just been remade.

For more than four decades, the Australian-born architect and co-founder of Lazzarini Pickering Architetti has built a European career by quietly resisting the cult of signature style. Instead, he has refined a methodology grounded in research, listening and contextual response.

"We don't arrive with formulas," he says, referring to the approach he has honed with his business partner and husband, Claudio Lazzarini.

"Each project becomes a portrait – of a

place, and the people who inhabit it."

The philosophy has produced a remarkably varied body of work: historic Roman residences recalibrated for modern-day life; crystalline alpine retreats, poised above dramatic landscapes; museum-like domestic interiors in Milan; and scenographic collaborations with luxury fashion houses. What links these projects is not an immediately recognisable aesthetic but an attitude – the conviction that architecture should tune itself to the emotional frequencies of its setting.

The Rome apartment exemplifies this approach. Although widely perceived as a new commission, it is, in fact, the latest chapter in a long-standing relationship with a prominent European client family.

Lazzarini Pickering first restructured the palazzo residence more than two decades ago. More recently, shifting domestic arrangements – and a desire to divide the

space to create apartments for two adult sons – prompted a careful reconfiguration.

Rather than stage a dramatic new intervention, Pickering and Lazzarini opted for restraint.

"We prefer to tune buildings," Pickering explains. "You listen to what is already there and respond."

Historic surfaces have been stabilised rather than cosmetically restored. Brushed steel and monumental blocks of marble add a sculptural presence while serving the practical purpose of recalibrating spaces and creating work surfaces.

In a city where architectural history can easily overwhelm, antique plaster, modern furnishings and strategic lighting exist in quiet dialogue, producing rooms that feel both deeply Roman and entirely current.

If Rome demands fluency in the past, the firm's project in the Dolomites demonstrates an equally nuanced engagement with landscape. Occupying the top two levels of a newly constructed condominium, the apartment functions almost as an independent structure – a "flying chalet", as Pickering describes it – elevated above the valley to capture sweeping alpine views.

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Carl Pickering



Need to know

Lazzarini & Pickering furniture designs for Marta Sala Editions are available exclusively through Moebel (Sydney).



Main: Carl Pickering, right, and Claudio Lazzarini in the Via Giulia apartment in Rome. Left: the apartment's master bathroom.

PHOTOS: JOSEF OBEXER

Here the architects distilled mountain typology to its structural essence. Rustic timber planes establish a calm tectonic order; expansive glazing frames the peaks with cinematic clarity. Yet, the interior remains emotionally warm. Custom furnishings in dense wool and honey-toned leather soften the geometry, while after dusk, the carefully modulated lighting transforms the space into a retreat ideal for quiet reflection. Graphic planes of punchy yellow create a graphically fantastic tension.

"Luxury in the mountains isn't about decoration," Pickering says. "It's about comfort – temperature, light, the sense of shelter."

The clients, long-time friends, sought precisely this balance between intimacy and modern restraint. The result is an alpine interior that feels grounded rather



Above and left: Open-plan living at the "flying chalet" in the Dolomites. Below: Casa Museo in Milan is both a residence and private gallery. PHOTOS: JOSEF OBEXER, CHRISTOPHER GHIOLDI.



than generic – contemporary without succumbing to cliché.

In Milan, Lazzarini Pickering's Casa Museo project explores more conceptual territory. Part residence, part private gallery, the apartment reflects the lives and passions of its art- and design-savvy owners.

"We were interested in making visible the idea that people curate their own existence," Pickering explains.

Formerly an industrial workshop, the apartment's rooms unfold in a sequence, with artworks functioning as narrative anchors. Arrangements of rare furniture by 20th-century design maestros including Osvaldo Borsani and Carlo Mollino subtly guide movement, creating an experience closer to cinematic choreography than domestic planning. The overall effect mirrors the intellectual rigour and understated glam of Milan itself.

Such scenographic sensitivity has long attracted fashion clients.

Lazzarini Pickering's relationship with the Roman luxury house Fendi dates back to the early 1980s, when the architects began designing exhibition environments and runway settings for the brand. By the mid 1990s, the collaboration had expanded to include boutique architecture and experimental retail concepts across Europe.

"Fashion clients understand image instinctively," Pickering says. "But they are also custodians of heritage. Architecture

has to communicate both."

Recent projects reflect an emphasis on circularity. Elements originally conceived for fashion show installations – including sculptural seating systems – have been reimagined as permanent showroom furnishings. The gesture is both practical and symbolic, reinforcing the idea that design can evolve rather than be discarded.

"It's extraordinary to see ideas return decades later," Pickering observes, noting the welcome return of designer Maria Grazia Chiuri to the famed Roman fashion house after almost a decade at Dior.

That long view has shaped Lazzarini Pickering's broader practice. Over the years the studio has moved fluidly between architecture, interiors, product design and brand strategy – designing yacht interiors, retail environments and hospitality venues with equal confidence.

The new Icebergs dining precinct at Sydney Airport offers a rare Australian example of their work. Translating the sensory language of Bondi's iconic ocean pool in a vast transit lounge required both abstraction and theatrical flair. Curved screens of suspended rods, aquamarine tonal gradations and large photographic murals evoke coastal light and movement.

For Pickering, such diversity is a necessity. "Each sector has its own boom-and-bust cycles," he says. "Working across disciplines keeps you alert. It forces you back to first principles." **L&L**



FASHION TRENDS

Street wise

Some of the most style-savvy commentators are behind the lens, writes Divya Venkataraman.

Above from left: Deep natural tones like forest green are popular among men in Milan; shades of grey at Milan Fashion Week; cow hide paired with denim in New York. Below: "There's a loosening up and a shaking out," says Johnny Cirrillo of the people who catch his eye in New York.

PHOTOS: ANASTASIA FEDOSEEVA @THESTREETPIE, EDWARD BERTHELOT/GETTY IMAGES, JOHNNY CIRRILLO @WATCHING NEWYORK

Street-style photographers know the power they wield. You'll spot them stalking the fashion week schedule, barrel lenses bristling. To be singled out is affirmation of your flair. To be overlooked is to have missed the mark.

From London to Milan and Paris, they've seen it all: the designers ducking backstage, the models off-duty, the editors slipping in incognito and the celebrities playing it up for the cameras. Crucially, they see how fashion looks in motion – rather than flat lay or in a photoshoot. Who better to reflect back to us the fashion lessons to be learnt this season?

Johnny Cirrillo (@watchingnewyork, 1.5 million followers) captures the artful chaos of New York. This season, he feels like he can take a breath. "I've been seeing a lot of folk right now who aren't doing 10 things at once," he tells *Life & Leisure*. "They're doing one thing really well and letting the rest of the outfit stay simple."

He recommends taking a feather from the animal world for that clinching statement: pony hair, leopard print, cow hide. Team a wild print with denim, Cirrillo says, for cool restraint. "It might just be one really beautiful vintage piece," he says, "and the rest of the outfit stays calm."

In Milan, Anastasia Fedoseeva (@thestreetpie, 312k followers) has snapped a few rule-breakers in her 14 years of documenting the city's best-dressed people. "I'm in love with the way the Milanese combine pieces," she says. "Especially men in their fifties and older.

They are my favourite people to photograph."

One rule? "Milanese men never wear all-black." Deep, natural tones are the way in this stylish city, from forest green to inky blue and rich burgundy. And when they do go dark, "one combination I see here often is navy with black, which many people avoid, but they make it look very elegant".

Colour-wise, London-based photographer Jonathan Daniel Pryce (@garconjon, 142k followers) has noticed a cool shift in neutrals. While browns and creams dominated for the past few cycles, he says, greys have returned as an outfit foundation. Tonal layering in

grey has been everywhere, he says, "often broken up with different textures".

Another popular way to break up the grey are wacky or interesting ties, worn by stylish men and women in London and Paris alike.

In Milan, hats are the accessory of choice: velvet pillboxes, newsboy styles, textured cloches. "Everyone wears them," says Fedoseeva. "You'll often spot classic hats from brands like Borsalino. It adds personality."

For Fedoseeva, accessorising reflects the Italian way of dressing more generally. "It never looks too much, [it's] always balanced," she says. "You feel the influence of the city and fashion week – but it's still very personal."

Not so in Paris. "Clashing prints, patterns and colours were everywhere in Paris," recalls Pryce. "I saw a lot of animal prints, florals, crochet, leather embellishment – fun, over-the-top style."

Sydney-based photographer Myles Kalus (@photomyles, 15k followers) has been seeing a lot of denim, across men's and womenswear. Kalus photographs the fashion set in London and Paris, as well as at home in Australia.

"Denim is really back," he says. "It's more present now than it was in the past couple of years. In all shapes and forms! Jeans, jackets, shirts. Slim, classic, and wide-fitted." He's also noticed more experimentation. "I love that women are playing around with opposing proportions, with form-fitting tops and baggy or loose bottoms. It's very dynamic to observe when people are in motion. A beautiful balance between definition and flow."

Kalus' camera has also been picking up the glint of old-world wristwatches, particularly on men. Styles are moving away from the hyper-masculine and oversized back towards smaller, more traditional shapes, he says. They're being worn differently too. "I love that men are embracing wearing [them] loose like a bracelet," he says. The louche styling naturally aligns with a more vintage silhouette.

No matter the fashion capital, personality is in. One point street-style photographers agree on is that success is less about the actual outfit and more about the charge it carries. "There's a loosening up, a shaking out, extra helpings of whimsy and colour, says Cirrillo. "Fashion-goers are dressing for fun. And that's really the most important part, isn't it?" **L&L**

