

THE MILAN ISSUE
THE PIECES, PALETTES & POWER PEOPLE

**PRIOR
ARRANGEMENTS**
LUXE TRAVELLER
DAVID PRIOR CURATES
YOUR NEXT JOURNEY

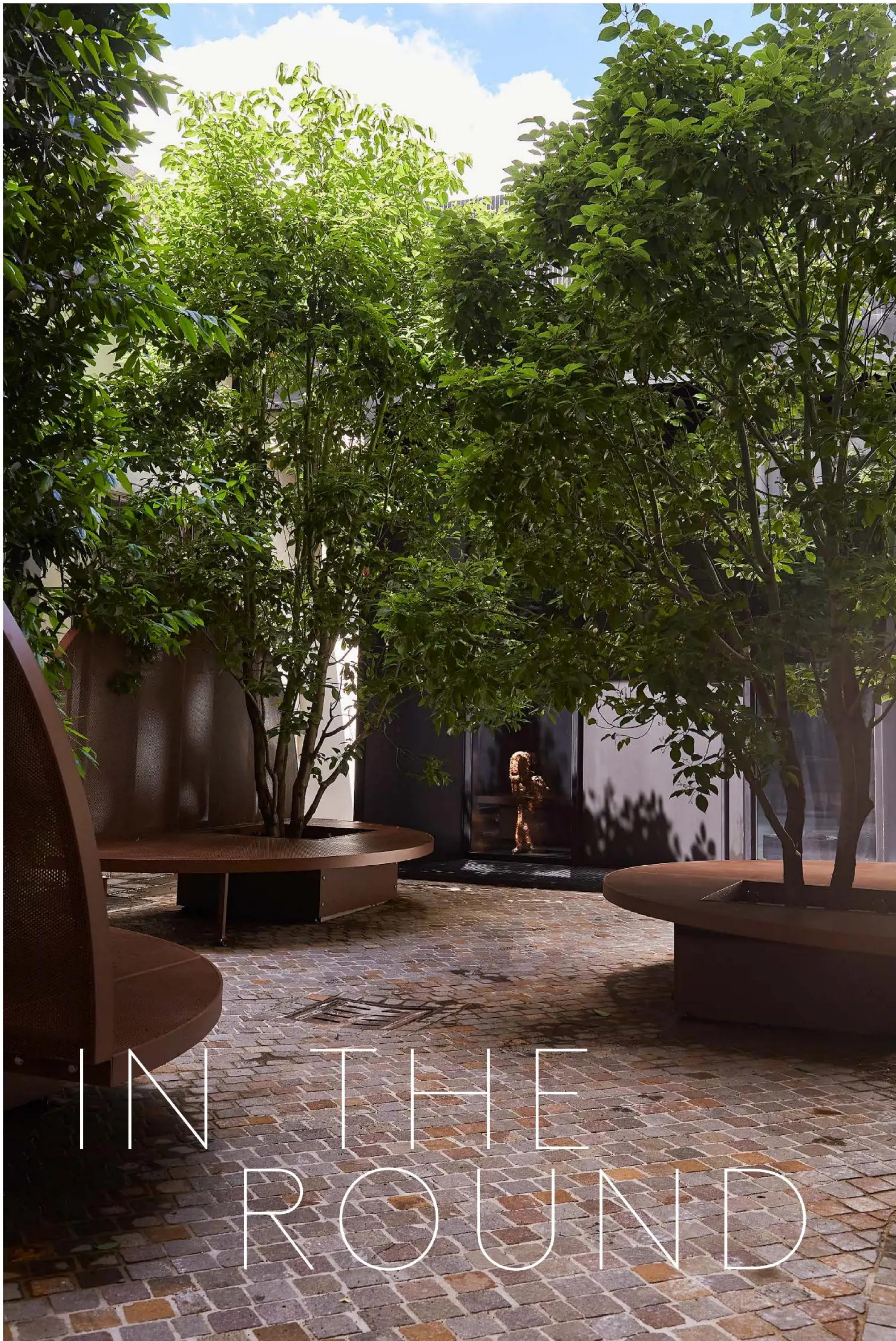
people

**THE ART OF THE
FOREVER HOME**
TIMELESS
RESIDENCES BY
BALAGNA DESIGN,
LAZZARINI PICKERING
AND ALWILL
ARCHITECTURE

A MASTERCLASS
in **ELEGANCE**

Thomas Hamel's *Toorak* triumph

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Italian-Australian design practice
Lazzarini Pickering Architetti has turned
a factory into a lived-in gallery space.



This page A curved, exposed steel structure acts as support and a framing device for the carefully curated collection of photography, with bespoke niches for rare Southeast Asian sculpture and heavy drapes used to divide peripheral spaces. Details of the photographic works (an international line-up ranging from the 1840s to the present) can be found in Speed Read. **Opposite page** Designed by Atelier Lavit, the cobbled courtyard with sculptural seating and leafy trees for shade allows for a transition from life on the street to the experience of the house.



In a quiet Milanese street, where hints of industry still linger, this discreet house museum is revealed in calibrated layers. Moving from the street through a deep cobbled courtyard, where oxidised metal sheets, folded, curved and interwoven with trees and plants form shaded seating, you arrive at an over-scale glass door – a portal to a world where art, design and architecture combine in a spectacular fashion.

Here, within the former shell of a 20th-century silversmith's factory in Milan's Isola district, Lazzarini Pickering Architetti (LPA) have conceived Casa Museo Molinario Colombari. Recalling the architects' first visit, Carl Pickering notes, "In the beginning, we went from an iron-roofed courtyard into a large shed-like space with a wall full of arches and a slightly ecclesiastical feel – part workshop, part church."

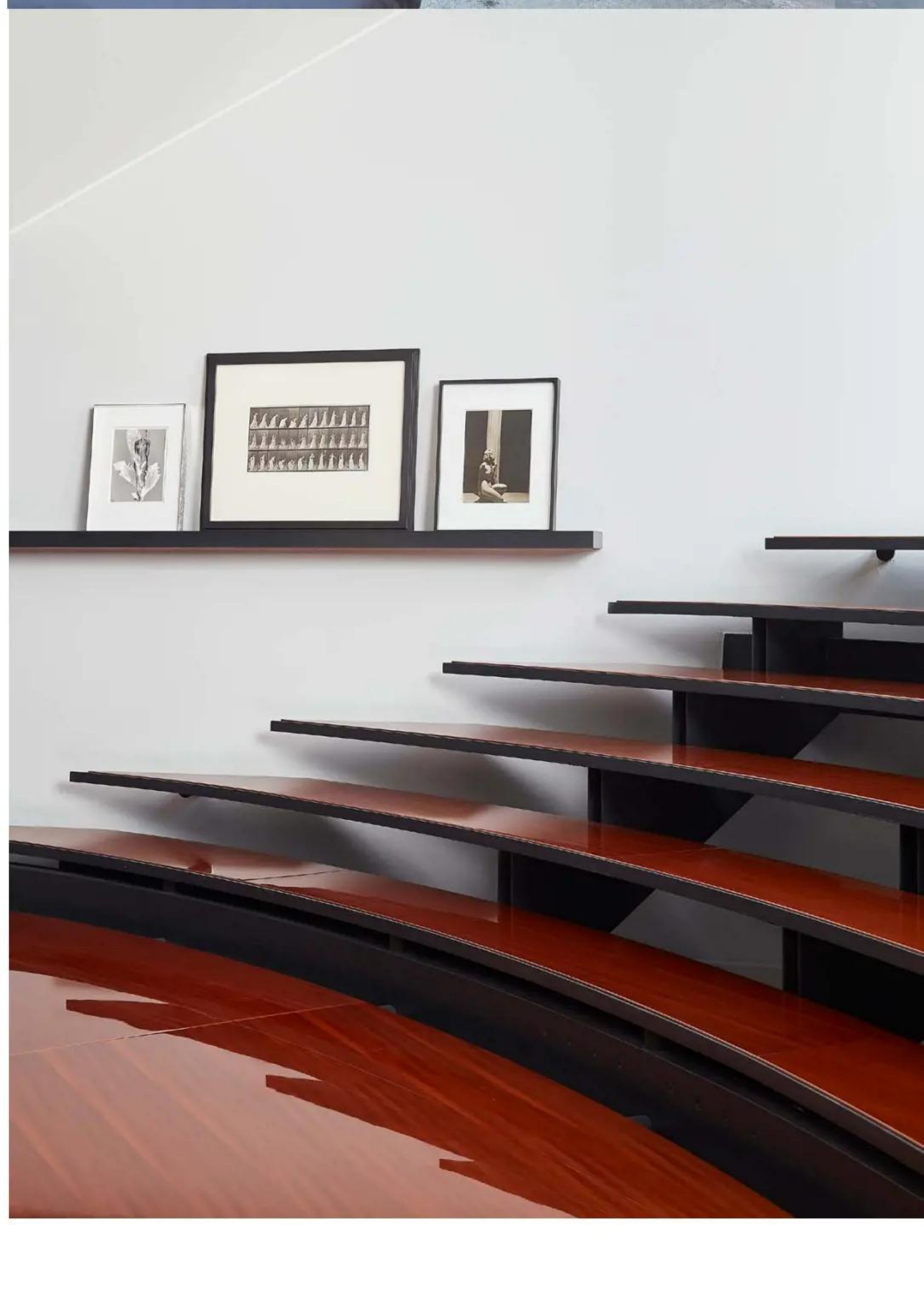
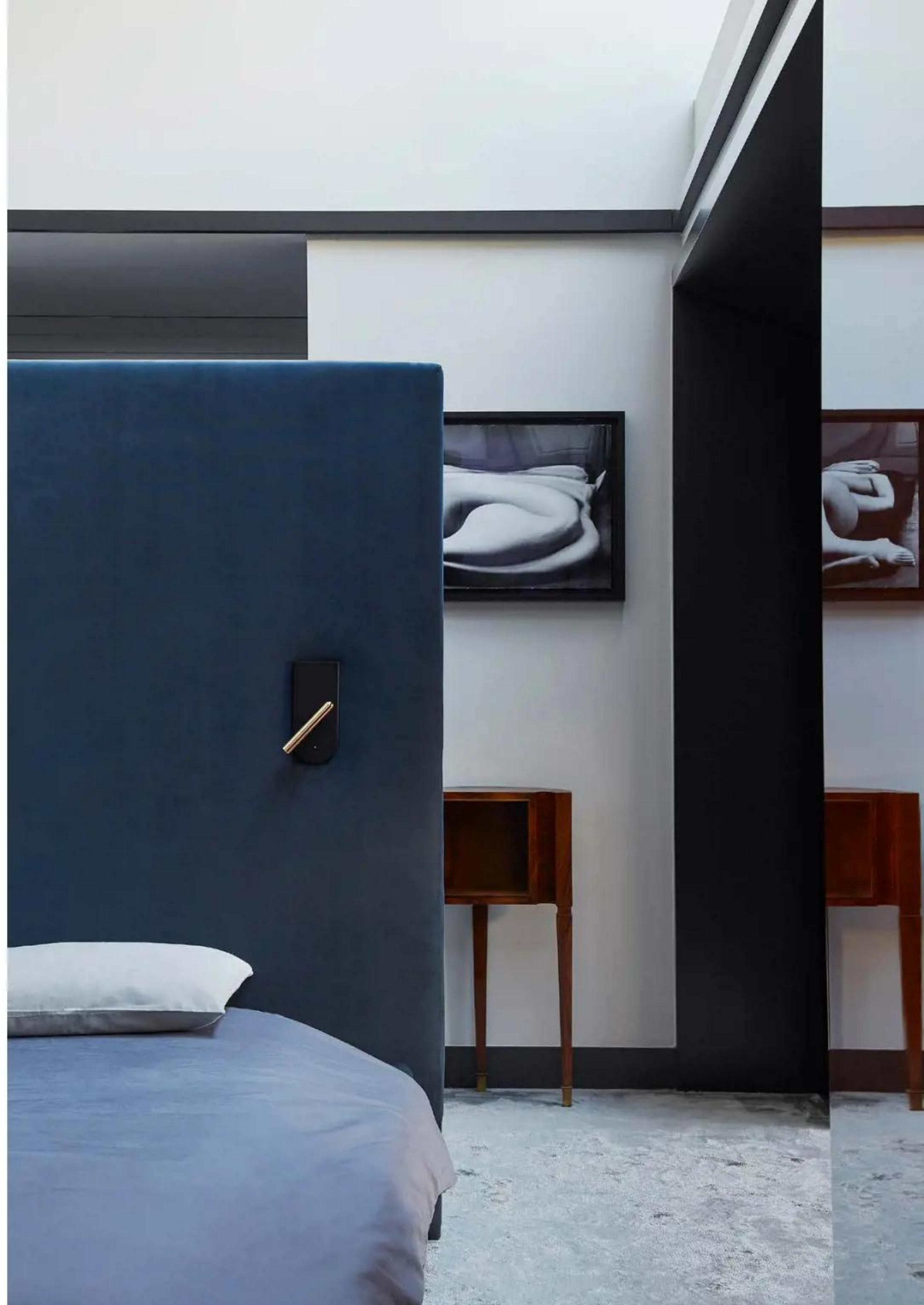
In a project that reworks these existing, visually disordered elements, LPA introduced sweeping gestures as the key design concept, with two offset circles informing the elemental structure of the interior. "As in all our projects, the primary idea generates and governs all subsequent choices," says Carl.

To design a single, large, fluid space with domestic, exhibition and theatrical functions was the brief from the clients – art collectors Ettore Molinario and Rossella Colombari – with the overarching idea that they could truly inhabit their passions.

For Ettore, that passion is a significant collection of photography dating from 1850, which traces themes of gender identity, desire and melancholy in works sourced globally, from celebrated artists as well as those that are unknown. »



These pages This central room uses circular motifs as the driving conceptual idea. Designed by LPA, the sunken lounge intersects with the structural steel forming the mezzanine. Surfaces to display the collection are utilised judiciously with a gallery of black and white images segueing to colour (the large work on the left is by Australian artist Tracey Moffatt) as the eye moves up the staircase. The red velvet cinema armchairs were designed by Carlo Scarpa in the 1960s for the Auditorium della Conciliazione, a building in the Borgo district of Rome by architect Marcello Piacentini.



This page An example of how architecture, photographic display, sculpture and furniture all come together in an inspiring and effortless fashion.
Opposite page (clockwise from top left) An anteroom off the main space hosts a glass-topped table by Melchiorre Bega. // The bedroom on the mezzanine can be closed off from the central space with a curtain. Artwork by André Kertész. // The flared lacquered-timber stair treads echo the work LPA have undertaken on luxury yachts. // An early 20th-century chair by Josef Hoffmann sits under a Robert Mapplethorpe portrait of Patti Smith.





These pages (clockwise from above) A dining room showcases more red velvet cinema armchairs by Carlo Scarpa, echoed by the tones of the work by Yasumasa Morimura (*Self-Portrait [Actress]/After Vivien Leigh 2*). // Jacob Aue Sobol's *Woman from Yakutsk, Far East Siberia*. // In a fluid sequencing, the eye is led from one space to the next. Positioned on either side of the dining room entrance are portraits by Joel-Peter Witkin and Etienne Charjat.

« For Rossella, who runs the prestigious Galleria Rossella Colombari, the focus rests on 20th-century Italian design, with pieces by Carlo Scarpa, Osvaldo Borsani, Luigi Caccia Dominioni and Gio Ponti, among others. “I was looking for the perfect harmony between architecture and decoration,” says Ettore of a space that moves seamlessly between private domain and public stage, accommodating exhibitions and cultural events as required.

The original building’s industrial bones, which are robust and utilitarian, find a refined echo in the exposed internal steel framing that articulates the circular mezzanine. This bold intervention frames interior vistas with a cinematic sensibility while evoking a museum-like grandeur. The space has thus shifted from making to display; from disorder to measured; from ancient craft to contemporary culture.

Given the interior’s scale and inherent sense of theatre, it is difficult not to be struck by the volume and movement shaped by the curve of the sunken lounge, designed by LPA, and the dynamism of the flaring, open-tread staircase (like a lacquered fishbone), which doubles as seating during events.

Across approximately 1000 square metres of exhibition space, walls, shelves, walkways and balustrades host more than 600 images and objects, with circulation encouraging a gradual, almost narrative, unfolding. Everything is curated with an exacting restraint: alcoves house precious sculptures from Southeast Asia; gallery-style hangs juxtapose eras »







Opposite page Continuing the sense of circulation, an inserted steel stairway sits independent of the walls and seems to float. The arresting work by Paolo Ventura is perfectly placed. **This page** (from left) Cobalt blue upholstery covers a day bed, sited under a photograph by Sarah Jones. // In the stairwell are significant works by Nobuyoshi Araki and Andres Serrano. // A corner of the study with a desk by Ignazio Gardella from the 1940s.



« and artists; linear displays and singular works are given measured intervals of pause.

More intimate functions – sleeping, bathing, cooking and dining – are positioned along the mezzanine’s periphery, enclosed by sliding doors or retractable curtains within what remains an essentially fluid sequence of spaces. Always attentive to human scale and spatial interaction, Carl says, “For us, architecture and furniture are inseparable. We sketch both big and small – figures interacting with buildings and objects. It’s always a hybrid process because design lives within architecture, not apart from it.”

Beyond aesthetics lie the practical considerations: the delicate calibration of insulation, soundproofing, energy efficiency and sustainability, alongside the stringent conservation requirements of a historically and culturally significant photographic collection. Skylights are treated with UV film, while, in pursuit of additional light, “The opening of an entire wall determined the birth of a courtyard that separates the main living area

from the wing reserved for guests,” notes Carl. “Light and sky are present in every space.”

Yet for all its rigour, the project allows for moments of quiet surprise. A large safe, once used to store the silversmiths’ materials, has been retained as an archive, where works are meticulously wrapped and catalogued before entering the exhibition rotation. And then there is the swimming pool and its spa – an inky, unexpected insertion within the building – accessed beneath the main stair. Here, an elongated composition of marble and timber assumes an almost monastic calm, animated by a circular light recalling a full moon, offering a place of retreat and contemplation.


Ultimately, the result is a singular expression of the lives and sensibilities of the owners – their shared devotion and distinct passions – resolved through an architectural language that accommodates complexity with ease and elevates it into an art form in its own right. ■

lazzarinipickering.com; casamuseomolinariocolombari.com



SIGNATURE STYLE
KEY PIECES

1 Studio Haos lounge chair with ottoman, \$14,500, Tigmi. 2 Kartell 'Thierry' side table in Blue, \$1475, Space. 3 Giobagnara 'Scala' leather tray in Antique Rose, \$1395, Becker Minty. 4 'H.H.H.' chair in Rust Orange, \$635, Space. 5 'Villa Natralis Truffle' wool floorcovering, \$175 per square metre, International Floorcoverings Australia.

A photograph of a spa area. In the foreground, there are dark wooden planks forming a bench. To the right, a wooden sauna structure is visible. In the background, a pool of water is illuminated with a blue light. Several large, circular, glowing light fixtures are suspended from the ceiling. The overall atmosphere is moody and contemporary.

SPEED READ

» While primarily residential, this hybrid space is also a gallery and event location contained in a former silversmith factory in the Isola district of Milan. » The current owners, art collector Ettore Molinaro and design gallerist Rossella Colombari, engaged Rome-based Italian-Australian duo Lazzarini Pickering Architetti (LPA) to transform the space into Casa Museo (House Museum). » Taking the central idea of a large internal circular form, every vertical surface has been used as an opportunity for display. The collection is meticulously catalogued at collezionemolinaro.com and details of museum events and opening times are at casamuseomolinaricolombari.com

This page The hidden pool and spa is a discrete, moody space that allows further withdrawal from the world and encourages contemplation and reflection.
Opposite page Another aspect of the courtyard, with metal seating where guests can linger before heading through the gallery's large glass door.