



In the Milan home of design dealer Stefano Vitali, a 1970s lacquered desk by Saporiti pops against the library's Pompeian red walls.

WEB-EXCLUSIVE HOME TOUR

Look Inside This Furniture Dealer's Chic Milan Apartment

Stefano Vitali of Avanguardia Antiquaria lovingly restores a run-down 1930s gem

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"It's quite unusual to have a garden in the middle of the town," notes Milan-based design dealer Stefano Vitali.

So when, some 15 years ago, he came across a centrally located 1930s apartment with a lush plot of nature out back, he was sold. As for the long-

e'd take care of those in no time.

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I'm a restorer, he says simply. It's what I do.

Since he was 19 years old, Vitali has refurbished antique furniture, studying under master artisans in London, New York, and his native Milan, before opening *Avanguardia Antiquaria*, a Milan gallery where his freshly restored collectables sit with blue-chip 20th-century design pieces and works of fine art. Not surprisingly, he approached the rundown apartment the same way he might a damaged, 18th-century French cabinet: with care, and utmost respect for its original design.

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"I'm not the kind of person who says, 'Let's take off all the floors and remake everything,'" he explains of the apartment, where he still lives, with his teenage son, Niccolò. "I'm always careful to keep things in their original condition."



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The home's original floors were thoughtfully restored in the kitchen.

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Slowly he made improvements that enhanced the space's early-20th-century charm. Sixteen original windows were removed, their wood frames restored, and reinstalled. Missing pieces from the damaged, original floors were replaced, a coat of lacquer slathered over top to preserve its condition. Ceilings were washed clean to reveal the original plaster design motifs.

To freshen things up, he coated several of the walls in rich, Pompeian red. "I visited the classical Italian city often as a kid," he remembers. "And I always wanted to live with that color."

When it came to furnishing the place, Vitali celebrated the same mix-and-match melange of old and new, known

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bores me."

In his own library, for example, nuanced modernist pieces dominate: a lacquered 1970s Saporiti desk sits with a gilded 1950s chair by designer G. Corradini; an unknown task lamp across the room from Greta M. Grossman's famous Grasshopper. For the doorway—which leads to his mirror-encased bedroom—Vitali commissioned a pagoda-like flourish, explaining, "It made the room feel like a small Chinese theater."

That same touch of the exotic permeates the living room, where 19th-century Balinese stools and colorful Indian pillows jazz up the clean lines of a 1960s midnight-blue velvet sofa. The room's crown jewel: a 1910 Venetian glass chandelier, to add a touch of elegance.

Like any true dealer, Vitali admits, his home is constantly evolving, with items from the apartment regularly making their way into the shop, and vice versa.

Like some of his most treasured antiques, he says of his home, "It's not in perfect condition. But it sure has a nice patina."



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