

# NEPTUNE



issue two



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At Home With

# FABRIZIO CASIRAGHI

Photographed by Jonas Unger



he home Fabrizio Casiraghi, nestled atop a fifth-floor walkup in the heart of the Parisian neighborhood dubbed Nouvelle Athènes, is a study on volumes. At just 40 square meters, the former artist atelier offers a sun kissed narrow space offset by double height 4-meter-tall ceiling. Casiraghi, who stands 6 feet tall with a heavy gaze, quickly fell under its unique charm.

Framed by two small but charming balconies, the space is littered with the recurring signature touches found throughout his work – Casiraghism if you will: box pleat trimmings on seating, forest hued lacquered surfaces or the warm yellow fabrics used in draping or upholstery. The graphic prints lining the living room wall, created by his father, a former art director of the Italian daily newspaper Corriere della Serra, serve as a reminder of his Milanese upbringing.

*"When I was a child, I think I always wanted to be an architect. There is a story I've often told of sitting on rock on the sea by my parent's summer home in the Cinque Terre looking up at the sea battered houses on the coast and telling my father that I couldn't understand why people did not fix them up or repaint the shutter that were damaged by the sea air. I remember him looking at me as if asking himself 'don't you have anything else to think about at six years old?'. That's when I decided to be an architect. Interiors came later for me."*

After studying classical architecture and city planning, it was whilst working a fundraising event at the Art Deco Villa Necchi that it hit him: *"I found myself looking at all the door handles, the radiators, the detailing on the windows... and that's when I realized that I wanted to be a decorator because it's those details that will inform the day to day lives of the people living in those spaces. It's not just the volume but also this typology of small details."*













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ilan, the industrial and creative capital of Italy, plays a central role in Casiraghi's style: "When people speak of Italian style they think of generosity, color, materials... This is of course very Italian in my work because they are central to my projects but there is also a very Milanese style in what is almost a minimalism with pure and straight lines. There is a sobriety. So even if there is a generosity in colors and objects, there is a sense of rigorousness in their use.

The first thing I learnt when arriving in Paris was developing a taste for decoration and decorative elements. In Italy, there are of course architects who also do interiors but in France there is a true culture of tradition and research of the object and the little decorative detail is something that I learnt in France. So my work is really a fusion of these both cultures: the Italian interior design style but with the attention to the decorative and not being scared to use the word 'decoration'. In Italy, is a bit reductive like someone who just choses pillows whereas in France it's a culture. I think you could say that in my work today, I have three roles: architect, interior designer and decorator. I know some of my peers have an issue with being called a decorator rather than architect, but I don't care; for me all three are exciting."

"I always try to do things that are not trend driven so that they become timeless – that's the most important thing for me. Something that you can't place in time or in style. But at the same time something sober but sober in terms of colors, objects and textures. So there that mix: timeless, sober and what we would call in Italian un stile generoso which means a style that is not pulling back. A place that is done to make people feel good and to give them information and detailing without falling into something baroque or redundant.

When I was growing up, we would go nearly every weekend to Lake Como where my grandparents lived and I remember on the drive there, which is a beautiful road around the water, there are these old villas – not palatial or baroque villas but rather sober

in their style – they are just so simple and discreetly sophisticated. When I was small, I remember I would stick my face to the window to see these houses and my father, who has been going there his whole life, would then tell all the stories of the Villa Carlotta, the Villa Mezze, the Villa Teste ... and I have a memory of these really being the first architectures that marked me. You have the water then a green garden – often done à l'anglaise and very simple – and then a sober façade simply painted with nice windows. But it's the setting with the flowers, the proportion of the building that really pleased me."

Given the historical references found throughout his body of work, I'm curious to hear which historical project he wishes to have worked on? "The Villa Kerylos at Beaulieu sur mer. It's one of the most beautiful buildings ever built. It was designed by a professor of classical art and archeology using classical Greek inspirations but done in a style that is a mix of 1930's and 1940's. It's sublime. There is a certain French flair to it that is very sophisticated."

His one piece of advice? "I have thought about this because I often have people who message me to ask me. I would say that you need to find one thing that is your signature. It doesn't mean that all of your work has to be identical but it's a good starting point. And it can't be something that you copied from a book or a magazine. For example, if someone loves Jean Michel Frank, use that as a starting point to see how you can develop your own style. But it has to be something from the past, you can't base your signature on something someone is doing now. You have to look at the roots of the things you admire. I think my signatures are inspired by my family: I come from a family that has always traveled a lot, so I was lucky as a child to go to Africa, America, Greece... My mother is also Austrian so there is a certain sense of rigor and love for the Viennese Secession. This mix has influenced my work a lot." ○





