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# A 1950s villa in Naples embraces timeless contemporary appeal

Built into a peninsula above the Bay of Naples, this restored 1950s villa celebrates its rationalist history thanks to a born-and-bred Neapolitan architect. *Photographed by Nathalie Krag.*



*In the living room of this Naples home, Osaka sofas by Pierre Paulin from LaCividina; vintage Petalas coffee table by Jorge Zalszupin for Atelier Brazil from Francesco Santochirico Gallery; vases by Gio Ponti for Sabatini from Galleria Massimo Caiafa; 1972 steel fireplace by Robert Asian from Robertaebasta Gallery; rug from Cc-tapis, enquiries to Mobilia; floor in light grey resin from Rezina; Ecstasy II artwork (on left) from the With eyes closed I see happiness series by Marina Abramovic and Persona che guarda lontano artwork by Michelangelo Pistoletto, both from Galleria Lia Rumma.*

***This story comes to you straight from the pages of our September/October issue. For the full story, purchase a copy of the magazine or become a Vogue VIP and take advantage of our digital and print subscription with exclusive offers and content.***

Poised on the horizon, Capri calls like a siren song from across the Bay of Naples. The island's most loyal voyeurs are the rarefied residences of Posillipo—embedded into the Italian coastline like beauty marks, they are a living, breathing timeline of Neapolitan architecture. Among them is a recently restored villa built into the peninsula, its tiered facade teetering over the rocky edge, as if reaching in vain for the island's embrace.



*In the dining area, bespoke dining table by Martino Gamper and chairs by Joaquim Tenreiro from Nilufar; vintage vase; glass bowl from Paola C; '60s pendant light by BBPR for Arteluce from Robertaebasta; wall lamp (just seen, on left) by Luigi Caccia Dominioni from DimoreGallery; art wall by Luca Monterastelli from Galleria Lia Rumma.*

A paragon of local rationalist architecture, Villa Crespi was designed in 1952 by Polish architect Davide Pacanowski, whose work is imprinted across Naples and Rome. Composed of robust structures and a rooftop garden, the villa's assertively modern presence is informed by Le Corbusier, who had a profound influence on Pacanowski. It would take an architect with an intimate knowledge of the area to guide the home into a new century, which is precisely why the owners approached Giuliano Andrea dell'Uva, founder of [Dell'Uva Architetti](#).

A dyed-in-the-wool Neapolitan architect, dell'Uva was immediately taken by the dwelling's exalted hilltop position. "It was breathtaking. Naples is the inspiration of all my work—I was born and grew up in Naples... it's where I studied," he says, who met homeowners Teodoro Falco and Irene Impresa through mutual friends. "We have always admired Giuliano's work, so when we bought the house it was natural to give him the job," says Falco, who describes the moment he and his wife laid eyes on the villa as "love at first sight—the sea fills the eyes from every angle".

*In the eat-in kitchen, 1955 dining table by Gio Ponti for Rima from Galleria Alessandro Malgieri; Superleggera chair by Gio Ponti for Cassina, enquiries to Mobilia; island produced by Abimis; fruit stands from Paola C; pendant light by Vico Magistretti from Rossella Colombari; Marat artwork by Jannis Kounellis from Galleria Alfonso Artiaco.*

While Falco and Impresa's brief was simple enough—a family home with ample space to entertain and art at every turn—the abode had been the subject of a 1990s renovation, influenced by what dell'Uva describes as "a neoclassical taste". He saw it as his duty, then, to "restore the original flavour" by preserving Pacanowski's intentions while designing for the owners' future.

Equipped with a sophisticated understanding of Neapolitan tradition and an open-minded approach to contemporary art, dell'Uva reinstated the home's soul and reoriented its design to favour the irresistible view. "The aim of my work was to bring back to life the original details," he says, pointing to the original brass door at the building's entry that inspired his design of the brass-framed glass doors dividing the kitchen and living space. Similarly, a freestanding ceramic wall in the hallway by an Anacapri atelier speaks to Pacanowski's reverential use of ceramics during the villa's early years.



As dell’Uva explains, “I tried to maintain and valorise Davide’s original ideas that are still alive... ceramic artworks, marble and elegant craftsmanship.”



*In the entry, vintage Elettra chair by BBPR for Arflex from Robertaebasta, enquiries for reissue to Space Furniture; Raro daybed by Angelo Mangiarotti and Bruno Morassutti from Galleria Rossella Colombari; vintage FontanaArte wall lamp; pillar and floor in Cipollino marble; artwork by Thomas Ruff.*

Throughout the building, the relationship between the material scheme and art collection has been masterfully orchestrated. Cipollino marble sweeps through the entrance and comes to a standstill in the form of a statuesque column, which is reflected in an artwork on the wall. The rest of the living space is all clean lines and gentle curves “to give space to the artworks and design objects”. Where charismatic pieces of furniture and art engage in fluid conversation, the rest of the room respectfully dials down the volume. The bathroom, on the other hand, has been thoroughly baptised in the blue Cipollino stone. This use of marble, notes dell’Uva, references the interiors of Milan’s famous Villa Necchi, while the architect’s bold choice of steel for the kitchen shelves and living room fireplace recalls the 1970s, specifically Gae Aulenti architecture in Florence.

*In the main ensuite, walls in Cipollino marble; custom bench in Cipollino marble produced by Alimonti Milano; Tara overhead rainshower from Dornbracht.*

Honouring Italian design was always going to be an essential consideration, but dell’Uva has done so in a way that is neither buried in nostalgia nor dismissive of the new. Incorporating important pieces from design masters is necessary in order to cultivate timelessness, says dell’Uva, and when pressed to identify an enduring influence, he references none other than Gio Ponti and a love of the 1950s. Just as crucially, “the architect has a duty to work with contemporary artists,” says the architect, who curated the home’s entire collection of art. Falco and Impresa gave dell’Uva free rein over selecting these works, many of which he sourced from renowned galleries and was then able to commission site-specific pieces including one on the dining room wall by Luca Monterastelli. “It had to talk to the house, in fact it brings the sun rays into the house,” says dell’Uva of the bas-relief piece. At different times of the day, marks etched in the concrete mingle with sunlight entering through the bayside windows.

Indeed, to pay tribute to Neapolitan design is to experience the beauty of Naples itself. In Falco’s words, “Naples is a fascinating city, and with Giuliano we made it more special. Giuliano has opened up worlds little known to us.”



