

Great spaces with
second acts, from a row
of 18th-century
Dublin townhouses to
a 19th-century former
factory on Lake Como

Design & Luxury
September 23, 2018



*Making
It New*



FIRST, CUT SHARPLY off a two-lane road leading around Italy's Lake Como and dodge the local stray cats until you hit a cobbled lane lined with scruffy mulberry trees. Follow this to its end. Then, on your left, you'll see the stucco facade of an apparently anonymous edifice — an other two-story rectangle overlooking a simple walled garden and lawn, the lake just beyond them. This is La Filanda (the Mill), the name a nod to the 9,600-square-foot building's original 19th-century function as a silk-weaving factory. Only a small nameplate — that says simply "housekeeper" — hints at the place's current residential use. "We felt it was more interesting having something beautiful inside that nobody knows," says Federico Marchetti, 49, the Milan-based entrepreneur behind the Yoox Net-a-Porter online retail empire. For the past four years, he and his partner, the British journalist Kerry Olsen, 41, have devoted themselves to constructing this privately opulent weekend refuge on a stretch of lakeshore best known for the palaces of American movie stars and Russian oligarchs.

In this they had an unusual collaborator: Luca Guadagnino, the Italian filmmaker, who had always wanted to be an interior designer. Marchetti knew of that dream from an interview that Guadagnino, 47, once gave; while Marchetti was visiting him on the set of "Call Me by Your Name" in 2016, he proposed that they collaborate on the house with the architect Giulio Ghirardi. Despite being in preproduction for his next project — a reimagining of the director Dario Argento's 1970s Italian cult horror classic "Suspiria," to be released in November — Guadagnino immediately agreed. "I'm a little bit irrational," he admits.

Marchetti and Olsen had long been friends with the director, whose densely atmospheric film sets are memorable for their layered, subtle details: a barely seen armoire full of linen in 2009's "I Am Love"; an actual notarized land deed used instead of a facsimile for 2017's "Call Me by Your Name." Guadagnino often films his movies in aristocratic villas or Art Deco-era wonders little known outside of Italy — environments are as critical to his vision as actors or scripts. "Space is the most important thing that comes to my mind when I analyze things," Guadagnino says. "In cinema, you are an impostor, in a way, because you can always edit afterward and change the story. You cannot do that with a house."

A house, after all, is not a fiction. And far from being theatrical types, Marchetti and Olsen envisioned their life at La Filanda as one oriented toward family and domestic pleasures. Marchetti, who was born and raised on the Adriatic coast, in Ravenna, is attracted to water and loves to swim. Olsen, from the north of England, enjoys gardening: Guided by Guadagnino's colleague, Gaia Chaillet Giusti, she planted modest parterres in a chevron pattern, had two mature palms helicoptered onto the property from nearby Tremezzina and installed a dollhouse-like structure for the family's pet tortoise, Frittata.

Inside, the couple sought a harmonious retreat. Guadagnino started with a psychologically detailed questionnaire: What colors do they like? What time of the day do they prefer? How do they see themselves in a room? Answers in hand — bright jewel tones, mornings, playing board games with



In the entry, a pair of Adriatic pendants by Anastassia Cogolin and a wall in brass paneling by Guadagnino. In the nautical-inspired room leading to the pool, the ceiling and brass hardware by Studio Luca

A house, after all, is not a fiction. And far from being theatrical types, Marchetti and Olsen envisioned their life at La Filanda as one oriented toward family and domestic pleasures. Marchetti, who was born and raised on the Adriatic coast, in Ravenna, is attracted to water and loves to swim. Olsen, from the north of England, enjoys gardening: Guided by Guadagnino's colleague, Gaia Chaillet Giusti, she planted modest parterres in a chevron pattern, had two mature palms helicoptered onto the property from nearby Tremezzina and installed a dollhouse-like structure for the family's pet tortoise, Frittata.