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THROUGH A SEPIA TONED LENS

*Designed for entertaining, this small apartment
in Marylebone has an enchanting mix of
contemporary ideas and nostalgia*

Words **CLARE SARTIN** Photography **MICHAEL SINCLAIR**

Dining area Mario Bellini's 'Il Colonnato' travertine table, designed for Cassina in the 1970s, commands this area of the open-plan living space. It is surrounded by vintage red leather 'Lutrario' chairs by Carlo Mollino for Doro - try Ist Dibbs for similar. The lights above are salvaged Czech designs from Retrouvius ►



A LITTLE LONDON

PIED-A-TERRE

with a hint of Crespi,' was the concise brief for the Marylebone home of this design-savvy Italian manager in the fashion business. His reference to designer and artist Gabriella Crespi, a fellow Italian whose glamorous 1970s style has experienced a recent renaissance, was the ideal starting point for Maria Speake, co-founder of interior design and reclamation firm Retrouvius, who has created an interior perfect for *Mad Men*-style afternoon cocktails and elegant soirées.

This flat's new look may be tinged with nostalgia, but when Maria first set foot inside it was the tobacco stains that caught her eye. A patch on the ceiling above where a desk would once have stood facing the window reminded her of a different era. 'Maybe the previous owner was a writer,' she muses. 'You can just imagine him festering there, looking out onto the street below in frustration.'

Unchanged for decades, the 75-square-metre property was ripe for a rethink. 'We did quite a lot of opening up the space,' explains Maria, but the biggest transformation involves the kitchen. Once situated at the front of the apartment, in what is now the dark-blue snug, this room was condensed into a compact nook right at the centre of the home. It may be tiny, but it's luxurious, with a statement sink carved from onyx. And, for an owner who is more likely to be found popping champagne corks than cooking, it's ideal.

To maintain a sleek aesthetic, storage here is deftly hidden. The wall that divides the kitchen from the dining area, for example, is in fact a cabinet that opens from both sides. Once you know what to look for, this home has its own language: the decorative wooden parquet that adorns the walls signifies a sliding divider or a disguised cupboard. Originally intended as a flooring option, the glamorous blocks were discounted in favour of reclaimed, lime-washed pine boards as, says Maria, 'I felt they might over-aggrandise the space'.

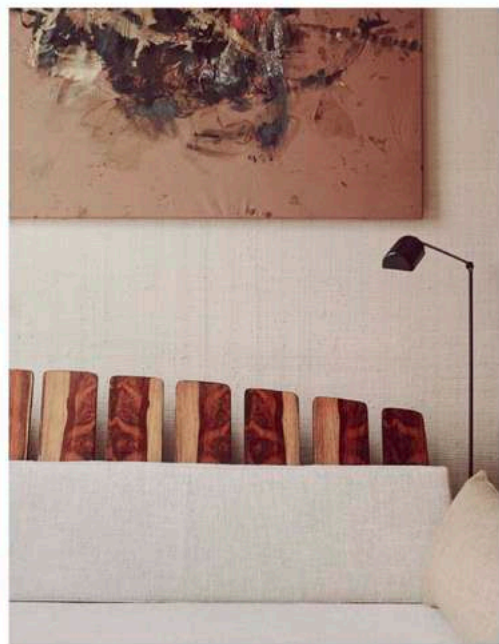
'I was having to be a bit more restrained than I normally am,' she quips. Indeed, there's a delicate balance here between modesty and opulence. Organic, understated, off-white seagrass wallpaper lends the main open-plan rooms a softness. 'Because this space is so tiny the lack of colour lends a generosity to the walls,' remarks Maria. The added texture also softens the light creating the feel of living in a sepia-toned photograph.

'There was an image of Gabriella Crespi's house in Milan that the homeowner showed me at the start of the project,' says Maria. 'It had a deliciously rich, golden quality.' This home possesses a similarly sumptuous glow. It's an aesthetic that the late-designer and socialite would surely have approved. retrouvius.com

THE PLAN 75M²



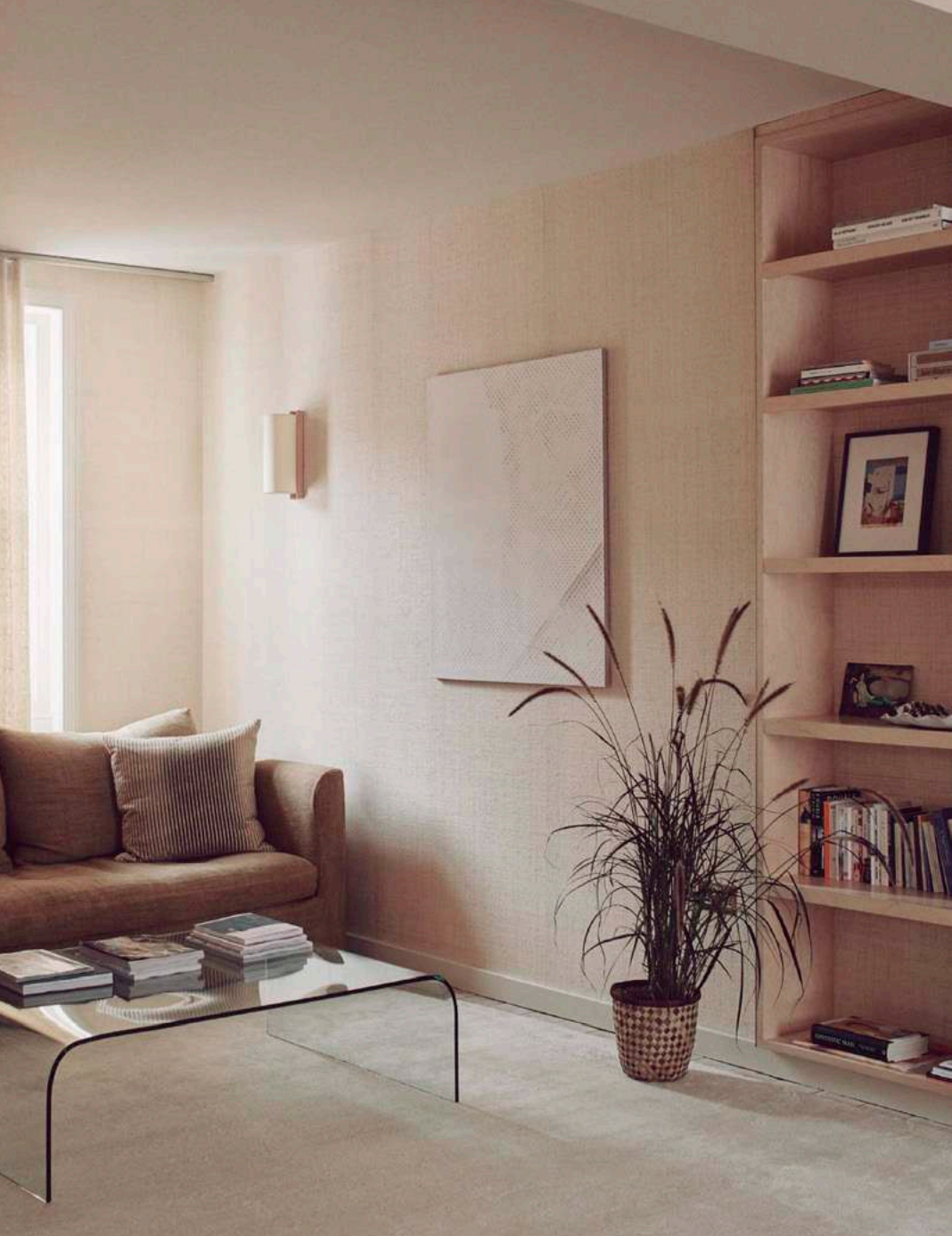
Living room A 'Presidencial' wooden sofa designed by Jorge Zalszupin in the 1970s sits between two 'Daphne Terra' floor lamps by Tommaso Cimini, also from the 70s. The wooden coffee table is by George Nakashima ▶



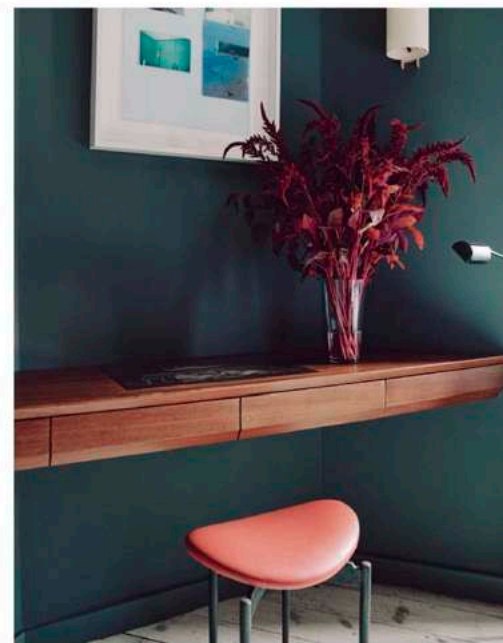
*'BECAUSE THIS SPACE IS SO TINY
THE LACK OF COLOUR LENDS
A GENEROSITY TO THE WALLS'*

Living room (above, and opposite) Salvaged parquet panels in this bespoke open-shelving unit disguise a decadent drinks cabinet. The owners' love of ceramics is evident on the shelves, which display pieces by Axel Salto, as well as a drawing by Swiss sculptor Alberto Giacometti. The canvas above the sofa is by German artist Michaela Eichwald and the original fireplace was given an update with a brass surround that Maria found at a market ▶





Living room Upholstered in tobacco-hued linen, a sofa from Caravane sits by the window on the other side of this room. The walls are covered in 'Tabacon Abaca' by Thibaut, a textured wallpaper made of seagrass. The glass coffee table is the 'Waterfall', a vintage piece by Angelo Cortesi for Fiam Italia **Kitchen** Small but luxurious, this galley kitchen features a splashback and sink made of salvaged onyx, as well as cabinets of reclaimed iroko wood. All materials were sourced by Retrouvius ►



ONCE YOU KNOW WHAT TO LOOK FOR, THIS HOME HAS ITS OWN LANGUAGE

Snug The bespoke daybed that fits so perfectly into this reading room/guest bedroom is covered in fabric from Caravane. The colour in this space – ‘Silent’ by Francesca’s Paints – makes for an indulgent retreat. Above the daybed is a canvas by German multimedia artist Kai Althof. On the other wall of the snug is a bespoke desk and a stool by Carlo Mollino for Doro, part of a range originally designed for the Lutrario ballroom in Turin **Opposite** Salvaged pine floorboards, sourced by Retrouvius, highlight the opened up sightlines in this home. Wooden parquet blocks, also Retrouvius, are used as decorative sign posts, signalling moveable walls or disguised cupboards ▶



KEY TO THIS HOME'S APPEAL IS THE DELICATE BALANCE BETWEEN MODESTY AND OPULENCE

Bathroom Decadent marble clads the shower area in this space, which also features an Italian backlit mirror from Retrouvius's collection. The tap is by Tapwell. **Bedroom** Painted a bespoke colour from Francesca's Paints, this room has one entire wall dedicated to wardrobe space for its fashion-loving owner. The chair in the corner is a vintage design sourced by Retrouvius, and the wall light by Tommaso Cimini is also vintage. The globe pendant light is a salvaged Czech design and the bedspread is from Libeco. **See Stockists page for details** 

