

STUDIO | HOME

ECHOES OF THE PAST ILLUMINATE THE PRESENT
IN THE ARCHITECTURAL AND DESIGN EXPRESSION OF
DAVID LOPEZ QUINCOCES AND FANNY BAUER GRUNG,
JUST DON'T CALL THEM MINIMALIST.

MAKERS

OF

MEMORIES



WORDS JENI PORTER

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Milan-based Quincoces-Drigo & Partners recently moved to a new studio in an early 1900s church complex in Isola. The entrance shows their passion for vintage pieces with a table by Alfa and Tobia Scarpa, Medea chair by Vittorio Nobili, a Doppio Vetro pendant light by Ignazio Gardella above the table and an Italian upright floor lamp.



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THE WORLD OF INTERIOR DESIGN HAS BECOME A LOT ABOUT SCENOGRAPHY
AND LESS SOMETIMES ABOUT ACTUAL LIVING.
SOMETIMES THAT'S GREAT, BUT IN REALITY, IT'S A SIMPLE JOB WE DO;
IT'S ABOUT PEOPLE BEING COMFORTABLE.

FINDING BALANCE through contrast is at the heart of the architectural and design practice of Fanny Bauer Grung and David Lopez Quincoces. Past and present. Simple and rich. Sweeping spatial gestures and refined details. The contrasting characters and talents of the partners, in life and work, also influence the expression of their Milanese studio, Quincoces-Dragò & Partners. She the storyteller and self-avowed nester with an innate feel for materials and combinations, who pretends every home they design is her own. He creative and methodical with an intuitive sense of colour and a keen eye for a rogue millimetre.

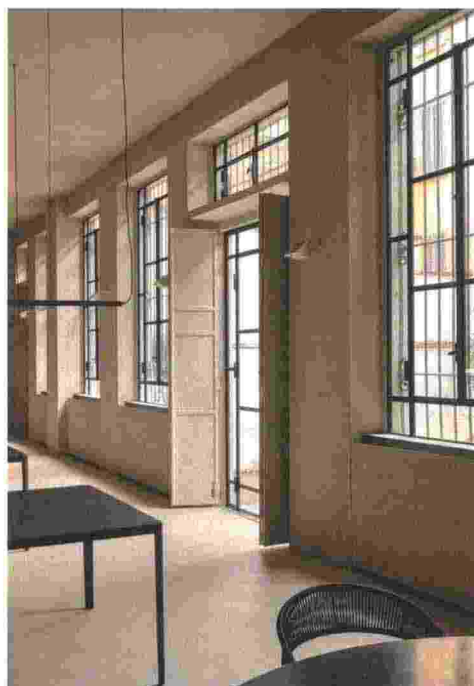
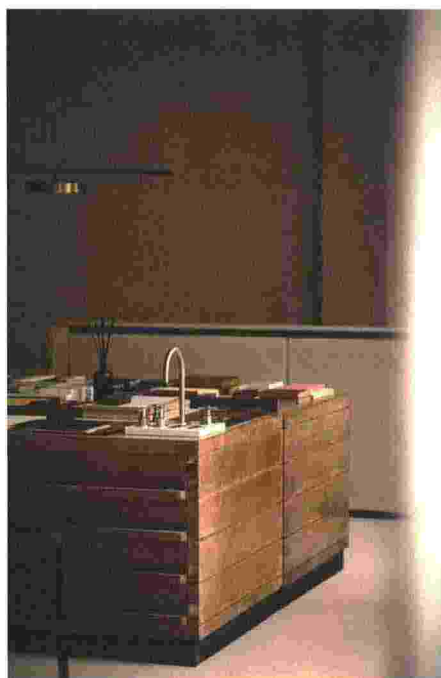
Their work is difficult to categorise but Bauer Grung's Scandinavian heritage and Lopez Quincoces' characteristic purity of line means they are often labelled minimalist, a misnomer, she says. "We've been told so many times 'You guys are so minimalist', but I don't really identify with that. I'm not for cluttering for the sake of cluttering but I wouldn't say minimalist either. We really want to do things that in a way are contemporary but in a way are old because we want to have that feeling, that trace of time." Rather than being minimal, their work is restrained and nuanced, with a sense of continuity where the past gives value to the present. It is done with amenity and longevity in mind rather than spectacle.

"One of the things that we like the most is to create volumes of space that allow you to live in a more natural way, to move around, walk easily inside your house and not to open a door then go into a corridor, then a door," says Lopez Quincoces. As well as giving form to spaces he is the master of finishing them with precise details. "It's about weight, precision, proportions, not a geometric line as such, but about finding a line and putting it together in my head to make it balanced and not formal."

They recently took over a two-storey space full of character in an early 1900s church complex in Isola as the new home for their studio. The ground level looks out through tall steel-framed windows onto a courtyard and gets direct light for at least five hours from spring to autumn while the lower level, but for some skylight windows, is subterranean. It was tempting to put the workspace in the basement and make the ground floor a showcase for their work, says Bauer Grung. "In the beginning we thought, oh it would be great to put the office downstairs and do something really cool and amazing on the ground floor but I think everyone working here would have been miserable." The choice of wall colour followed a similar logic, a light colour was obvious rather than daring, she says. "But I don't mind... The world of interior design has become a lot about scenography and less sometimes about actual living. I feel that a lot of people look for the most surprising thing they can do or the most extreme interior to make the story. Sometimes that's great, but in reality, it's a simple job we do; it's about people being comfortable. And, if you are making homes for people you are making their homes not yours."

Born in Paris to Norwegian parents, Bauer Grung grew up in Rome, studied art history at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London and then architecture at Accademia di Architettura di Mendrisio, a faculty founded by Mario Botta. Notwithstanding her peripatetic life, she says she has always been a "nester". "I think I chose this career just because I wanted to do my own home, so even when we make homes for other people, I always pretend that it's mine." "Que loco," says her partner in response, reverting to his native Spanish.

Lopez Quincoces grew up in Madrid where he graduated in art from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid in 2004, heading to Milan the next year to study interior architecture at Politecnico di Milano.



The studio workspace is in a bright room looking onto a courtyard. A view of the materials table showing favoured textiles. Detail of the studio's QD22 Floor Lamp, George's chair David Lopez Quincoces designed for Living Divani and his Filo table for Lema.

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In 2006 he joined Piero Lissoni's architecture and design studio, working there for 12 years including four as partner. Bauer Grung joined Lissoni's office in 2012, and their relationship sparked soon after; within three weeks they were living together and the next year collaborating directly in Quincoces-Dragò, the studio named after his grandparents, that Lopez Quincoces had set up in 2007 as a sideline. Bauer Grung took it over in 2013 and they have worked there full time together since 2017 along with running Six Gallery, an outlet for their own custom designs and vintage pieces. Lopez Quincoces also has a multitude of product design projects ranging from furniture to taps to wall finishes and is co-creative director of heritage furniture brand Acerbis. Besides residential interiors the Quincoces-Dragò portfolio spans luxury retail and hospitality with work underway in Milan, Casablanca, London, Geneva, Rome, Nice, Madrid, Paris, Venice and Florence.

"People ask me, 'Oh my god how can you work with your husband, your partner?' With our work, it's very different and we each have our space," says Bauer Grung. "I think we have grown a lot from when we started working together by pushing each other. But it's essential to have your own field." Hers is more instinctive and heavily research-based while his is the product of creative confidence, hard graft and, sometimes, an unwillingness to compromise. "When most people do 200 drawings David does 2,000," she says of his precise approach. "Unfortunately, yes," he confirms.

They are sitting in the living room of their Milan apartment, a testament to his exactitude, amongst other things. "With clients you need to draw everything and be very explicit but for here as we were

a high-gloss finish that evokes the interior of the Orient Express. It is somewhat disconcerting then to walk into a large open space with a bank of windows to the street combining living, dining and kitchen. With classically detailed plaster ceilings, painted wood-panelled window and door frames, and squeaky oak parquet floor, it feels like old Milan and yet the configuration is clearly contemporary.

"We tried to balance what was old in terms of the perimeter or the skin with the new elements that we put inside. Always working with the contrast between old and new, proportion against proportion, glossy and not glossy," says Lopez Quincoces. And while the details might be old-school, they are not necessarily old. For instance, some of the parquet floor is made new to look old with built-in gaps. "I got him to make it as if it was a mistake. That's what gives you depth and character and makes it more interesting. If you make everything new or too old and dusty it becomes monotonous."

The new floor plan is a radical departure from what was there before, a traditional layout with major and minor rooms opening off a central hallway. To create the open living space they eradicated the hallway completely, changing the flow so that you weave through the rooms, and using the space won from the hallway and shrunken back rooms for three capsules. The vestibule is one, another is a walk-through dressing room that leads from the kitchen area to the main bedroom and the third central one is a study that faces the living space and has a concealed door to the girls' bedroom. Framed by painted wooden panels matching the old doorways it could almost be original, except to create the opening they had to remove a load-bearing wall and install several tonnes of reinforcing steel.

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working with our carpenters and metalworkers, and so on, I just made a basic drawing with all the measurements and all the data." And what is his margin of error? "None." This certitude is his winning feature, says Bauer Grung. "Clients will often come with questions, and David will be just like, 'it is this', and if he says it is like that, then it is like that."

Of all the projects they have done together, making their own home was the easiest, by far, says Bauer Grung. "Even aesthetically, because funnily enough we do fight when it comes to our clients." Their apartment in a 1920s building in Chinatown embodies everything they stand for in the context of creating a space for contemporary living and is also the purest version of their aesthetic expression.

It is also their first family home, designed when they had only one daughter and now they have two, Uma, four, and Ava, one. Seeking to give their daughters a special start to their lives the couple set about embedding memories in the interior. And the way to do this, says Lopez Quincoces, is a home full of details.

"We wanted to make it simple and rich at the same time because apart from my own aesthetics and Fanny's aesthetics, we believe that in the long run the kids will appreciate all these kinds of small details." "They become memories," she adds.

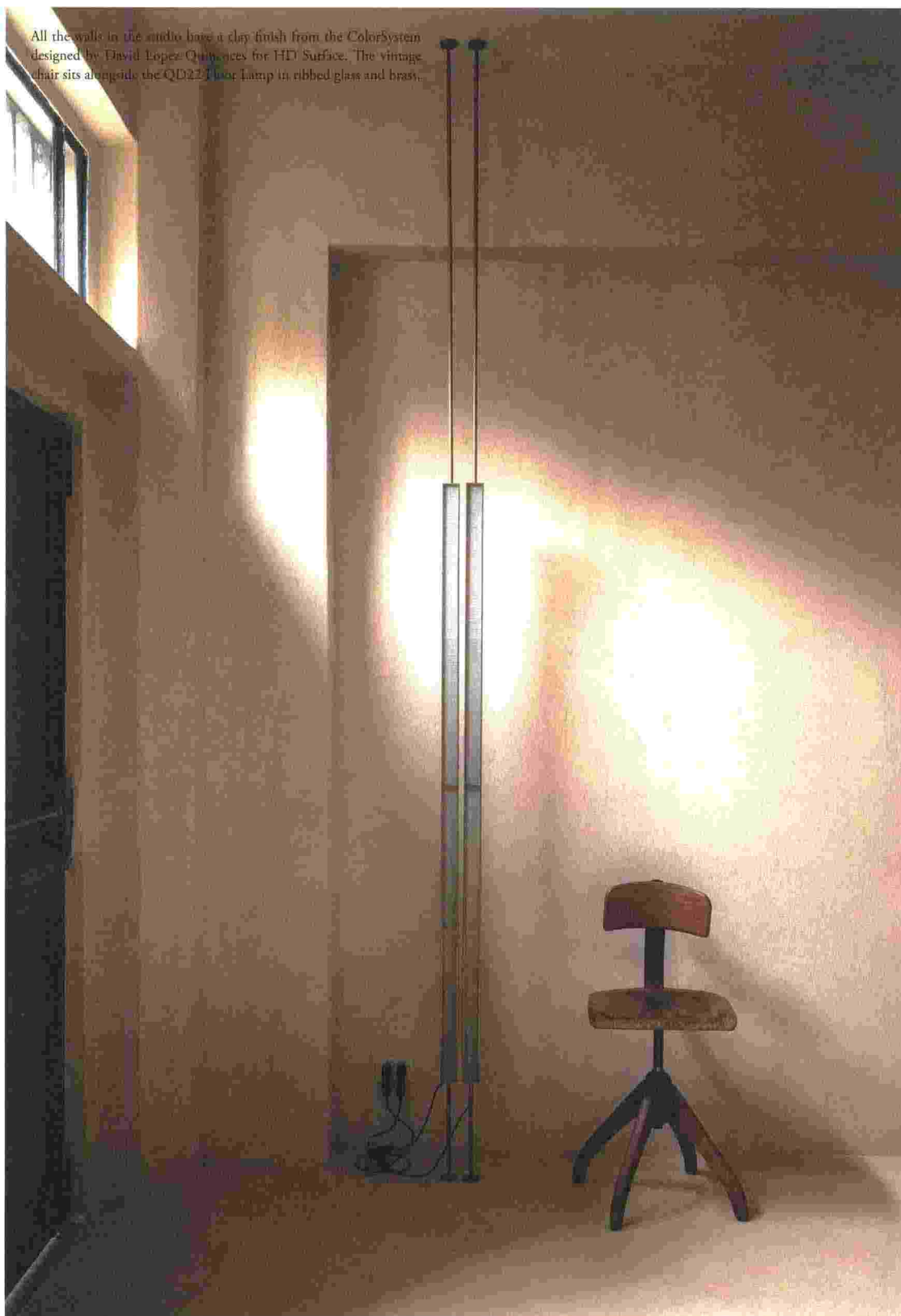
The third-floor apartment is reached by service stairs, handsome but clearly secondary. Once you step over the threshold you enter a vestibule that feels much more luxe, lined wall-to-ceiling in walnut with curving corners and cornices, brass insets and light fittings and

"It is unorthodox, in a sense, to go through and really mess with the plan," says Bauer Grung. "Some conservative architects would not do that because you are killing a bit the existing, but as I always say, we are making houses for people and so many things have changed in relation to the contemporary way of living." Living in the apartment has changed their behaviour, she says; instead of going out all the time they often have friends home for dinner. Plus, it feels bigger than its 150 square metres and there is not one square metre that does not have a purpose. "I think that is very contemporary. Corridors are beautiful but also wasted space."

The study is the heart centre, a room of ideas and dreams, as appealing to a child as an adult. Lined in walnut even more elaborately detailed than the vestibule it is like a cabinet of curiosities you can inhabit with shelves full of knickknacks amassed across cultures and generations. Coral, butterflies and insects under glass, skulls and horns, an ancient typewriter and loads of books repatriated from Norway and Spain or amassed in Italy. Lopez Quincoces works in here from a vintage table by Swedish designer David Rosén. The minute he vacates the chair, Uma is sitting on it doing her "work", he says.

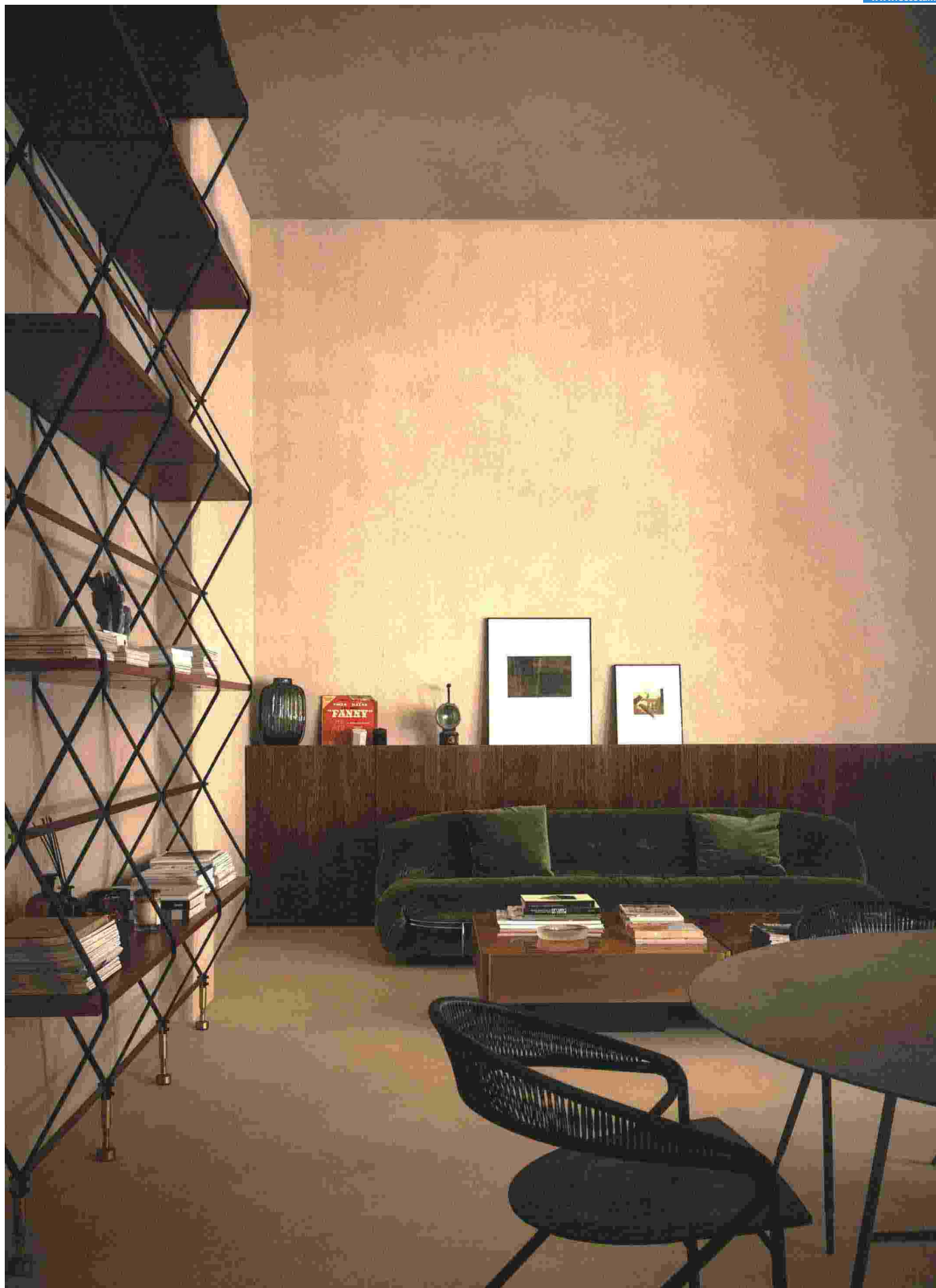
As a kid he says he was very aware of small details which he appreciates even more as an adult. The smell, feel or look of something. "These are senses and experiences you want to share with your kids. I think that when you are small it is very important and you are very permeable to appreciate these kinds of details and it's a good memory to grow up with."

All the walls in the studio have a clay finish from the Colorsystem designed by David Lopez Quintana for HD Surface. The vintage chair sits alongside the QD22 Floor Lamp in ribbed glass and brass.



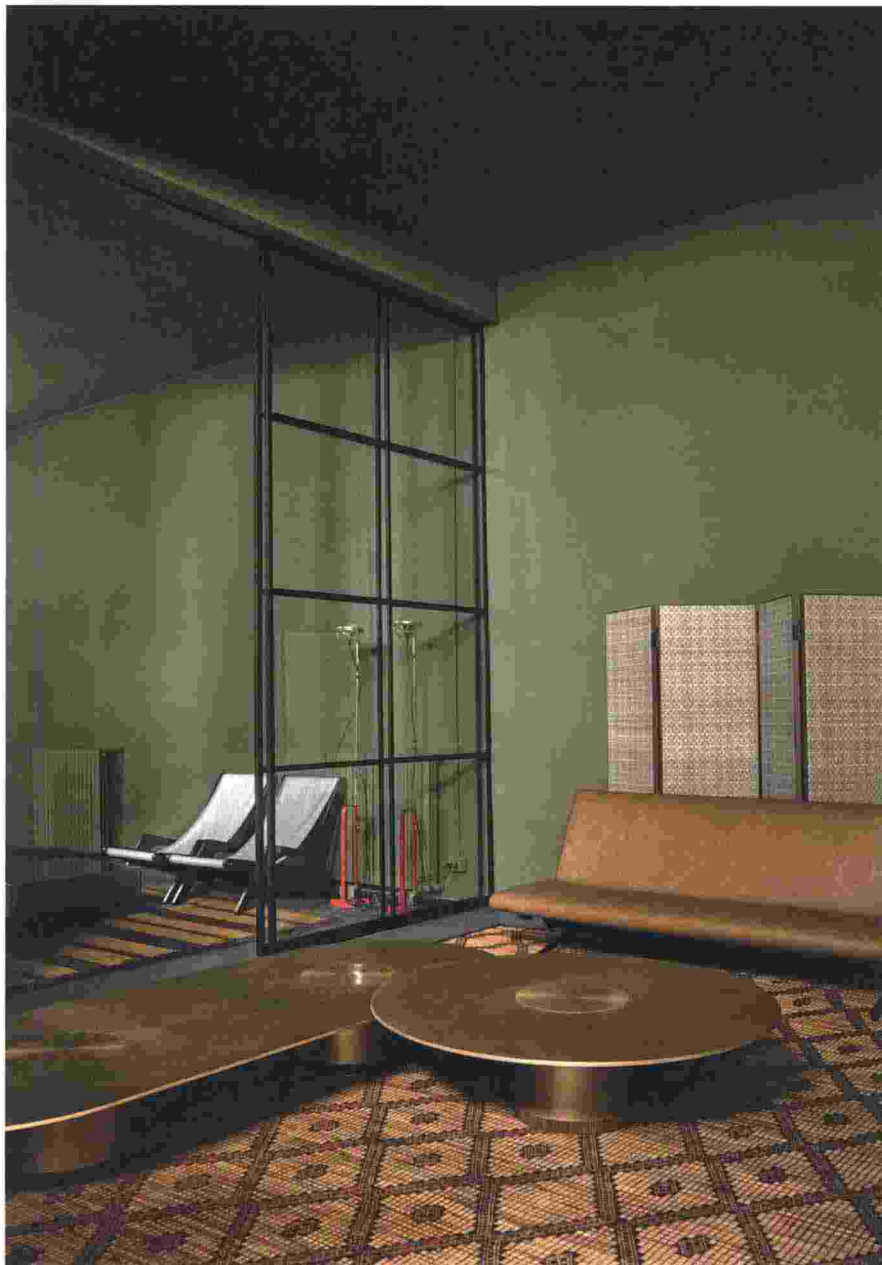
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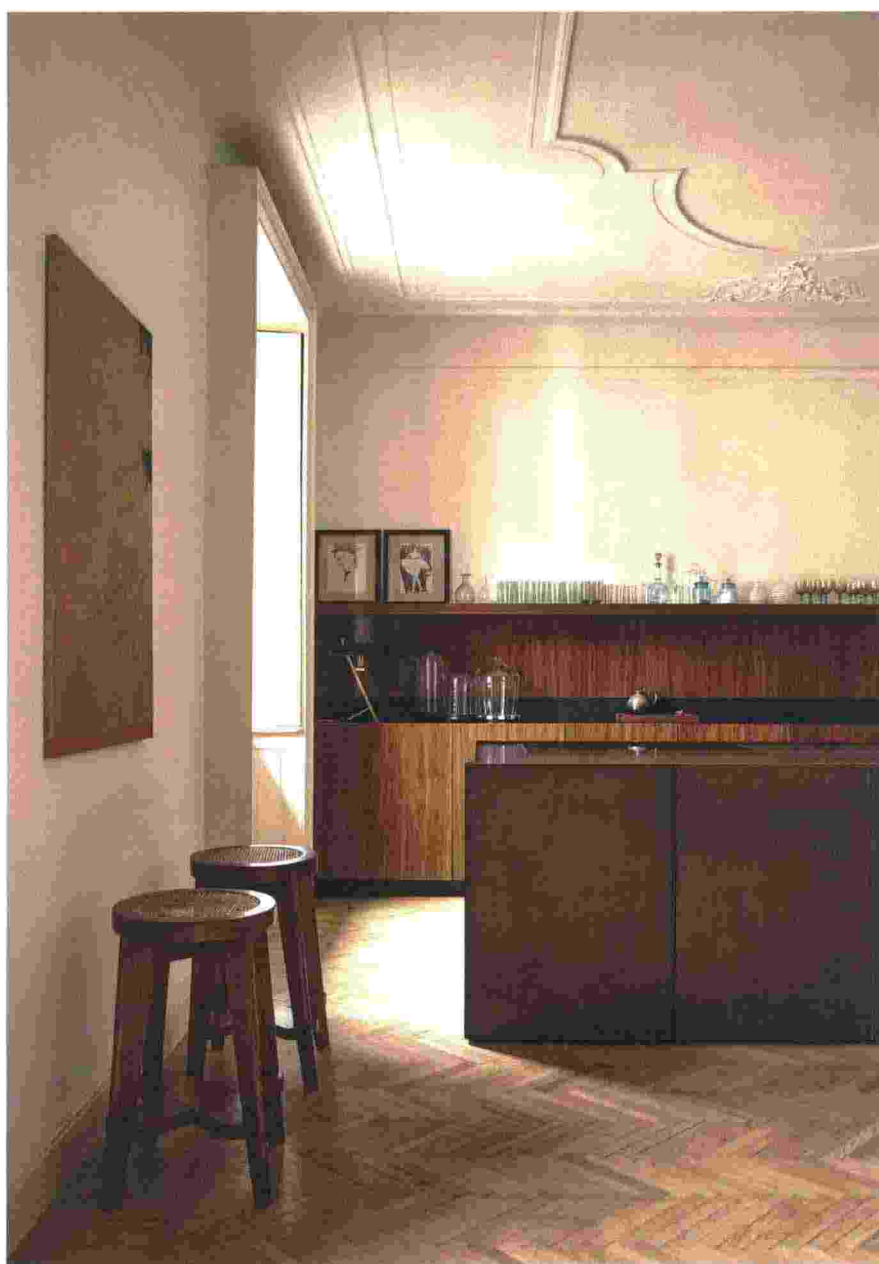


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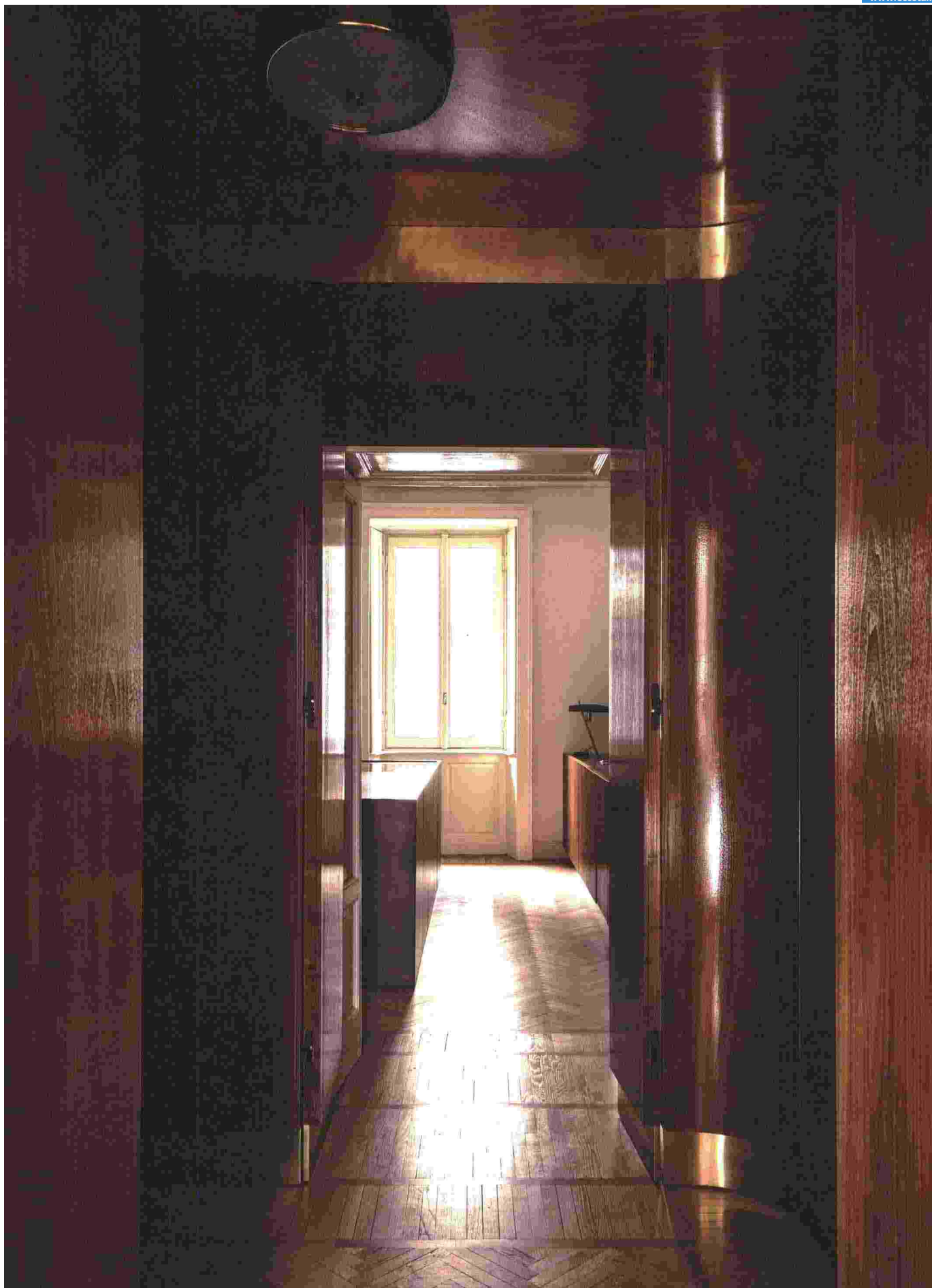
The lower level of the studio is a showcase for Quincoces-Dragò custom pieces and vintage items amassed over the years and sold through Six Gallery. Custom tables and screen for the Six Gallery collection, vintage sofa, a Mauritania rug from Altai Gallery in Milan, a pair of Toio floor lamps from Flos and two vintage chairs by Jorge Zalsupin. **OPPOSITE:** A quiet corner in the workspace has a vintage Soriana sofa by Afra and Tobia Scarpa and a custom table. David Lopez Quincoces designed the George's chair for Living Divani and the round W marble table for Salvatori. The shelves are by Pietro Russo.



Old and new are deftly combined in their 1920s apartment. The kitchen cabinets are made of ribbed walnut with countertops in Nero Assoluto black granite. Two Chandigarh stools by Pierre Jeanneret are paired with an artwork by Gianni Politi, a Roman artist and friend. OPPOSITE: A walk-through dressing room leading from the kitchen to the main bedroom is lined completely in walnut with brass details and a glossy finish. The ceiling light is vintage Italian while the lamp on the countertop is a vintage piece by Louis Kalff.

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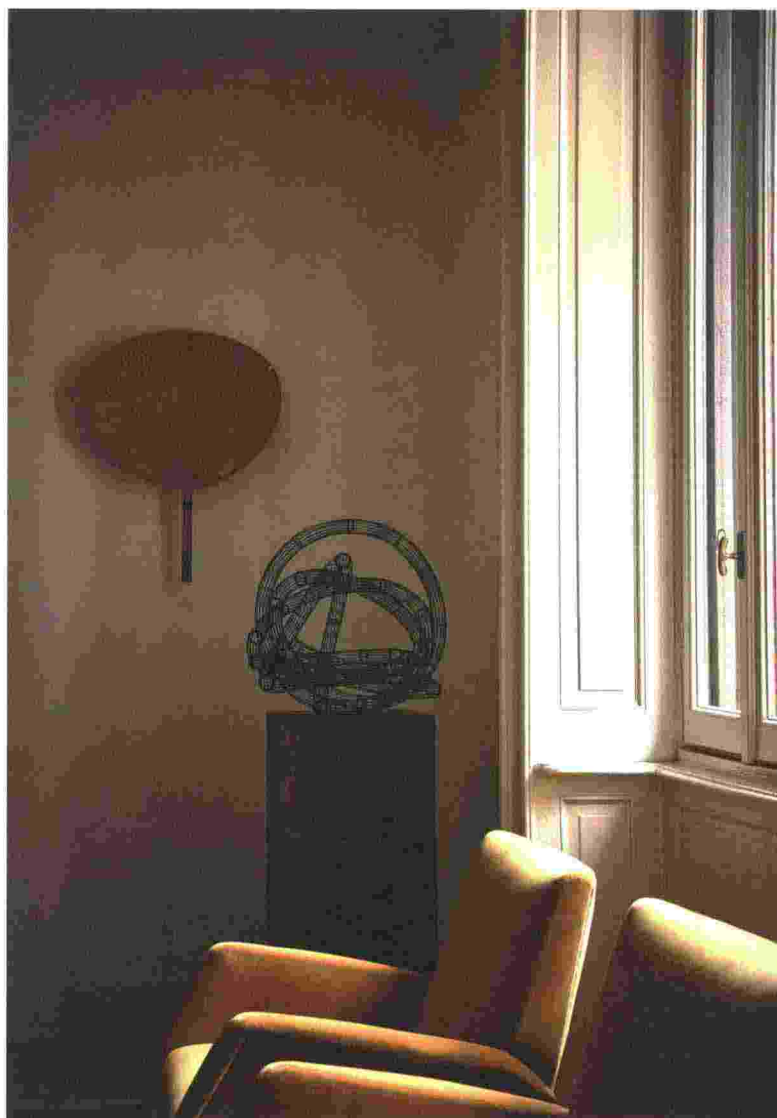
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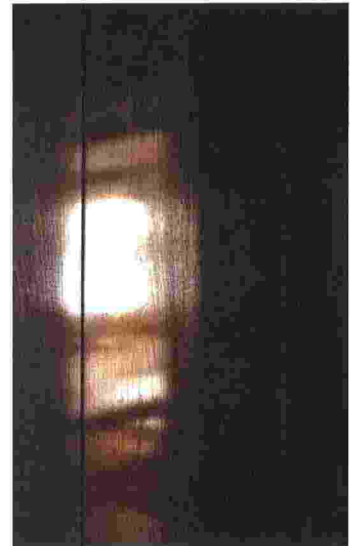
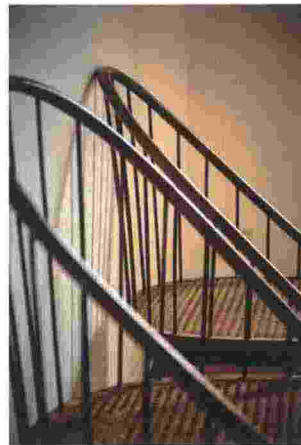
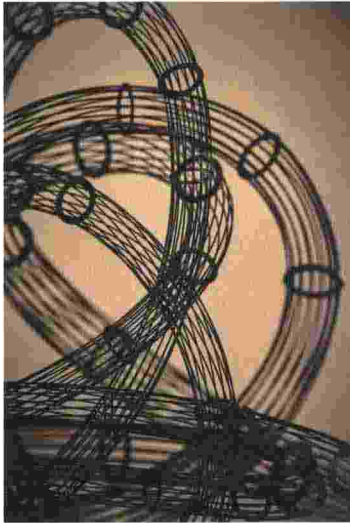


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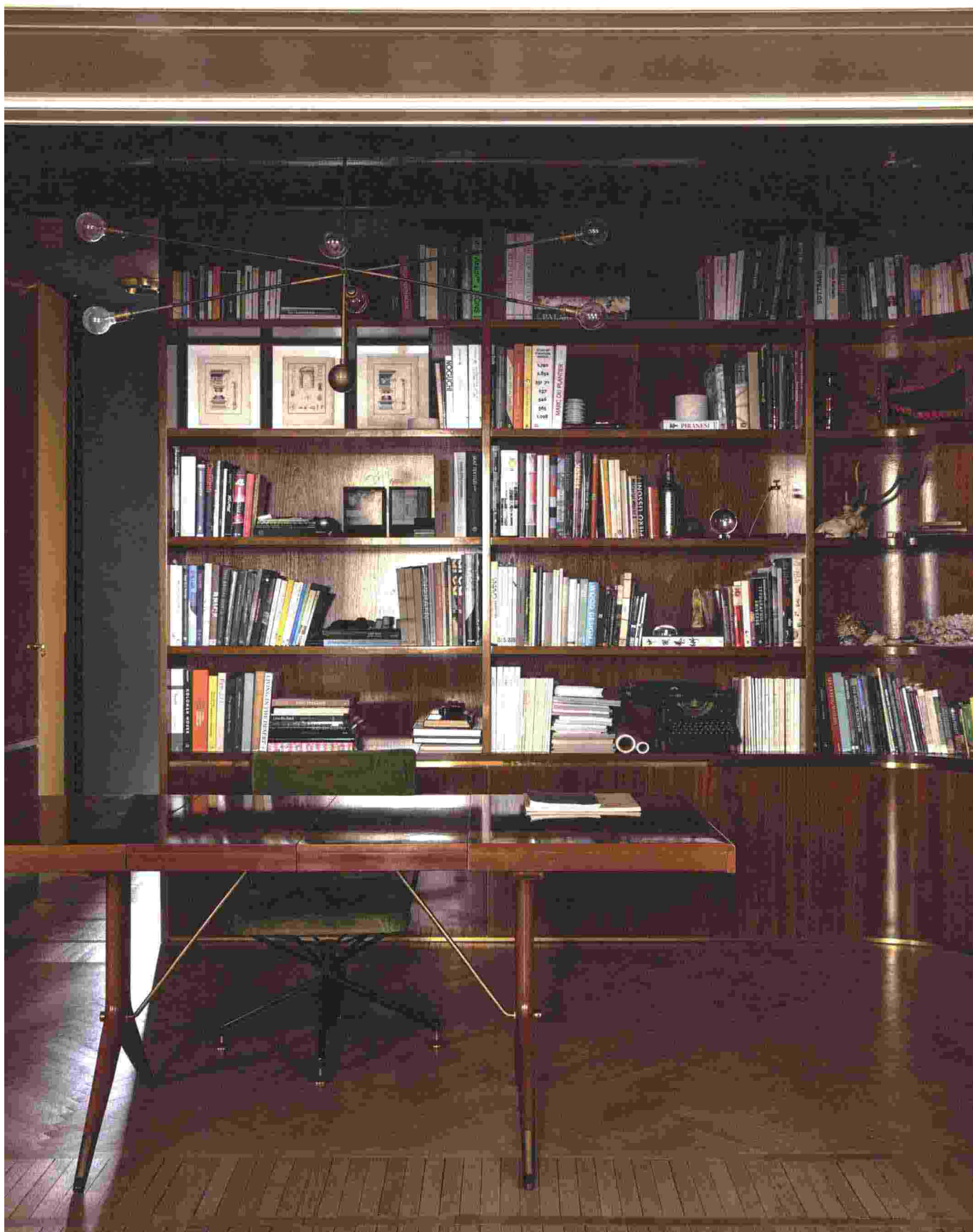
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Two vintage Gio Ponti chairs in the living room. Nearby, the sculpture *Untitled (Gathering)*, 2020 by David Murphy sits on a custom Quincoces-Dragò pedestal with one of a pair of vintage Uchiwa lamps by Ingo Maurer above. **OPPOSITE:** The living room runs the full length of the apartment with windows to the street. The Greene sofa by David Lopez Quincoces for Living Divani, is one of the few contemporary furniture pieces. Sitting alongside on a vintage Gio Ponti side table is an Atollo table lamp by Vico Magistretti for Oluce. The Alanda coffee table by Paolo Piva offers a graphic counterpoint to the softer furnishings. The artwork is by Goldschmied & Chiari, an artist duo based in Milan. Behind the sofa is a vintage Marcel Breuer lamp while a vintage ceiling light by Angelo Letti hangs above the dining table.



A vintage lamp by Louis Kalff. Details of sculpture by David Murphy. Two Curva chairs by Joaquim Tenreiro. The third-floor apartment is reached by a handsome staircase with painted effects on the walls. OPPOSITE: In the study is a vintage table by David Rosén and vintage Arco chair by BBPR. The High-wire light is by Apparatus. The study, lined in walnut with dark wenge insets, is like a cabinet of curiosities you can inhabit, intentionally designed to be a repository of and maker of memories for their two young children.



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The apartment was reconfigured to create a glamorous entrance vestibule, one of three capsules lined entirely in American walnut and evoking the Orient Express. The ceiling light is vintage Italian. OPPOSITE: Two PK22 chairs by Poul Kjaerholm echo the materiality of the Mauritania rug from Altai Gallery. A vintage chair of unknown provenance sits under an Uchiwa lamp by Ingo Maurer. The triptych by Tom Lovelace from the series, *Forms in Green, Hackney*, 2011 was bought from Alma Zevi, now of Paterson Zevi.