THE TOP 25 PLACES TO LIVE

MONOCLE

INSIDE: SMART, SEXY CITIES 100 CULTURE ESSENTIALS BEST NEW SPORTSWEAR HOW TO BE A GOOD CITIZEN

(A) to F AFFAIRS: Agenda-setting mayors BUSINESS: Set in concrete: the big city builders CULTURE: Sounds for summer DESIGN: On the slide: the best urban playgrounds ENTERTAINING: In praise of punch FASHION: Hermès shoe star Pierre Hardy



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Close to home

A life's worth of travelling informs this South Tyrolean haunt - but it finds inspiration on its doorstep too.

> By Nolan Giles Photography Robert Rieger

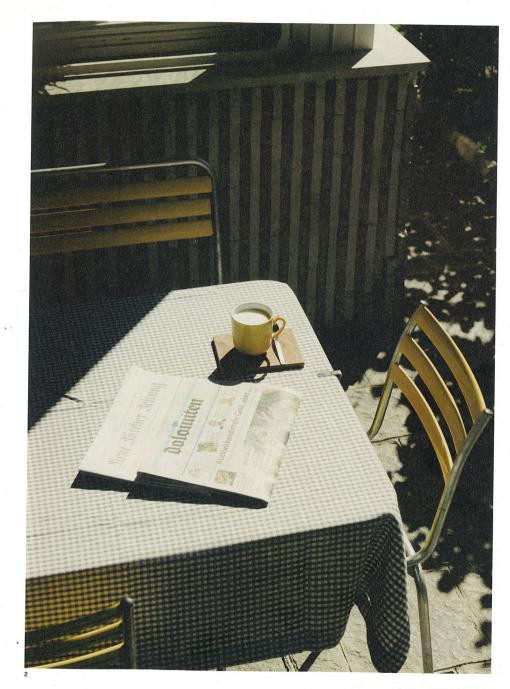


being very late spring, when our residents corner of northern Italy-known for its crafts, rolled towards Merano some seven years carpentry and smart alpine architecture ago. But dipping down from the snowy - can provide. "The builders went above Engadine, past the peaks above Vinschgau and beyond," says one of the owners and into a sun-soaked patch of Italy's high about the process that saw chief builder north alive with palms and evergreen pines, Martin Mitterer commission sliding timber things took a turn for the better. Some real-screens to divide the home more effectively, estate window-shopping soon led them to transform upstairs kitchens into sunny what was then a small, pastel-pink apart- living spaces and smarten the exterior with ment block of three units set back from a new coat of cool-grey paint. the main town and the Passer River, which gushes through Merano.

the right kind of renovation challenge realised in less than six months by a cast but its verdant subtropical nature - alive

Summer still felt months away, despite it of builders that only this Austro-cultured

Today, on another brilliant spring day, it's difficult to imagine this place A perfect location, strong modern- being anything other than the handsome, ist bones - the building is a brick, stone, balcony-blessed, three-storey home it is concrete and marble 1960s gem - and today. Swinging open a decorative 1960s wrought-iron entrance gate, you're greeted coaxed its owners into the purchase. Their by a neat, enchanting garden that runs the vision for a sensitive transformation was length of the house. It's Japanese in spirit

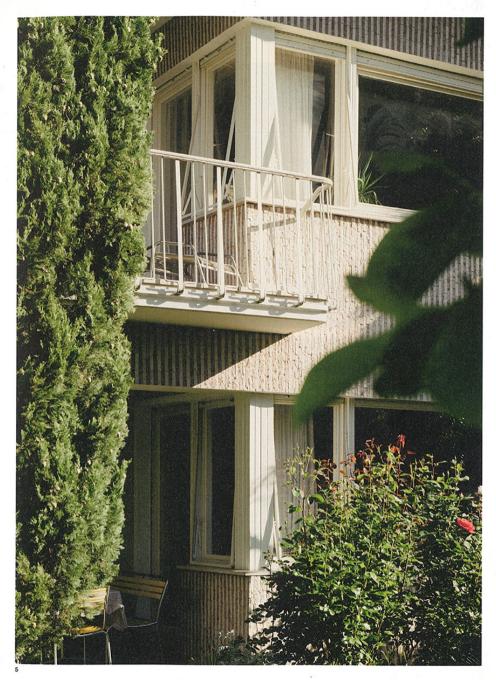






Previous spread: (1) Characterful original mid-century fittings, like this door handle, can be found across the house (2) A morning newspaper read on Swiss outdoor café furniture by Manufakt

This spread: (1) Vine-covered 'grotto' (2) Original wrought-iron entrance gate (3) Sunbathing statuette (4) Harry Thaler-designed outdoor shower (5) Original pink-pinstriped façade







(1) Photography prints from Stefan Oláh and 'Made in Italy' rucksack from Zilla at the ready
(2) Harry Thaler was responsible for the built-in couch and table; the hanging lamp is vintage
from Hamburg (3) Builders matched the new oak fittings with the original timber fixtures;
print by Stefan Oláh (4) Cushions from Stockholm's Svenskt Tenn; the mid-century
chairs were found for the residents by their upholsterers



(5) Welcome home: the residence's entrance (6) Union de Transports Aériens model aeroplane sits atop a Vitsoe 606 Universal Shelving System designed by Dieter Rams









(1) Manufakt table and 'Spaghetti' lounger from Bogen33 (2) Dining table with Marimekko tablecloth, Svenskt Tenn vase and Thonet chairs; vintage chandelier by Austria's Lobmeyr; photograph of Hamburg's Elbtunnel by David Willen (3) Illustrations by Jordi Labanda overlooking modernist furniture by Knoll and vintage Scandinavian pieces (4) Table and shelving unit by Switzerland's USM; the chair came with the house (5) Virge artwork and vintage Lotte Lamp in master bedroom













(1) Italian-made loungers waiting for the residents to soak up the sun (2) Neighbouring snow-capped Dolomites

with floppy native ferns and tall imported Japanese woodblock art aplenty inside Dolomites offers.

Onward and onto a bright tiered lawn seating and a vine-ceilinged "grotto" provide two alfresco options (one sunny, one shady). A favourite feature of the residents is out here too; an outdoor shower. The smart shower screen that offers privacy was crafted by a young Tyrolean maker who, to the homeowners' surprise, arrived one day with damp willow branches and a metal frame and wove the screen on site. It was commissioned by Merano's Harry Thaler, a designer who became a close confidant in the renovation process, collaborating on many clever additions.

It's on the second - and busiest national taste blurs best. A large balhandsome modernist Svenskt Tenn furni- either Swiss, Austrian, German or Italian," designer TH Robsjohn Gibbings. There's come pretty good on that." — (M)

monkey puzzle trees - reflects the comfort- too but the focal point is a massive and able living that this warm corner of the magnificent illustrated world map drawn in Sweden, circa 1935. Here, as the evening light upon summer parties dims, guests garden, where colourful Swiss café outdoor find themselves mulling over its depictions while enjoying a tipple from the room's built-in drinks cabinet. This is a magnificent thing; made in the workshop of South Tyrolean carpenter Gufler from oak, marble and cast metal, it opens smartly to reveal an Aladdin's cave of alcohol.

But despite all the local help this is a residence reflective of its owners - a house for finds from a life's worth of travelling. From a "Made in Melbourne" Angelucci couch to a vintage Bell Canada telephone, to a hand-drawn sketch from Oscar Niemeyer, to Murano glass lamps secured at the second-hand shop down the road, floor where this mix of South Tyrolean a world of good design has its place here. handiwork and the residents' inter- More recent furniture additions come from closer to home. "Our aim is to keep cony opens up to a sunroom sporting it roughly within the old Austrian empire, ture by Josef Frank and a side table by US says one of the residents. "I think we have