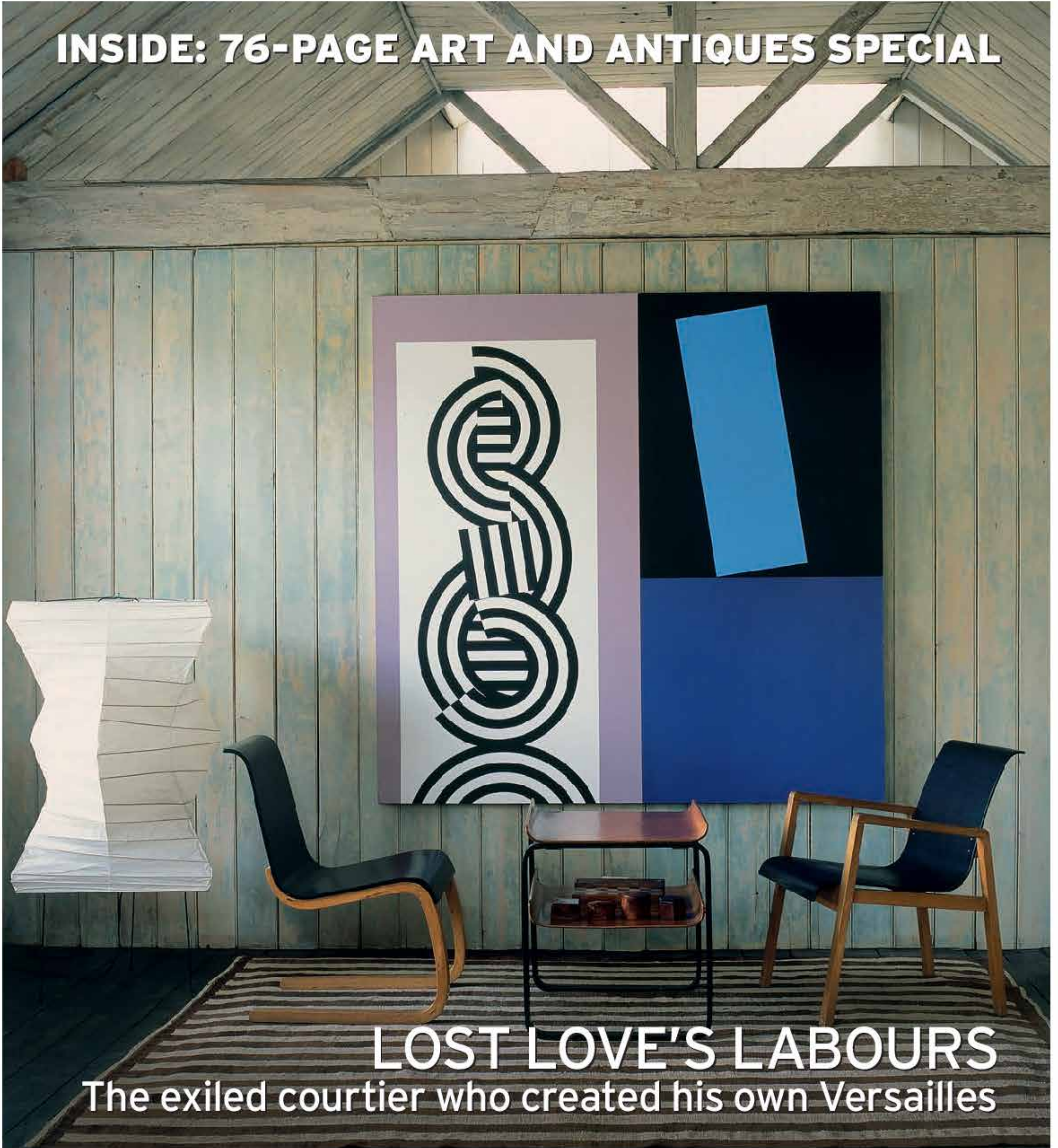


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# THE WORLD OF INTERIORS

INSIDE: 76-PAGE ART AND ANTIQUES SPECIAL



LOST LOVE'S LABOURS

The exiled courtier who created his own Versailles



# THE REAL MACAW

Like the parrots – alive and stuffed, modelled and painted – that populate his new home in Tangier, Nicolò Castellini Baldissera's décor is striking for its beautiful plumage of blues, pinks, mauves and greens. That exoticism is reinforced by Syrian mother-of-pearl tables, gilded Moorish four-poster beds and vibrant fabrics mostly supplied by the Italian's family company, C&C Milano. But, as befits the work of this interior designer with an international clientele, everything is governed by a logical rigour, as Marie-France Boyer finds out. Photography: Roland Beaufre

In the veranda, an extension to the dining room, sits an 18th-century cast-iron French bed covered with C&C

Milano fabrics. An Umberto Pasti table sits on a Mauritanian mat. The architectural engravings show the gates of the Vatican







In the pink living room, an 18th-century Italian cane wing chair (far left) sits on a 'Clouds' rug by Luke Irwin. Three of the cushions on the grey linen sofa are made out of pieces cut from Turkish kaftans. C&C Milano's 'Osteria' hangs at the window





## 'I AM FICKLE,'

Nicolò Castellini Baldissera admits. 'Like all interior decorators I always have that desire to move house and find a pretext to reconsider everything. Luckily, if I may put it that way, my neighbour built a very noisy hotel right opposite...'. So Nicolò deserted the medina in Tangier he thought he loved so much (*WoI* July 2015). He had already been eyeing a small square in the Marsham district, lined with well-to-do 1940s houses with faded ochre rendering that reminded him of Milan, and even of some of the villas built by his grandfather.

Nicolò divides his time between Tangier, Paris, London and Milan. 'In Tangier, I like the idea of being able to rest while at the same time having all sorts of things made.' His work can be found in Milan, Venice, Switzerland, the USA and Mexico. Trained in art history at Sotheby's in London, Nicolò comes from a family of Milanese architects and interior designers. They founded C&C Milano, a celebrated manufacturer of fabrics, an element which Nicolò can never do without. Happily, he needed a lot of fabric to domesticate this five-storey building with a lift and 45 windows.

'It truly was a very brutal house, tall and cubic. I immediately built an extension, the veranda, on which there is a terrace corresponding with the lounge. I hope that plants will eventually cover these arches and metal structures that I've put in and that this mass of greenery will balance the building.' In the meantime, he asked Umberto Pasti (*WoI* March

2012) to create the two little 'gardens' on either side of the building. You now enter through a riot of colour: orange begonias, blue plumbagos and pink bougainvillea, beneath the big white trumpets of daturas. On the right, tortoises come and go from the little house designed specially for them. No sooner are you in the entrance hall, beneath a chandelier made from antlers, than at the end of the corridor you spot the second garden. Behind the flowering gardenias, spectacular elephant ears – alocasia – are combined with strelitzia, banana trees and the *Monstera deliciosa* plants dear to that earlier Tangier aficionado, Henri Matisse. This delightful little garden is completed by a cage of parrots and a fountain made from old tiles collected one by one.

On the ground floor, the house is divided by a corridor. On the left the long dining room decorated with a discreet trompe l'oeil of plants extended by the colonial-style veranda. To the right is a set of saffron-coloured rooms: the kitchen, pantry, cloak-rooms and loo. The steps of the plain staircase with its minimalist iron handrail are grey; the walls white, the tiled floors of the landings grey and white, as are the long, striped linen curtains, often drawn to filter the strong light on the floor. Nicolò has retained this sober approach over the five floors, to offset and separate the dazzling colours of the rooms.

The first-floor living room, which occupies almost the entire space, was intended to be a delicate pastel pink. 'I wanted to try at least,' Nicolò says, but when he saw the result, he found that his objects

Top: the mauve study/TV room is also used as a guest-room. Antelope antlers, romantic engravings and a portrait of Charles X, king of France, overlook a large metal Ottoman daybed. The mother-of-pearl-inlaid tables are Syrian. Opposite: seen beyond stuffed parrots, the spectacular fireplace (half seen on the previous spread) is copied from a 17th-century one in a family property in Piedmont. Beneath a strip of antique Venetian silk velvet can be seen a sprig of faux coral, miniature tiles and a Moroccan wedding-belt buckle







This page, clockwise from top: the unusual L-shaped plan of the house is evident from the square at the front; the cement tiles of this en-suite bathroom repeat those in its corresponding bedroom (below). The washbasin is a copy of an old design; this guest-room is almost entirely filled with a pair of 19th-century gilded-iron Spanish-style four-posters from Tetouan; a 19th-century Venetian gondola chair sits on the first-floor landing. Opposite: closely hung architectural plans in identical frames cover an upstairs corridor.







In Nicoló's bedroom, a 19th-century Renaissance Revival armchair is pulled up at an English Neo-Regency desk.

The 18th-century Hispano-Moorish bed faces curtains made from C&C Milano's 'Nice Chopper' material





could not adjust to it. He decided to repaint it all in hot pink instead. The living room is divided by white columns. In the first part, two wide comfortable sofas face one another, covered in subtle grey linen that matches the striped curtains, festooned with old Turkish cushions shimmering like butterfly wings; some of the lampshades are made of the same fabric. The other side of the room is focused on a beautiful fireplace inspired by an original in a 17th-century property belonging to his family in Piedmont. Immediately next to this is a small lilac room, dominated by a Turkish-style daybed, for watching television when not used as a guest bedroom.

The second floor is taken up by three bedrooms. Nicolò's is a strong peacock blue broken up by mustard-coloured curtains with a violet band at the bottom. The centrepiece is a spectacular 18th-century Hispano-Moorish Tetouan bed. The Moroccan king is supposed to have considered buying it for his son, but rejected it as too feminine. This magnificent object is covered by turns in velvets, Venetian silks and embroideries from all over the Orient, as is the little bench that accompanies it. Between the bed and the window is a study area furnished with sophisticated classical European furniture and a large violet sofa. More than a bedroom, this is a delicious living room for use all year round, even during the very humid Tangier winters.

The upper floors, says Nicolò unapologetically, are reserved 'for hedonism': hammam, massages and gymnastics. Right at the top of the building is a

swimming pool with a small kitchen to one side; the narrow terrace can be delightful early or late in the day thanks to the panoramic view – it overlooks the city as far as the Strait of Gibraltar.

Matisse had trunks of accessories that he took with him everywhere he went. In some there were fabrics and evening dresses, in others French earthenware, Moroccan pottery, shells and Oriental ewers – objects you see again and again in his paintings. The Nicolò of Tangier is like that. In Marsham we find again the French Empire-style chair and 18th-century cast-iron daybed from the medina, parrots and tortoises, both dead and alive, the false coral mounted on its 18th-century stand, the Tetouan twin beds and above all the range of bright colours contrasting with grey and white.

In his previous home we already had lilac, violet, saffron yellow to set off the silks, the pieces of family furniture mingled with curiosities and the same exotic feeling softening the logical rigour of the seasoned interior designer. In Marsham, Nicolò has reshuffled the cards: inventing a very strong peacock blue and a shocking pink that match one another, adding a lot of striped linen that punctuates the space and lifts at the slightest breath of air, sprinkled with a light Ottoman fragrance, and introducing an aesthetic of exotic plants whose surprises enchant him every time he visits. Thus a new décor emerges like a phoenix from the ashes: shimmering, sensual, comfortable ■

For more information, visit [nicolocastellinibaldissera.com](http://nicolocastellinibaldissera.com)

Top: two ladder bookcases serve as bedside tables. The bench at the foot of the bed is covered with a silk-embroidered suzani from Fadini Borghi. Opposite: exotic kaftans populate the dressing room.

