

AD CLASSIC

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LORDS OF
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MASTERS &
PROTAGONISTS

HOW ART
FURNITURE
IS MADE

STYLE
SUGGESTIONS
AND INSPIRATIONS
FROM THE HOUSES
FEATURED IN AD

PAST IS
NOW

II INTERIORS WHERE THE SPIRIT
OF HISTORY IS ALIVE AND WELL

Renaissance, Baroque,
Neoclassical:
a harmonious synthesis
of styles brings the
entrance hall of an early
20th-century Roman
interior to life

Heart of STONE

ROME, IN THE CASTELLO DELLA CECCHIGNOLA, A FORMER RESIDENCE OF POPES AND THE CITY'S ARISTOCRACY, THE APARTMENT OCCUPIED IN THE 17TH CENTURY BY THE BORGHESE POPE, PAUL V, HAS BECOME THE HOME OF AN ARCHITECT, A COLLECTOR AND EXPERT ON WORKS IN STONE

PROJECT BY DARIO DEL BUFALO – TEXT BY ELENA SOZZI
PHOTOGRAPHS BY MASSIMO LISTRI





The living-room in Dario Del Bufalo's Rome residence, located where, in the 17th century, there was the apartment of the Borghese pope, Paul V (reigned 1605–21). On the walls, the frescoes with architectural and biblical subjects, painted for the pope in 1610 by Annibale Durante, have been restored. Sculptures in Del Bufalo's collection of works in stone; from the left, 15th-century marble bust on a column of African



LEFT: detail of the living-room, with frescoes by Annibale Durante, 1610. On the 18th-century console table, a collection of antique marble heads collected by Del Bufalo. To the left of the console table, a sculptures in volcanic stone representing a Phoenician female idol; to the right, an African marble headless bust on a column of Numidian *giallo antico* marble.

ABOVE RIGHT: the main tower has a Roman base, a medieval central section, a seventeenth-century balcony and a 19th-century turret.

BELOW RIGHT: the gate with, above it, the monogram AT (Alessandro Torlonia) surmounted by the prince's crown (19th century).



He started as child when,

just for fun, he cycled round the Roman Campagna looking for fragments of coloured marble that he then swapped with his friends, as if they were cigarette cards. Today his collection of coloured marbles and sculptures, built up over a period of twenty years, includes 300–400 pieces. Not satisfied with this, the architect Dario Del Bufalo — in addition to being a collector of works in stone one of the greatest connoisseurs of these — bought a piece of history when, in 2004, he purchased with a partner the Castello della Cecchignola and then restored it.

This ancient building is located on Via Ardeatina within the Raccordo Annulare, the orbital motorway circling Rome, so that it is one of the last — and oldest — castles remaining in the city. Many different eras are reflected in its architecture: originally a Roman castrum, then one of the various local baronial fortresses in the Middle Ages, headquarters of the Templars, summer residence of two popes — the Borghese pope, Paul V, who commissioned the important frescoes from Annibale Durante in 1610, and Leo XII in 1815, who, passionately fond of the chase, made it his hunting lodge — and then the residence of some of the city's leading families — including the Pamphilj, Colonna and Torlonia, who were its owners from 1820 until recent years. "The building was in a disastrous state", recounts Dario Del Bufalo, "and was occupied by a person who, for forty years, had rented out carriages and horses for historical costume epics". Thus its renovation

Between Annibale Durante's 17th-century frescoes, a console table from the same period bearing various fragments of antique coloured marbles and, in the centre *Portrait of an Emperor*. To the left of the console table, *Bust of Emperor Vitellius*, in polychrome marble, on the right 17th century marble head on a giallo antico column of the 2nd century ad. In the foreground, an ebony pyramid with coloured marble inlays. On the 18th-century terracotta floor, an Indian dhurrie carpet.

RIGHT: *Bust of Cardinal Albani* of the 18th century on a column of Numidian yellow marble of the 2nd century and a cloak of the Order of Jerusalem, a religious military order of the Catholic Church founded in Jerusalem in 1099 in order to look after the Holy Sepulchre.





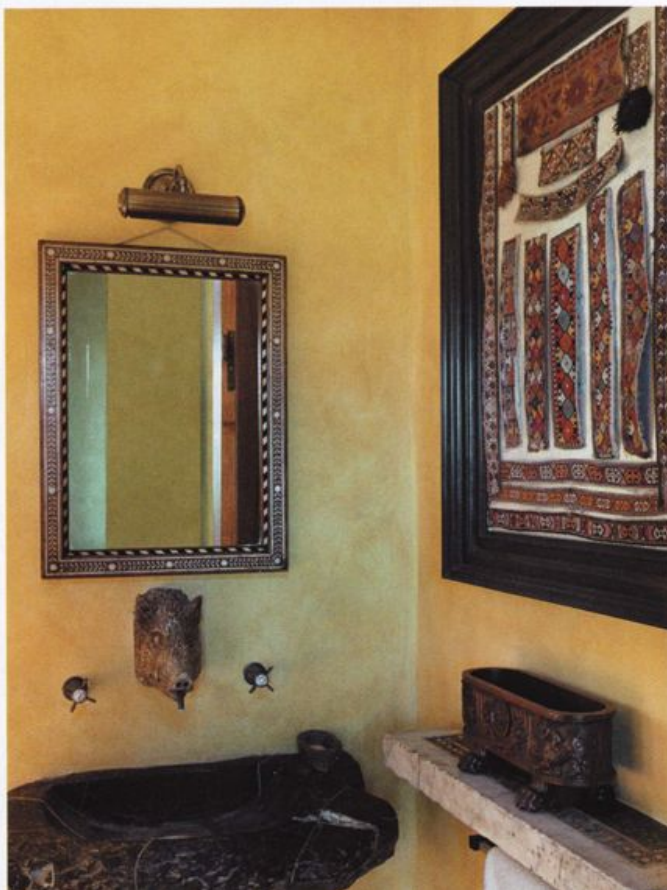
was a complex affair, also because it had been subject to the restrictions of the Fine Arts Commission from 1959, one of the longest and most binding in the recent history of architecture in Rome. But Del Bufalo's scrupulous restoration project undertaken in collaboration with the Superintendency of the Artistic and Historical Heritage in just four years, from 2004 to 2008, has given the building a new lease of life, allowing part of it to house the Università dei Marmorari and a library open to the public specializing in the art of sculpting stone, with 5,000 volumes.

We entered the state rooms, the ones frescoed by Annibale Durante in 1610 for Pope Paul V's summer apartment, now the residence of Del Bufalo, who has restored not only the original beauty of these frescoes buried under layers of whitewash and paint but also the eighteenth-century terracotta-tiled floors set off by carefully selected furniture dating from the 17th and 18th centuries. It was no easy matter to disentangle the numerous periods and styles in the building and find the right approach to its restoration." In agreement with the Superintendency, but on our own —





SPOUT IN THE FORM OF A *MARBLE* BOAR'S HEAD



without any financial support from the state, which, although this had originally been negotiated, would have raised costs and slowed down the work — we chose to leave, in each part of the building, the most important and best preserved feature out of all those present, according to the type of architecture and the period, Del Bufalo explains". In the chapel, we favoured the sumptuous Baroque elements, in the medieval defence towers, the simplicity of the rough stones, left bare without plaster.' Sacred and profane, elegance and minimalism: it's all here, between assonance and contrasts, tells the story of living. □

PREVIOUS PAGE: lining the access staircase, late 18th-century hunting trophies belonging to Gian Galeazzo Ciano. On the left, 18th-century taxidermied crocodile and a 19th-century Danish painting. The floor is a composition of antique polychrome marble fragments (1st–3rd centuries ad).

ABOVE: the study, with Dario De Bufalo's library and some pieces of his collection of stone sculptures. Zoomorphic wooden armchair, Rajasthan, 19th century.

LEFT: marble basin hollowed out by hand. On the right, in the ebony frame, embroidered silks from Uzbekistan, 19th century.