

# PAST & PRESENT

This minimaluxe Milanese apartment is a harmonious blend of the old and the new, thanks to the subtle touch of its designer owners

PHOTOGRAPHY Davide Lovatti  
WORDS Kara O'Reilly



## LIVING ROOM

'The main thing was to be able to accommodate many people. The ottoman, which we use as a coffee table, can also serve as extra seating,' says Leonardo.

Custom linen sofas; custom velvet ottoman, Dainelli Studio. Vintage glass ashtray (on ottoman), Venini. Brass trays, for similar see Ferm Living. Pipistrello table light by Gae Aulenti, Martinelli Luce. Artwork by Dainelli Studio



## DESK AREA

'We had the idea of creating a workspace without dedicating an entire room to that, so we stylised a bookcase to make it into a shelf that could accommodate various objects,' says Leonardo.

Custom brass-backed shelving, Dainelli Studio.  
Frate table, Driade  
S32 chair, both Thonet.  
Desk light, vintage find.  
'Faces' mixed media artworks, Dainelli Studio.  
Other objects on shelves: various family collections and mementoes sourced from markets, antiques shops and on travels



# W

hen Leonardo and Marzia Dainelli found their Milanese apartment, their priority was to save as many original features as they could. This involved reviving the gorgeous parquet and encaustic tile flooring and restoring the decorative window frames and plasterwork, such as cornicing and ceiling stuccos, typical of this kind of turn-of-the-century Milanese building. 'When we find traces of the past in good condition, we tend to preserve them,' explains Leonardo. For the couple it was important to 'let the history of the building not be too stifled by the renovation'. Tackling it this way gave them a canvas on which to stage their deliberately minimalist interventions in order to make the apartment their own. 'We wanted to keep the mood of the apartment the same, just update it with custom details and furniture.'

The couple, who are partners in business as well as life, moved to the city from their original base in Pisa in 2018. The low-key yet luxe vibe they have imbued their home with is thanks to a tight edit of vintage and bespoke furnishings, placed alongside a selection of high-end materials, from parquet to marble, leather to brass. The latter has become something of a design signature for the duo, who have used it as an accent in several of their interior design projects. In their own home it is seen to most spectacular effect in the dining space with its glamorous brass and marble table – the glimmer of the metal picked up on the striking brass swing door that leads through to the kitchen. This recurring metallic motif also features as an insert in the bespoke entrance storage and as a backdrop to shelves above the desk in the living room, as well as being the material of choice for door and window handles. Far from being blingy, it is a nuanced addition that highlights their thoughtful design choices. As Leonardo says, getting this type of warm minimalism just right is like 'balancing the ingredients in a good recipe'.

As well as their successful interior design business, the couple has also become known for the pieces they have created for many high-profile furniture companies such as Gallotti&Radice, Lema and Gebrüder Thonet. In a further string to their creative bows, they also create quirky anthropomorphic 'Faces' paintings and sculptures, which nod to Cubist influences – many of which are dotted around their home.

The subtlety of all their designs is in the kind of details that a casual observer might easily miss. For example, the soaring ceiling height of the living room is emphasised by the decision to go for low-slung seating – another of the couple's own designs,

of course. This room is one of Leonardo's favourite spots: 'It is spacious for receiving guests, but at the same time intimate for daily family life,' he says. Leonardo describes the finished apartment as 'Moderno-Borghese' – or modern-classical – which feels right for a space that is all about a dialogue between old and new. 'I often feel like I am reliving the past,' he says, 'as when people in those days arrived in carriages and opened elegant gates.' That reference to timeless style perfectly encapsulates the mood of his home.

dainellistudio.it



## ENTRANCE

The dialogue between old, which includes the original floor tiles, and new is beautiful.

Turciù wall light, Catellani & Smith.  
Custom bench and brass stool, both Dainelli Studio. Similar linen cushions, Nordic Nest. Similar vases, Etsy

## DINING AREA

'The bench solved the problem of the small space, while the monumental table catches your eye as soon as you enter the room,' says Leonardo.

Oak parquet **flooring**, original to apartment; similar, Havwoods. Custom **table** with natural brass base and Macchia Vecchia marble top; custom stained ash and leather **banquette**; natural brass swing **door**; **pendant**, all Dainelli Studio. 210 **dining chairs**, Thonet. Try Shimu for antique Chinese **artworks**



## the download

### THE OWNERS/ DESIGNERS

Leonardo and Marzia Dainelli, who founded their eponymous design studio in 2007 in Pisa, specialising in product and interior design. They share their Milanese apartment with their daughter, Bianca, age 11, and son Teo, age six.

### THE PROPERTY

An apartment on the first floor of an early 1900s building in central Milan. It features an entrance area, a large living room with an office area, kitchen, dining space, three bedrooms, two bathrooms, plus a laundry and storage room.



### KITCHEN

**'To break it up and give it more character, we included the brass elements,' says Leonardo.**

Custom stained ash **cabinetry**; brass **unit**, both Dainelli Studio. The **worksurface** is white Macchia Vecchia marble.

The small wooden watchmaker's **chest of drawers** is a vintage piece. Decorative **wall plates**, Fornasetti

BATHROOM

The muted monochrome colour palette serves to make all the subtle design details – such as the shapely mirror – sing.

Custom white Carrara marble **basin unit** and **mirror**, both Dainelli Studio. **Taps**, Signorini Rubinetterie. For a make-up **mirror**, try John Lewis & Partners. **Radiator**, for similar see the Rococo at The Radiator Centre



MAIN  
BEDROOM  
'We divided this large  
room to separate the  
wardrobe area from the  
bed area,' says Leonardo.

Sommier upholstered  
**bed**, Tréca. Vintage  
**bedside light**; similar,  
Vinterior. For **bedding**  
like this, see Beaumont  
& Brown. Bespoke  
**rug**, Sirecom







### DAUGHTER'S BEDROOM

The tall ceiling height is accentuated here, as elsewhere, by clever design.

Custom canopy **bed** and wardrobe unit, Dainelli Studio. Similar pink **bedding**, John Lewis & Partners. Anemone **chair**, Edra. HAL RE Sledge **chair** (by desk), Vitra. **Wall light**, Artemide. Custom **wallpaper**, Dainelli Studio

### SON'S BEDROOM

'For both kids rooms we decided to use a single main colour and use it on everything from the walls to the furniture and fabrics,' says Leonardo.

Custom **cupboards**, Dainelli Studio. Panton Junior **desk chair**, Vitra. Vintage school **desk**; try Vinterior for similar

### BATHROOM

'In both bathrooms we used only two colours: white marble with black walls and ceilings,' says Leonardo.

Similar white Carrara marble **floor** and **wall tiles**, Mandarin Stone. Custom white Carrara marble **basin unit**; **mirror**, both Dainelli Studio. **Taps**, Signorini Rubinetterie. Antique **towel holder** and **hooks**; visit Selling Antiques to source similar. Rattan **waste basket**; similar, Oka