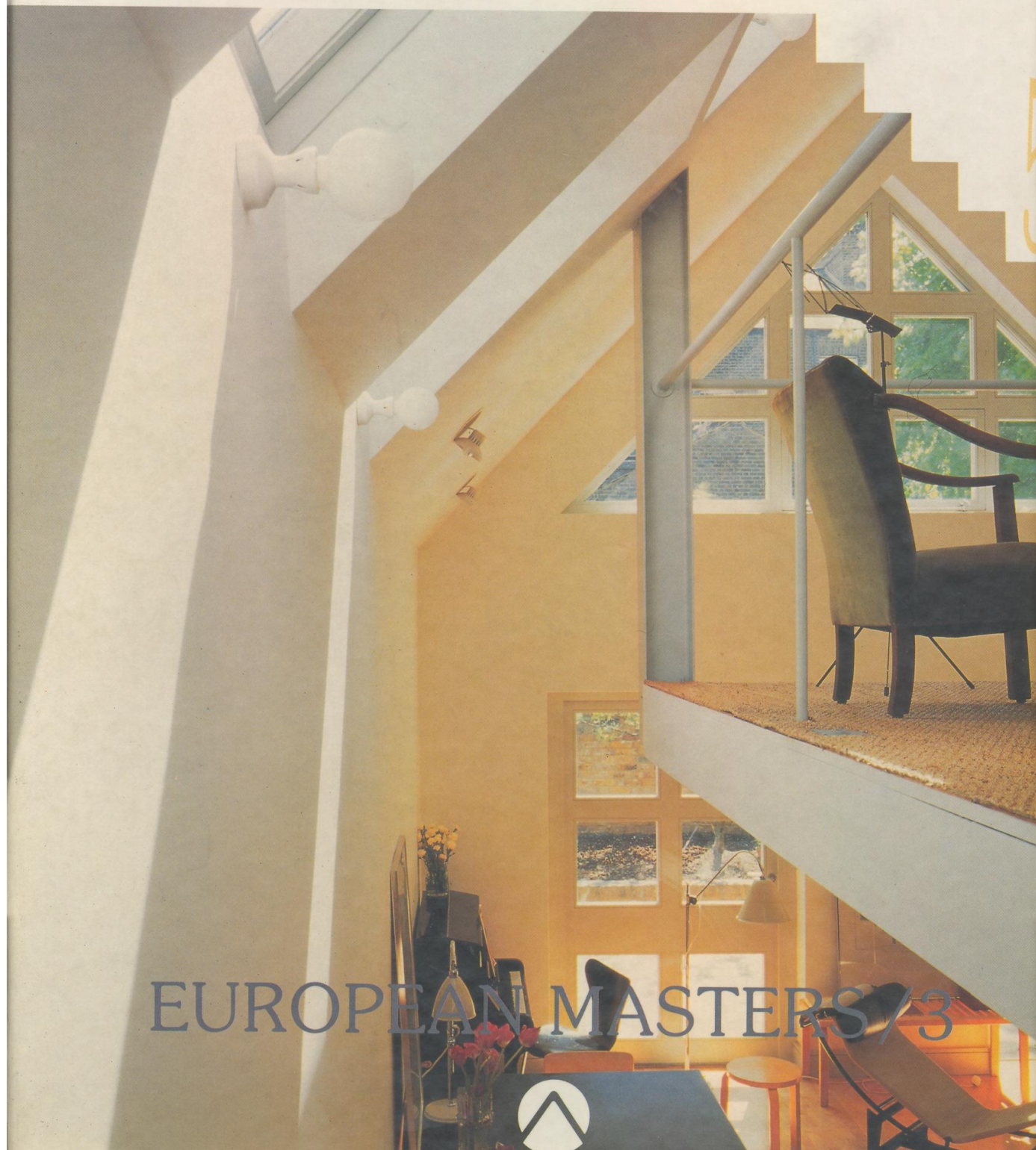
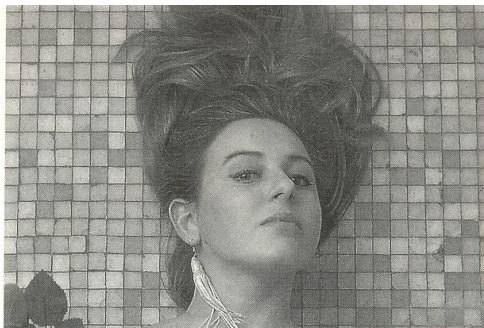


DOMESTIC INTERIORS



EUROPEAN MASTERS/3

TIZIANA LORENZELLI



APARTMENT IN MILAN

Tiziana Lorenzelli, born 5 June 1961, in Lecco, Italy, graduated in architecture from the Milan Polytechnic University in 1984. For the following two years she worked as an assistant to the professor Marco Zanuso in the same faculty. She is presently conducting research work for American and Italian universities, and is coordinator for the study plan in Milan for the University of Cincinnati, Department of Design. Since 1991 she has been working in association with the University of California Los Angeles and with the Pasadena Art Center and College of Design where she is a teacher of Industrial Design. Her professional career spans various fields of design and she has participated in prestigious architecture and interior design competitions.

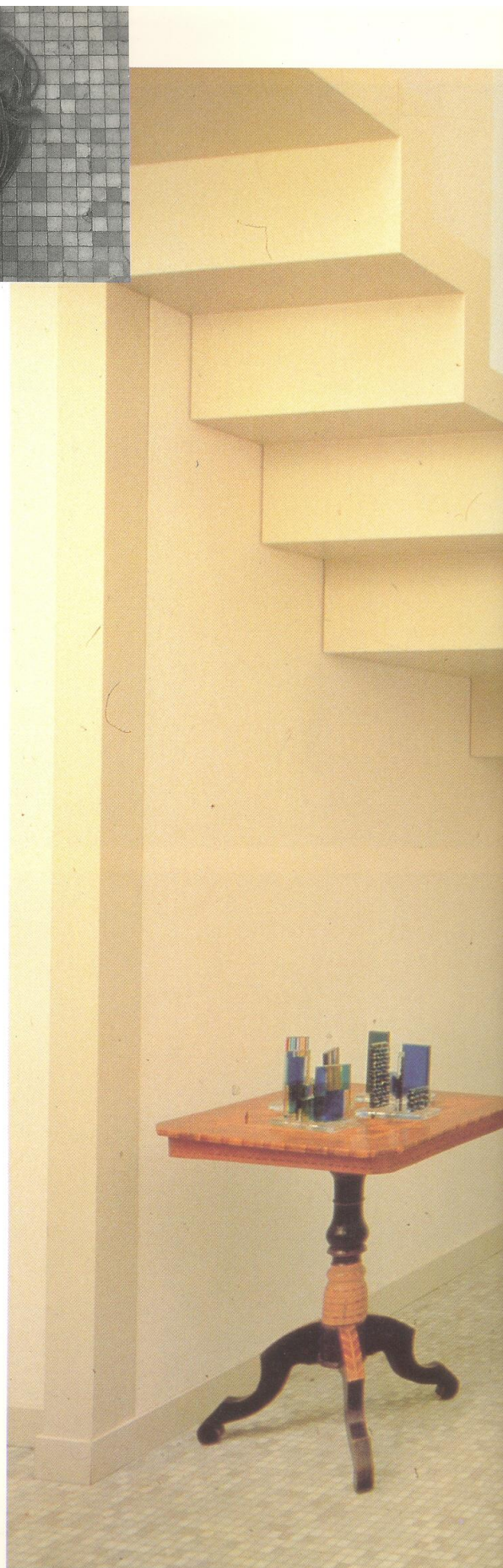
Started: January 1989.

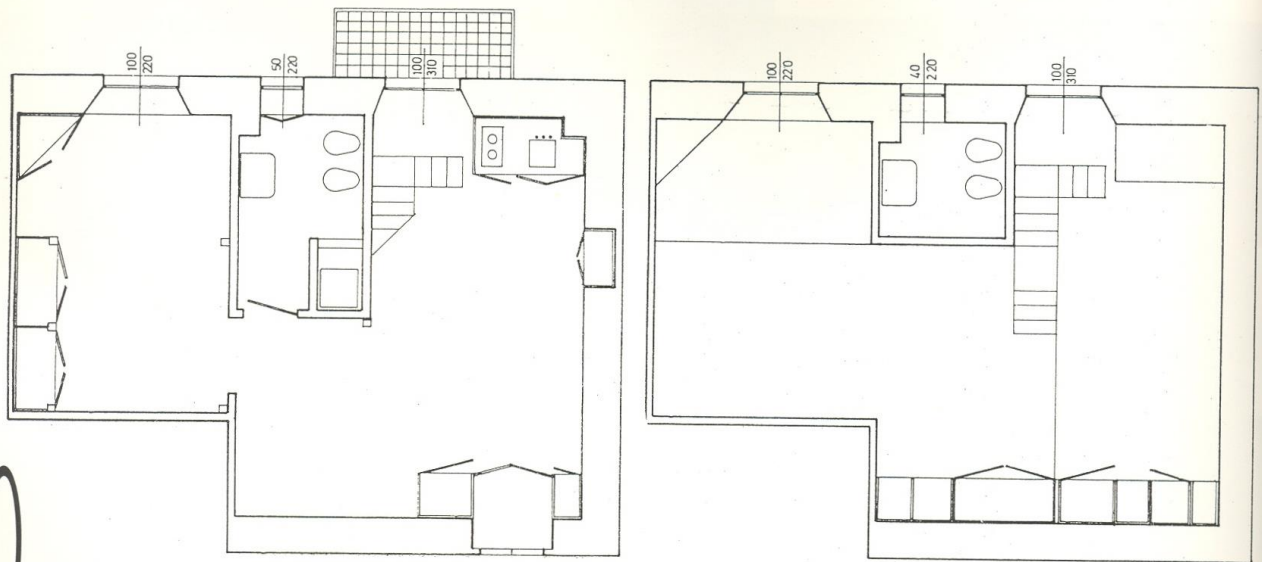
Completed: March 1989.

Location: Milan, Italy.

Client/Promoter: Tiziana Lorenzelli.

Architect: Tiziana Lorenzelli.





Quite often the volumetric and spatial characteristics of flats impose certain limiting conditions on the possibilities available for an intervention. In the case of this apartment in Milan, these very characteristics also dictated the interior design treatment that had to be employed. Tiziana Lorenzelli, an individual with considerable talent in a field in which innovative ideas do not exactly abound, has elaborated her proposal by combining the physical properties determining the living space with an individual creative language. Full of conceptual reminiscences, it ties in with the most advanced theories on the demands of living within the dense modern context of the city.

The apartment is extremely small, and as such has been a reason for Lorenzelli to conduct a magnificent study on the volumetric possibilities of the intervention. This has been solved by employing virtually experimental methods both in terms of the floor-plan and the content. The former is an astonishing structural composition, making the very best of the space available due to a calculated development of the interior architecture. The decision behind the planning of the content, on the other hand, has opted for a decidedly minimalist, cool and contemporary atmosphere for a modern life-style. Some of the ideological content has been approached with irony, such as the triumph of artificiality over nature and the expectations behind the progressive reduction in the amount of space the modern world allots for living areas. The architect has in no way, however, ignored criteria for a functional patently habitable layout, interior circulation, perception of views or the treatment of light.

Tiziana Lorenzelli has explored, in this small job, one of the preoccupations discussed in the International Congress of Modern Architecture in 1929 on fulfilling living, psychological,



way that it would not interfere with the general interior perspectives, but would still fulfil its objectives.

To achieve a greater understanding of the calculated process behind the intervention, we should analyse the floor plan underneath the platform. As we have already pointed out, there are two readily distinguishable areas in the interior: a larger quadrangular room and a smaller rectangular room, placed next to each other. The former, slightly larger in terms of space, has the advantage of the entrance and the balcony which lets in a soft light. Its volumetric qualities and its relationship with the exterior, made it an obvious choice as the living-dining room, kitchen and even bathroom. The smaller room also had light coming in from a window, and was set apart as a studio and work area.

The platform was to be used as a bedroom so it did not have to be very large, but it did give the apartment more breathing space. It was built so that the more representative areas would be left full height (living room and studio), but without blocking light coming in from the windows. The rooms kept their general open perspectives, while the platform and the bathroom walls would form a type of interior corridor communicating with these areas. The layout was thus based on two construction ploys (the walls of the bathroom and the framework of the mezzanine), whose strategic positioning encouraged a feeling of space and light. The position of the television, which can be seen equally well from both floors, is an example of the masterly way the levels are linked with each other.

To bridge the gap between them the upper floor is reached by way of a simple metal stairway. Its ambiguous design form and concept fit in well with the general treatment of the interior. The sensation of insubstantial weightlessness is reinforced by the fact it has no hand rails and is structurally attached by means of an inner metal





frame. It is positioned against one of the bathroom walls and the bottom steps turn in a gentle spiral towards the support. The change in direction gives the staircase an added function: it also acts as a support for reaching the top of the cupboard situated beside the balcony.

Mentioning this gives an opportunity to examine another of the strategies used by the architect to create more space and get the maximum out of the existing space. The thickness of the walls of the old mansion in some areas meant that some structures could be built-in. The architect used some of these, such as the cupboard referred to above, to hide the cooking facilities which, despite the lack of space, include the most advanced equipment such as micro-wave oven, refrigerator and dish-washer.

The treatment of the entrance, already existing before the renovation, is also a remarkable design feature of the apartment. The normal entry has been dramatised in a unique fashion by concealing the doorway in one of the built-in cupboard-bookcases. From inside the door cannot be seen and blends in with the general decor to reinforce the idea of an architecturally closed space. The usual wasted room taken up by a hall has also been dispensed with in making the access direct.

The construction techniques employed have succeeded in suggesting greater space and lightness which the rest of the finishes, furniture and decor were also designed to reinforce. The colour scheme chosen for the majority of surfaces, on wood and other structures, is a cool white, augmenting the feeling of spaciousness and giving a clean sparse impression to go with a dynamic life-style. The flooring, glazed light-coloured mosaic tesseras in grey and white, also contributes to heightening the effect of more space.

The individual pieces of furniture and elements in the decor similarly define the conceptual criteria behind the intervention. One of the most unexpected items is a large turn-of-the-century

writing desk whose proportions strike a contrast with the tone of the rest of the minimalist decor and provide an effect of tension. The *Genny chaise longue* designed by Gabriele Mucchi in 1935, the drawing-machine and the corner-bookcase for the television, are pieces that give the living-room a studio character. An abstract painting by Enzo Esposito provides exactly the right counter effect to the antique furniture.

Artistic displays contribute to emphasising the irony of the scant possibilities for inspiration in a home with such little room. The magnificent collection of sculptures by Lorenzelli herself, *Alberi Elettrologici*, placed all around the flat serves to state the triumph of the artificial over the natural. These works combine metal and floral motifs and are reiterated in others, such as the sculpture placed in the main room by Lukas Reimbold and Michael Wolf and the small chrome glass objects, also by Lorenzelli in association with Matteo Piazza and produced by Venini.

The final result of this intervention could be summed up as a clever combination of formal and conceptual proposals which, on the basis of bold techniques and strategies, have solved the physical problems posed by an extremely small interior. The process of distribution has been limited to two simple components to break up the space: the central bathroom area and the platform construction. These have defined the basic living areas (living-room and studio), while assuring they are perfectly communicated but do not block the passage of light. Certain fundamentally important items in the programme (the kitchen and entrance) have been concealed or disguised in order to make the place seem bigger and give an uncluttered interior perspective. This has also been reinforced by the finishes, materials and colour scheme. Decorative items are in keeping with the basic content of the proposal: it is a veiled and ironic, though vehement, protest against the cramped life-style forced on us by contemporary society.





