

Divine inspiration

Stark, white surfaces, married with high-end technology, transform a traditional rustic monastery into a 21st-Century family home with spectacular aplomb

Report: Ashlee Moratorio Photography: David Still Styling: Marie Fox

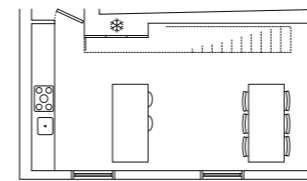


When Marco Rossi asked Milan-based architect, Jacopo Mascheroni, to create a contemporary one-bedroom bachelor home from two adjoining units within a remodelled 18th-Century monastery near Como in northern Italy, little did he know that he would meet Diana, his future wife, just months later. His original request was for a clean, open space within the internal architecture, although an additional bedroom and bathroom was soon added to the layout.

The biggest challenge the architect faced when plotting the internal space was the high-pitched ceilings, which drop and change direction throughout the space. This posed problems, particularly when creating necessary divisions, such as the bedroom and bathroom areas. "I wanted to highlight the depth of the space so that you are able to see, from within the living area, the entire gallery. With the height of the ceilings, if you make too many divisions, you end up with very weird spaces and it's not very comfortable," Jacopo explains, "so I decided

to keep it horizontal. We planned the master bedroom and bathroom on one side of the space. It's like an independent block floating in space; we created this block so that we wouldn't have to close off the pitched roof."

The private area is marked out by a Canadian maple-clad wall, which stretches across the entire length of the couple's bedroom and bathroom. This soft, light wood has become a part of the architect's signature palette, due to its flat grain and warmth. However, Canadian maple is not as resilient to thermal shock as the more ▶



Opposite page: The Corian-topped island unit subtly delineates the kitchen from the living area within the open-plan gallery space **Above:** Linear task lighting runs along the entire length of the main work surface. As Jacopo notes, it is important to get the right balance when working with glossy surfaces to avoid highlighting the scratches that occur through daily use **Below:** The large-scale TV projector, which projects onto overhead units within the kitchen, is the most prominent feature within the loft-style apartment. Below the units are five speakers, with a subwoofer built into the main island unit for optimal audio quality



durable standard woods, which gave rise to additional challenges when installing the radiant heat panels within the bathroom ceiling and the floor throughout the apartment.

The solution? Custom-made, ultra-thin planks, which remain stable, enduring extreme temperature changes. Radiant ceiling panels within the bathroom are an invisible alternative to traditional heated towel rails, of which Jacopo is not a fan. Instead, towels are neatly stacked on the Corian vanity area, near the slick, minimal basin, which he also designed. In fact, almost everything within the home was designed by the architect and his studio, including the boxy master bed – which conceals additional storage within – and the lacquered wardrobe storage unit within the bedroom, which doubles as a partition between the sleeping and living area.

Corian dominates surfaces throughout the bathroom and kitchen area. When undertaking the design of the architect's signature clean, white spaces, Corian is often the starting point of each project. "Corian comes in many different tones of white; the one that we use is Glacier White. The person in charge of lacquering the millwork has an instrument that photographs the colour, then machine mixes the white, so that they come out exactly the same. When it's all together, it's difficult to tell which is the Corian, and which is lacquered wood," Jacopo notes. When working with such an unforgiving monochrome, the finish is as important as the hue. Jacopo warns that too much gloss, particularly on the work surfaces, will highlight any scratches and reflects the light, creating an unappealing glare, particularly along the main run of units within the kitchen.

"It's very important for me to design the lighting together with the architecture," he says of the apartment's sophisticated system. "It creates different perspectives from lots of different points, and also, for example, when using wood for the walls, it creates nice scenography – something very dramatic, yet very warm at the same time." Apart from the recessed spots, which offer general illumination, light coves, fitted with warm tone fluorescent lighting, made in custom-made long strips give off a seamless ambient glow. ▶

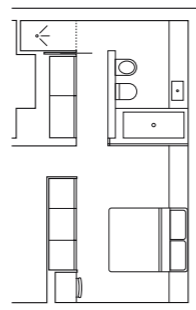
Horizontal lines create perfect symmetry within the couple's private bed and bathroom area. At the far end, the original arched windows of the former monastery remain



Above: Key elements within the bedroom-bathroom space, such as the bed, are formed in blocks to highlight their status. The linear recessed lighting above follows the line of the room uniting rest and bathing zones. **Below:** The huge bath is the only division in the space – its proportions echoing those of the bed beyond, while the linear vanity unit arrangement links with the line of bedroom furniture.

Lighting is not the only sophisticated aspect of this high-tech home. Intelligently linked through a central system, the kitchen boasts motorised drop-down cabinets above the main prepping area. The main inspiration behind the remote units was to create a blank space on the wall above, which doubles as a projection screen, the focal point of the apartment. As the only suitable surface area within the apartment, the TV projector dictated the layout of the kitchen and living area. From the dividing island unit and breakfast bar area, the couple enjoy watching TV before work each morning.

Though steeped in tradition from the outside, both Jacopo and his clients enjoy the surprising modernity of the vast, clean space. "It's quite a shock when you walk in," he concludes, "because you expect something totally different. It's a nice change." KBB



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DESIGN

Architect Jacopo Mascheroni, JM Architecture (+39 023314691 or www.jma.it)

KITCHEN

Kitchen units, fittings, countertop and sink designed by Jacopo Mascheroni, as before
Brassware Vola (01525 841155 or www.vola.com), available from Just Add Water (020 7697 3161 or www.justaddwater.co.uk)
Hob and fridge-freezer Gaggenau (0870 125 4500 or www.gaggenau.com)
Extractor and oven Siemens (01276 696000 or www.siemens.co.uk)
Steam oven Miele (01235 554455 or www.miele.co.uk)
Stools Arper (www.arper.it)
Coffee machine La Pavoni (+39 02982171 or www.lapavoni.com)
Oil and vinegar dispenser Fashion Food Factory, from La Collina Toscana, (+39 0575550693 or www.collinatoscana.com)

DINING AREA

Table Custom designed by Jacopo Mascheroni, as before
Chairs Arper, as before

BATHROOM

Units, bath and basin designed by Jacopo Mascheroni, as before
Brassware Vola, as before
WC Antonio Lupi (+39 0571586881 or www.antoniolupi.it)
Toiletries Shampoo and conditioner, Davines (+39 0521965611 or www.davines.com)

BEDROOM

Bed and storage units designed by Jacopo Mascheroni, as before
Lighting Addject Ltd (0870 013 3026 or www.addject.com)
Flooring Custom designed by Jacopo Mascheroni, as before

COST

A similar kitchen would cost around £25,300 (€32,000) including appliances. A similar bathroom costs around £14,200 (€18,000) and a similar bedroom design would cost around £12,000 (€15,000)



Left: An enclosed shower space is created within a niche. The flush-to-floor tray and wall-mounted showerhead are the only defining elements within the zone. **Above:** Brassware is counter-mounted onto the bath for convenience and to maintain the clean, minimal aesthetic within the wet space. Even the toilet-roll holder is recessed within the Corian splashback, in accordance with the architect's brief. **Below:** Corian dominates the surfaces in the bathroom – its seamless look perfectly complementing the interior scheme.

