



ITALIAN DESIGN: SILVER GILT BY CRESPI

Gabriella Crespi is a designer very much in the grand manner. But, perhaps as a result of early architectural training, her work also reflects great discipline. She is regarded as a trend-setter amongst the Italian designers. Crespi was one of the first to work in brass for very large pieces . . . one of the first to use burl, the swirl-patterned timber grain making big news at the moment . . . and she has done exciting pieces that combine cane and brass. HELEN MARSHALL's most striking impression on visiting the Crespi showroom in Milan (there's another in Rome) was of total opulence mixed with practicality. Her work in silver gilt is breathtaking. The practical ingenuity of her superb dining table (above), the coffee table in her Milan flat (page 43), and her Quick Change furniture is masterly. All the Crespi designs are signed, numbered and patented. Some of them are already being imported by Puzzle of Windsor Street, in Paddington, Sydney, who will welcome enquiries about any of the merchandise shown.



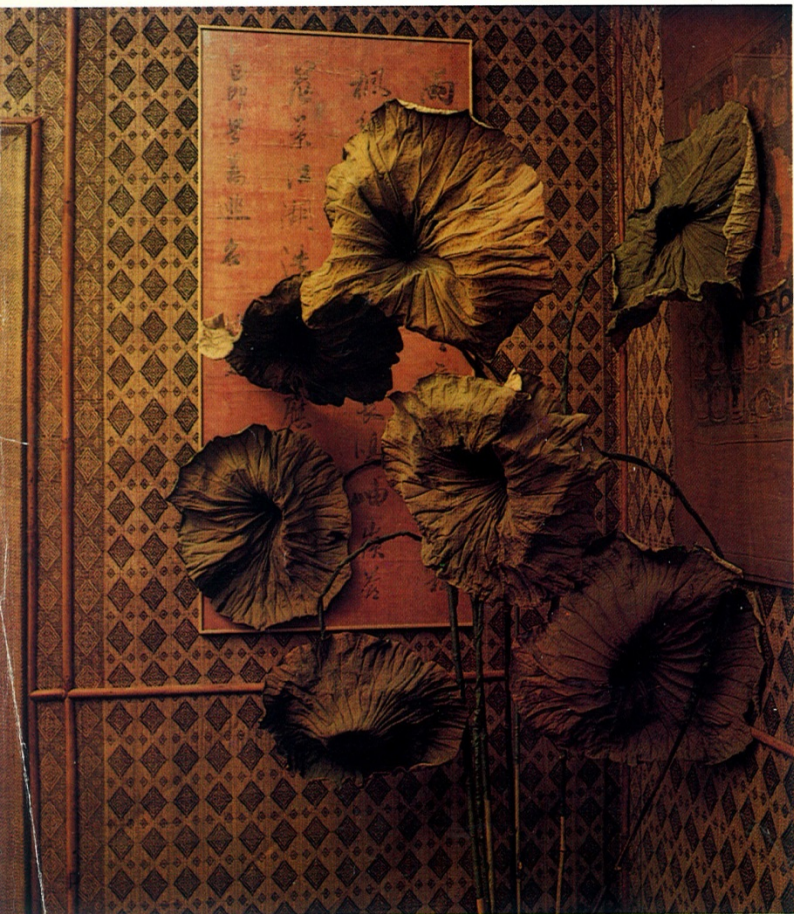


Facing page, top: The Puzzle Table is handsome in brass, but it can also be made in other materials, including steel, lacquer or wood. The versatile design consists of several different elements, here used all together. The pieces may be used separately as consoles or joined up in various ways: for example, the two end consoles would make a smaller octagonal table, and the two middle pieces could be joined as a rectangle, or used as wall consoles. The magnificent tableware is silver gilt (using 24-carat gold) with an intricate, hand-chased design. Below: Silver and silver gilt are combined in what may be the most stunning ever disguise for a glass Pyrex dish. The birds atop the cover have been hand-chiselled and plated with 24-carat gold.

This page, above: A real ostrich egg and silver gilt — superbly hand-worked — hatch the most captivating penguin in captivity. The smaller bird has a tummy made of hand-blown glass. Above right: An insulated ice bucket is tucked away inside the leaves of this fabulous silver gilt cabbage . . . with further gilding of the cabbage in the form of tiny golden snails. Right: We fell in love with this canopied 'Scheherazade' bed, a very Art Nouveau design in black iron and brass. Surely, a bed to build a dream in. (All Crespi designs shown are signed and patented.)



ITALIAN DESIGN: APARTMENT IN MILAN



Above: In the entrance hall, a branch of dried tropical trumpet flowers in front of a rare old rose-coloured Chinese scroll.

Right: 'Quick Change' modular seating in the living room, covered in basket-weave cotton, has a metal frame adjustable into any of three positions. 'Design 2000' coffee table also adjusts to three shapes and sizes; on it, glazed porcelain fruit and a magnificent Buddha. Lamps and end tables show Crespi's use of cane worked with brass; a deep drawer in one table slides out to reveal hi-fi equipment.

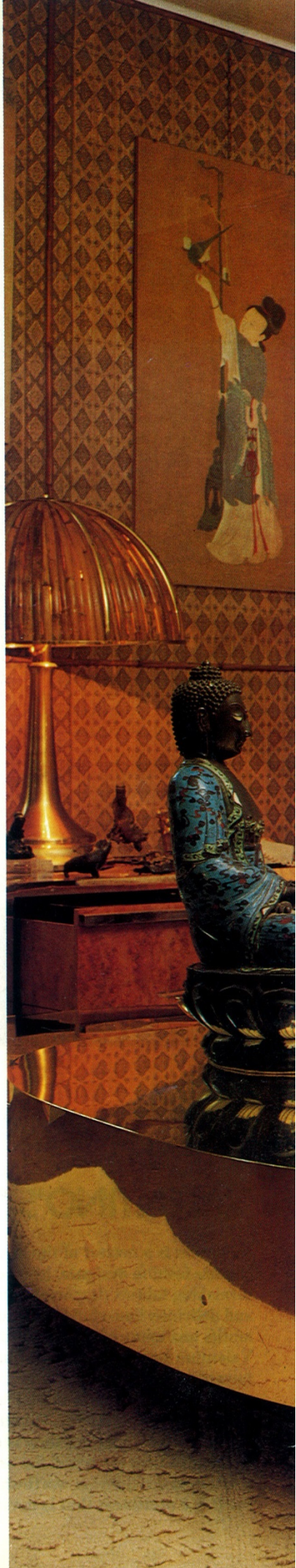
The brilliant Italian designer Gabriella Crespi, some of whose work is shown on page 38, is a lady of almost intimidating style, elegance and charm. Her lifestyle reflects all these qualities — whether it's in Rome at home in the Palazzo Cenci, a magnificent 14th century palace, in Sardinia for summer holidays, or here, in her delightful rooftop apartment in Milan.

In Milan, Gabriella Crespi has created an oasis in the heart of that bustling, noisy city. It even has a two-storey garden, reached up a narrow, winding staircase: an evergreen garden perched high above the city traffic. "It was all cement when we came here," she says, "and I hate that. So I have covered it with green. The garden is my hobby."

The apartment is shared with her daughter Elizabeth, her son Gherarda, and an enormous German Shepherd who rejoices in the name of Groggy. While the furniture and lamps are modern (designed by Gabriella herself), the artefacts are rare Chinese antiques — the mixture handled with confidence. It is a firm Crespi credo that "those who do not love the past have no right to the future" ... an attitude that comes through clearly in her designs and the happy juxtaposition of ancient and modern in her homes. As she says: "Each gives to the other."

This opulent apartment looks deceptively simple. The seating is modular, appropriately called 'Quick Change', and can be used three ways: as a long sofa, as a bed, or as chairs with pouffes.

The walls are covered in hand-woven straw cloth — again looking deceptively simple: but the fabric was specially woven, and bamboo strips give the look of panelling. It is this attention to detail which adds immeasurably to the overall effect.





APARTMENT IN MILAN

The textured walls are a good background for the collection of 17th and 18th century scrolls and paintings. The Crespi-designed, brass coffee table (Design 2000, which can be made to order in any material) is really three tables in one. The ends, one or both of them, slide in and under so as to form a smaller oval table. When pulled out fully, as shown here, Gabriella says it makes "a wonderful low, casual dining table. The children

love to sit round it on cushions from the settee."

The instant adaptability of the seating and table is typical of Crespi's practical approach to design for modern interiors, where space is often at a premium.

Flowers, as Crespi does them, are not small bowls dotted about, just one enormous basket sitting on the floor, crammed with an armload of white and yellow blooms.

Elizabeth has joined her mother

in the business and has obviously inherited her flair. She says her mother is the best teacher a design student could have. Gabriella herself trained as an architect.

Both the mother and daughter say that they are happiest in the Milan apartment "because it is cosy and comfortable". But they also love the grandeur and beauty of their home in Rome. It seems a happy set of choices.

HELEN MARSHALL





Facing page: Split cane dining table with central brass inset and fan-backed chairs are designs by Crespi. Again, a mixture of old and new in candle sconces mounted on 17th century papier maché.

This page, far left: Living room has simple uncurtained wood-framed windows, doors on to leafy garden.

Near left: The living room looks uncluttered yet is full of warmth, comfort and beautiful art pieces.

Below: The terrace outside the living room is the lower level of the two-storey roof garden.

