



Laura Sartori Rimini  
Roberto Peregalli

# The Invention of the Past

Interior Design and  
Architecture of  
Studio Peregalli

---

Laura Sartori Rimini  
Roberto Peregalli

# The Invention of the Past

Interior Design and  
Architecture of  
Studio Peregalli

*RIZZOLI*  
NEW YORK

New York Paris London Milan

First published in the United States of America in 2011  
by Rizzoli International Publications, Inc.  
300 Park Avenue South  
New York, NY 10010  
www.rizzoliusa.com

© 2011 Studio Peregalli

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,  
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any  
means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise,  
without prior consent of the publishers.

Editors: Philip Reeser and Sandy Gilbert Freidus  
Art direction: Luca Stoppini  
Production: Maria Pia Gramaglia  
Translation: Christian C. Bayliss  
Text revisions: Philip Reeser  
Published by arrangement with Marco Vigevani Agenzia Letteraria  
Photolithography: Graphic & Digital Project

Lines from *Life a User's Manual* by Georges Perec, translated from the  
French by David Bellos  
Reprinted by permission of David R. Godine, Publisher, Inc.  
Copyright © 1978 by Hachette Littérature  
Translation copyright © 1987 by David Bellos

2011 2012 2013 2014 / 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Distributed in the U.S. trade by Random House, New York

Printed in China

ISBN-13: 978-0-8478-3665-9

Library of Congress Catalog Control Number: 2011926684



# CONTENTS

<i>Foreword by Hamish Bowles</i>	7
Introduction	15
Facades	18
Entrance Halls	50
Stairways	84
Living Rooms	116
Dining Rooms	154
Libraries	186
Kitchens	216
Bedrooms	232
Bathrooms	258
Capricci	284

# The Invention of the Past

*The canvas portrays an empty room, painted gray, virtually empty of furniture. In the center, a metallic gray desk on which lie a handbag, a bottle of milk, a diary, and a book open at the twin portraits of Racine and Shakespeare. On the rear wall there hangs a picture of a landscape with a setting sun. To the side, a door ajar, through which, one surmises, Eurydice, just a few seconds before, has disappeared forever.*

Georges Perec  
*Life a User's Manual*

Laura Sartori Rimini  
Roberto Peregalli

# The Invention of the Past

Interior Design and  
Architecture of  
Studio Peregalli

*RIZZOLI*  
NEW YORK

New York Paris London Milan





# CONTENTS

<i>Foreword by Hamish Bowles</i>	7
Introduction	15
Facades	18
Entrance Halls	50
Stairways	84
Living Rooms	116
Dining Rooms	154
Libraries	186
Kitchens	216
Bedrooms	232
Bathrooms	258
Capricci	284



# The Invention of the Past

Foreword

Hamish Bowles

Roberto Peregalli and Laura Sartori Rimini are the alchemists of contemporary decorating and architecture, possessed of the gift of transforming base materials into profoundly evocative environments with the power to stir and inspire. Those happy few who inhabit or are invited into these endlessly intriguing rooms experience by turns the drama, romance, mystery, seduction, and surprise that signal a Studio Peregalli project. The works presented in this book—"an architectural dictionary" as they describe it—reveal their perfectionist fetish for nuanced detail. This approach colors not only their decors and buildings but also their most ephemeral creations—exhibitions and even party environments that bloom, like rare desert plants, for one night only.

It is the complementary differences in their individual tastes that fuel these unique rooms. Their working relationship—as I have experienced at first hand—is of a firm complicity that has established through the years, a relationship that surges on with its gentle bickering and its disagreements and its triumphant moments of creative synergy.

Laura admires the enchantment and comfort of the settings that Madeleine Castaing created in mid-twentieth-century France to modishly evoke those of the Second Empire. Roberto, meanwhile, cherishes the elegant austerity of early nineteenth-century Northern European and Russian interiors, as well as a Chekhovian nostalgia that borders on melancholy.

For an early project—a *garçonnière* fashioned from an unpromising and entirely neutral studio apartment in a shabby postwar Milanese high-rise—they envisaged a ruined Roman villa, the walls and ceilings of the room embellished with trompe l'oeil in the romantic tradition of the artist Lila de Nobili (friend and collaborator of the legendary decorator Renzo Mongiardino). The room was painted to suggest a ruined Roman villa, its roof collapsed to reveal a sky and opportunistic vines and creepers insinuating themselves through the void. The illusion was extraordinarily convincing. (In the houses they have built, however, including a villa emerging in persuasive antiquity from the orange groves of Sotogrande, Roberto and Laura insist on a sensitive relationship between the facade and the interiors.) It is perhaps unsurprising to discover that Roberto has chosen the teeming, flyblown medina of Tangier for his retreat. Here, with remarkable vision, he and Laura have fashioned an environment of Delacroix mystery and beauty from a cluster of unrelated buildings, mostly long-buried under the accumulated dust and debris of decades of neglect. Laura instead has an elegantly inviting jewel box of an apartment in Paris. In this enchanting establishment the patina of its Louis Quinze boiseries and eighteenth-century tile and parquet floors seems untouched for centuries but was installed, of course, merely months ago.

Studio Peregalli's projects are indeed palimpsests of memory. Laura and Roberto delight in using antique salvaged interior elements and materials—deftly synthesized with contemporary fabrications—to brilliantly illusory effect, so that the viewer is not able to determine where the original elements end and their interventions begin. (Their much lauded work on public historical monuments—Milan's mayoral Palazzo Marino, Palazzo Reale, and Palazzo Morando, the museum of Milanese history, among them—naturally requires a more scrupulously authentic approach.)

They are vehemently opposed to the idea of fashionable decorating, "the idea that you change your house like you change your dresses." Instead they would rather "create a shell—a house that just grows up with you and that you don't feel the need to change because you still feel comfortable in it." At times their gestures may seem counterintuitive, but ultimately they prove inspired. They will insist, for instance, that a room with very little natural light be decorated in Stygian tones so that the few rays of sunlight, when they finally appear, make the space vibrate with life, or that a small room, densely crowded with pattern, furnishing, and objects, will appear larger—or that an empty room can be cozy.

Their use of antiques suggests the layering of the grand interiors of English and Italian aristocrats, of those rooms in which each successive generation has added rather than subtracted furnishings, paintings, and



Roberto Peregalli and Laura Sartori Rimini

photographed by Luca Stoppini

*Page 6 and following pages.* A visual tour of the studio: the entrance hall, gallery, and two working rooms where clients are received. Models, fabric swatches, wood samples, paper, and capitals are seen everywhere, as well as statues and architectural fragments—all creating a Piranesi-inspired assemblage. It is in these spaces—a well-organized Babel of a world—that the design projects portrayed in the following chapters are born.





















