

IMPERFECT

harmony



Featuring distressed metalwork, worn woodwork and rough plaster walls, this converted saucepan factory provides the perfect setting for an inspiring antiques atelier, hidden away in the backstreets of Milan

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Seating area Positioned beneath an ornate iron chandelier, the 19th-century French sofa – accessorised with handmade cushions – is an elegant centrepiece

Dining table An Italian farm table is dressed with an arrangement of glass pharmacy jars filled with fresh flowers. Decorative pieces such as antique window grilles and a taxidermy stag's head contrast with the utilitarian staircase that leads to the mezzanine >





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Sideboard The 20th-century side unit is a neutral base for a display of mismatched antique paintings. The balancing act continues with an antique French mirror placed alongside a small still-life painting and a Middle Eastern iron gate. 'It is a very flexible space. It gives me a lot of freedom to present my things, moving them around as I choose,' says the owner. The wallpaper is by British textiles brand Lewis & Wood

Dining table Enrica Stabile (pictured) runs her design business from the building, opening it as a shop each Thursday. Her signature style is one of imperfect elegance; here, a French folding table accessorised with a pretty selection of Sèvres porcelain teapots is surrounded by garden chairs. A floral arrangement and a 19th-century Italian chandelier hung with glass fruit and teardrops add splashes of colour **Stockist details on p187 >**

Part of the charm of interior designer Enrica Stabile's shop and office is that you have to find it first. Removed from the bustle of central Milan, L'Utile e il Dilettevole is hidden within a network of courtyards, marked out by two lemon trees that signpost the front door. Inside, an elegantly industrial interior is home to an enchanting mix of the grand and the everyday. Growing up in the Italian style capital, surrounded by beautiful design at every turn, Enrica cultivated her aesthetic skills from an early age. The shop (open every Thursday) is new, but her customers have been coming to her for years, attracted by the way she effortlessly mixes simple yet sophisticated furniture, curios and fabrics. Here, Enrica talks to us about her store.

When did your love of furniture and design start? I have always been very conscious of my surroundings, even when I was young. I grew up in Milan in a house full of beautiful objects, but quickly realised that I didn't like the heavy and austere feeling of classic furniture. I longed for lighter colours and wanted to live in a soft atmosphere, the kind that can come from balancing the elegantly distressed look of an antique sofa with upholstery in fresh, uplifting colours.

What attracted you to the building? It's a very interesting space, primarily because the ceiling is so high. There are lots of qualities in its industrial character and I purposefully left it rough, with cement on the floor and no decoration on the walls. I did some basic work such as electrical wiring and I put a staircase and mezzanine level in to create two floors: upstairs for fabrics and decorative objects and downstairs for furniture.

How do you define the L'Utile e il Dilettevole look? Although I'm not tied down to a specific style, my stock tends to be 19th-century furniture and a collection of smaller objects from the past and present. I try to picture the pieces together so that the end result is harmonious. Contemporary and vintage textiles establish additional texture and colour, while flowers and plants create a calming effect.

How do you use colour? I can't live without it. It doesn't have to be strong, but it has to give me joy. Right now, I'm in a green phase. At the moment I have two beautiful blue-green opaline lights, which have become the springboard for a decorative scheme. I like to create a setting where the colour is the thread: the starting point can be any object in a specific shade and then all the rest will follow.

L'Utile e il Dilettevole: utile-dilettevole.it

Dining area The pared-back arrangement of wood and metal furniture is lifted by busy displays of flowers and pictures. A mix of rustic and more sophisticated china is peppered throughout the space. For similar vintage desks, try Retrouvius **Stockist details on p187** >





Colour and scent make the space come alive'



Hallway Concrete walls and floors are softened by a few choice items, such as an antique Swedish clock and a display of vintage linen sheets. 'I adore textiles, and I get very passionate about colours,' says the owner
Courtyard This is the owner's favourite place to sit in warmer months. A carved wooden column acts as a plinth for a vintage watering can and a vase of flowers **LD**

