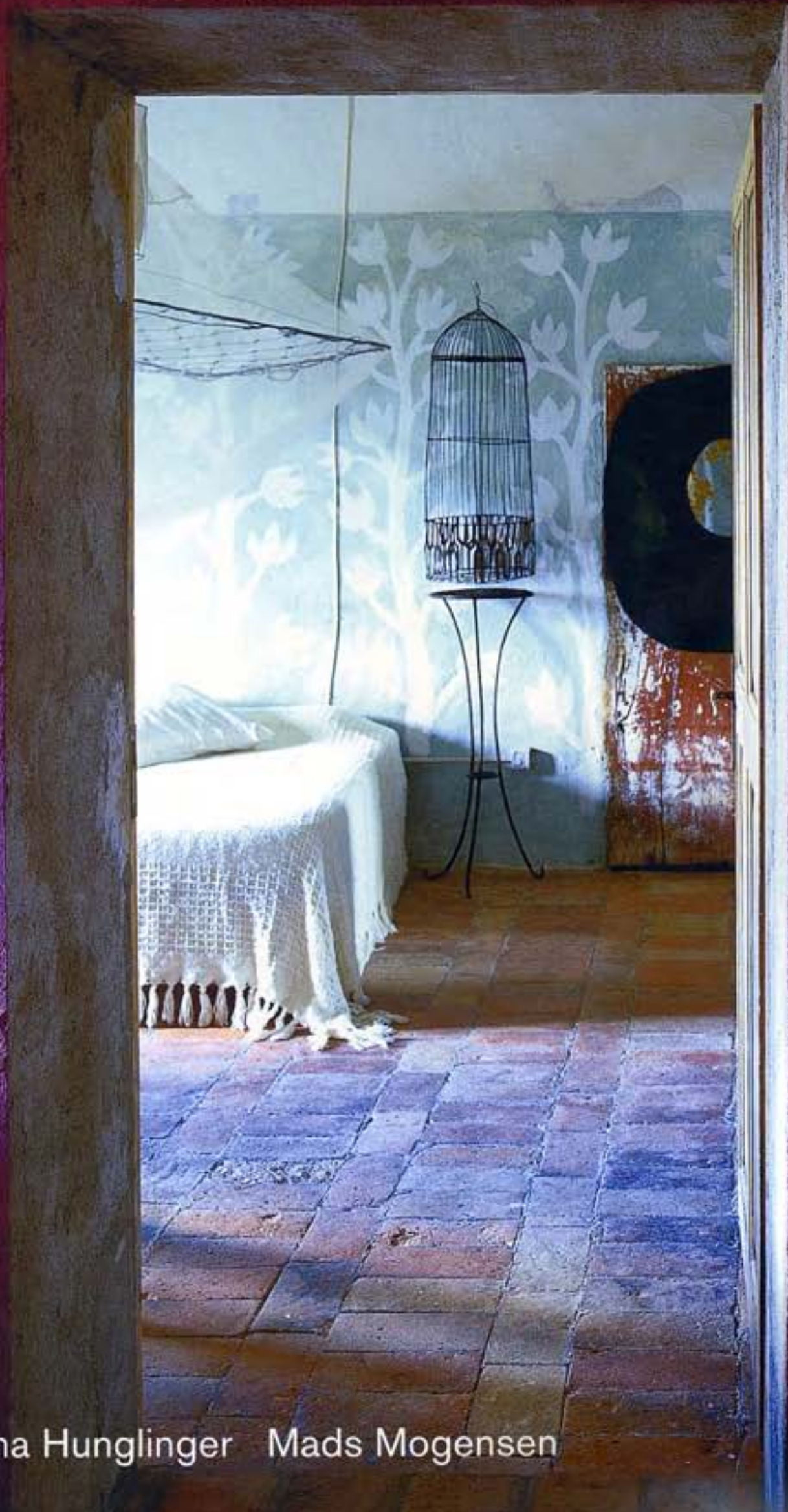


A Sense of Place

Country Style Living



Martina Hunglinger Mads Mogensen

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Barbara Frua

Maremma – Italy

BARBARA FRUA'S CHILDHOOD WAS, in every sense, a colourful one. She grew up in a house near the ocean where white walls didn't exist. "My father loved colour with a passion." Later on, her travels to places like India, Morocco and Greece – where she found inspiration in everything from spice markets to saris – deepened her love affair with colour and eventually led to a lifelong attachment to interior design.

As well as decorating houses, Barbara owns 'Mimma Gini,' a shop in Milan that's an essential port of call for anyone seeking exquisite fabrics from all over the world. Life as one of the city's most in-demand interior designers, means that taking regular breaks is as important for inspiration as it is for relaxation. While she maintains an elegant apartment in Milan, Barbara likes to escape as often as possible to her house in the Maremma region in Tuscany.















"It's so easy to decorate in the country because nature gives you the clues. Whether it's colour, texture or light, all you have to do is open your eyes and you'll find inspiration: in every walk you take, every morning you wake up and every night you look up at the sky. The landscape is like this huge, wonderful library that you can borrow from as you wish." 🌿









"For me the idea of a retreat was about the perfect location rather than the perfect house, and that meant a specific part of the Maremma.

I'm halfway between the openness of what I call true countryside and the soft and long-stretching dunes of the sea. On windy days you can smell the sea and hear the sound of breaking waves, even though the house is one kilometre away from the beach. I especially enjoy surprising first time visitors by taking them on a walk through the countryside, which then unexpectedly leads to the sea."

Sensitive renovation work under Barbara's discerning eye means this 1950s farmhouse has kept its rural charm, but also undergone a wonderful transformation. Large windows now front

the sheds where agricultural machinery was once stored. Here the original stone pavement remains, leading you to the garden and connecting the inside with the green spaces surrounding the house. Inside the floors are made of wood, while walls are plastered with limestone in natural, warm tones.



Against this Barbara has skilfully combined original and beautiful pieces from all corners of the globe. African carpets, French chairs and a Belgian table all sit alongside one another in easy harmony. The house is undoubtedly eye-catching yet very cosy. Colours are used to connect rooms, furniture and accessories. "I wanted the interior

of the house to reflect both its countryside and seaside moods," says Barbara. "The colour choice came quite naturally to me: the warm reds reflect the terracotta and sienna shades in the soil surrounding the house; there are yellows that symbolise the sunflowers and ripe cornfields and greens that are emblematic of the fields in spring and the many trees that frame the property. And of course there are pale blues and

green to capture the sea."

She has also applied her talents to the exterior of the house. Fifteen years ago she planted a huge palm tree in the middle of the lawn which, today, forms a focal point for the garden. Meanwhile a willow tree provides plenty of shade to enjoy a summer breakfast or lunch with friends.









On the veranda Barbara has used wooden planks, which extend right out to the lawn. Under the Asian inspired cane-worked sunroof, hand-made cushions and Chinese benches are an invitation to relax and enjoy the changing parade of Tuscan colours. These include oak and fig trees as well as Macchia mediterranea, shrubs that are typical of the Maremma region such as wild rosemary, juniper, pistachio and laurel.

For Barbara being here is ultimately about enjoying the abundance and beauty in her surroundings. "I love the way the seasons offer up new colours and perfumes. I appreciate the simple things, like walking with my daughter and playing with my dogs, riding my horse or eating with friends. We prepare our meals with locally grown produce and then we all sit down to dine in front of the fireplace. It takes us four and half hours to get here from Milan which means you have to make a real effort but this special landscape is worth every kilometre of that journey and more." 🌿

