

THIS PAGE in the kitchen of this home, Margherita **armchair** by Franco Albini for Bonacina 1889.

OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM LEFT in the living area, built-in green velvet **sofa** with Carrara marble surround; 1970s Nesting **coffee table** by Giotto Stoppino for Kartell; Plumage **vase** by Bottega Nove; 1950s Alberello **floor lamp** from Stilnovo; *Piero Della Francesca aspirava alla sanità in pittura* **artwork** by Linda Carrara from Boccanera Gallery. Architect Giacomo Totti. *Details, last pages.*



THE TIES THAT BIND

Architect Giacomo Totti draws on bright tones, covetable pieces and a smart division of space in revamping his sister's family home near Vincenza in northern Italy.

By Annemarie Kiely Photographed by Helenio Barbetta



Try telling an Italian that family is best kept separate from business and they'll bang on about centuries of success burgeoning from the bonds of blood. But not architect Giacomo Totti, a native of the northern Italian city of Vicenza that vies with Venice for the finest representation of Renaissance architecture by the master Andrea Palladio. Totti contentiously swam against the tide of familial tradition by knocking back a commission from his close sister Elena.

Why risk professional objectivity and personal peace when you have enough clients and media coverage flowing from inspired concepts that synthesise Palladian classicism with a Carlo Scarpa-like crafting, mid-century collectables and a rave-party palette of colours? Besides, Totti rationalises, his oeuvre was perhaps too theatrical for Elena and her husband who, living in cramped accommodation near Vincenza and expecting their first child, yearned for more space with a built-in practicality and a minimalist aesthetic.

But as sisters are known to do, Elena ignored her brother's protests and pushed him to inspect a non-descript house in a nearby town and appraise it for purchase and improvement. "I remember when Elena sent me the photos of the real estate ad, I didn't even want to visit the house," says Totti. "It reflected their housing needs, but it had no positive aesthetic characteristics: the rooms were badly distributed, it seemed very small and cramped. The light display was a disaster, no finish was worthy of preservation." »



PRODUCTS, FROM TOP
KV1 one-handle **mixer** in Gloss Black, \$1745, from Vola; en.vola.com
Carbon double **outlet** with USB in Aged Brass, POA, from Zetr; zetr.com.au
60cm electric built-in **oven**, \$1599, from Ilve; ilve.com.au
SL Riedel Stemless Wings cabernet sauvignon **glasses**, \$55 for a pair, from Riedel; riedel.com



THESE PAGES in another view of the kitchen, custom Carrara marble and stainless-steel **island**; Gaia **stools** by Kazuhide Takahama for Cassina, enquiries to Mobilia; Aim **suspension lamp** by Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec for Flos, enquiries to Living Edge; custom **room divider** in curved wood and Vienna straw; pyrography **artwork** by Jarmila Mitříková and Dávid Demjanovic from Studio d'Arte Raffaelli.

Totti turned up the folly with sugar-pink cabinets and a Carrara marble bench bound in a light-bouncing stainless steel.



THIS PAGE in the bathroom, custom **vanity** with plum lacquered cannetate doors with top and basin in red Levanto marble; brass mixer; 1940s mirror; 1940s Seguso glass vase. *Details, last pages.*

« Slamming its gormless form, Totti flung the couple the dare of a totally “over-the-top” scheme, which would either galvanise their commitment or cause them to walk away. His quick jump to the intricacies of construction tells that the couple took the challenge and Totti the commission. “We completely razed the living area to the ground, getting rid of the horrible floors in a fake slate porcelain stoneware, together with all the useless elements that hindered the volume and suppressed natural light and airiness,” he says. “We then demolished the superstructure of the stairs, minimising it as if it was drawn by a child.”

The bathroom is hewn in red Levanto marble, lined with plum-lacquered cabinets and propped with a 1940s mirror and Seguso glass vase. Practicality is shrouded in glamour.

He then rezoned “functional systems”, covered the floor in concrete, colouring it a unifying blue-tinged grey, and custom-designed 1950s referential fixtures that freed space for the flow of traffic and a feeling of largesse. Intrinsic to the new “airiness” was the removal of a load-bearing kitchen wall, which invited south-east light and landscape into living rooms.

The kitchen thus became an on-view vestige of the living room. Accordingly, Totti toned down its functionalism and turned up the folly with sugar-pink cabinets and a Carrara marble bench bound in a light-bouncing stainless steel that repeats in the open living-room shelving.

Where there was little mystery in the layout, the architect detailed screens of woven Viennese straw, some of which curve to create an enigmatic entry niche when slid along a guiding track. They evince a crafting that continues upstairs, where a more light-absorbent materiality plays to the rhythms of sleep. The main bedroom, in a dreamy dark teal, feeds into a bathroom hewn in red Levanto marble, lined with plum-lacquered cabinets and propped with a 1940s mirror and Seguso glass vase. Practicality, again, is shrouded in glamour.

Totti insists he has met her brief in “a minimal box that welcomes elegant presences, with a nostalgic hint that never gives in to opulence”. But more importantly, he adds with note that peace and professionalism were preserved, her home now reflects her joie de vivre personality, “always sunny and positive”. **VL** giacomototti.com