

• GLOBAL STYLE •

ITALY

# Beyond a ROMAN HOLIDAY

AN AMERICAN DESIGNER FINDS A FRESH SOURCE  
OF CREATIVITY IN THE ETERNAL CITY



The barrel-vault ceiling creates a cozy, intimate atmosphere in the living room of designer Patrick Gallagher's apartment in Rome's Palazzo Taverna. Gallagher designed the sofa, upholstered in Alessandra Stria, the Gustav chairs, covered in Bernardo Paisley, and the Kristina ottoman, done in four more shades of Alessandra Stria. The palette was inspired by the view from his windows, and all the fabrics are from the Patrick Gallagher Tessuti collection. **OPPOSITE:** Gallagher's dog, Brewster, sneaks a drink from a third-century Roman sarcophagus, now a fountain in the courtyard.



**CHRISTINE PITTEL:** You're living my fantasy—an apartment in a palazzo in Rome. How did you find it?

**PATRICK GALLAGHER:** A woman I sat next to at a dinner party said, 'Try the Palazzo Taverna. I know the family who owns it.' I had no idea it was a fabled palazzo—it was just an address to me—until I walked into the courtyard and saw the elegant 17th-century fountain. All of a sudden the noise of the city vanished and everything was hushed and quiet. I thought, Wow, this is so peaceful. My apartment, off a smaller medieval tower courtyard, is certainly not one of the grand apartments, but I liked the layout—an entry hall, a living room, and a not-quite-square bedroom with high wood ceilings.

**Why is there a barrel-vault ceiling in the living room? Are you under the roof?**

No, I'm on the second floor, and I don't know what it's doing there. When I first saw that room, it was painted a dingy white with bare bulbs hanging from the ceiling, and my initial reaction was that I couldn't possibly live in a Quonset hut. Visions of *Gomer Pyle: U.S.M.C.* came to mind. But then I focused on the uniqueness of the space and imagined it made into a jewel box of a room, with a faux-painted quilted effect on that ceiling. Then I walked into the bedroom and knew it was never going to get much light, since the only window looked out on the wall of an abandoned sacristy, deliciously decaying with old paint. I was trying to envision myself living here, thinking, This is what I will see when I wake up. Then the noon bells from all the surrounding churches began to chime, and that was it: I knew this would be my home.

**What prompted the move to Rome?**

Change. The year 2008 was my annus horribilis. I lost my mother and my best friend. The market tanked. A friend said I needed a break, so my great staff in Stonington, Connecticut, looked after my clients while I went to Rome for a six-month sabbatical. I arrived with my dog, knowing no one, and signed up for Italian lessons and a painting class. And I fell in love



with the city and the people. So here I am, having made a huge change in my life, setting down roots in Rome. No longer temporarily.

**How do you maintain your practice?**

I fly back every few months to meet with clients, and so far I've managed to keep them happy, thanks to Skype, FedEx, Delta, and Alitalia. Meanwhile, I've always wanted to design a textile collection and finally had the opportunity to do it here. Coincidentally, a studio opened up beneath my apartment in the courtyard, and it's now my showroom.

**So you live and work amid the same sun-baked ocher walls. Did you duplicate that color in your living room?**

Yes. I thought, Let's bring the Roman colors inside. In the living room and the entry hall, the walls are painted ocher, hand-waxed to give a little luster, with terra-cotta trim. Since the space is small, I wanted warm tones to make it feel cozy. Also, the terra-cotta floors weren't going to change, and I wanted to play off that. A mossy sage green is the foil, and I put it on

**ABOVE:** Gallagher on one of the monumental staircases inside the Palazzo Taverna. **OPPOSITE:** Mia Fonnagrives-Solow's corrugated cardboard collage of a wolf hangs above a c. 1820 American pier table. "I thought, What do I really want to live with? And then I brought over all my favorite pieces," says Gallagher. The curtains are in his Taverna Grape silk-linen, named after the palazzo where he lives.

the sofa I designed with curves that echo the curve of the ceiling. The rest of the furniture consists of favorite pieces from my New York apartment and my Stonington house, like that pair of chairs by the window and the ottoman. It separates into four seats, with a little center table, which is great when I have a lot of people over. You can take a seat and scoot it over to join any conversation you like.

**Where do you eat?**

Do you see that half-moon table in the entry hall, flanked by two chairs with a painting above it? Its other half is in the living room, and I put them together for a dinner party. Or I'll invite people over for drinks, and then we'll go to a local trattoria, either Pierluigi or Roscioli.

**Stop. I'm getting hungry. And very jealous of la dolce vita. What's it like sleeping in a red bedroom?**

Rich, seductive, mysterious. I knew I wanted red. First, I found the red grass cloth for the walls and pulled a deep Valentino red from that for the closet and trim color. The fabric on the headboard is my own Daniella Stripe, in a more Pompeian red, and then there's a terra-cotta red on the coverlet and the side chair.

**Do all reds go together?**

No. Oh no, no, no. My reds are warm, which means that on the color scale, they tend more toward orange as opposed to blue. They work together because they all have the same tone.

**I'm curious about that bed. Is it antique?**

No, I designed it, modeling the headboard after the back of a 16th-century chair I saw in the shop of Rome's ultimate antiques dealer, Alessandra di Castro. I took that same shape and redid it—on steroids. It needed to be tall to be in proportion with the high ceiling. As you look into that room from the entry hall you see the bed, and it had to have presence. I used to be a stylist on photo shoots, and I tend to look at things as though through a camera's eye.

**You've created a very photogenic place in the midst of reinventing your life.**

I thought, If not now, when?

PRODUCED BY GRETCHEN SMELTER



In the entry hall, portieres made of Gallagher's Demetrio Stripe mask a doorway leading to the front entrance. He replaced a nondescript door to the bedroom with mahogany and had bookcases built to provide more storage. Nickel picture lights from Leone Aliotti. The painted ceiling was inspired by frescoes glimpsed through windows at night. **OPPOSITE:** A 17th-century table is paired with a kaleidoscopic version of Donatello's famous *David*, painted by C. Finley. The chairs, from a local antiques shop, are covered in Gallagher's Savage Damask.





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1. The other half of the entryway's 17th-century table anchors a wall in the living room. 2. Objects, composed into vignettes, add interest to the bookshelves. 3. Grass cloth on the walls and a woven stripe on the headboard bring warmth and texture to the bedroom. 4. Gallagher and Brewster, in front of a neighbor's door. 5. The designer lives right over his showroom, which makes for an easy commute. 6. In the bathroom, he designed a new vanity, topped with Carrara marble and high enough to accommodate a small washing machine underneath. It's hidden behind shoji screen-style doors covered in African cloth; a motif from the cloth inspired the painted frieze. The door to the bathroom, on the left, is mirrored. 7. Under a ceiling where the main stars portray Gallagher's astrological sign, a valance in Demetrio Stripe accentuates a window. **OPPOSITE:** The walls of the palazzo are almost three feet thick, which means the windowsill is large enough to serve as a bar during parties.



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Rich colors and a mix of patterns contribute to the exotic air in the bedroom. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Pleasants Paisley, designed by Gallagher and used for the curtains, was inspired by a silk-and-cashmere shawl—thrown over a nearby chair—that he found in Brussels. **BELOW RIGHT:** The pillow on the c. 1780 American wing chair is made of Gallagher's Cinzia Medallion. **FAR RIGHT:** Omexco Foja grass cloth covers the walls and sets off a bed upholstered in Gallagher's Daniella Stripe. Textiles he picked up on his travels were turned into pillows, accenting a coverlet made of Gallagher's Brewster Chenille. The Moroccan rug is laid on the diagonal, "to give it some energy," he explains. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES

