

VOGUE

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INTERIORS WITH CHARISMA

UNTAMED CREATIVITY IN JAIPUR, DUBAI, NEW YORK...
THE VERY BEST OF SALONE DEL MOBILE

VOGUE LIVING

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ATUL PRATAP CHAUHAN

For this issue's cover, the India-based hotel and resort photographer stepped inside the newly opened Villa Palladio – an old haveli turned boutique hotel that has been dressed in maximal whimsy (p48). “My experience with the space in Jaipur was fabulous,” he says. “I was impressed by the use of maximalism and Indian architecture.”



MOHAMED SHERIF

The Egyptian documentary photographer ambled about the streets of the country for the edition's travel feature, highlighting all of its tastes and treasures (p91). “I often travel around Egypt to chronicle the transformation of people's lives,” he says. “I couple that with the place's cafés, wedding halls, beaches. Sometimes I create immersive designs with different materials I collect on the way, like I did with the image of the horse.”



NAUSHEEN NOOR

“It was wonderful to reconnect with Ariana, who I had interviewed over a decade ago, and see what she's accomplished since then,” the journalist and editor based in Washington says on her feature with celebrity chef Ariana Bundy (p100), who has just opened a dining venue in Dubai. “It was interesting to hear about how a combination of serendipity and hard work played a role towards her first restaurant.”



SEBASTIAN BÖTTCHER

The Dubai/London-based photographer, whose projects have led him to cross paths with a diverse range of personalities – from Zaha Hadid and Nobu Matsuhisa to HRH Princess Lamia Al Saud – lensed the Georgian decor of a Downtown Dubai home (p60). “After moving from London to Dubai, my first client was Eva Interiors, whose opulent and luxurious style perfectly captures the essence of Dubai,” he says. “Our partnership has been a source of great inspiration.”

VOGUE ^{حياة} ARABIA



ملف DOSSIER

INSIDE THE WORLD'S MOST CHARISMATIC INTERIORS
جولة داخل أفخم التصاميم الداخلية الملهمة بالعالم

PARADISO

PRINCE

Outside Jaipur, a new boutique hotel is a crimson fantasy come to life. Amid a rural landscape, a maximal style fuses whimsy with Maharaja-esque decadence

Photography ATUL PRATAP CHAUHAN

Words HANADI MERCHANT-HABIB



The suite has a canopied bed, embroidered linens, hand-block printed razai, and Venetian wall sconces





J

ust 25 minutes outside Jaipur, the pink city's beautiful chaos hits pause. As it disappears and the rural landscape sets in, the neighboring village of Sumel comes alive. A camel may cross the road with its owner, or women in their colorful, traditional garbs can be seen transporting water matkas (clay pots) on their heads. There, set at the foot of the Aravalli Hills and near the banks of the glistening Lake Kanota, is the newly opened Villa Palladio – an old haveli turned into an otherworldly nine-bedroom boutique hotel. While Rajasthan is home to many royal residences serving as hotels, Villa Palladio's more intimate appeal and fantasy-like decor have created quite the buzz. Its owner, Swiss Italian entrepreneur Barbara Miolini, teamed up with Dutch Marie-Anne Oudejans, a former fashion designer, for its playful red interiors. Here whimsy merges with Maharaja-esque decadence and a dose of Italian flair. Bringing to life the work of local artisans – painters, embroiderers, or woodworkers – the hotel is an ode to Rajasthani heritage with zest.

"When my business partner and I were first introduced to the haveli, I originally imagined it as a private country house. But how could I have kept such a beautiful place all to myself?" offers Miolini. The haveli, which could have been a hunting lodge in the past, sits on three acres of land and was completed in the 1980s. Built by nobleman Abhay Singh of Kanota, Miolini explains that the entire property was constructed by two builders using local materials and heritage processes.

The architecture amalgamates Rajput and Mughal influences – with its many scalloped arches, triangular battlements (kanguras), and a central courtyard. Next to the main building are two watchtowers, originally guardrooms – complete with mini turrets. Miolini adds that the haveli was in a remarkable condition when they acquired it. The project began in 2019 and, after multiple Covid-19 lockdowns, was completed in 2022.

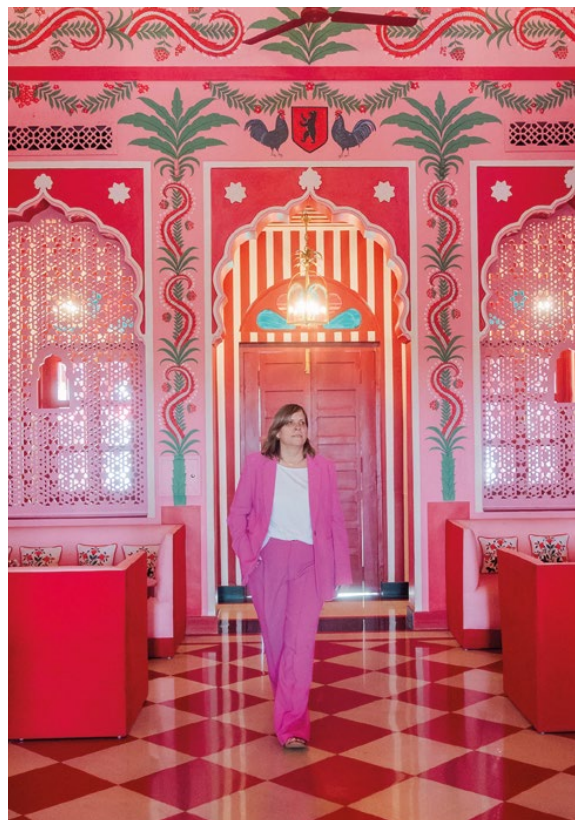
One look at the property, and it's hard not to imagine a caravanserai – Miolini agrees. "We are located just off the ancient road that connected the Mughal court in Agra to the royal court of Jaipur. That road is filled with beautiful palaces, gardens, temples, and in the past, surely a caravanserai," she says. For her, Villa Palladio is a place of respite for its guests. Its deceptively simple white exterior is a stark contrast to what's inside. One doesn't expect to see a contemporary black-and-white checkerboard marble terrace in a traditional haveli. "The floors were inspired by the Vatican. The marble was sourced throughout Rajasthan and was cut on site into the required sizes and placed manually," she elaborates. Upon entering, a manicured formal garden of yucca, red roses, jasmine, and

burgundy frangipani welcomes you. "The main focus of our attention was the construction of the back verandah and gardens. These are completely unrecognizable thanks to our fantastic landscape architect Aude de Liedekerke," adds Miolini.

Outside the gates, there are blossoms of white marigolds and oleander, while the front garden is designed like a typical Charbagh [quadrilateral garden] and is filled with bougainvillea topiaries. Once you pass the chevron-striped arches, a crimson fantasy comes to life. Pillars, walls, furniture, and doors are all pulsating with red – a color inspired by cardinals' robes. "Design should make you dream – be it minimalist or maximal. I have always worked with Marie-Anne, who is integral in dreaming of the most wonderful interventions. We create a story, and the design follows from that initial fantasy," she explains.

The maximalist central hall is a visual treat. Pink and red double-height ceilings boast large, hanging lamps while daylight plays peek-a-boo through the jaali screens. Elsewhere, the walls are hand-painted with a blend of motifs, including palm trees, roosters, and bear crests. Tented daybeds sit atop checkered white-and-red marble

RIGHT Barbara Miolini in the main hall, which features Palladio signature tents, Mughal flower-block printed pillows, and hand-laid scarlet-and-white marble floor
OPPOSITE The Mughal breakfast veranda with custom-made iron chairs and pineapple lamp, scalloped wood table, and hand-embroidered Italian linen place mats and napkins



Pillars, walls, furniture, and doors are all pulsating with red. "Design should make you dream, be it minimalist or maximal. We create a story, and the design follows from that fantasy"



There is little margin for error when manually painting murals, so each room took around two-and-a-half weeks to complete

flooring. “This room feels like a fairytale – it also has the most visual styles. The motifs here are more mod and a nod to the 60s,” she says. A candy-striped corridor boasting Venetian wall sconces running along the perimeter leads guests to the rooms, each telling a different story.

In the superior room, guests are treated to canopied twin beds set against a vivid, hand-painted wall of stripes and chevrons juxtaposed with quintessential Mughal motifs. “Marie-Anne and I played with geometries. We loved the chevrons because they were expressive without being overwhelming and gave a youthful feel to the property,” says Miolini. Every nook and corner here is painted – including the ceiling. Given that there is little margin for error when manually painting murals, each room took around two-and-a-half weeks to complete. Meanwhile, the suite features a large, red, four-poster bed with scalloped edges and stained glass above the bedroom door. The beds are decorated with hand-block printed Jaipuri razais (blankets) featuring an ancient Sangneri block print. The same lavish touch extends to the bedsheets, which boast hand-embroidered motifs by their in-house artisans. In the bathrooms, hand-carved marble jaalis separate the shower area from a sea of red and pink.

The dining halls, too, are designed with the same wit. The duo referenced Palermo for the garden veranda, where lunch and dinner are served. “Chevrons are present within the Norman-Arab architecture of the 10th century,” she says of the murals. The ceilings portray garlands of pomegranates on a background of red stripes, while the walls are panes of mirrors that reflect the gardens. On the contrary, the breakfast veranda leans towards an Indian aesthetic with its Mughal floral motifs.

The duo wanted to keep the furniture minimalistic – be it the scalloped-edged tables or the latticed cane chairs, all handmade by local craftsmen. After toying with many ideas, they opted for a more vintage vibe and referenced old Italian beach clubs and antique fittings. “The furniture is a nod to the 50s and 60s when modern forms and decorative elements were each well-matched. We wanted it to be charming but not overwhelm the room,” explains Miolini. The surrealist affair continues with a pool house at the garden’s end, shielded behind hibiscus hedges and date palms. Reminiscent of a circus tent with its candy-striped interiors, the space overlooks a black slate lap pool. “We designed it with deep banquettes to really luxuriate oneself. Outside are Italian sun umbrellas and spindly loungers. It feels like an exotic beach club fantasy in the middle of the desert.” **VL**



TOP The candy-striped pool house mirrors the scalloped archways of the main villa
ABOVE The bathroom in the Superior Room offers hand-woven towels and hand-painted laurel garlands that complement a red-and-white marble floor

The library with marble floor, signature scallop coffee tables, English-style red sofa, and a collection of books wrapped in red paper that keeps to the theme

