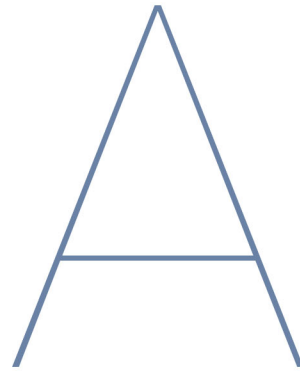


RIVIERA REVIVAL

Faced with a faded apartment in a 1970s building in Monte Carlo, a young design firm looks back to the glittering heyday of the principality to create a glamorous and witty escape for today

TEXT by IAN PHILLIPS · PHOTOGRAPHY by FRANCIS AMIAND





pair of iconic 1970s

images by the society photographer Slim Aarons hangs on the walls of a Monte Carlo apartment decorated by Emil Humbert and Christophe Poyet. One is *Poolside Gossip*, shot at the Richard Neutra–designed Kaufmann House in Palm Springs. The other was taken in the south of France, at the Hotel du Cap-Eden-Roc, which has welcomed everyone from Marc Chagall to Cate Blanchett. “It’s one of those rare places that’s as authentic and magical today as it was in the 1950s,” Humbert says.

It was precisely the glamour those photos encapsulated that the designers wished to capture in their renovation of an apartment on Monaco’s Avenue Princesse Grace, which has been called the most expensive street in the world. “We are nostalgic for the golden era of the French Riviera,” says Humbert, who in 2007 established a design studio here with Poyet. (A decade later their firm is very much on the rise, with projects ranging from residences in France and Hong Kong to restaurants in Berlin and Mexico City to the Parisian flagship of the fashion designer Alexis Mabille.)

Owned by an English stockbroker, in a 1970s tower boasting a prime seafront location, the four-bedroom apartment is nearly 5,000 square feet—exceptionally large for dense Monte Carlo. But the decor felt dated and drab. “It wasn’t even fun, as 1970s interiors can often be,” Poyet recalls. There were odd details, such as belle époque–style cornices that had been added by the previous owners. “They were completely anachronistic and didn’t go with the building at all,” Humbert says.

One element did, however, make the cut: the marble tile flooring in a highly patterned pinkish-beige coloration. “It evokes the Monaco of the 1970s,” Poyet says. “It’s chic and glamorous.”

The designers’ scheme for the apartment’s new decor was deliberately based on oppositions. The

LEFT: In a Monte Carlo apartment designed by Emil Humbert and Christophe Poyet of Humbert & Poyet, the Marco Zanuso armchair is upholstered in a Kvadrat fabric, the custom bench is covered in a Nobilis fabric, and the 1960s bookcase is Italian. The dining table and chairs are by DimoreStudio, the Sputnik ceiling light is by Fedele Papagni, and the marble flooring is original to the 1970s building; the artworks in the dining area are by Pierre Le-Tan, and the light sculpture over the bench is by Olivier Peyricot. For details, see Resources.



The entry's wallcovering is by Matthew Williamson for Osborne & Little, and the photograph is by Slim Aarons; in the living area beyond, a pair of Saporiti Italia chairs is upholstered in a Pierre Frey fabric, the cocktail tables are custom designs, and the rug is by Fashion for Floors. **OPPOSITE:** On a terrace, the 1950 Wim Rietveld sofa has cushions covered in an Osborne & Little stripe; the chair is from Honoré. For details, see Resources.







living room is both sophisticated and restrained, with walls that have just a hint of blue and prime furnishings by such collectible French designers as Jean Prouvé and Pierre Jeanneret. But the mood lightens elsewhere in the home with the addition of whimsical wallpapers in bold tropical motifs. “We wanted to add something playful, but only in little touches,” Humbert says. “Whereas in the ’70s people might have covered a whole room in a palm pattern, we chose to use it just on certain walls.” The dining area also features fanciful artworks by the Parisian illustrator Pierre Le-Tan that depict two Monaco attractions: the Jardin Exotique and the Oceanographic Museum.

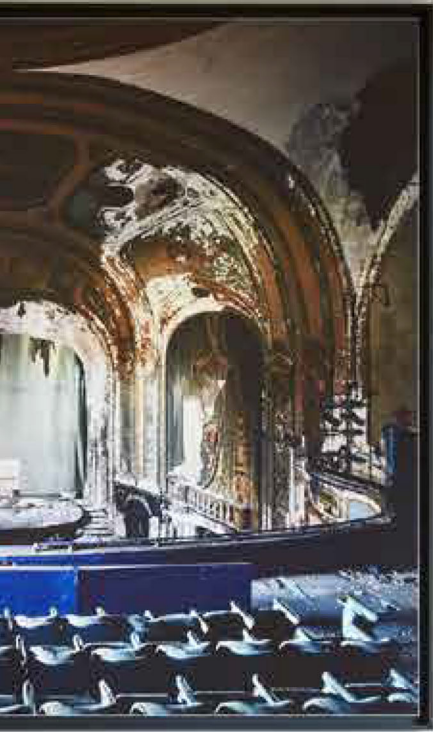
Italian design, too, was a strong reference—an homage to such 20th-century masters as Gio Ponti and Luigi Caccia Dominioni, who came to Monaco and added to its skyline. “You can really feel their influence here,” notes Poyet. “We live alongside Italians every day. It’s part of our culture.” His favorite item in the apartment—a dramatic Sputnik chandelier by Fedele Papagni—is Italian, as are Humbert’s objects of choice: the vintage Gino Sarfatti sconces in the entry hall. “They were the very last things we found,” he says. “For a long time, there were just wires hanging out of the wall.”

OPPOSITE: In the home office, the 1936 daybed is by Jean Prouvé, the table is by Mathieu Matégot, the mirror is a Gio Ponti design, the rug is by Stepevi, and the wallpaper is by Cole & Son. **THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** The desk and chair are reissues of Jean Prouvé designs by Vitra, and the artwork is by Paul Cowan. The entry rug is by Fashion for Floors, the vintage chair is by Pierre Jeanneret, and the sconce is by Gino Sarfatti. The kitchen table and chairs are by Jeanneret; the oven, cooktop, and hood are by Aster Cucine. For details, see Resources.





The living room's side tables and leather sofa are by Flexform, the midcentury Italian chairs are covered in a Nobilis velvet, and the brass-and-alabaster pendants are by Humbert & Poyet; the photograph over the sofa is by Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre, and the artworks at left are by Alex Perweiler. For details, see Resources.





For the owner, the highlight of the apartment is the small terrace tucked just off the master bedroom, which is fitted with a vivid blue custom sofa, metal Jean Royère chairs, and a variety of greenery. It's there that he often works, catching up on e-mails, or simply relaxes, enjoying his private front-row spectacle of the sparkling Mediterranean. "What I love most about Monaco is the very direct relationship between the city and the water," Humbert says. "You can be walking among high-rises for a quarter of an hour, and all of a sudden, you get an unexpected view of the sea. It really is just so beautiful." *Originally published in ELLE DECORATION Netherlands.* ■

OPPOSITE: The bed in the guest room, by Flexform, has a cover in an Osborne & Little check, the lamp is by Michael Anastassiades for Flos, the wallpaper is by Cole & Son, and walls are painted in Farrow & Ball's Parma Gray; the large drawing on top of the 1950s wall unit is by Joe Bradley. **THIS PAGE, FROM TOP:** In the master bedroom, the Flexform bed is dressed in Hermès linens, the daybed is by Jean Prouvé, the console is by Cees Braakman, and the lamp at left is by Gubi; the rugs are by Fashion for Floors, and the artworks, left to right, are by Michael Wilkinson, Danh Vo, and Robert Mapplethorpe. The bedroom terrace has a custom sofa with cushions covered in a Pierre Frey fabric, a vintage Jean Royère chair, and a Pierre Frey cocktail table. For details, see Resources.

