

LODOVICO B. BELGIOTOSO

ERNESTO N. ROGERS

ENRICO PERESSUTTI

the spiral and the acrobat



This apartment, which occupies two floors of an existing house in Milan, was remodeled by what is perhaps the most universally respected architectural firm in Italy, the famous B. B. P. R. The second B., Banfi, died during the war, which is why there are only three men in the photograph at the left, but the four initials still not only a gifted architect, but his courageous spirit — that spirit which pervades the well publicized but not so well understood Italian renaissance. It is a spirit in which both human and professional concerns are mingled — as indeed they should be, in this field particularly. Just when it started is difficult to say. The movement is really not a post-war movement at all, except in terms of our own information, and had its wartime martyrs; the Ninth Triennale in Milan included an exhibition in their honor. Nevertheless very few of its veterans have passed the sunny side of forty.

In the preceding pages we saw some of the divergent (or at least *superficially* divergent) elements of the Italian style in dramatic contrast, exemplified in two works by the same man — Ponti. In this example three minds express a homogeneous concept.

Only the lower floor of the apartment — the living area and entrance — are illustrated on these pages. It is remarkable for its exceptional and precious objects: the Marino Marini statue, a lighting fixture on the wall (that resembles a well-known modern clock), a brightly tiled stove pipe, an entrance floor of deep blue tiles, a suspended circular staircase. It is remarkable also for the way in which these objects are used in the spatial solution. But most of all of it is remarkable for the lack of

Glassed on three sides, the new low window over the garden hangs out of doors, at least visually. It can be protected from the sun with white venetian blinds whose fixed horizontal bars are crossed by four black ropes.

Though unpartitioned, floor of blue-tile set

Through the window, the living room is divided into three parts: entry (foreground), central area, window. A step to a lower level, which has a view of the city, is the entry point. The central area focuses on the hooded fireplace that turns its back to the outward-minded window edge. A step to a lower level, which has a view of the city, is the entry point.





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Glassed on three sides, the new bow window over the garden hangs out of doors, at least visually. It can be protected from the sun with white venetian blinds whose faint horizontals are crossed by four black tapes.

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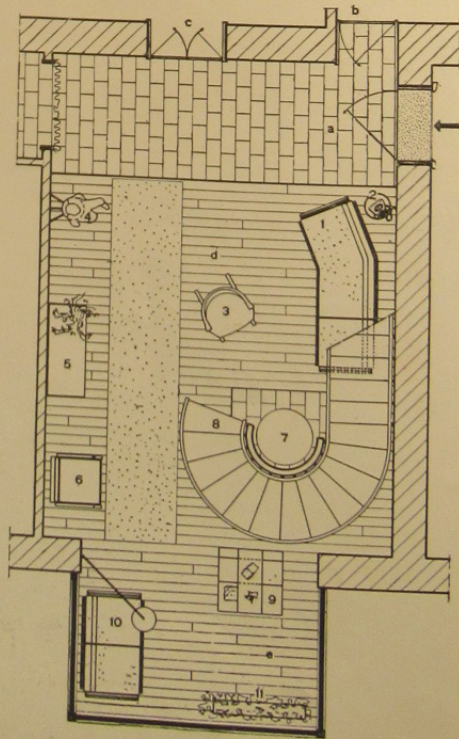
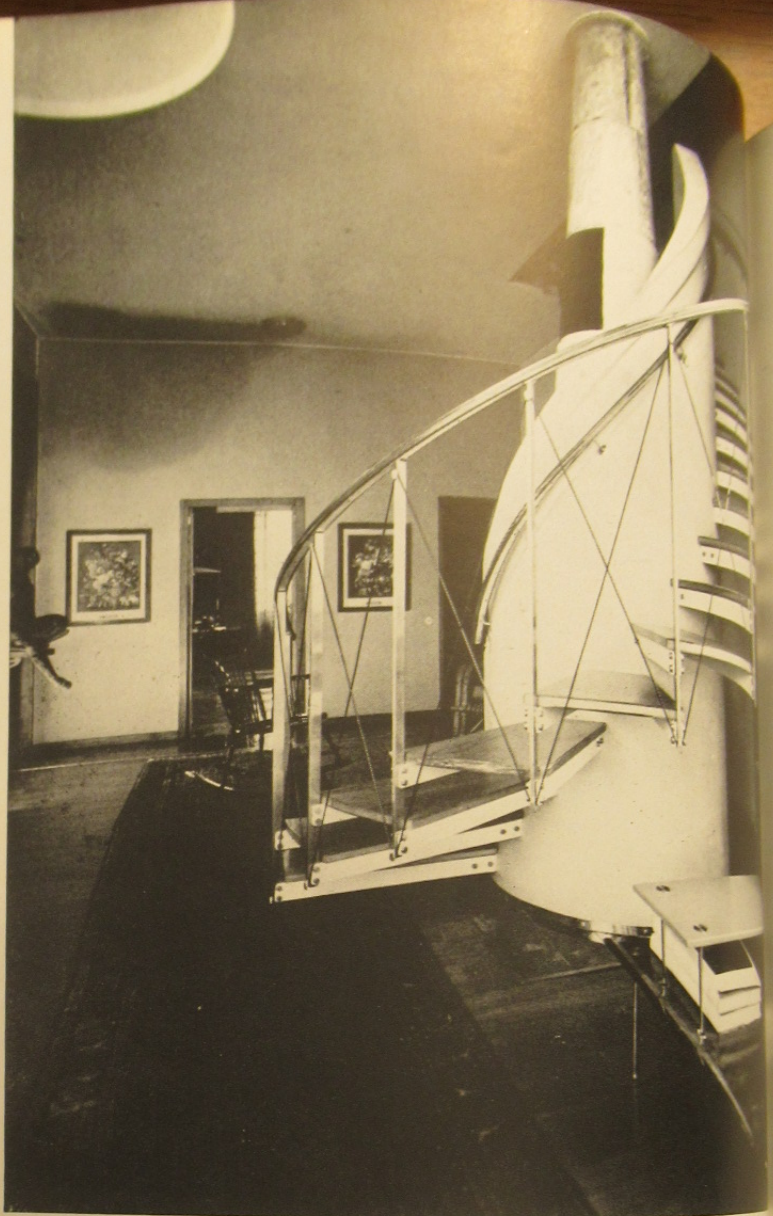


strain with which so many unusual parts are assembled into a comfortable, easy-going whole.

Originally the floor was divided into small spaces: living room, kitchen, lavatory, entrance. The architects knocked down all the partitions and added a rectangular, steel-framed bow window overhanging the garden.

Though not partitioned, the entrance is set off by a slight change in level — being a single step down, and by its flooring — Melotti's ceramic tiles with cloudlike blue mottlings. Walnut planks cover the main living area.

Two sculptural objects dominate and organize the main living area, which is relatively long and narrow. One is a sculpture, Marini's large, tinted statue; and the other is an amazing unit composed of the fireplace, its concrete shield, its conical hood, and the skeletal staircase circling around it. The hood, emerging from the ceiling over a bronze tripod tray, is covered with a traditional fireplace material — ceramic tile — used in most untraditional diminishing rectangles of pink, yellow, gray, blue. Around it spirals the delicate skeleton of the stairs, protected by a contrastingly thick, smooth shield that is cut away parallel to the inner railing. Steps are walnut, railings polished brass, the crossed steel wires black. The first 11 steps are supported on the shield, the



- a. door to tiled entry
- b. entry area windows
- c. central living area
- d. window area added
- e. bamboo sofa
- 1 telephone
- 2 rocker
- 3 statue
- 4 Venetian chest of drawers
- 5 armchair
- 6 fireplace
- 7 stairs
- 8 tables
- 9 sofa
- 10 plant box
- 11

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BELGIOIOSO, PERESSUTTI, ROGERS (R.R.P.R.)

Marini's "Il Giocoliere," The Acrobat—about to step onto his tightrope—sits on a swingable stool that does actually swing, as a study of our pictures will show. Changes in position as well as of lighting multiply the possibilities of interesting shadows—one of sculpture's basic assets. The wall-blooming Sarfatti fixture may also be considered sculpture, but its connotations are all irreverent.



higher ones on the wall. Bolts make a pattern of double dots on the structure.

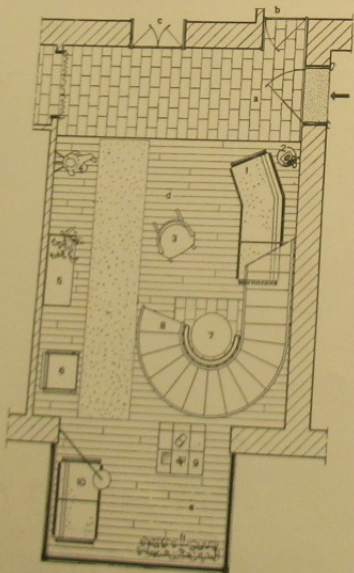
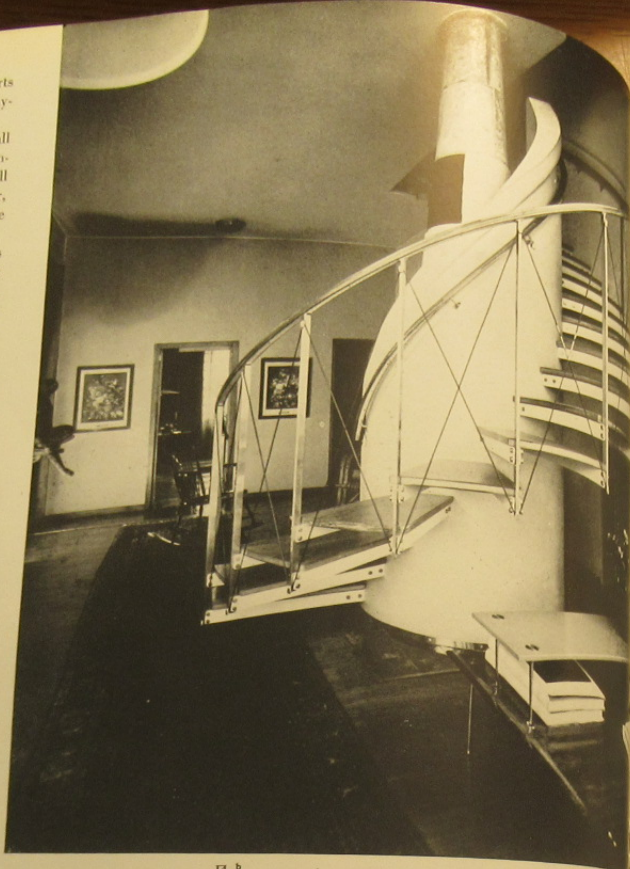
Antiques, two oriental rugs, plants, books, paintings (not all *avant-garde*) and other nostalgic impedimenta of comfortable family life make the spectator take for granted the spatial tricks which the architects have played. The space is first of all made the most of by the transparency of the big objects within it. The Windsor rocker, the two wicker sofas (designed by the architects), the stacking, nestable coffee tables on thin brass legs with tops of walnut, blue enamel and white enamel, (also by the architects) and the stairs, share this characteristic. But even more remarkable is the levitation of the heaviest objects in the room — fireplace, stairs, and the big statue — Marini's *Giocoliere* — The Acrobat — who, about to venture on his tightrope, sits on a swinging stool held out from the wall—mischievous, weightless, and very much at home.—O.G.

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