

KEY TO PLAN

1. Living and dining areas.
2. Library.
- 3, 4. Children's bedrooms.
5. Master bedroom.
6. Kitchen.
7. Entrance hall.
8. Pantry.

Opposite: Corridor gallery is sparsely furnished with antiques, and angled cases (designed by Albini & Helg) displaying antique pottery. Paintings are hung from unobtrusive iron band at top of wall, and illuminated by simple modern fixtures. Floor, throughout major spaces, is black and white marble tiles.

Palazzo mood in a Milanese high-rise

With spare and stately perspectives, Italian architects Franco Albini and Franca Helg capture a museum's timelessness for an art collector's apartment in Milan

Long-term readers of INTERIORS may have some sense of the power and scope of one of Italy's most famous architectural teams, Franco Albini—whom Kidder Smith termed "the most elegant architect in Italy"—and Franca Helg. The range of design projects in itself is impressive—from delicate Venini lamps to massive exhibition spaces, from plywood chairs to underground museums (INTERIORS, January, 1956.) Their published projects, however, can only suggest the adaptability of their design. In the solution of design problems, no statements are repeated, no solutions formulized; their interiors are daring, appropriate, but never trademarked. The aptness of the solution is exemplified in this grand apartment for an art collector, located, surprisingly enough, on the seventeenth floor of a modern high-rise apartment building in Milan. The disposition, and furnishing of all spaces, insofar as existing columns and pipes would permit, were dictated solely by the collection of art itself—a priceless group of paintings and sculptures which range from the pre-Raphaelites to Mirò. In deference to this wealth of art, Albini & Helg created what they term a museum domicile—*una casa-museo*—in which residential activities revolve around a leisurely, and profound absorption of the art itself. Major spaces were designed like museum galleries, with special emphasis on uncluttered and open perspectives. Extraneous walls were removed; existing walls are backgrounds, rather than partitions. Gallery rooms are unified, and perspectives articulated, by a floor of black and white marble tiles. The furniture is intentionally sparse, placed in unobtrusive groupings and isolated visually and psychologically from the art pieces by subdued area rugs. The furniture, though unobtrusive, is carefully selected, and as carefully counterpointed: antique pieces, from the owner's collection, balance pieces by the modern masters—Mies, Saarinen, Eames, Zanuso. Antique and modern furniture, commenting as subtly as the art collection on the easy mating of the best, regardless of period, is augmented by special pieces, including display cases, designed by Albini and Helg. Throughout, the juncture of walls and ceiling is defined by a narrow band of iron, which supports the hanging wires as well as occasional spotlights. Living quarters such as the library and bedrooms are given a less formal atmosphere with planked wood flooring, an abrupt change from the black and white marble tiles. For the children's rooms and baths (page 95), the architects designed a special ribbon-patterned floor in ceramic tile.—B.W.N.

all photographs by carla de benedetti



APARTMENT IN MILAN



Right: Open corridor spaces around dining and living areas are designed like museum galleries, with clear, uncluttered perspectives. The floors throughout are covered in a checkerboard of black and white marble tiles; the walls are covered in a neutral sand-colored plaster; the free-standing partitions which serve as backdrops for paintings. The door in background is covered in leather, and framed by bright aluminum stripping. For the column outside dining area, Altoni & Helg designed a circular shelf for silverware. Lower shelf on far wall supports two medieval statues, flanking Madonna painting.



Left: In seating area, massive contemporary sculpture, antique and modern accessories, are reflected in ornate antique mirror in Venetian gilt frame. Eames chairs, like all furniture groupings, are visually isolated from art works by area rugs in subdued rust tones. Curtains are fringed white wool.

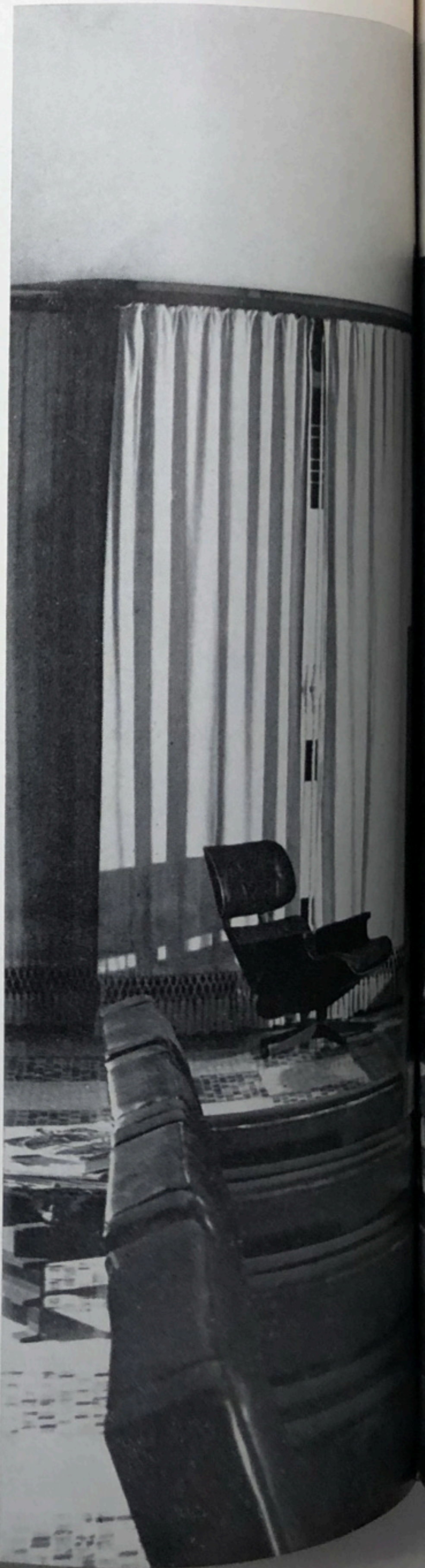




Left: Library is differentiated from living areas by planked wood flooring, large-scaled antique chest and desk. Baronial desk chair is upholstered in cut velvet, sharp contrast to modern leather chairs (below.) Built-in shelving is embellished with carved round columns. Door to gallery-corridor (p. 89) is framed in polished aluminum stripping; wall-mounted lighting fixtures match gallery's ceiling fixtures.



Right: Formal seating area features a Renaissance painting of a Venetian doge. Color scheme is geared to painting; antique chairs are covered in red velvet; modern arm chairs in dark blue leather; rug is soft shades of red and blue. Round table displaying an assortment of precious objets in gold and silver has red-lacquered top; dark blue trim. Sculpture in blue glass (right) is mounted on shelf of red and blue, matching table.



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Above: Floor and walls in the bathroom are covered by a dramatic ribbon pattern of mottled dark and light ceramic tiles, designed by the architects. Saarinen pedestal stool is upholstered in gray wool; curtains are fringed white wool. Left: The master bedroom is a spare but sumptuous blend of old and new. The gilded Renaissance bedstead is covered by a throw of rich red cut velvet, and gold-embroidered red velvet pillows; antique chair is upholstered in cream and blue petit point. Mies chairs, in sharp contrast, are in black leather. Superb collection of pre-Raphaelite religious paintings is displayed on walls covered in pale gray Japanese silk; draperies are white silk.