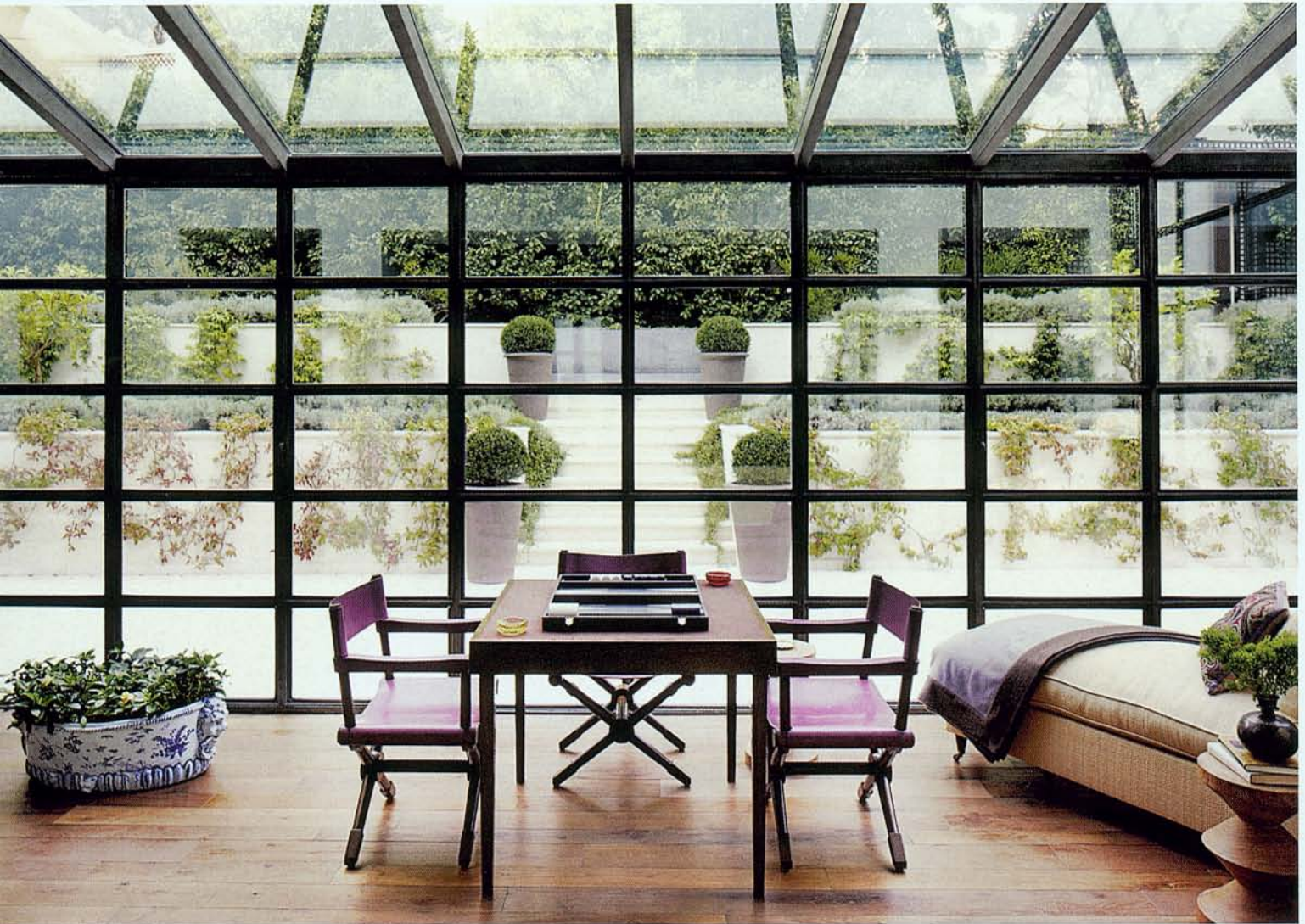


URBAN OASIS



Thanks to an artful edit by designer Timothy Whealon, a Monte Carlo house affords a moment of calm amid the city's glittering high-rise towers

TEXT BY PENELOPE ROWLANDS PHOTOGRAPHY BY SIMON WATSON STYLED BY CAROLINA IRVING

Villa Nocturne, the Monaco residence of Mark Brockbank and Marco Orsini, underwent a glamorous renewal courtesy of architect Marc Corbiau and designer Timothy Whealon. **Opposite:** The conservatory features a games table and chairs custom made in the style of Jean-Michel Frank. For details see Sources.





The Mediterranean-style Monaco house poetically named Villa Nocturne had faded drastically in the decades since it was built in the early 20th century. By

the time Mark Brockbank, a retired British insurance executive, bought it, some 100 years later, the four-story residence at the north end of Monte Carlo had become, as he puts it, “a handsome shell, with an appalling and very dilapidated interior.”

The surrounding principality had changed too, growing into the most densely populated country in the world. Apartment towers had sprung up all over Monaco, a city-state measuring less than a single square mile, and private residences were increasingly rare—and coveted. So even though the Nocturne was, as Brockbank says, “an unhappy house crying out to be saved,” it was a project he and his partner, documentary filmmaker Marco Orsini, were eager to take on.

Left: In the living room, an Andrew Moore photograph is grouped with a classical Roman figure, an 18th-century Chinese altar table from Antony Todd, and a pair of Jansen armchairs; the rug is by Beauvais Carpets, and the walls are painted in Farrow & Ball’s Hardwick White. **Above:** The sofas are upholstered in a De Le Cuona linen, the cocktail table is a Whealon design, and the antique Biedermeier-style étagères are from Galerie du Passage.

The pair sought out their friend Marc Corbiau, a Brussels-based architect, for a redesign that would make the most of the 5,000-square-foot dwelling. The interior was stripped out and reconstructed, from the street level, which now includes storage and staff quarters, to the top floor, where the attic was converted into a skylit office/media room. The living room was expanded by adding a glass conservatory over part of the adjoining terrace, and the entrance was moved from the east side to the north—away from looming





high-rises and toward the lush hillside behind the home. “We basically turned the house around,” Brockbank explains.

You now arrive from the garden, passing through French doors and into a book-lined foyer that doubles as a library for the bibliophilic couple. From the moment you step inside, you’re reminded of where you are in the world: The plaster bust displayed on the parquetry-top center table is of Charles Garnier, architect of Monte Carlo’s famous opera house and casino.

Acquiring a new residence is often a cue to start shopping, but that wasn’t the case here—quite the opposite. A decade or so earlier, Brockbank had enlisted New York-based designer Timothy Whealon to decorate his previous home, a grand Georgian townhouse in London; together they had amassed a trove of European antiques and midcentury pieces, as well as paintings, drawings, and photographs, many of them 20th-century British. When Brockbank called on Whealon once again, the designer edited the collection to fit the Nocturne’s more diminutive scale. →

Clockwise from top left: Moroccan-inspired wallpaper by Phillip Jeffries enlivens the kitchen; the faucet is by Dornbracht, and the cabinetry is by Strato. The powder room also features Dornbracht fittings and Phillip Jeffries wallpaper. The dining room’s chairs are slipcovered in a Dedar print, the light fixtures are by Philippe Anthonioz, and the abaca rug is from Holland & Sherry. **Opposite:** In the kitchen, a Saarinen table by Knoll is paired with vintage Milo Baughman chairs; on the wall is a photograph by Marie-Laure de Decker.





In contrast to the London residence, the Monegasque villa demanded a less formal look. Whealon devised a warm palette of sand, brown, and ivory for the furnishings, in tune with both his clients' tastes and the pristine local light. For the walls, Whealon says, "I wanted a color that would unify the whole house, one with rich hues." He opted for pale gray, warming or cooling it as each space required.

The living room's walls, the designer notes, "are intensified by a touch of umber." Here, as elsewhere, vibrant patterns animate the setting, from the antique Naxos textiles on throw pillows to the David Hicks-inspired linen covering two Louis XVI-style armchairs. The western wall is dominated by a vast Andrew Moore photograph of a music hall in Gary, Indiana, an image Whealon admires for its painterly quality. It is positioned between Chinese incense burners repurposed as planters, which rest on a Chinese altar table. As for the lime-green box on one of the two Biedermeier-style étagères, the designer was drawn to its eye-catching character: "I love pops of beautiful color."

The adjacent dining room had to function as an everyday seating area for the couple as well as a spot for entertaining. Abaca matting on the floor, a hunt painting

Left: A plaster bust of architect Charles Garnier, a 19th-century parquet-top pedestal table, and a striped runner by Beauvais Carpets furnish the house's foyer, which doubles as a library. **Above:** Limestone underfoot in the stairway.



over the mantel, and industrial-look hanging fixtures contribute to the room's almost rustic appeal. ("I was playing with high and low," Whealon says.) Again, he enlivened the space using pattern and color; a graphic print distinguishes the slipcovered chairs and a burnished gold gleams from gilded Queen Anne consoles, standouts from Brockbank's collection.

Strong hues crackle in almost every room. On the second floor, where the Mediterranean sun shines sharpest, these accents darken and strengthen; they range from navy in the master suite to violet in the neighboring guest room. A color apex of sorts is reached on the top floor with an azure low table made up of four lacquered cubes of Whealon's design. The piece manages to be both surprising and appropriate—adjectives that could also describe Villa Nocturne. Even in vertical Monte Carlo, the residence projects a sense of spaciousness and calm.

"It's a little island, somehow," Brockbank says approvingly, adding that he'd hoped for "a simple, modern, classical house." And here it is. □

From top: Whealon designed the master suite's white leather commode and the nailhead-trimmed bed, which he upholstered in the same navy silk used for the curtains. The bath features a limestone tub; Horst butterfly photographs are displayed on the far wall. **Opposite:** A Galbraith & Paul printed linen was chosen for the curtain border and seat cushion; the carpet is by Vanderhurd.

