

HOUSE & GARDEN

The background of the cover is a warm, festive photograph of a living room. On the right, a Christmas tree is decorated with gold and white ornaments and star-shaped decorations. In the center, a fireplace mantel is adorned with several lit green candles. To the left, a round table is covered with a patterned cloth and holds wrapped gifts, including a prominent green one. The overall atmosphere is cozy and celebratory.

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CUMULATIVE EFFECT

In this vibrant apartment in Milan, a broad range of colours and styles is united by the confident taste of its owner, **Rosita Missoni**, who freely admits the influence on her own creativity of the disparate things she has collected

TEXT CAMILLA ALFTHAN | PHOTOGRAPHS PIA TRYDE





In the sitting room, the seating area (this page) is defined by a Missoni rug, the colours of which are picked out in the soft furnishings and the golden wall hanging by African artist El Anatsui. A Kartell lamp stands on the side table, and other golden objects, including a sculpture by Andrea Branzi, are arranged on a gold-leafed table by Salvatore & Marie, who also designed the striped sideboards (opposite top, right of picture). The mirror-glass cocktail cabinet (opposite, both pictures) was originally a fake chimneypiece in the dining room of an ocean liner. The round Sixties chair is enlivened by bright Missoni cushions



OPPOSITE In the hall, a grand piano stands on a mosaic 'rug' designed by Ottavio Missoni, who also found the graphic costume displayed on the wall, originally designed by Giacomo Balla for the Diaghilev Ballet. Orchid plants suspended from the wall are an arresting arrangement. THIS PAGE The 'PK54' Poul Kjaerholm table, made in 1963, is surrounded by Wegner's 1950 'Y' chairs - 'the best chairs in the world as they are light and comfortable', says Rosita Missoni. Colour is provided by the Gio Ponti chandelier, 1950, and the painting of Milan Cathedral, used as a print design for a Missoni shawl collection in the early Nineties

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ore than 50 years since the Missoni family's unmistakable stripe and zigzag stitches were introduced to the fashion world, the Italian dynasty is now making a colourful impression on the world of interiors. Ten years ago, Rosita Missoni, 75, passed the reins of her womenswear line to her daughter, Angela, in order to concentrate on the Missoni Home collection. Now several Missoni hotels are planned – one opens in Edinburgh in 2008 – and Rosita already holds numerous design awards.

Rosita has decorated the family's Milan apartment, on the top floor of La Casa del Arco di Via Salvini – a Thirties building by the Italian postmodernist architect Piero Portaluppi in the heart of the city – in a typically colourful way. Missoni's iconic florals and stripes grace every room, contrasting with blond, Scandinavian furniture and a varied mix of art and objects collected from all over the world.

To Rosita, a home should be living, developing and never quite finished. Since the family bought this flat in 1982, it has evolved and changed. In the beginning it was primarily a showroom, and what is now the large sitting room was divided into three connecting spaces. About 15 years ago, when the family moved the showroom to the ground floor of the building, the top floor was converted as a home.

While her grandchildren occupy the apartment most of the time, Rosita uses it to entertain during fashion week and the annual furniture fair. 'My favourite time in Milan is when all the shops and showrooms are open late and there are people and music everywhere,' she says. When there is a Missoni party, guests are greeted with music from the grand piano in the hall. Food is brought in from the family estate in Sumirago, in the foothills of the Italian Alps, and is served on the apartment's two dining tables. 'A home should always be open to the family who come and go, and to guests who drop by unexpectedly,' says Rosita. 'You need to create a comfortable nest, but also to stir the senses and arouse





curiosity with beautiful and unusual things.'

The art world has always been important to the Missonis, and they in turn are often seen as artists rather than designers. Rosita's husband, Ottavio, whose kaleidoscopic tapestries and intense colour compositions have been exhibited in museums, designed the mosaic floor, which forms a trompe-l'oeil 'rug' underneath the piano in the hall. Ottavio also gave Rosita the four, graphic costumes from the Twenties which hang in the hall; they were made originally for the Diaghilev Ballet by Giacomo Balla, who was a seminal influence on fellow Futurist artists.

It is, more than anything, Rosita's love of shopping that has shaped the apartment over the years. 'I always say that I'm not a collector but an accumulator. My style is to mix things up. The only thing these pieces have in common is that I like them. That makes them compatible,' she explains. Whenever she's travelling, Rosita always scours the local markets

– her favourites are Marché aux Puces in Paris and Alfies Antique Market in London, where she discovered the printed display mannequins from the Seventies that now stand behind the dining table. A texture, a colour, a particular shape or material may inspire her, and then she brings it back home or uses it in her work.

At one end of the sitting room a spectacular, Fifties, Murano glass chandelier by Gio Ponti hangs above the table. Rosita found it at the flea market in Castello di Belgioioso, near Pavia. 'When I saw this gigantic, red octopus, I fell in love with it – I just had to have it,' she chuckles. The large painting of Milan cathedral was the prototype design for a 1992 Missoni shawl collection. On another wall hang several vibrant, knitted wall panels designed in the Eighties by Rosita's son, Luca, who now directs Missoni's menswear collection; since his childhood, Luca has spent hours experimenting with the knitting machines.

In the sitting area, it is as if there really is gold at the end of Rosita's rainbow of colour: a shimmering, golden wall hanging, 'Nyekor', made out of metal bottle tops, by African artist El Anatsui hangs behind the sofa, while a Kartell lamp and a ceramic sculpture by Andrea Branzi are arranged on a gold-leafed table by Salvatore & Marie. Several tables in the flat, including the striped sideboards against the far wall of the room, were designed by the same Milanese partnership.

Off the hall is the television room, dominated by Japanese-inspired, coloured-glass windows original to the house. On the other side of the hall, at the far end of the apartment, is the main bedroom, which is decorated with fabrics from the latest Missoni Home collection, inspired by the Bauhaus geometry of the Thirties. The framed, silk print above the bed is by the abstract artist Sonia Delaunay (1885–1979), a leader of the Orphism movement, which attempted to soften Cubism with lyrical colours. 'The children always want this room because it has the largest bed,' says Rosita. 'Tai [Ottavio] and I have spent only one night here. To my husband it is not important where you sleep, but where you wake up. In Sumirago, where we live most of the time, there's the garden and the view... and the factory, if they need us urgently.'

In the bathroom, Rosita has brightened up the earthy tones of the marble with striped towels, bath mats and bathrobes from the new collection. There are more striped rugs in the spare bedroom, which is filled with fake cactuses. Cactuses and flowers are another of Rosita's passions. When there's a party, there are flowers in every room. Orchids are even hung from the walls – their entangled roots becoming a vital part of the decoration: 'They last two or three days like that, and then I take them back to Sumirago,' says Rosita. In the Missoni home, the most unlikely objects look stylish □

Missoni Home (tel: 020-7349 7144;
www.missonihome.com)

OPPOSITE ABOVE Rosita's collection of fake cactuses lines the walls of this spare room; the 1983 sculpture is by Rod Dudley. OPPOSITE BELOW The television room is lit by dramatic, Japanese-inspired, coloured-glass windows; the chairs are 'Adam's Temptation', by Edwin Niekel & Taco Regtien for Leolux. THIS PAGE The bedroom is decorated with the latest Missoni Home collection, inspired by the Bauhaus geometry of the Thirties; the silk print above the bed is by abstract artist Sonia Delaunay

