

TRUTH IN TRAVEL

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Issue



Il Sereno & Villa Pliniana

TORNO, ITALY



Designed by Patricia Urquiola

Spanish architect and designer Patricia Urquiola was finishing one of the newest buildings on Lake Como—the Sereno hotel (sister property of the St. Barts original)—when she was tapped for one of the oldest. The Sereno's owner had just added the nearby Villa Pliniana to his portfolio, and he asked her to handle the decor of the sixteenth-century Renaissance estate, visited by Napoleon, Byron, and Liszt. Both properties opened this summer in Torno, a one-church, one-restaurant village on the lake's south shore. The contemporary Sereno, a 30-suite hotel, channels its Alpine setting with regional stone and local walnut and vertical gardens with 260 native plants. Inside, pieces from Urquiola's collections for Italian companies (like the tufted Husk chair she did for B&B Italia) share space with fabrics from the surrounding Lombardy region's famed textile houses, all in the understated grays and blues of the lake. Pliniana, by contrast, is a mix of old-world elements, like terrazzo floors and gold-leaf mirrors, and modern furniture from icons like Giò Ponti and Le Corbusier. Luckily for Sereno's guests, when the seven-suite villa isn't rented they can use its pool, spa, teahouse, and gardens. Guests move easily between the properties—they're a half mile apart—by car, on foot via a wooded path, or in Sereno's Riva boats. Just ask Urquiola, who spent months going back and forth. "It's very interesting to have these two totally different kinds of architecture, but they're connected because both buildings are in constant dialogue with the mountain behind and the lake in front," says Urquiola. "I like to be in the middle, between these two huge elements." A.S.

Q+A

Beyond the natural setting, what was the inspiration for Sereno?

"In the city of Como, there's a Rationalist architectural masterpiece—Casa del Fascio, by Giuseppe Terragni, who was sort of Italy's Mies van der Rohe. It's a building we architects go and see. It gave us the idea of modularity for the hotel—the way he designed individual rooms and how they interact as a whole. We simplified things for Sereno, but we were inspired by this building."

What's your favorite space in Pliniana?

"I love the room under the terrace, where you're right on the water and

have your own personal little deck—you can even leave by boat right from there. It's like a secret room."

Is there an architectural wonder you're dying to visit?

"Michael Heizer's *City*. It's an ongoing land-art project in a desert valley in central Nevada and an example of vision becoming reality."

What's your most influential travel memory?

"Visiting Ibiza. I've been going since I was a teenager. The locals live so simply and naturally—this made a big impression on me." ♦

FROM TOP: Pliniana's Salone Rossini (the composer wrote *Tancredi* on this piano); the view of Lake Como from the villa.

