

With its furniture constantly coming and going, this striking apartment – home and showroom for one of Barcelona's leading interior designers – is a never-ending work in progress.  
By Danielle Miller

## HERE TODAY, GONE TOMORROW

Photographs by Richard Powers

'Anything you see here today could be gone tomorrow,' says Lázaro Rosa-Violán, an artist turned interior designer, indicating with an airy wave the vast design studio in Barcelona where he works with eight colleagues. And everywhere you look there are antiques and design prototypes: sculptural lamps that look like a tower of ninepins, a pair of gigantic stucco scrolls that must once have graced a public building, long buttoned sofas and a clutch of mirrored tables with, propped up here and there, some large-scale monochrome paintings – Rosa-Violán's own work. But none of it is destined to stay here for long, as quite soon all of these pieces will be on their



A VAST PAIR OF STUCCO ROSETTES DOMINATES THE LIVING AREA, WHERE A WELL-WORN BELGIAN LEATHER CHESTERFIELD FACES A CUSTOM-MADE BLACK GLASS-TILED COFFEE TABLE AND PAIR OF WHITE LEATHER ARMCHAIRS. THE BLACK AND WHITE BOBBLE BALTHUS CHAIRS, DESIGNED FOR THE PULITZER HOTEL IN ROME, SIT OPPOSITE A PAIR OF LONG, WHITE BUTTONED SOFAS, BOTH OF WHICH, AS WELL AS THE BLUE CORAL VASES, WERE MADE IN ROSA-VIOLÁN'S WORKSHOPS





'I like to create a core feeling of history for every project, by using components that look as though they've always been there'

ABOVE RECLAIMED CABINETS AND A GILDED 20TH-CENTURY CHINESE SETTLER SCREEN IN THE KITCHEN WITH A PROTOTYPE MEETING-CUM-DINING-TABLE AND 1960S CHAIRS BELOW A 1900S BRONZE FRAME AND A MODERNIST MIRROR

way to one or other of his design projects - hotels in Argentina, Buenos Aires and Marrakech, a boutique in Barcelona, a restaurants in Madrid or the Costa Brava. 'I like to create a core feeling of history for every project, by using components that look as though they've always been there,' he says. And he applies the same principle to this space, which is part warehouse, part showroom and part home. Surprisingly there is no sign of the creative chaos you might expect from a temporary environment - instead, it is an ordered place of art, beauty and the unexpected. Svelte and fashionably studded, Rosa-Violán revels in constant change, making new arrangements from the props he has to play with.

Rosa-Violán studied fine art in Madrid and changed tack when a friend asked him to design a restaurant in the Balearic island of Formentera. It was such a success that lots of other commissions soon came his way and he unwittingly launched his second career.

The studio is set behind one of the gracious façades that line the wide avenues of the Eixample area. Meaning 'extension', Eixample was one of the key areas developed in the 19th and early 20th centuries after the walls of the Ciutat Vella (the old city) were demolished. It went on to become known for its striking *modernista* (art nouveau) architecture. The area also saw an influx of textile companies at that





time, and this first-floor flat, with its vast wood-panelled interior, initially served as the headquarters of a family-run cotton empire with outposts across North and Latin America. Five years ago Rosa-Violán, who then lived on the other side of the courtyard, noticed some activity in the abandoned apartment and knew he had to move fast. 'I'd had my eye on the place for a while,' he says. 'I was sure it would be ideal for a studio.' But he only decided to move in himself when



## This flat, with its vast wood-panelled interior, initially served as the headquarters of a family-run cotton empire

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT THE TERRACE; A CUSTOM-MADE BED IN THE GUEST ROOM WITH A PORCELAIN APPLE BY GERARDO SAN MARTÍN; THE FORMER RECEPTION AREA WITH PHILIPPE STARCK BATH AND A STOOL FROM SEMPRE

he took into account its huge terrace – the perfect playground for his sleek weimarner, Bosco.

Two days after the move the design studio for his firm, Contemporain, was up and running again, but it took Rosa-Violán two more months to open up the 200-square-metre space to finish his own quarters. There were oak-lined walls and parquet floors, and within this shell he made a bedroom with mirrored doors from a palace, a bathroom with a skylight in place of the original reception area, a guest-room and a dining-room, which is separated from the kitchen by a wall of striking glass panels salvaged from the city's Ritz hotel. The most sensational room – and Rosa-Violán's favourite – is

the kitchen, made up of reclaimed antique cabinets with a gilded Chinese screen across one wall. His colleagues say he's a real whizz in the kitchen, especially with puddings.

The glorious climate of Barcelona has meant Rosa-Violán, as well as Bosco, can take full advantage of the 600-square-metre terrace, on which he has thrown themed parties for several hundred guests at a time. As one of the designers breezes through the kitchen to grab a coffee, a meeting gathers outside and jazz hums in the background. All in all it seems rather an idyllic place to work, not to mention live. ●

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