



THE CRYSTAL SUITE
GLASS CASA

TEXT: ERIKA HEET
PHOTOGRAPHY: VALENTINA SOMMARIVA



Tucked within the gentle hills of Montferrat, a region in northwestern Italy rich with truffles and wine, is a most unlikely retreat that shares its roots equally with an iconic midcentury architectural masterpiece and a lemon greenhouse. A collaboration between designer Piero Lissoni and Dream&Charme—a boutique villa and castle rental firm with more than 500 historic and modern properties under its tutelage—the Crystal Suite was transformed into a glass-walled atrium from which guests are encouraged to contemplate the surrounding landscape unencumbered by solid walls.

"The greenhouse was in a great location with wonderful land around it, but was used for years only to protect the lemon trees in winter," says Giorgio Caire di Lauzet, who founded Dream&Charme with Monica Mazzucchelli. "We re-created it using sustainable materials and glass walls for guests who want to experience nature in privacy and comfort, with the best Italian design." Indeed, with Lissoni's coordination, Caire di Lauzet selected Italian furnishings from the likes of Cassina, Boffi and De Padova in neutral shades that don't detract from the natural setting.

Caire di Lauzet did plenty of research before he enlisted a local architect to execute his plans. As a younger man, every summer for 20 years, he accompanied his family on travels to galleries, museums and great architectural works, among them Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater, Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House and Philip Johnson's Glass House. The latter stayed with him and informed much of the Crystal Suite, but he threw in his own twist. "While the Glass House inspired Crystal Suite, we gave it something different, a special character related to its origin as a greenhouse: a sloping roof, instead of a horizontal roof so typical of modern houses," Caire di Lauzet says.

The sparsely furnished suite consists of a living room, kitchen, bedroom and bath, with a patio that seems to extend forever. Inside, a simple sofa joins a Louisiana chair by Vico Magistretti, both from De Padova, along with a table from Boffi, its glass-and-metal structure strongly echoing the house itself. A fireplace from Edilkamin keeps the austere house warm during the winters beneath the mountains. Past a sleek Boffi kitchen is the bath and bedroom, both with miles of views. The bedroom has only a bed designed by Lissoni and a Franco Albini bedside table, both from Cassina. The linens are from Dream&Charme, their first foray into home accessories. Here, says Caire di Lauzet, guests are encouraged to take part in the myriad activities offered by the property, from horseback riding to a stroll in the half-acre botanical garden or, favored by many, to bask in the peace of nature and do nothing at all. ■ dreamcharme.com

