

## Houzz Tour: Milan Architect Puts Her Stamp on Her Space

A 19th-century balcony apartment in the city's lively Navigli neighborhood gets freshened up



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Collaboratore Houzz Magazine. Design nerd della prima ora, giornalista, copywriter...

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It's not always easy for an architect to stay focused when renovating his or her own home. There's time to reflect on decisions, and there may be a temptation to try to make everything perfect. For Milan architect Selina Bertola, however, renovating her own home was less challenging than she expected. "Strangely, I had it all pretty clear from the beginning. My ideas have been gradually pared down and the various phases of designing and building have followed one another naturally," Bertola says. Perhaps it's because the home is full of history and character, without being extravagant, and boasts a fabulous location overlooking one of the most spectacular corners of the city.



### Houzz at a Glance

**Who lives here:** Selina Bertola and her husband

**Location:** Milan

**Size:** 1,292 square feet (120 square meters); two bedrooms, two bathrooms

**Architect:** Selina Bertola, [Nomad Architecture](#)

Navigli, one of the most famous and liveliest neighborhoods of Milan, is named after the five famous canals that are a magnet for anyone looking to enjoy an evening stroll or a cocktail. Here Bertola found the home of her dreams: a traditional 19th-century apartment with a balcony.



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The renovation, which lasted six months, started by enhancing preexisting structures and elements. The wooden ceiling beams, which had previously been hidden, were exposed, treated and stuccoed. The apartment's structural walls would not allow for a major reorganization of the layout. The only wall torn down was in the living area, to create an airy, comfortable space.



The kitchen incorporates industrial design elements: hexagonal cement floor tiles, a warehouse-style ceiling lamp and iron and wood shelves.



The kitchen opens into the living room. To separate it from the other rooms in the apartment, Bertola conceptualized it as a box that can be closed or opened. On the living room floor is a 17th-century rug given to Bertola by her grandfather, who purchased it in the 1970s in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.



The kitchen's windows open to allow for a chat with dinner guests. In the foreground is a dining table by Maison du Monde, featuring cast iron tripods on wheels in lieu of table legs. It integrates beautifully with the kitchen box and can be expanded to accommodate larger parties.



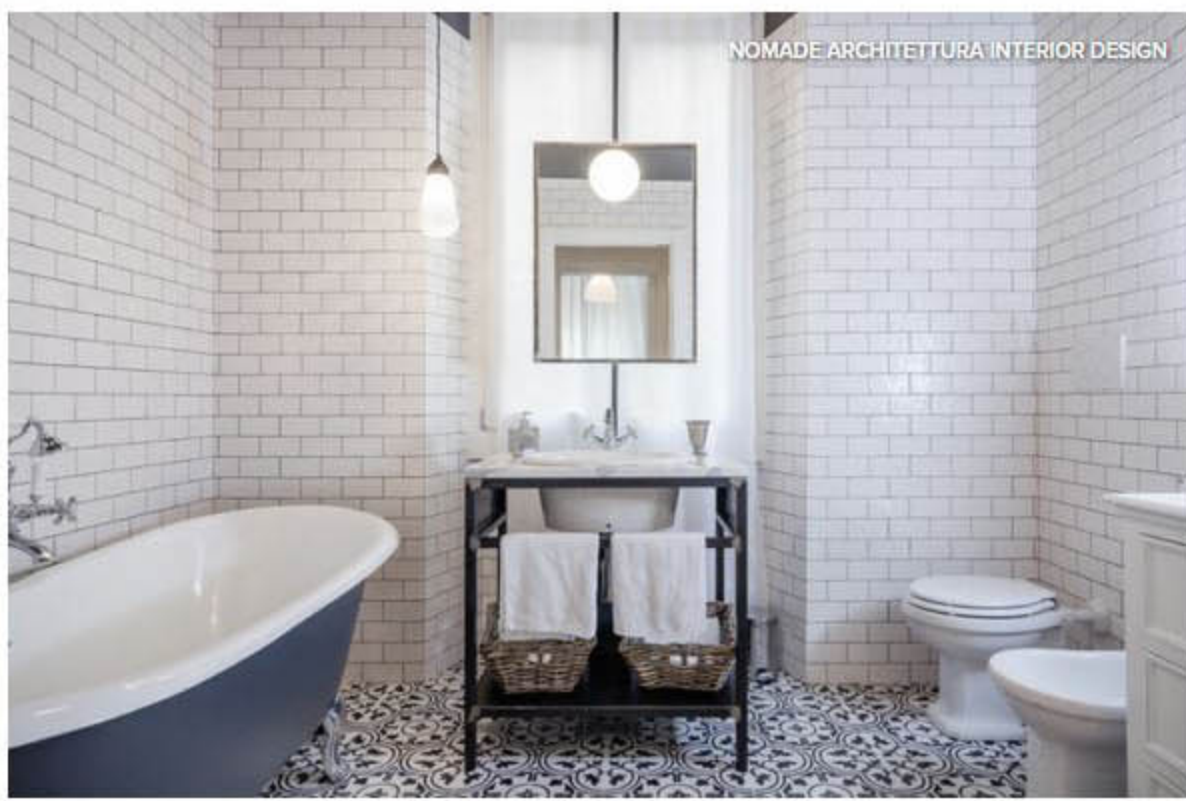
Like the rest of the kitchen and many other pieces throughout the house, the marble countertop was custom-made to complement other features, giving the home an extra touch of personality and warmth.



As an architect, and particularly as a Milanese, the owner could not resist the charm of a few famous 20th-century designs. The RAR rocking chair by Charles and Ray Eames for Vitra is seen here in the foreground. In the background, beside the bookcase, sits a lounge chair by Mario Bellini for B&B Italia, reupholstered in a vibrant ochre fabric.



The master bedroom embodies simplicity. The furnishings and linens, for example, are exclusively in shades of white and cream, and are enlivened only by the chromatic contrast of the blue wall behind the headboard. The only decorative touches are two silk lanterns from Vietnam.



NOMADE ARCHITETTURA INTERIOR DESIGN

The mirror in one of the bathrooms is positioned directly in front of the only window. The mirror is hooked to a rotating bar, allowing the window behind to be fully opened and the space to be ventilated. The round pendant light was once part of a London bar, and the one to the left is from Belgian company Flamant.



NOMADE ARCHITETTURA INTERIOR DESIGN



NOMADE ARCHITETTURA INTERIOR DESIGN

In the other bathroom is a sink on a stand made from an antique Singer sewing machine table's cast iron base; the wooden top ties in with shelving found elsewhere in the home. Patterned cement tiles on the floor contrast the white subway wall tiles that climb up to the ceiling.

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