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Homes by
Francis Sultana,
Peter Marino,
and Holly Hunt**

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to Tangier,
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FLIGHTS OF FANCY

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SUNNY SIDE UP

At a family getaway in the hills above the French Riviera, designer Francis Sultana balances easygoing comfort with jaunty refinement

*By Gay Gassmann
Photography by Richard Powers*



As part of his makeover of a vacation retreat and guesthouse near Cannes, France, designer Francis Sultana commissioned Mattia Bonetti to create an array of exuberant furnishings, including the main dining room's chandelier, table, and sideboard with cherublike figures. Works by Marc Chagall hang on both sides of the mirror. OPPOSITE: A Barnaby Barford apple sculpture stands in a courtyard surrounded by landscaping Sultana devised with local firm English Garden. For details see Sources.

About five years ago, longtime clients of designer Francis Sultana summoned him to the Côte d'Azur in France for what would be their fourth project together.



The couple had acquired a property with two houses in a lovely location, tucked away in the hills outside Cannes, offering sensational views. Both structures called for major renovations.

The site's charming original house, now the guest cottage, had been built in the 1960s, while the main, larger residence was added later, in the '90s, by owners with a particularly Americanized vision of the South of France. Sultana took both houses "down to a shell," as he puts it, and rebuilt the interiors.

"They wanted a comfortable place where they could be with family and friends," says the designer. "Everyone with their independence between the main house and the guest cottage and the pool." Sultana's focus was on enhancing the indoor-outdoor living, which also entailed redesigning the gardens and adding a lawn where children can play.

Sultana compares the property to a classic American estate. In addition to the 20,000-square-foot main residence and the 8,000-square-foot guesthouse—each with five bedrooms and five baths—there is also a pool house and an outdoor kitchen for grilling. Everything is designed to function year-round.

For Sultana, one of the main challenges was to conjure a more consistent, unified feeling of laid-back Riviera chic across the entire property. "I wanted to keep the style in a low-key way, to keep it all relaxed," he says.

When it came to the interiors, the designer says, the clients "wanted to create something a bit 1950s, Grace Kelly on the Côte d'Azur. Very dolce vita." He responded with a palette dominated by gold tones and citrusy hues as well as a →

A George Condo painting presides over the main house's entrance hall, which features a Mattia Bonetti hanging lantern and a console table topped by André Dubreuil lamps; the rug, stair runner, and wall sconce are by Sultana. OPPOSITE: On the pool deck, Santa Barbara umbrellas shade chaise longues designed by Sultana with cushions in a Perennials fabric.





In the main salon, an armchair and sofas by Mattia Bonetti are grouped with a cocktail table and circular side tables by André Dubreuil as well as a pair of tufted stools by Syrie Maugham; the floor lamps are by Bonetti, the table lamp is by Dubreuil, and the sculptural bronze side tables are by Sultana, as is the rug, while the curtains were made by Designs of the Time in a Antico Setificio Fiorentino fabric. RIGHT, FROM TOP: A Jamb light fixture overlooks the conservatory's Sultana-designed table and chairs, which are upholstered in an Élitis fabric; the rug is by Beauvais Carpets. Bonetti made a bespoke floral-form screen that separates the salon's bar and the dining room.



The clients were seeking “a comfortable place where they could be with family and friends,” says designer Francis Sultana





spirited array of custom furnishings and decorative elements he commissioned from Mattia Bonetti and the late André Dubreuil, both masters of highly original, often fanciful objects.

There is the sunny salon, for example, which Sultana anchored with plump, yellow-upholstered Bonetti sofas, their backs undulating like pairs of lips. Joining them are multiple tables by Dubreuil and lamps by both designers, not least one of Bonetti's torchère floor lamps with branching lights that protrude surreally from a serpentine column.

Sultana also commissioned Bonetti to create a floor-to-ceiling decorative screen to provide partial separation between the salon's bar and the dining room. The openwork design of large yellow and white floral forms echoes details on the Bonetti dining table nearby. "I wanted something like an architectural intervention by Mattia," says Sultana, "to complement the sculptural qualities of the furniture, to give it all strength."



For the guesthouse living room, Sultana created the mirror and floor lamps that surround the Jamb mantelpiece, as well as the sofas and glass-top end tables; the cocktail table is by Mattia Bonetti, the gueridon is by Garouste & Bonetti, the rattan chair is by Bonacina, and the painting is by Sue Williams. LEFT: Sultana designed the outdoor breakfast area's table, chairs, and banquette, which is cushioned in a Perennials fabric; the umbrella is by Santa Barbara.



Sultana contributed a number of his own bespoke designs, including the upholstered bed with a monumental headboard and a sinuous chaise with richly sculptural legs in the primary bedroom. Here, again, there are multiple furnishings by Dubreuil and Bonetti, highlighted by whimsically ornamented Bonetti nightstands topped with elegant lamps in wrought iron and glass by Dubreuil.

The art, meanwhile, is a mix of works previously owned by the clients and new acquisitions. “It was all about balance,” says Sultana, who hung modern masters,

The goal, says Sultana, was “something a bit 1950s, Grace Kelly on the Côte d’Azur. Very dolce vita”

including Pablo Picasso, Jean Cocteau, and Marc Chagall (a favorite of the wife’s) alongside contemporary works by Yayoi Kusama, George Condo, Sue Williams, Huma Bhabha, and Secundino Hernández.

The entire project took about two and a half years, remaining more or less on schedule despite the COVID pandemic. “The result is a happy house,” Sultana says. And perhaps nowhere more so than on the outdoor terraces, where he custom designed chaise longues and gently curving sofas with elegant, nature-inspired details and upholstery in that jaunty Grace Kelly palette of yellow and white. Sweeping vistas out over the Bay of Cannes help with the effect.

“The clients love this place, their child loves it, their friends love it,” says Sultana. “It all just really works.” □



A de Gournay wall covering clads the primary bedroom, where Sultana custom designed the Savoir bed dressed in Gayle Warwick linens; the bench, low side table, and floor lamp are by Mattia Bonetti, the bedside lamp is by André Dubreuil, and the curtains are made of an Élitis fabric. OPPOSITE, FROM TOP: Also lined in a de Gournay wall covering, the primary suite’s TV room features a mirror and sconces by Joy de Rohan Chabot from Galerie Chastel-Maréchal installed above a bespoke sofa and ottoman upholstered in a Fox Linton fabric by Sultana; the side table is by Bonetti. The primary suite’s custom marble-top vanity incorporates panels by Atelier Mériduet-Carrère, Baguès sconces, and THG sink fittings alongside a Bonetti chair covered in a Toyine Sellers fabric.





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1 Working largely in bronze, famed French artist **Joy de Rohan Chabot** creates nature-inspired furnishings and objets d'art, like this Cage aux Papillons gilded chandelier from Galerie Chastel-Maréchal. "She's one of these true old-school decorative artists," raves Francis Sultana, who installed fanciful mirrors, tables, and lighting by the Paris talent throughout this enchanting Côte d'Azur residence. chastel-marechal.com

2 Two lithographs by **Marc Chagall** were the final pieces placed in the dining area, which features an array of custom **Mattia Bonetti** furnishings, among them a snail-inspired floor lamp with a multitude of shades and a console held up by horned cherubs. "That's the good part about loving the art—finding where it's going to fit," explains Sultana. davidgillgallery.com

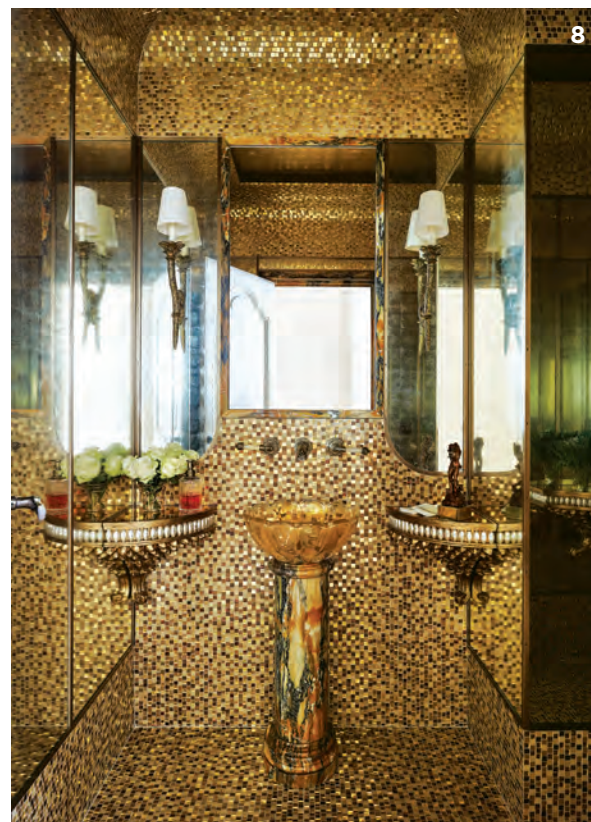
3 To give the conservatory an indoor-outdoor feel, Sultana sheathed the walls in a trompe

l'oeil trellis, then layered in painted terra-cotta plates by influential Surrealist **Jean Cocteau**. "Cocteau made ceramics not very far from where this house is located," he notes. "The plates are randomly placed, so it's very relaxed."

4 Sultana's clients collect works by artist **Sue Williams**, who conceives her energetic canvases as an antidote to the male-dominated Abstract Expressionist movement. Her paintings, like 2022's *Re-uptake Inhibitors*, probe subjects such as gender roles and the human body and look at ideas of transparency and autonomy. 303gallery.com

5 To create moments of whimsy throughout the home, Sultana teamed up with André Dubreuil, a highly regarded French artisan known for his sculptural metal furnishings loaded with poetic symbolism and ornamental craftsmanship who passed away in 2022. A group of his former

(1) COURTESY OF GALERIE CHASTEL-MARECHAL - SYLVIE CHAN-LIAT; (2, 3, 6, 8) RICHARD POWERS; (4) COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND 303 GALLERY, NEW YORK; (5) COURTESY OF GALERIE MOUGIN; (7) COURTESY OF DAVID GILL GALLERY



collaborators continues to work for Galerie Mougin under the **Atelier Dubreuil** moniker, introducing new pieces that adhere to the style of the decorative arts luminary, such as this engraved steel side table. galeriemougin.com

6 "The clients asked for yellow to be the predominant color outside," Sultana says. He responded by designing a pair of boomerang-silhouetted outdoor sofas as well as matching kidney-shaped tables. "The curves make it easy for people to sit around," he explains, noting the homeowners "love to have big parties and invite all the neighbors."

7 Sultana accented the dining table with a work by Amsterdam glass artist **Barbara Nanning**, who conjures bewitching objects that resemble spindly,

sprouting flora. "I find her vases very special," he says. This piece, titled *Daphne* (2012), beautifully demonstrates the breadth of her capabilities: Even though it resembles metal, it's made of blown glass that has been hand formed, cut, sanded, and gilded to striking effect. davidgillgallery.com

8 Shimmering like a disco ball, the powder room began as an ostensible joke between the homeowners. "As soon as the husband said he wanted a gold toilet, the wife looked in horror," say Sultana, laughing. "In the end, the joke became reality." The final mosaic-wrapped space features **Volevatch** fittings set above a Murano glass-and-marble pedestal sink. "It's an English tradition for people to have fun with the guest loo. You make it a talking point." volevatch.fr

