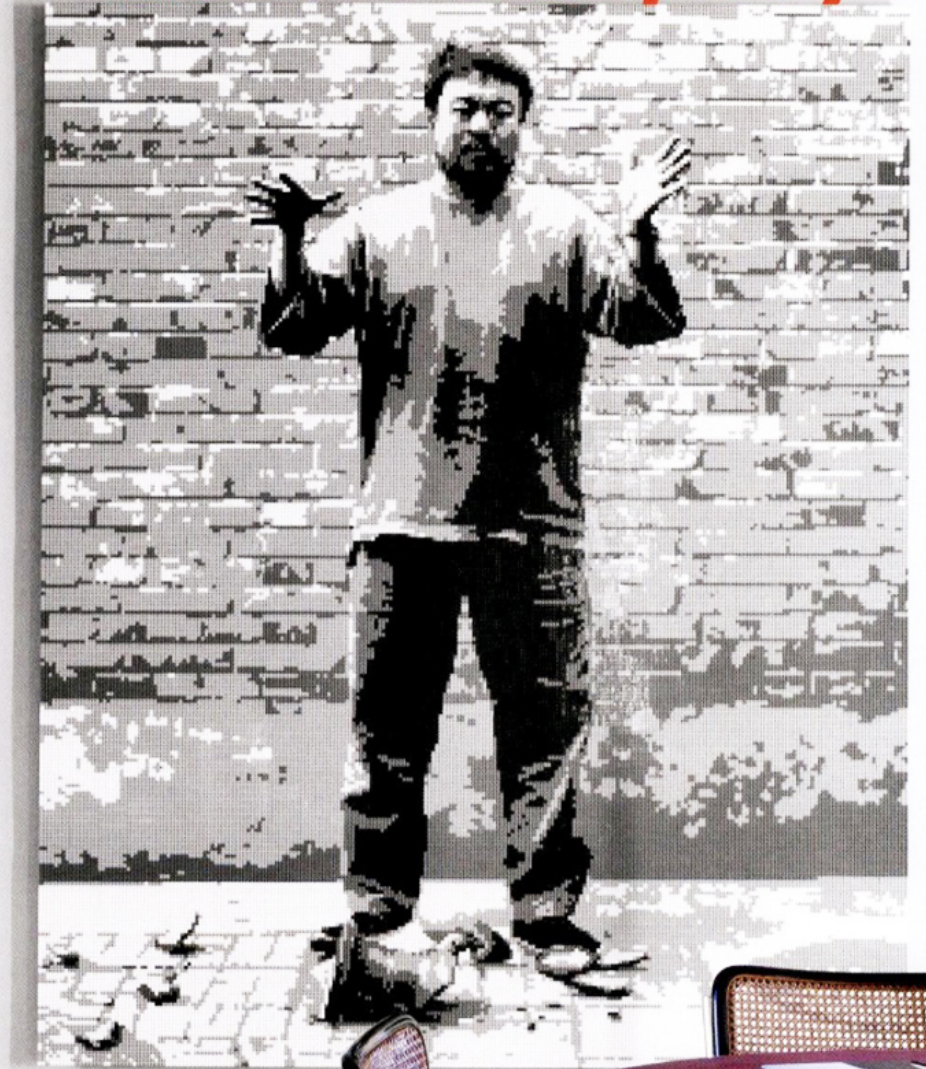


A designer-chef collaboration has yielded Casa Maria Luigia, an art-filled hospitality venture in northern Italy

## *three's company*



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**The country estate** that renowned chef Massimo Bottura and his wife and collaborator, Lara Gilmore, transformed into a boutique hotel poises new-world sensibilities wrapped in old-world charm. Dating to the 18th century and nestled in the Emilian countryside in the province of Modena, Casa Maria Luigia, named after Bottura's mother, ticks off all the Tuscan villa boxes: classic allée, original shutters, centuries-old oak trees intertwined with manicured lawns.

But inside, the eclectic environs prove it's not exactly a conventional Italian casa.

"It's something between new and old, with a little bit of nostalgia—but also irony," designer Catia Baccolini says of the 12-room, three-story main building. A longtime friend and advisor, Baccolini previously worked with the couple on their four restaurants, including the three Michelin-star Osteria Francescana nearby, as well as their family home approximately 30 minutes away. "They both kept repeating that it had to be easy and refined, challenging but also familiar," she continues. "These contradictions lead to unexpected design choices that make it feel like a personal and authentic space rather than a hotel."

The communal kitchen is one such space. Its all-black Ernestomeda cabinetry could trend toward sterile, but with Bottura's collection of vintage copper cake molds along one wall and Gilmore's anthology of Empoli green and clear glass bottles peppered around, it's instead warm and welcoming. Elsewhere, mid-century furnishings by Eileen Gray, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Eero Saarinen, and the Castiglioni brothers along with vintage Murano glass chandeliers keep company with original walnut floor planks and ancient ceiling



**Previous spread:** Ai Weiwei's *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn* (Lego), a Lego bricks on panel triptych, lines the living room of Casa Maria Luigia, an 18th-century villa turned boutique hotel in San Damaso, Italy, by designer Catia Baccolini and owners Massimo Bottura and Lara Gilmore.

**Opposite:** A trio of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe chairs joins a Murano glass chandelier and an oil on canvas by Philip Taaffe in a sitting room.

**Top:** Sandro Chia's bronze *Il Babbo* stands at the hotel's entrance, while Giorgio di Palma's ceramic *Coppe Gelato* is on the first-floor balcony. **Center:** Casa Maria Luigia contains 12 rooms. **Bottom:** A modular sofa by Piero Lissoni stands beneath the vaulted frescoed ceiling, which dates to 1900.





**Top:** *Francescana* at *Maria Luigia* restaurant occupies the renovated carriage house, outfitted with *Alessandro Mendini* tables and *Damien Hirst's* screen print, *The Last Supper*. **Center:** *Vintage* scances and side tables populate a guest room. **Bottom, from left:** *Gregory Crewdson's* photograph *Untitled (Awake)* overlooks *Marco Zanuso's* chair in a guest room. *VB39 US Navy SEALs*, a *Vanessa Beeccraft* photograph, hangs in a hallway.

**Opposite:** The hotel's cocktail room features artwork by *Barbara Kruger* and *Jonathan Borofsky*, a lamp by *Michael Anastassiades*, and a vintage armchair.



house that sits across the courtyard from the main building. It contains Bottura's newest culinary experience, *Francescana* at *Maria Luigia*, a nine-course tasting menu from *Osteria Francescana* presented nightly to a small group of diners, either guests of the hotel or those on *Osteria's* waiting list. By day, the carriage house serves as the casa's breakfast space, with a buffet of locally sourced ingredients such as *Parmigiano Reggiano*, focaccia baked in the on-site pizza oven, and balsamic vinegar from the *acetaria*, the barrel-aged vinegar production zone in the attic (the region is famous for the liquid). Beneath the restaurant's brick barrel vaults, *Baccolini* installed *Ingo Maurer* lighting, a trio of communal oak tables by *Alessandro Mendini*, and leather-upholstered armchairs, while *Gilmore* chose a 13-piece *Damien Hirst* screen print, aptly titled *The Last Supper*, for the walls.

She and *Bottura* acquired the estate in June 2017, offering only a euro above the auction list price, but decided to take their time with the renovation, officially opening it this spring. Now, in addition to the main villa and carriage house, *Casa Maria Luigia* offers guests a swimming pool, a tennis court, and gardens to roam, where sous chefs can be found picking fresh herbs and vegetables.

Harnessing the "power of food and hospitality, to me, is a new frontier," *Bottura* states. "We're opening up our home, hearts, and passions, and saying we love to share this with you." To that end, the communal kitchen is always unlocked, a cocktail room allows guest to create their own beverage, and it's not uncommon to find chef ending the evening in his preferred space, the music room, where floor-to-ceiling bookcases hold thousands of vinyl records for guests to peruse and play. *Bottura* repeats his favorite phrase many times throughout our interview: "We are home to slow food and fast cars." He should know. He's a brand ambassador for *Maserati*, its main production plant headquartered in *Modena*. 🍷



#### PRODUCT SOURCES

**FROM FRONT** **PAOLA LENTI:** LARGE TABLE (LIVING ROOM). **LIVING DIVANI:** SECTIONAL SOFA. **GUCCI:** WALLPAPER (SITTING ROOM, GUEST ROOMS), CHAIR FABRIC (RECEPTION). **RIVA 1920:** TABLE (RESTAURANT). **POLTRONA FRAU:** CHAIRS. **CASSINA:** GREEN CHAIR (GUEST ROOM).