

A scenic view of a stone terrace in Italy. The terrace is paved with large, irregular stone tiles. A low stone wall runs along the edge, topped with a wooden plank. Several potted plants, including pink and orange flowers, are arranged along the wall. A green wooden stool stands on the terrace. In the foreground, a large terracotta pot is partially visible. The background shows a lush green landscape with trees and a view of the sea under a bright sky.

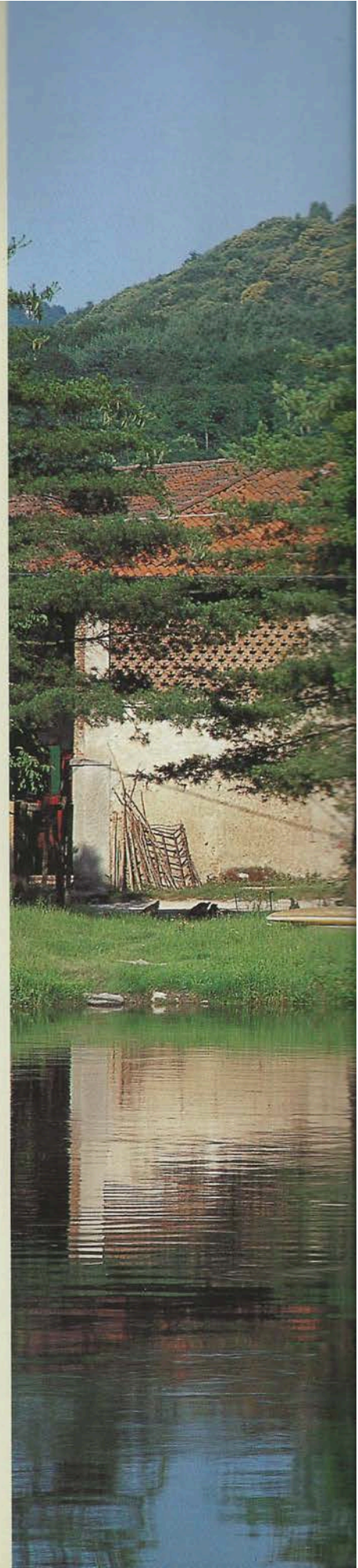
# RESTORING A HOME IN ITALY

TY-TWO HOME OWNERS REALIZE THEIR DREAM

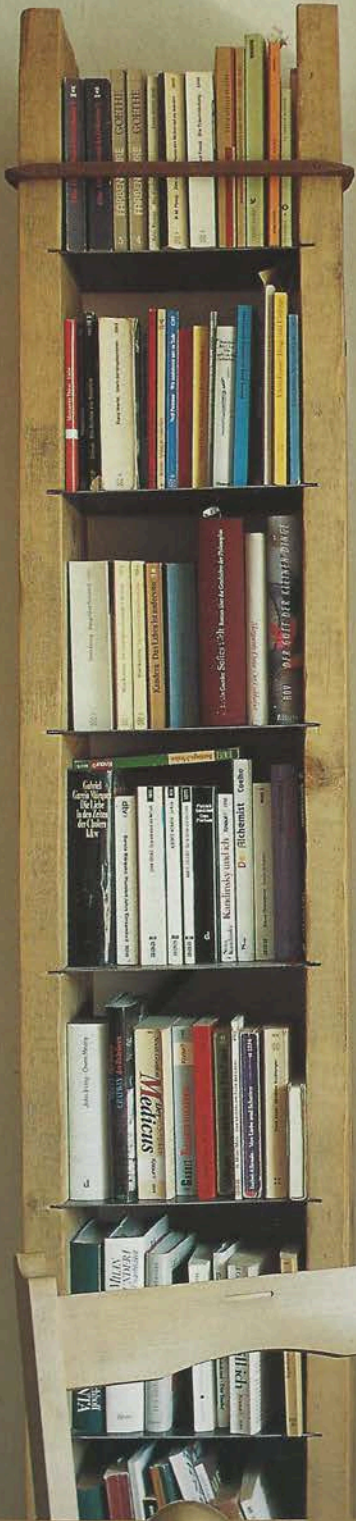
A C O N V E N T I N

# LOMBARDY

S I N C E T H E P H I L O S O P H Y O F recycling is predominant in Katrin Arens's furniture making, I wasn't surprised to find that she had chosen to "recycle" an abandoned convent into her home. In fact, the large three-story building on the Adda River near Bergamo had seen many reincarnations since it was built in the sixteenth century. The story goes that Leonardo da Vinci, who worked just down the river, designed the stone house; since the layout of the rooms, which are all interconnecting, reflects his design philosophy, it may just be true. At the time, the building boasted a large water mill, which powered the stones used to grind grain. The wheel eventually was dismantled and the mill transformed into a convent.









By the time Katrin discovered Il Mulino di Sotto—"The Lower Mill," as her house is called—one wing had been empty for five years and the other occupied by farmers. (Tenants still occupy that wing.) Katrin, her husband, and their three-year-old daughter took up residence on the second floor of the abandoned part of the building and located Katrin's business on the ground level. When they moved in, they had no electricity, no

THE HOME OWNER'S DESIGN OFFICE, opposite, is on the second floor. The bookshelves, part of her Terracielo (Earthsky) collection, were crafted out of salvaged wood. The kitchen, above, is the main room in the house; the wood-burning stove is used for cooking as well as heating the large space. Previous spread: The family lives on the second floor of the old mill, overlooking the river. The ground floor is devoted to the owner's furniture business; the attic remains abandoned—for now.



A LONG NARROW HALLWAY, above, bisects the apartment on the second floor. The space, overlooking the garden and river, serves as the living room and is furnished with the home owner's own designs. The floor, installed by the previous tenants, was left exactly as the home owners found it; the walls were simply whitewashed.

running water, and, of course, no heating. Katrin and her husband painted the walls, cleaned the place up, and camped out. When their daughter was born, a heating system was installed. Large aluminum tubes snake their way up the wall and across the ceiling, bringing heat generated from the boiler in the workshop, which is fueled with scraps left over from Katrin's work. But the overriding aim was to leave things as they were