

SPACE INVADER

Lucie McCullough has transformed a 17-century villa in Italy into a cosy and chic family home, writes Divia Harilela.



Hong Kong-based interior designer Lucie McCullough's ski lodge in Pinerolo Torino, Italy.

BRITISH DESIGNER Lucie McCullough has spent most of her life flitting around glamorous fashion circles in Paris, Milan and New York. As a former ad executive at British *Vogue* as well as PR guru at Valentino and Ralph Lauren, a career in interior design was the farthest thing from her mind when she moved to Hong Kong with her husband in 2005.

"I quit fashion when I came to Hong Kong," she says. "I had time on my hands and threw myself into decorating my flat in Pokfulam."

Once it was finished, the flat became a showpiece for her talents as friends began requesting her help with their own homes. Her first official project came in 2007, when she was commissioned to design a 3,000-square-foot flat on The Peak. Armed with a keen eye and strong database of suppliers around Asia, more jobs soon followed.

Her ultimate test, however, came when she and her husband decided to buy a home in Pattermouche, a medieval skiing village in north Italy which hosted the 2006 Winter Olympics. The area holds special memories for McCullough - she spent her honeymoon there. It took several years before the couple finally settled on a derelict 17th-century house.

The original 5,000-square foot stone house consisted of a ground floor with vaulted ceilings that was once a stable. The middle floor had

been partially renovated in the 1950s with two bedrooms, while the top floor was a hay barn. "Because building laws restrict changes to the exterior of the house, we couldn't carry out structural changes," says McCullough.

After two years, the house has been transformed into a sleek yet intimate family ski lodge with five double bedrooms and en-suites, a music/media room that converts into an extra bedroom and a children's dorm. Other features include an open-plan living/dining room and kitchen, and a relaxation area upstairs which leads onto the roof terrace, with a hot tub to use after a hard day's skiing.

"The upstairs living area is my favourite, because it overlooks the mountain we ski every morning," she says. "It's also got an old stove fireplace built into the wall."

McCullough's touch can also be seen in the many pieces scattered around the house, which she has lov-

ingly collected during her travels to the mainland, Bhutan and Burma. You'll find hand-battered Burmese bronze bowls, Tibetan carpets and a customised Mongolian patchwork carpet. "Everything has a memory or story - it reflects my eclectic background," says McCullough, who cites French designer Christian Liaigre as an inspiration.

"I want to pass this onto clients. I want everything in a home to have a story - a place needs to have soul."

Since the house was completed last year, it has graced the pages of international magazines such as *Architectural Digest*. So what's next on the cards for the designer? "My dream project would be to work with the same architect and renovate an old wine estate in the Barolo valley," she says. "It's close to home and incorporates my three loves: wine, design and language." ■

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