



One extraordinary (and totally nonessential) space. Now visiting: **A Caravan in Tuscany**

By Nancy Hass Photographs by Danilo Scarpati

THE STYLIST AND interior designer Paola Moretti's son Orso started agitating for his own place when he was only 6. Like many young boys, he was enamored of cowboys, known as *butteri* in Italy, where the 59-year-old Moretti works for clients including the kitchen and bathroom designer Boffi and Milan's avant-garde design firm Dimore Studio. "He had a fantasy of being on his own, near horses, of having a *rifugio* in nature," she says.

So in 2015, when a friend was cleaning his villa's property and offered Orso a midcentury canned-ham-

shaped camper, the kind that might have once been hitched to a Chevy Bel Air, the boy was immediately smitten. Moretti and her son, now 14, live in Brescia, west of Milan, in a restored 15th-century parsonage filled with vintage furniture by Hans Wegner and Arne Jacobsen alongside family antiques. But once the camper — a dilapidated Roller Super 3, built in Italy around 1960 — was fixed up, Orso could spend summers living out his dream.

The romance of a tiny portable home is forever linked to images of open highways during America's

The Roller Super 3 in its resting place among horses of various breeds owned by Marco Semprini, a retired Italian polo player. Fornasetti's Nuvolette clouds, on a wall covering by Cole & Sons, line the door's interior.



postwar leisure era, but such transient dwellings in fact made their way into the public imagination in Europe much earlier. In the late 19th century, William Gordon Stables, a famed Scottish author of books for boys, commissioned the first “gentleman’s caravan” to travel the United Kingdom, based on wagons used at that time by the Romani people who had immigrated to the British Isles centuries before. Stables, who modeled himself after Jules Verne, called his horse-drawn cabin “The Wanderer.”

Unlike the author, Moretti wanted to keep her caravan in one place. She had spent her own childhood summers in Maremma, in seaside Tuscany, where *butteri* continue to herd cattle on horseback nearby, and she knew the perfect spot: a secluded beach in Punta Ala on a 12-acre tract, where a retired polo player named Marco Semprini keeps about a dozen ponies. He was happy to lend her space to park the 11-by-7-foot camper.

For the renovation, the stylist and her son — her “accomplice,” as she calls him — drew on their shared passion for the outdoors, the history of caravans and Moretti’s own peripatetic career. She had collaborated with Barnaba Fornasetti, who now runs the decorative-arts line created by his father, Piero, so she lined the ceiling, doors and cabinets with the

company’s iconic clouds in a wall-covering by Cole & Son, to create a dreamy atmosphere. The complementary Fornasetti owl motif, in paper and fluttering fabric, adds a “nocturnal element,” she says; at night, the camper and grounds are lit only by solar-powered lanterns. A friend of Moretti’s hand-dyed the vintage linen that covers the benches, which double as bunks — Orso can host two friends at a time — and painted

the aluminum shell the dark green of an old English Land Rover, which blends into the lush surroundings, thick with oak and pine.

The family spent most of last summer in Punta Ala, and plans to for years to come. Orso sleeps in the caravan or in a hammock outside, and helps take care of the polo player’s horses, occasionally leading

tourists on riding excursions to the beach. He showers with the hose hooked up to the animals’ stalls. His mother also sleeps in the caravan, a surprisingly ad hoc arrangement for someone who makes a living conjuring high-gloss perfection.

As the burnt-orange Tuscan moon sets in the navy sky, Orso chars steaks on the grill and Moretti pours herself a glass of Brunello. They listen to the water lap at the rocks on the nearby shore. “We pretend we are in a magic tiny house abandoned in a forest,” she says. “And, really, there is no reason not to believe it.” ▀

Above, from left: benches that double as beds for guests, draped in duvets covered with hand-dyed linen; Cole & Son wallpaper featuring Fornasetti’s owls and clouds decorates the kitchenette, with its ikat bowls from Uzbekistan.

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