



Timeless Style

Riccardo Barthel's showroom in Florence is a paean to artisanal excellence. *Marco Mansi* finds a world of beauty and so much more 40 years after it opened.

Stepping into the courtyard of this ancient palazzo on the left riverbank of the Arno in Florence, one is reminded of the small square at the center of many of the villages scattered across Tuscany's picturesque countryside. Framed by the leafy canopy of two tall trees, Riccardo Barthel's showroom is located on the bottom floor of a pink two-story building. Since it opened in 1976, it has been the must-go-to place for all interior design enthusiasts visiting Florence. Forty years later, Riccardo and his son Francesco's love for excellence in decorating is still alive.

Over a period of two generations, this family enterprise has evolved to become an international business without ever forgetting its roots—Tuscany's artisanal tradition—and its bond with the city of Florence.

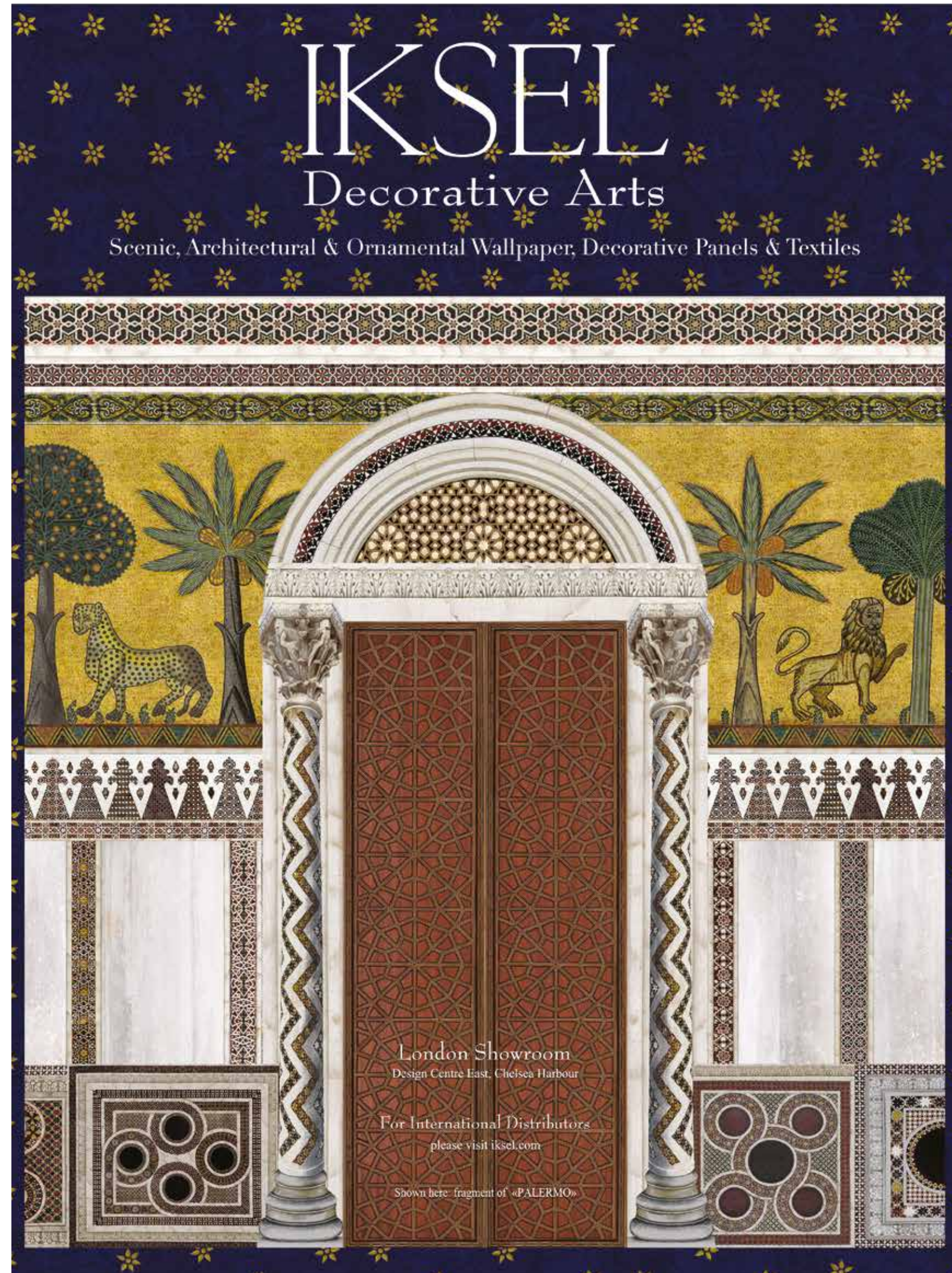
Inside, the showroom is truly a treasure chest. Its walls are lined with painted ceramics and tiles, and the visitor's eye is drawn to the beautiful cupboards, the ottomans, the brass taps and fittings, alongside the warm hues of the natural cotton and linen textiles on display.

All pieces of furniture are designed by architects and handmade by expert artisans—carpenters, bronze smiths, lathe turners—in the nearby studios. Every

object they create is a unique expression of the classic, timeless *stile Barthel* (Barthel style), which combines traditional craftsmanship with modern functionality. Riccardo Barthel is an authority on design and an ambassador of Florence to the world. For his international clientele he has created the interiors of villas, farmhouses, hotels, restaurants and even yachts. His great experience and versatility allows him to approach every project in a unique yet very distinctive way. In fact, from wooden floors to the smallest details, what everything has in common is elegance and practicality.

In the showroom, there is a special space dedicated to the kitchen, the heart of the home. This concept is the main inspiration for "Desinare": much more than a cooking class, this is a wonderful sensory experience through the colors, the flavors and the smells of traditional Italian cooking, in particular Tuscany's. "Desinare" is surely the best way to test firsthand the quality and the functionality of Riccardo Barthel's kitchens.

When we leave the showroom, with our back to the palazzo's door and our eyes still full of wonder, we cannot help but wish to go back as soon as possible.



A cupboard in the Barthel's showroom in Florence. Image by James Taylor. Taps details. Image by Francesco Restelli. All images courtesy of Riccardo Barthel, Florence