

ART HOUSE



Molteni's immersive new design destination, located in a historic Milanese building reimaged by Vincent Van Duysen, is a seven-storey cultural powerhouse that extends far beyond the realm of home furnishings

PHOTOGRAPHY: GIULIO GHIRARDI WRITER: LAURA MAY TODD



This page, the Grand Salon, with its gridded glass ceiling, incorporates the building's original pilasters and friezes
Opposite, Molteni set out to create the impression of an art collector's home rather than a furniture showroom, with arrangements such as this one, featuring a Gio Ponti 'D.655.1' chest of drawers, a Gino Sarfatti 'Model 548' lamp, and *Composition 395*, by Gabriele Cappelli



Palazzo Molteni is Molteni & C's most ambitious project yet. Brought to life by the Italian design firm's creative director, Belgian architect Vincent Van Duysen, this seven-storey, art-filled cultural destination, in Milan's Quadrilatero della Moda fashion district, is robust evidence that the company isn't just expanding its retail footprint, but positioning itself as a global lifestyle brand.

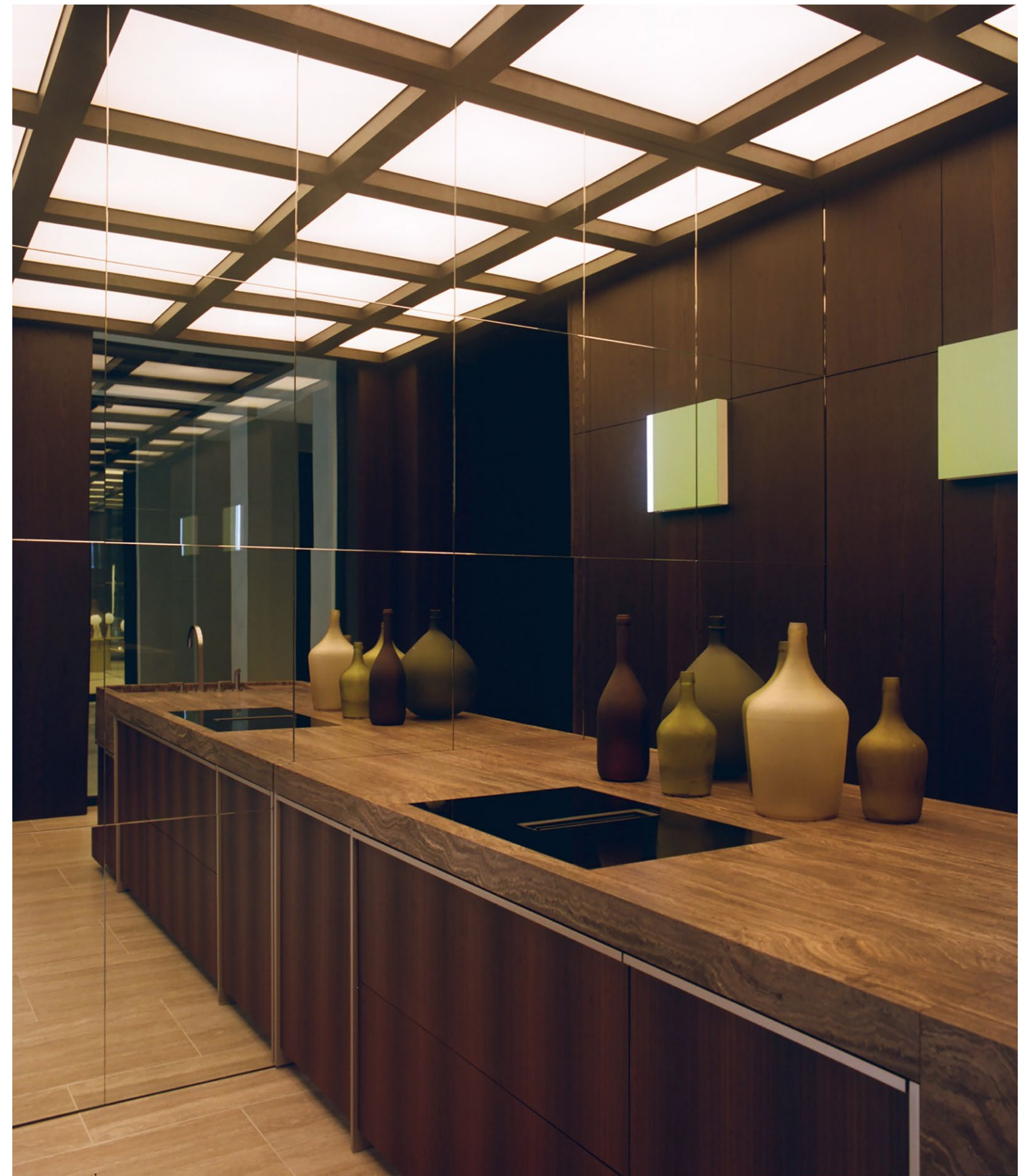
The 3,000 sq m palazzo – originally built in the eclectic style in the mid-19th century – sits in a privileged spot on the shopping thoroughfare Via Manzoni. 'Starting from the entrance, we have a stone staircase that flows into the Grand Salon, the heart of the flagship store,' says Van Duysen, describing

the layout, which is awash with his signature muted greys and blacks. Occupying what was once the central courtyard, the expansive room is capped by a gridded glass ceiling that floods the space with light, and frames views of the inward-facing façade, animated by ionic pilasters and tall arched windows. 'The low ceiling creates intimacy,' he continues. 'There's a sense of warmth, yet you have the juxtaposition between the world of Molteni and the building's historical details.'

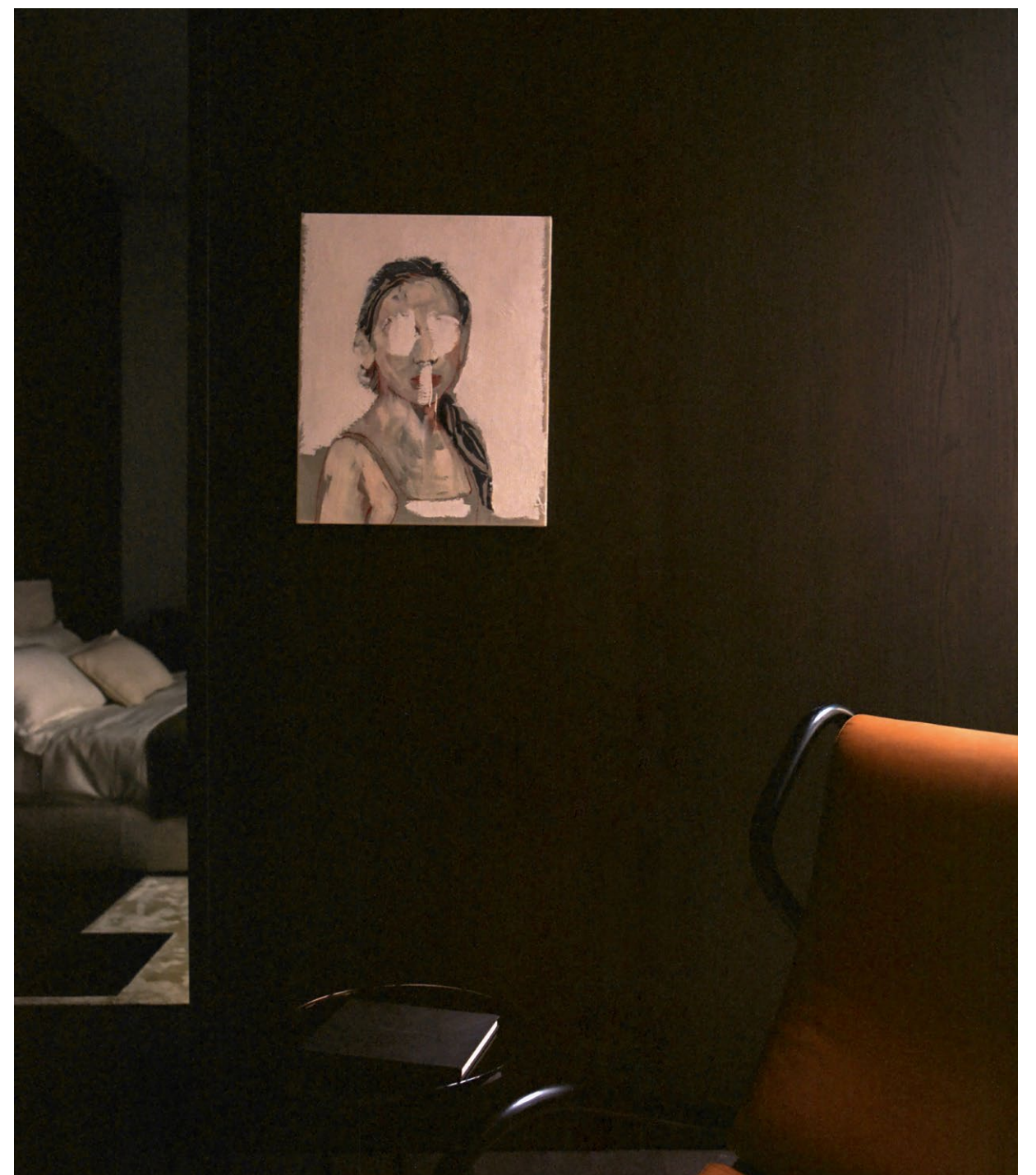
A carefully choreographed sequence of domestic spaces unfolds as you move upwards: Dada kitchens fitted with smart travertine countertops and intimate libraries furnished with contemporary art plucked

from the walls of Milanese gallery Massimo de Carlo, topped off by a glassed-in modern penthouse overlooking the city rooftops. Here, Molteni plans to host parties and cultural events. 'We wanted to create a space that feels like you are stepping inside the home of an art collector,' says Van Duysen.

According to Molteni's chief marketing officer Giulia Molteni, the concept for the project was to create 'a metropolitan house'. That is, the type of urban living space that many of Molteni's clients are looking to furnish in global cities such as Paris, London or New York. 'In every city, we present a different concept that adapts to the local culture,' she says. 'We are an industrial »



Above, the store unfolds across seven floors, showcasing the breadth of Molteni's output, including its collection of Dada kitchens
Opposite, Vincent Van Duysen photographed at Palazzo Molteni in December 2024



company, but our furniture is bespoke.' It's a strategy that the brand has been rolling out across the world, with recent openings in the likes of San Francisco, New Delhi and Lagos. 'In Shanghai, for instance, you can find fantastic art by Chinese artists,' says Giulia Molteni, referring to the Van Duysen-designed flagship, which features an on-site art gallery and restaurant.

If this set-up sounds more like a concept store in the guise of Dover Street Market – Commes des Garçons' cult retail touchstone

– than a conventional furniture showroom, you'd be right. Anchoring the flagship within a fashion epicentre, as well as aligning with cultural institutions like Massimo de Carlo, was intentional. It's all part of Molteni's mission to break out beyond the realm of furniture, a prescient move at a time when fashion houses including Louis Vuitton, Dior and Hermès are taking up ever greater space within the design and home furnishing realm.

This pairing of a hyper-local approach and the investment in physical spaces of hybrid

character and offer has been paying off. Since Van Duysen came on board in 2016, the company's turnover has risen nearly 70 per cent to €520m in 2024. It is testament to the brand's strategy that its sales are booming when the industry is trending downwards. Molteni plans to continue in this direction, with almost two dozen new flagships slated for 2025 alone. 'We're targeting areas we don't have much of a presence in yet, like the Middle East and Asia,' says Giulia Molteni, citing upcoming openings in Riyadh,

Above, a Gio Ponti 'Continuum D.163.7' chair sits in front of *Federica*, by Roberta Savelli, as it might in an urban living space belonging to a Molteni client

Opposite, the glassed-in rooftop penthouse, which offers views over the Milan skyline, will be used to host parties and cultural events

Chengdu and Mumbai, which aligns with the brand's remit to focus growth in areas with a high concentration of residential towers and an expanding hospitality sector.

The arrival of the new flagship also marks a turning point for Milan's design industry. For the first time since Angelo Molteni helped found the Salone del Mobile in 1961, the brand, historically one of the main exhibitors, will not take part in this year's event. However, Molteni is far from the first Italian brand to take this route.

Following the openings of their own city-centre showrooms, brands including B&B Italia and Cassina have also focused their design week exhibitions in-house. 'The Salone is a very important place to go when you're a small company,' says Molteni, who doesn't rule out a return in 2026. 'But once you grow, you have other priorities.' Palazzo Molteni stands as a clear embodiment of this. As Van Duysen puts it, 'This is not just a flagship – it's a home for design, culture and the art of living.' ✪ molteni.it