

# OBJEKT

INTERNATIONAL



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LIVING IN STYLE

INTERIOR  
TEXTILE TRENDS

NEW BELGIAN *design* STAR

HONG KONG IN  
CYBERSPACE

AMSTERDAM  
ANTIQUES PALAZZO

ART instead  
of hard LIQUOR

concrete *on a*  
CARIBBEAN island

MILANO highlights

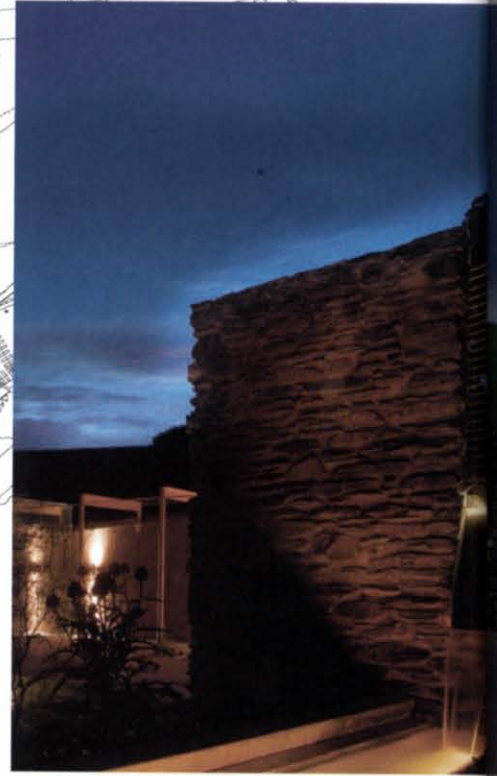
€12.20 - CAN \$19.95 - US\$14.50



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## FOWLESCOMBE FARM ESTATE

Fowlescombe farm estate in all its splendour, following the thorough restoration.

Buildings, ancient roads and paths, orchards and glazed galleries have been restored, to which end Robert Barker, architect and son of the owners, has added the modern cachet.

The large lawn is now bordered by a sleek water feature and the connecting element between the house and galleries has also undergone an architectural update.

Top left: the layout of buildings, gardens and pergolas of Fowlescombe estate after renovation.

Fowlescombe farm estate lies in England, in a deserted valley in the Devon countryside. It has a fascinating history dating back to the 17th century. Anything that still tangibly remained of bygone times was largely choked by ivy and other vegetation.

Barbara and Richard Barker were undaunted; they purchased the estate and embarked on a drastic restoration of the buildings, as well as the garden. They asked their son Robert, an architect, to assist them in the undertaking.







Above: the glazed pergola at night and in daytime. It now forms the entrance to the main house of Fowlescombe estate.

Below right: the new entrance door to the glazed gallery and, beside that, the path connecting the upper and lower gardens. It forms the transition between artificial section and the real Devon countryside.

When in 1998 Barbara and Richard Barker bought an entire farm estate in a Devon valley in England, they thought they knew what they were up against. 'Picturesque' is often used in such cases as a euphemism for 'advanced decay', plus completely overgrown gardens.

And their estate was no exception to that rule. They rolled up their sleeves and embarked on a far-reaching restoration, asking their son, architect Robert, to assist them from the start with the strategic decisions. He decided to adhere to the original layout, which emerged when they studied the history of the estate.

On the site old buildings, often in ruins, were found dating from the 17th century. Old routes, hidden ponds, overrun orchards and ancient garden walls were the starting point for the reorganisation of the complex. The old route once running from the mansion to the orchard and the farm was the key concept in the new design.

The most significant alterations have been the reorientation of the house to face down the valley and the introduction of a new, glazed gallery entrance along one of the rediscovered historical paths. The

glazed pergola consists of large sheets of glass resting on a frame that follows the curved line of the path. Glazed panels, which can be opened, automatically keep the indoor temperature at a pleasant level. The internal arrangement of the house is such that the family quarters are at the front and the guest quarters adjacent to the farm. The new entrance meant that the Barkers also redesigned the drive and surrounding gardens, thus creating a private garden and a small bird sanctuary where rare songbirds nest.

The garden is now surrounded by a wall of excavated stones with niches in which plants can grow. On top of that wall a rectangular water feature borders the garden adjoining the house. There is a second garden lower down which serves as a transition between the artificial upper garden and the natural surroundings.

During the first stage of the renovation Robert Barker was still studying and worked together with the local architectural practice of Harrison & Sutton to elaborate the most radical architectural alterations. Today he and Richard Coutts form the architectural firm of Barker & Co. Architects in London.



