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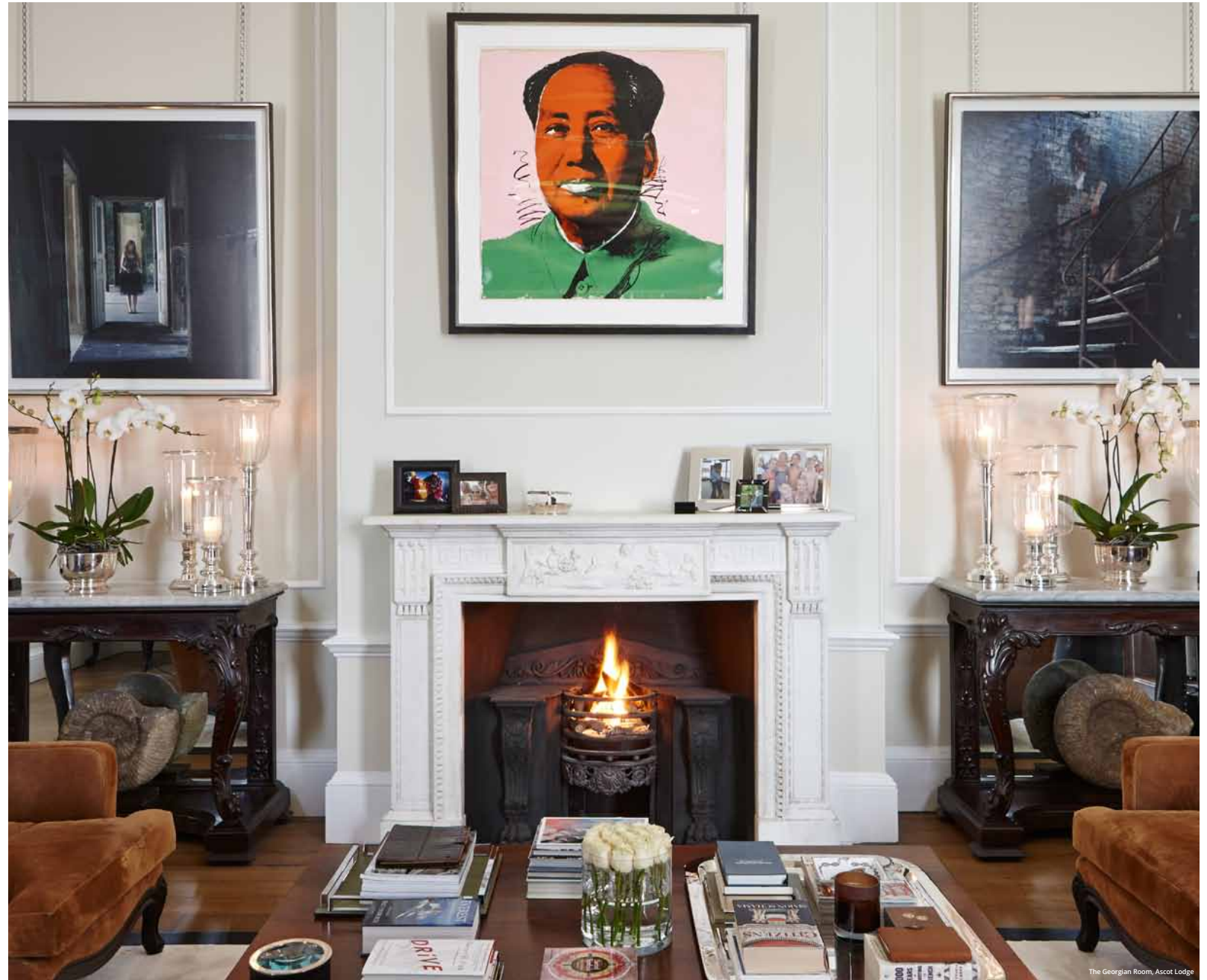
We speak to Maurizio Pellizzoni about refurbishing Ascot Lodge, a project that involved lending a hand to history

WORDS: TIFFANY EASTLAND

Paul Cézanne once said: "It's so fine and yet so terrible to stand in front of a blank canvas." True, but imagine leaving your stamp on a Monet or Renoir. Perhaps the same could be said in that regard. Interior design extraordinaire Maurizio Pellizzoni of MPD London may not have been adding to an Impressionist masterpiece, but he was asked to bring a 15th-century, Grade II-listed building into the 21st century, and that in itself is no small feat.

Located in the Berkshire countryside, Ascot Lodge is steeped in history; initially used by King James I as a hunting lodge, the property then underwent a re-model and extension by renowned architect Sir Edwin Lutyens in 1912. More than a century later, Pellizzoni and his team were asked to refurbish the master bedroom, two guestrooms, a dressing room and two sitting rooms; the Georgian Room and the Ballroom, a project that took in total three years to complete. Hardly a surprise, when the sensitive treatment and meticulous planning are so evident.

When you look round the property it's also quite apparent that each room has a signature style inspired by a piece of artwork. The Georgian Room, which was transformed into a private gallery, is perhaps the best example of this. ☉



The Georgian Room, Ascot Lodge



“We usually end up becoming very close to the client. You really get to know them and their family”

FROM TOP Master bedroom, the Ballroom, the Georgian Room (All images courtesy of MPD London)

⊙ Like all good interior designers, Pellizzoni approaches a project by first sitting down with the client and gaining an understanding of their vision: “I believe it is important to take the time to get to know the client, and to understand everything about them. To me, it is important that the house is comfortable for them,” he explains. Pellizzoni says it’s about interpreting his clients’ tastes and styles, rather than imposing his own, to ensure that the end result is unique and characterful. This is very much evident when you look through his portfolio and find that no two projects are the same. Pellizzoni believes this is only achieved by encouraging the client’s involvement throughout the process, right from day one.

Initially, Pellizzoni invites the client to his studio where they discuss the design concept. In this instance, the client’s brief was to draw on elements of Ralph Lauren, whilst also incorporating antiques, artworks and personal heirlooms belonging to the family. With a brief like that, there really wasn’t a more qualified designer for the job. In fact, Pellizzoni was able to draw on and apply the experience he gained as Ralph Lauren Home collection coordinator for Europe.

Once Pellizzoni has a clear understanding of the client’s brief, he takes the time to understand the space and fabric of the building, accompanying the client onsite: “I spend a lot of weekends at the houses, looking round and deciding what to do.” It is therefore hardly surprising to hear that Pellizzoni remains friends with many of his clients long after the project has been completed: “We usually end up becoming very close to the client. You really get to know them and their family.”

Not every studio can boast the same, nor can they provide their clients with a bespoke furniture offering. If Pellizzoni can’t find what he’s looking for, he won’t just settle for that, he’ll work with expert craftsmen to custom-build pieces to exact specifications, and this was very much the case for Ascot Lodge: “We custom-made a lot of the pieces, including the bookcase in the Ballroom and the sofas and chairs.”

Like all interior-design projects, Ascot Lodge wasn’t without its challenges. Pellizzoni explained that as a Grade II-listed building, absolutely everything had to be submitted for council approval, including colour choices which had to be drawn from the original palette: “At this level they need to check every detail.” The Ballroom proved the greatest challenge in this respect, as the floorboards were listed, which meant they couldn’t be removed, only restored. According to Pellizzoni, it took nearly a year to gain council approval on this room alone.

Worth the wait? Absolutely. The outcome of Pellizzoni and his team’s tireless work is a stunning family home which, despite being stamped with the owner’s identity, retains its character, charm and rich history. ●

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