

ELLE DECORATION COUNTRY

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THE WORLD'S
MOST BEAUTIFUL
HOMES IN
THE COUNTRY

modern design / rural retreats / coastal havens / country classics

PLUS 51 essential buys for your home

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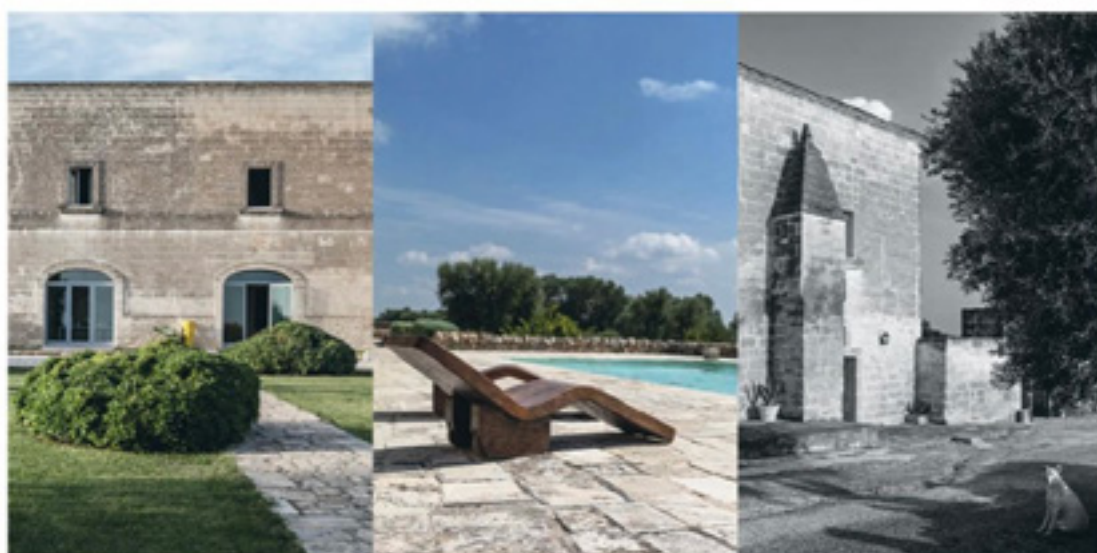
*Once a shelter for farmers and their
flocks, this traditional Italian masseria
is now an idyllic family home*

Words AMY MOOREA WONG

Photography MONICA STEZIA/LIVING INSIDE







Travel through the village of Grottaglie in southern Italy and head inland, past endless views of sun-drenched vineyards, and you will spot the country home of Kristine Standnes, an architect from Oslo, and her family. With its imposing silhouette, the property stands out against the picturesque surrounds of olive trees and grape vines. A traditional agricultural building, or *masseria*, it was originally built for Kristine's husband Gianmattia de Ginio's family in around 1750 to house animals and shepherds, its impenetrable stone walls providing protection from the elements. But now, the doors have been flung open and the building's days as a fortress given over to relaxed family life.

Empty since 1950, the farmhouse was almost in ruin and required extensive care and attention. 'We had always dreamed of renovating it, and would visit during the harvest but could never stay overnight – there were no floors, doors or windows left, and trees were growing inside,' says Kristine. 'Though our three children, Kristine and I currently live in Naples, we wanted this to become our countryside retreat, a place to

meet and spend time together,' adds Gianmattia. Restoring the original façade and floors was a long, laborious process – 'We had to scan the entire region to find reusable bricks and stones. It was also difficult to locate skilled stone-setting artisans, since only a few are left,' explains Kristine.

While filled with warm Mediterranean light, the house is decorated sparingly. The furniture – which sits, gallery-like, around the edges of the cavernous rooms – is an assortment of design classics, including an enviable collection of chairs from the likes of Vitra and Knoll. The elegant vases, jugs and urns decorating the house are from the local area, which is famed across the country for its pottery. One nod to modernity, however, is the industrial steel kitchen, juxtaposed against the wealth of natural materials. Tucked carefully beneath the stone arches, it was brought in to facilitate the family's love of hosting dinner parties. 'I like to integrate modern design, but to me, it is important that the interior harmonises with the architecture,' says Kristine. 'I'm careful to strike the right balance, because the space is so beautiful.'













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