



Through the keyhole: Mariano Fortuny's flourishing legacy

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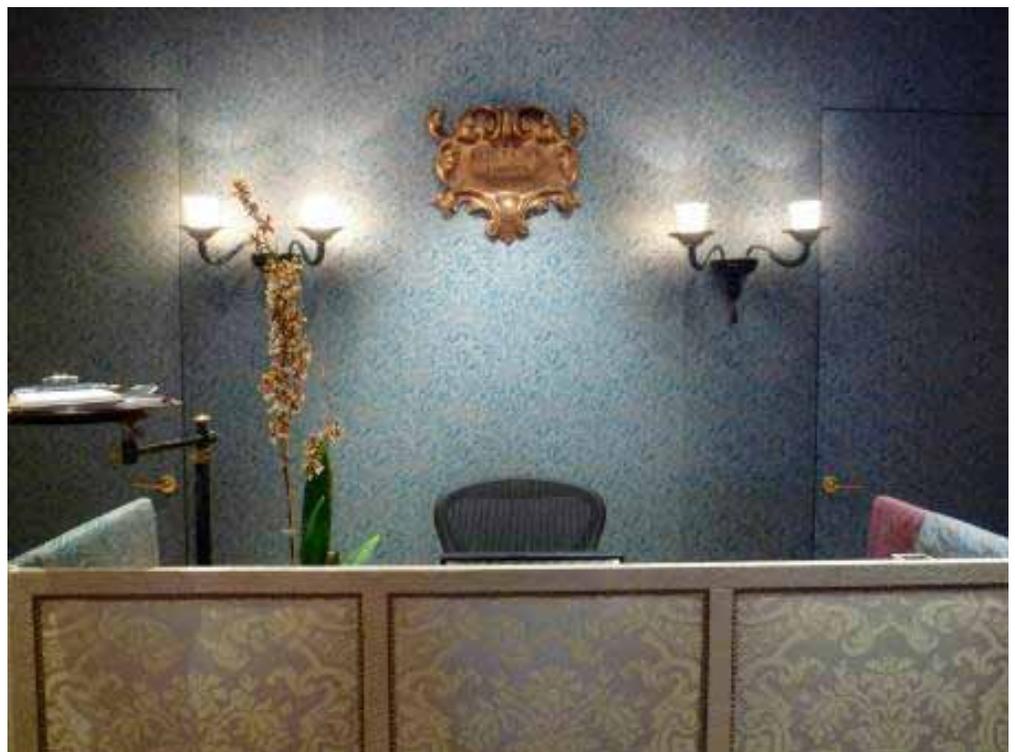


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Last Tuesday night, I popped by the new Fortuny showroom opening at the D & D building. The famed fabric line has gone through somewhat of a renaissance over the past several years, shaking off its more conservative reputation. This revitalization is fitting, too, as Mariano Fortuny was anything but the typical textile designer.

I love spending time at the Decoration & Design building, of course, but I wouldn't deem any of the showrooms "through the keyhole" material; the Fortuny space, however, changed my mind. Every editor at the event marveled at its splendor— Lili Diallo of Country Living said she never wanted to leave! I wholeheartedly agreed with her, so the next day I went back with my camera in tow.



Image credit: Mieke ten Have



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I can't quite explain how much I adore fabric covered walls. The fabric in the reception area also seamlessly ensconces the two doorways leading into the back office. It reminds me of the famed photograph of Pauline de Rothschild in her green silk chinoiserie bedroom; covered doorways have a magical and secretive element to them.

While I can't fully articulate my passion for fabric walls, I can precisely explain why I adore Fortuny. There is no other fabric out there that emulates its movement, texture, and mottled, vibrant colors. Fortuny fabrics are created on their original, century-old machines in Venice.

The reclaimed oak floors from LV Wood add an organic, earthy feel to an otherwise opulent space. They create such a soothing balance— and allow the voluminous bolts of fabric to stand rightfully on their own. The fabric at Fortuny doesn't compete with anything else in the room, which is just how it should be.

That doesn't mean, however, that the space is bereft of styled nooks!

Two young brothers, Mickey and Maury Riad, have been managing the company since 1998. Their father, Mr. Riad, purchased Fortuny from the Countess Elsie Lee Gozzi in 1988. Gozzi was a fierce steward of Fortuny's



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legacy and insisted that if the quality or tradition of the Fortuny fabrics were to diminish, that the company and its looms should be destroyed. It was a wish that the Riad family has sought to uphold.

The Countess, in the picture at left above, looks over the current showroom. Though I know nothing of her sensibilities (apparently, all the rooms in her villa were covered in Fortuny fabric- gal after my own heart!), I daresay she would be impressed.

Mickey and Maury came out and introduced me to their lighting designer, Pietro Lunetta, who was in from Venice. They discussed the work that went into creating their vision of Fortuny in New York and showed me, with relish, a sample of a sumptuous cheetah-like fabric which takes the artisans a full day to weave just thirty millimeters of. The table, covered in decadent swatches, was copied from a butcher's sawhorse table in Tuscany that Maury fell in love with and had replicated, using planks from an 18th century Virginian barn.

They may also have been the unlikely men for the job, but it turns out they were destined for it. Thank goodness for Fortuny lovers, for they have the eye, vision, and taste befitting their inherited legacy.

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