



DISCOVERIES

AD VISITS

Lust for Life

Fabric maestro *Peter D'Ascoli* transforms a Delhi villa into a kaleidoscopic feat of color and pattern

AT LAL KOTHI, IN DELHI, PETER D'ASCOLI OUTFITTED THE SALON WITH FABRICS OF HIS OWN DESIGN AND FAMILY COLLECTIONS OF TILES AND PHOTOGRAPHS.

MARK LUSCOMBE-WHYTE

DISCOVERIES



1. THE FRONT GARDEN OF LAL KOTHI. 2. THE DESIGNER IN HIS STUDIO WITH TEXTILES FROM HIS NAMESAKE LINE. 3. IN THE DINING ROOM, THE CEILING, WALL PANELS, AND TABLECLOTH ARE ALL D'ASCOLI FABRICS.



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n a recent night at Lal Kothi, the Delhi farmhouse of textile and fashion designers Peter and Cecile D'Ascoli, candlelight and the full moon glowed together as guests gathered sur l'herbe for dinner. "It's like dining at an Indian Versailles," remarked author William

Dalrymple over masala aubergines sprinkled with gunpowder Sri Lankan pepper. In this verdant corner, tucked away from the city's hustle, the couple has realized something quietly remarkable: a creative tour de force in the jostling landscape of a country highly attuned to its cultural heritage.

Peter, an American expat, began his love affair with his adopted homeland four decades ago, during a business trip to the Punjabi city of Amritsar, among other sites. "We stayed in the pilgrims' quarters at the Golden Temple and ate at long tables in the communal dining hall," he recalls, crisp in a white kurta. "All of this—and the many donkey carts, camels, horses—seemed like a wonderland to me, having grown up in prosaic Long Island." (His wife is French.) After a five-year stint working for Diane von Furstenberg in New York City, life would eventually bring him back to India, where he had a formative encounter with the textile doyen and elegant Punjabi royal Martand "Mapu" Singh. "Mapu taught me so much about the impact of Indian crafts on the wider world."

Peter founded his atelier Talianna Studio in 2006, ensconcing his young family—he and Cecile have two daughters—rather snugly in a South Delhi apartment a decade ago. With the business expanding, the family embarked on a new chapter, looking for someplace "with our own fruit trees and a sense of breathing out." When they first visited Lal Kothi, they knew nothing of the villa, owned by an erstwhile royal family.

"While the gardens were very impressive, the previous tenants had placed a green plastic covering over the central skylight that cast a bilious pall over everything," he says. Nevertheless, a second visit and the chance to move to a house surrounded by lawns seduced them.