



**Breathtaking project:** Palazzo Volpi above and above right, a short walk from St Mark's Square, restored by Fred Tubau and Anna Covre, right. The husband-and-wife designers stripped the roofless, abandoned Venetian palazzo back to its bones and created top-quality apartments for rent

# Enjoy the fruits of their labour

A couple who courageously restored a palazzo are an inspiration to those who buy in Venice. By **Cathy Hawker**

**V**ENICE has plenty of crumbling palazzos on its canals, yet the thought of restoring property built on a lagoon, beset by spiralling costs and Italian bureaucracy, leaves most of us cold.

However, Paris-based husband-and-wife designers Fred Tubau and Anna Covre have completed a breathtaking project at Palazzo Volpi, just a 10-minute walk from St Mark's Square. They took a roofless palazzo, empty for 70 years, and stripped it back to the exterior walls to create four beautiful, top-quality apartments, now available to rent.

The couple have designed for major brands including Armani, Lancôme and YSL but the palazzo was their first experience of property restoration. It took four years, with one year just to get all the necessary permissions, and included dry lining the basement and adding a lift — a real rarity in Venetian palazzos.

"Twenty years ago Anna introduced me to her home city of Venice and it was always our dream to buy a home there," says Fred.

### LUXURY AND ROMANCE

Palazzo Volpi is a homage to the city they both love. Black and white marble, brushed oak parquet flooring and layers of Travertine are teamed with Rubelli fabrics and elegant wrought ironwork to create the ultimate Venetian rental pads.

There is linen from Frette, super-sized French mirrors and silk rugs from India, while the lighting, designed by Anna and Fred, was made by Venetian craftsmen. The romance of this "modern classic" design clearly works — their very first guests were Londoners who promptly got engaged at Palazzo Volpi.

The palazzo is in a large, airy square in Castello, a truly local area with older residents meeting each morning next door at Rosa Salva, Venice's oldest bakery, and young children filling into school.

"We walk everywhere, it's impossible to rush," says Fred. "There is such beauty in the churches, the architecture and the water. It's an easy lifestyle with simple pleasures of sitting on a terrace, walking



**£390,000:** a one-bedroom apartment that would rent well in the Dorsoduro university district, with a balcony overlooking a canal. Through Savills

*"There is such beauty here. It's an easy lifestyle with simple pleasures"*

on the beach, touring the markets." Anna adds: "We have created high-quality homes, something we felt was missing in Venice. People are adding quality all over the city now. There's a greatly improved airport terminal, more arts and commercial events and upgraded restaurants."

### A VENETIAN HOME

Savills associate Views on Venice offers a restoration service, managing the full process and all paperwork, and then arranging rentals if required. A typical request from buyers is for a property in the Dorsoduro university district, or in vibrant San Polo or laid-back Santa Croce, for £700,000 to £1 million. Buyers like the secure, if unspectacular, rental yields of three to four per cent and the knowledge that no more homes will be built on the lagoon.

A 753sqft one-bedroom first-floor flat with air conditioning, parquet floors and a balcony above a canal in Dorsoduro looks good value at £390,000. A quiet two-bedroom loft apartment in San Marco, five minutes from Accademia Bridge and with a wonderful wooden roof terrace, is £668,000, both through Savills.

- **Palazzo Volpi rentals:** one- and three-bedroom apartments start from £390 a night including daily maid service and concierge (palazzovolpi.com)
- **Savills:** savills.com (020 7016 3740)

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