

MAY 2004

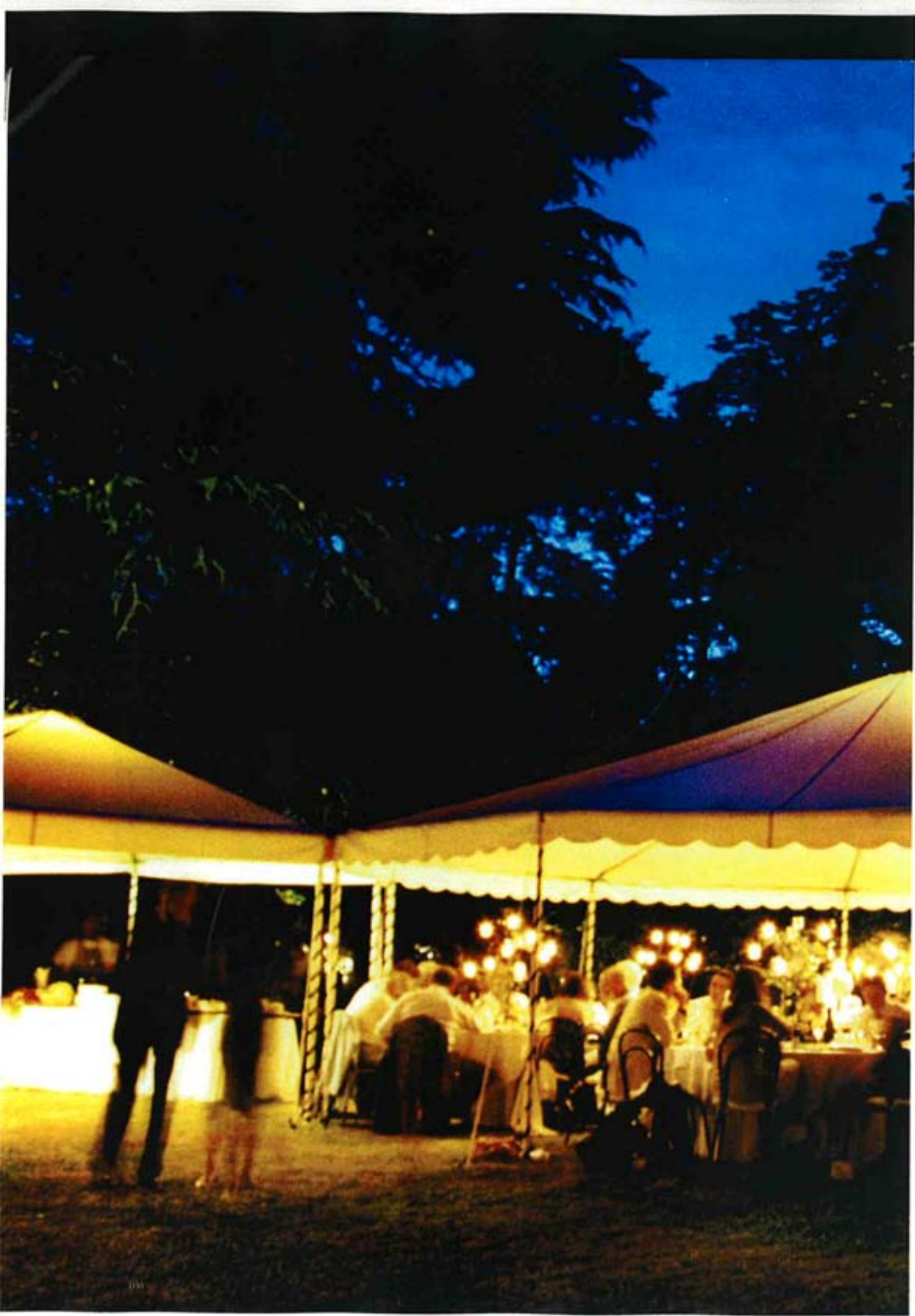
THE STYLE BIBLE FOR MODERN BRIDES

WEDDING DAY



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PAOLA SOMAINI & GUS TUGENDHAT

UGGIATE TREVANO, ITALY, JUNE 21 2003

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ELIANA MAFFEI AND BEATRICE RAGGIO. TEXT BY KATHRYN SEIDL

THERE ARE FEW PLACES IN THE WORLD more beautiful than the spectacularly picturesque Como region in Italy, and few nights more magical than Midsummer's Night. So, with the forces of good fortune very much in their favour, the wedding of Paola Somaini to Gus Tugendhat on Midsummer's Night last year could hardly have been surpassed for pure romance. With Paola's Italian origins, and Gus's Austrian-German ancestry, their wedding was inevitably going to be an international affair. Shortly after Gus's spontaneous proposal during a weekend in Paris, the date was set, and the venue decided – an 18th-century country house 16 kilometres from the shores of Lake Como, which Paola's family have owned for over 200 years. Its extensive grounds, filled with an

INSPIRATIONAL WEDDINGS



The details

THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP As she gets ready for the ceremony, Paola peeps through the shutters of her family's house near Lake Como; family jewels which had belonged to her mother were perfect for the day; each table was distinguished by different coloured ribbons round the napkins; the clever colour-coded seating plan; a bowl overflows with favours to be given to the guests – little fabric bags filled with white sugared almonds are traditional; the wedding cake was a spectacular tiered confection made with two kinds of cream, meringues and fruits of the forest OPPOSITE PAGE Looking stunning, Paola walks to meet her groom





INSPIRATIONAL WEDDINGS



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The bride makes some last-minute adjustments to her outfit; after the blessing ceremony on the lawn, Paola and Gus knelt in the chapel for prayers; in true Italian style, children were more than welcome



enchanted forest of palms, magnolias and pines, as well as a chapel, was the perfect setting for their blessing and reception.

Undaunted by the potential problems that could arise from organising a wedding in Italy from their London home, Paola decided to closely involve family and friends. Her sister-in-law Meggie, an artist, was the obvious choice for designing the invitations. Using an existing piece of her own art which had been based on an old photo of Paola and Gus, Meggie's invitations were both beautiful and personal.

'We asked one of Gus's friends to be the DJ, and our friend and composer Giuseppe Soccio offered to compose a violin and viola piece especially for the ceremony,' says Paola. 'And Gus's cousin Anna performed a song that she'd specially adapted from Ella Fitzgerald's *Blue Room*.' As if such touching personal gestures weren't enough, a friend created a short film about them which was shown during the reception, and a small wooden house in the grounds was fitted with a video-cam so guests could record their own tributes to the couple.

Although Paola and Gus wanted an intimate occasion,



250 guests from Italy, England, America, France and Belgium (where they met) were invited to the celebrations, which kicked off the night before the wedding with a dinner in Milan. Proceedings started late the next day with a 6pm blessing on the lawn outside the tiny chapel. Here, Paola had arranged the chairs into two columns, creating an aisle which was flanked by sacks of rice for throwing over the bride and groom. She'd chosen Meggie's children, Laura, aged four, Federico, two, and Lorenzo, seven, as her attendants.

'The scenery was incredibly beautiful,' says Paola. 'As we

INSPIRATIONAL WEDDINGS

stood facing the priest during the blessing, we could see the mountains surrounding Lake Como.'

The garden was scarcely less impressive. Paola and her family, with the help of local florist Ratti Flora, had added to its natural splendour with an abundance of country flowers, which cascaded round the doorway of the chapel and the arches of the courtyards where the bridal procession entered the garden. 'We used mainly small roses in pinks and yellows to go with the colour scheme of the day,' explains Paola.

The garden had also been dotted with a number of tented marquee roofs, under which guests sat for dinner. 'We decorated the tables with tall iron candelabras wound with more cascading flowers and foliage,' Paola adds.

Having decided to dispense with tradition when



choosing her dress, Paola consulted her friend and fashion designer Stephan Janson, based in Milan. 'I wanted something fun, original and bright,' she explains. 'I was very open about the colour, though I have always considered white dresses to be quite boring and conventional.' Together, Stephan and Paola designed a short shift dress with a long train at the back. But the real wow factor was the fabric – silk with layered chiffon petals in different shades of pink.

Paola's veil was also entirely unique, and was discovered in a shop in Milan. 'It was white and pale blue, and constructed to resemble a cloud,' says Paola. White Jimmy Choo shoes and family jewels completed the outfit perfectly.

'We discussed Gus's outfit at length with Stephan,' says Paola, 'and came to the conclusion that if I was going to have a colourful dress, Gus would look amazing in white. We liked





OPPOSITE PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM
Paola's stunning veil was designed to look like a cloud; a friend composed a musical piece specially for the occasion; niece Laura and nephews Federico and Lorenzo were attendants; the bride on the arm of her proud father, who was born in the beautiful country house where the celebrations took place; Paola and Gus - at their blessing ceremony and cutting the cake; guests mingle outside the little chapel; Paola gets a hug from her father while Gus looks on; Gus's mother shows her delight; the 250 guests dined under tented marquee roofs, at tables decorated with candelabras and cascading flowers and foliage





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE A shower of rice greets the bride and groom as they leave the chapel; Paola's fabulous dress – designed by Stephan Janson – was a silk, above-the-knee shift with a long train at the back, covered with layered chiffon petals in shades of pink; the bride and groom share a kiss in front of the family and friends who helped to make the day so special





the idea of the groom in white instead of the bride.' They chose Jim Roberts, Gus's Savile Row tailor, to create the suit.

After the ceremony, the wedding party enjoyed a champagne reception on the villa's veranda, accompanied by the sweet sounds of a string quartet. Then, dinner was called and guests moved to the open-air tables, each of which was distinguished by different coloured ribbon napkin rings. 'We had a traditional Italian supper,' says Paola, 'with meats and cheeses for starters, then a fish main course, with different pastas, rice and gnocchi.' As guests feasted on the delicious Italian dishes, and darkness began to descend on the enchanting scene, the garden came alive with the flickering light of hundreds of candles, which had been hung amidst the trees.

After dinner, the remaining speeches were made by the best man and the groom. Paola recalls Gus's speech: 'I think everyone cried and so did he – unusual for an Englishman!'

All in all, a glorious day. Says Gus: 'We were blessed with stunning surroundings, lots of easy Italian style, a strong affection between our families and a touching sense of historical contact for Paola's father, who had the honour of giving her away in the house where he was born and brought up.

'Also, there were so many memorable contributions from friends. The intimacy of it all will be our abiding memory and, I think, the memories of our guests, too.'

And you can hardly get more romantic than that.

How it was done

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