



A New Luxury Hotel Just Opened in One of Milan's Most Iconic Landmarks

The hallways have been transformed into art galleries, showcasing immersive works alongside contemporary to antique furniture.

By

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Hoteliers Carrie and Alex Vik were at a friend's birthday party in the South of France five years ago when a well-connected associate in the hotel business recommended they look at a space up for grabs within the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II—one of Italy's most iconic landmarks in the heart of Milan. The Town House Galleria, as the space was known then, was already a luxury five-star hotel.

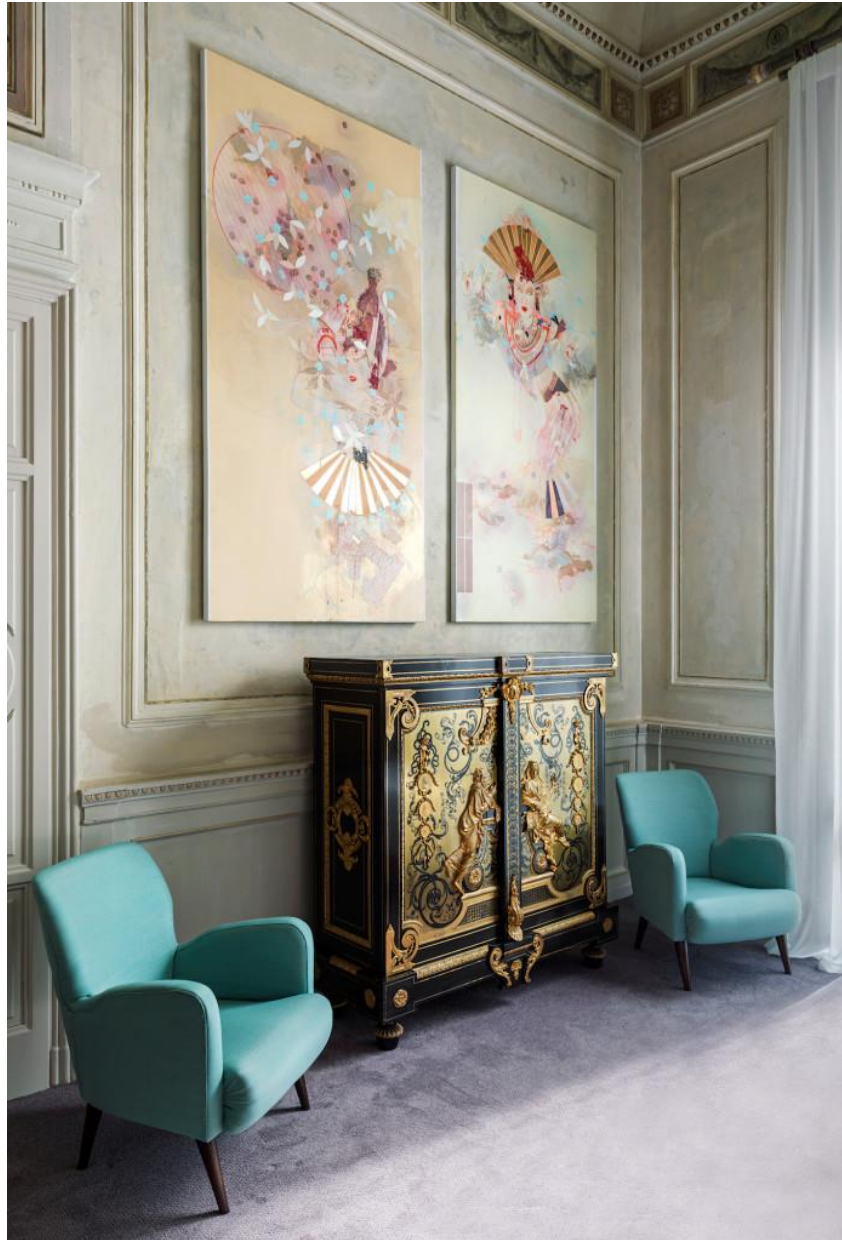
But Carrie and Alex believed they could bring their penchant for developing one-of-a-kind hotels and deep-seated love of the high-end art world to offer a unique hotel experience.

“There are already very beautiful, very mature five-star hotels in Milan,” acknowledges Carrie. “But what we saw and what we decided to bring to Milan is an edgy design that pushes the envelope. We do things in our spaces—experimental, crazy ideas—which you might do in your own home but most hotels won’t do in their spaces. But Milan is the city of design—the fashion capital, the design capital of the world—and we didn’t feel there were other hotels that represented that.”



To that end, [Galleria Vik Milano](#), which opened in early November, is Carrie and Alex’s most ambitious hotel project to date and Vik Retreats group’s first foray outside South America.

The husband-and-wife duo entirely reimagined the hotel’s interiors, starting with the lobby, which is dominated by a bronze cast of Rodin’s *The Thinker*, and reception area, where guests are welcomed by a dry fresco painted by Italian artist Alex Folla spanning the ceiling and walls.



Galleria Vik Milano has 89 rooms and suites, starting at \$534 per night and topping off at nearly \$11,400 per night for the master suite, with two bedrooms.

Each of the accommodations showcases art and decor, with pieces from 89 international artists and walls finished in *stucco veneziano*, an Italian design technique with a finished product that resembles the stuccos found in the ancient buildings of Venice.

The hotel's Palace Suites on the second floor feature ornate, double-height ceilings, while the fifth floor highlights wall paintings and canvases by six Uruguayan artists, many of whom Carrie and Alex have been working with for over a decade, starting with the first Vik Retreat hotel, Estancia Vik José Ignacio in Uruguay. (In addition to Galleria

Vik Milano, Vik Retreats currently has five hotels across South America in Uruguay and Chile.)



Galleria Vik Milano's restaurant Vikissimo, overlooking the famous bull of the Galleria, largely focuses on a seasonal menu of recognizable European and Chilean staples: appetizers like octopus with potatoes, chives and pepper sauce, pastas, filet mignon, fish including branzino and sea bass, as well as desserts including a chocolate mousse with accents of banana, tiramisu, and a variety of homemade ice cream and gelati. Meanwhile, the Galleria's rooftop features I Dodici Gatti, a longtime favorite pizzeria of the Milanese, which Carrie and Alex left largely untouched. The restaurant offers a mix of traditional and creative wood-fired Neapolitan-style pizzas and Italian comfort foods, using homemade mozzarella.



If Vikissimo and I Dodici Gatti seem less innovative than the approach taken to the rest of the hotel, it's on purpose.

"We don't want to compete with the top Italian restaurants of Milan," contends Carrie. "That would not be, in our opinion, the right thing for us to do. We're bringing something and different [with our hotel] to Milan."

For Carrie and Alex, that includes importing their three red wine blends from the VIK winery in Chile: their flagship VIK, which blends the structure and elegance of Cabernet Sauvignon with the subtlety and minerality of Cabernet Franc, a second label Milla Cala that marries the silkiness of Merlot with the qualities of Cabernet Franc, and La Piu Belle, which mixes spice notes and touches of oak. All three wines draw from the diversity of the VIK vineyard, an 11,000-acre property in Millahue Valley that grows at least five varieties of grapes across six valleys, 12 microclimates, and 13 types of soil.



Although Carrie and Alex haven't decided where they plan to open their next Vik Retreats hotel—they usually set their sights on locales they visit most, including South America, the United States, and Europe—they're proud of what they have accomplished with Galleria Vik Milano in renovating a preexisting hotel space in one of Italy's busiest cities to fit their design philosophy.

"It was a different animal, and we're still learning," Carrie says, "but we'll continue to look for new challenges and building a great team and hospitality experience."