



# Independent Minds: Alex & Carrie Vik, Galleria VIK Milano

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# INDEPENDENT MINDS: ALEX & CARRIE VIK, GALLERIA VIK MILANO

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Creating a masterpiece takes time, and for Norwegian-American hotelier couple Alex and Carrie Vik, each individually designed room at Galleria VIK Milano is a work of art. Housed within Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, Italy's oldest active shopping centre which was built as the "living room" of Milan, the Vik family have established a Milanese home-from-home inspired by the architecture of the 19th-century arcade and the city's world-renowned design scene.



A celebration of Italian artistry, the couple work in close collaboration with local artists and have almost exclusively decorated their hotel with Italian-made furniture and artworks. Living up to its name in both senses of the word 'galleria,' as a cultural destination and an exhibition space in its own right, the Viks let their unique aesthetic do the talking.

Reflecting the art and soul of Milan, a city which has long been recognised as a symbol of Italian culture and creativity, Galleria VIK Milano is part hotel, part modern art gallery. Bedroom walls become canvases, while wandering the corridors feels like viewing the latest local exhibition. Clearly unafraid of colour, bold murals, striking sculptures, and a vibrant palette paint a vivid picture, though no two rooms are the same – each bearing the hallmark of a renowned artist, from Giuseppe Gonella and Pino Pinelli, to Felipe Cardena and Shinya Sakurai. Striving to make aesthetic enjoyment more accessible to travellers and the Milanese community alike, art, beauty and design come together in what the Viks like to call their “for love project” – resulting in a boundary-breaking hotel which is both inspired and inspirational.

## What does being *‘Independently Minded’* as an hotel owner mean to you?

Being independent allows us to put the guest and their experience first and foremost. In every location we have created hotels specific to the location, its people, culture, art, design, architecture, and nature. This, in combination with our philosophy of inviting guests into the properties as guests in our homes, to live in luxury, art, design and architecture with human warmth. Our teams work hard to give our guests a personal experience. There is a common experience at each property and an individual one as every room in every hotel is unique in design, furniture, art, and colour palette.



## What was the inspiration behind the hotel, and where do you continue to find sources of inspiration?

When we first went to visit the property, we were inspired by the architecture of the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II and the city of Milan. The Galleria is an exceptional architectural example to the world, built as the living room of Milan, its own Eiffel Tower. The centre domed *octagono*, the arcades coming from that central space, the arching glass and cast iron roof is truly inspiring and magnificent. One of the unique qualities of the interiors is the diversity of spaces. Each room has a unique layout, some with grand proportions. Our inspiration comes from the world around us, so working in the Galleria and in Milan, a centre of world design, has been very thought-provoking. Buying Italian furniture, discovering artists – most of whom are Italian, interacting with the Milanese people, have all added to this inspiration.

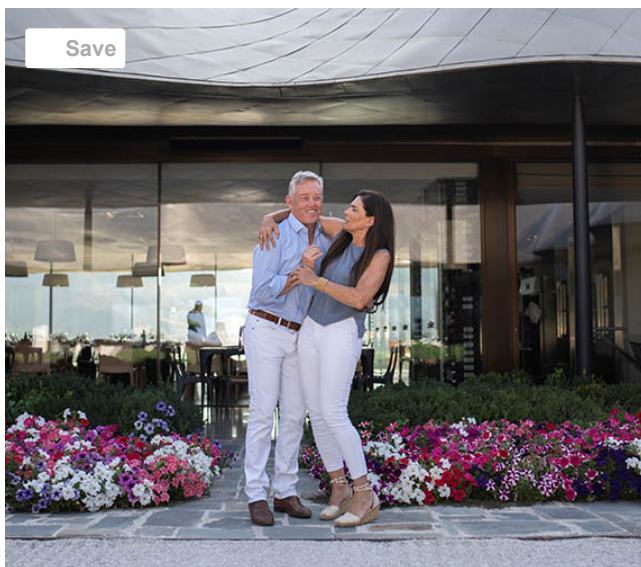
## How do you think your hotel stands apart from other boutique hotels?

Galleria VIK Milano is not only inspired by great design, art and architecture, but we also work with people who are passionate about creating something exceptional. VIK Retreats are our “for love” projects and we believe that this is reflected in the physical as well as the human experience of staying with us. The artists we chose for Galleria VIK Milano were selected for their art, but also because of the inspiration they emit. Our relationship with the artists is a collaborative one, with many spending weeks in the hotel creating their room or suite. When you stay at Galleria VIK Milano, we hope that you will feel that passion and inspiration within the walls.



## How would you describe your own perfect luxury experience?

A perfect luxury experience is one in which you feel completely relaxed, comfortable and welcome, and at the same time one that challenges your senses. A place where you constantly see something that inspires you, makes you think about what you have seen, and perhaps makes you think about things slightly differently. A luxurious, mind expanding, intellectually challenging and extremely comfortable place, for emotional and aesthetic enjoyment.



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What is disappointing about most hotel experiences is the lack of inspiration. Most hotel rooms are cookie cutters of the others in terms of design that is in at the moment; modern hotels in shades of greys, browns or blacks and wood or classical ones filled with uninspired furnishings and common designs. They can be at the top of the luxury scale and not be interesting.

## Do you have a vision for the future of the hotel?

Our vision for the future of Galleria VIK Milano is for it to be widely recognised as a hotel where art, beauty and design play a central role, and the human experience provides a home away from home for its guests. We hope that Milan will embrace Galleria VIK Milano as a place that reflects the soul of Milan, the design and art city of the world. We want Galleria VIK Milano and Vikissimo, its bar, restaurant and co-working space, to be where the Milanese and visitors alike come to live, rest, meet, work, eat, drink, dance and enjoy themselves – a place where many visitors will call their home in Milan.

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