

## OUT & ABOUT

GOOD TASTE IN VEGAS / CHRISTO TAKES PARIS / BATTLE OF THE ART TITANS



### Scenes from a MALL

*Shhh... Don't tell anyone about the boutique retreat hidden inside Milan's Galleria.*

Galleria Vik commissioned artists, including the Spaniard Felipe Cardena (whose mural is seen here), to design its 89 guestrooms.

Milano has plenty of grand hotels. When the city opens its doors this month to the thousands of pilgrims who come every year for the Salone Internazionale del Mobile, the world's foremost design fair, many of the visitors will take up residence in the numerous neoclassical palaces and religious sites that have been converted into luxury Valhallas. What you could say it doesn't have enough of is the sort of bespoke accommodations a global cultural capital should have.

Anyway, that's the argument made by Alexander Vik, the Norwegian-Swedish billionaire, and his wife Carrie, whose retreats in Uruguay put the beach town José Ignacio on the map. Their new Galleria Vik Milano is an 89-suite sanctuary inside the city's circus maximus, Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II ([GALLERIAVIKMILANO.COM](http://GALLERIAVIKMILANO.COM)). The Viks, who live not far away in Monte Carlo, may be the first out-of-towners to walk out of Italy's oldest shopping center with a worthwhile souvenir since Giuseppe Mengoni designed the Galleria, in 1861. They had been looking to open a property in a major city for a while when, five years ago, an acquaintance told them the sleepy TownHouse Galleria hotel had become available. They pounced.

"I could envision what could be done with it," Alexander says. Carrie adds, "Milan deserves to have a real design hotel that showcases the architecture of this national monument." Working with the Uruguayan architect Marcelo Daglio (he is to the Viks what the late Kerry Hill was to Aman Resorts), the hospitality impresarios assigned a flotilla of international artists a room each to treat as their canvas. Their fortissimo color schemes and bold decorative flourishes signal that the Viks are confident about entering their most competitive arena yet. Nowhere is that clearer than in the lobby, where worshipers headed to the nearby Duomo might clutch their pearls at the sight of a replica of Rodin's *The Thinker* surrounded by seminude murals. "We wanted to bring attention to the hotel," Carrie says. "We are never afraid of pushing the envelope." Erik Maza