



Divine inspiration

Part art gallery, part luxury city retreat, The Art Hotel Boston reflects Italy's cultural richness, with interiors adorned by a vast collection of contemporary art

With the heavyweight tourist traps of Rome, Florence and Venice pulling in the crowds, Turin may not be the most obvious Italian location to visit, but the historic city is steeped in culture – full of wide boulevards, chic arcades and elegant public buildings. Located just a short walk from its heart, the Art Hotel Boston is easily the most imaginative hotel in the city.

the Fondo Giov-Anna Piras on the project, and their personal art collection was the leading inspiration for the hotel's diverse interior design, with the retreat boasting an impressive collection of original artworks and prints by artists such as Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Aldo Mondino, Lucio Fontana, Alighiero Boetti, Mario Merz and Alberto Burri, among others. Piras was also the author of several of the latest rooms, like the Senna (as in Ayrton) and the Picasso, featuring many personal objects that belonged to both. ●●●

Originally built in 1971 as an ordinary three-star business hotel, it was refurbished in 2002 by architects Roberto Bongiovanni and Marco Luciano. As part of the renovation, the modern hotel space was combined with two surrounding historic buildings, with classic Liberty style façades (the Italian equivalent of Art Nouveau), to create a striking exterior.

One of the main challenges architect Roberto Bongiovanni had in refurbishing the hotel was seamlessly merging three buildings with different ceiling heights, room sizes and interior styles. "The aim was to blend the different buildings in a harmony of shapes, creating a dramatic contrast between the sober Art Nouveau and sleek contemporary exteriors," he says. And looking at the hotel, it is clear his hard work paid off. In what could have become a confused jumble of different aesthetics, each element of the design, from the furniture to the choice of art on the walls, works together to create a space that is both warm and quirky.

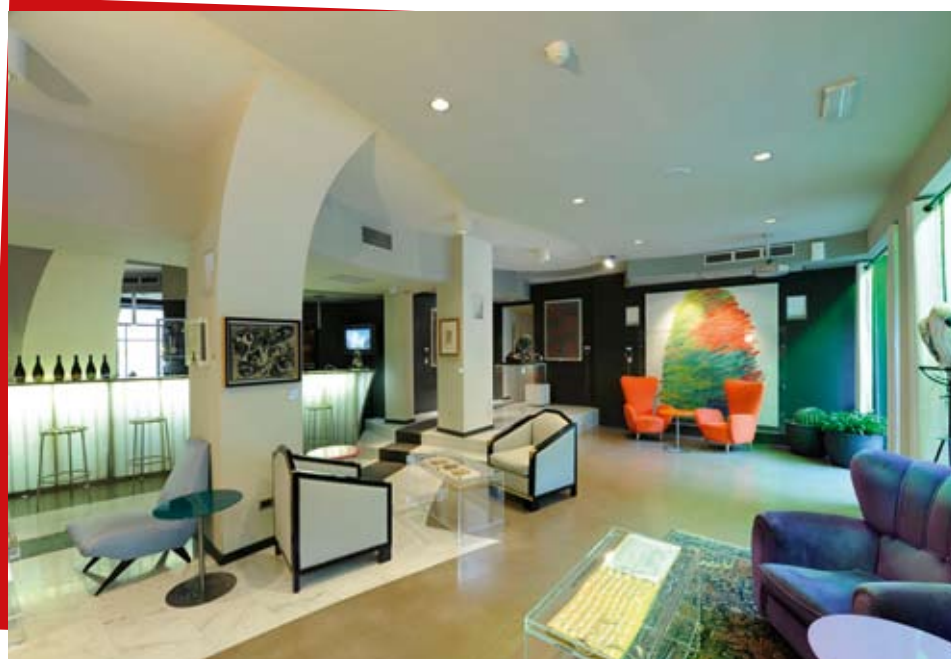
Owner and art collector Roberto Franci joined forces with designer and artist Flavio Piras of





However, despite the presence of so many valuable pieces, the pair wanted an environment that wouldn't put guests on tenterhooks and leave them too scared to relax and enjoy the space. "One of our main goals in designing the hotel was to avoid the stuffiness that is often experienced in an art gallery," explains Bongiovanni. "Initially the artworks didn't have labels, to prevent a 'museum feeling', but today we are more focused on sharing information about the artists."

In order to learn more about the art on display in the bar and lobby area and to "enhance the viewer's emotional reaction", guests are offered iPods, with readings of the artists' biographies set to music, to listen to while they look around. As a result, visitors can share the owner's passion for art at their own leisure, without the formal atmosphere you might find in a museum.



The stunning common areas of the Art Hotel Boston are an art lover's paradise, with every nook and cranny reflecting the owner's varied taste in collectables. The spacious lobby is peppered with colourful vintage sofas and bespoke furniture, boasting charming views of the hotel's private garden, complete with outdoor sculptures and luscious greenery.



The Fibonacci Bar at the hotel has become a hotspot for Turin's sophisticated residents. Its vibrant Thursday night aperitivo, where the garden opens up for traditional pre-dinner nibbles and cocktails, is particularly popular with trendy locals and discerning tourists alike. Paintings by renowned Italian artists of the 1950s adorn the walls of this elegant bar, with other features, such as Roberto Bongiovanni's illuminated counter and Flavio Piras' showcase tables, adding to the eclectic aesthetic. ●●●





Cosy, yet full of light, the Lalineacontinua restaurant similarly boasts an impressive collection of art, with transparent Perspex dining chairs and Emilio Scanavino's glass sculptures keeping the ambience fun and light-hearted.

While the hotel offers 87 luxurious rooms, guests also have the chance to stay in one of the exclusive Art Theme suites. Each space is individually designed by a different contemporary artist or with a theme in mind, and have become artworks in their own right. Highlights include the Diabolik room, which is complete with floor-to-ceiling comic book theme murals and a collage floor, and the Picasso room, with an original artwork hanging over the bed. Items including paints and cigarettes from the renowned artist's studio are also on show in display cabinets. The Nicola Bolla room is an all-white space that is accessorised with Campbell's soup can lampshades and a crocodile made from cards hanging from the ceiling.

Considering the relatively unusual nature of the guest bedrooms and public areas, quirky design is kept to a minimum in most of the guest bathrooms, where the style is sleek and sophisticated, with materials including black or white marble, or glass paste mosaic. However, in some of the 'Art Theme' rooms, the concept permeates the bathroom as well. In the Diabolik ensuite, comic pages are pasted to the floor and a striking pair of cartoon eyes looks out from the top of the wall. Other design highlights include a basin that takes pride of place atop a distressed timber bench.

So, if you're looking for a city retreat with the sophisticated glamour of an art gallery, but the cosiness of a home-from-home, the Art Hotel Boston is the place to be. ●

Prices from around £130 per night for a double room with breakfast

+39 011 500 359 | www.hotelbostontorino.it