

HÔTEL LOCARNO ROMA

THE HISTORY

1925

If walls could talk, ours would have more the one century of intriguing tales to tell.

The Hotel Locarno was conceived in 1925 as a warm and refined 5-star hotel.

It was inaugurated by the original Swiss owners who named it Locarno after their hometown, in the west building only. At the time, the famous film poster artist Anselmo Ballester was entrusted with the advertising image for the opening.

1943

“Rome, Open City”: in September 1943 the Germans marched in and took over the city for nine months. Hotel Locarno was occupied by the nazis. But even in the saddest days, having gone through the world war and the occupation, the hotel has never closed its doors for a single day.

1944

The Liberation: after Rome was freed from German occupation, American soldiers inhabited the post-war city and the Hotel Locarno. Now the lobby was ‘occupied by the children of the neighborhood who used to come here to play with the pinball machines and the football tables of the Americans.

The Fifties

The paparazzi: As Italy’s post-war film industry flourished, the reputation of Rome’s Cinecittà began attracting more and more Hollywood people, while Italian neorealism cinema gained International plaudits. Italian paparazzi soon became notorious and were chasing celebrities who gathered at the bar of Hotel Locarno.

The Sixties

“La Dolce Vita”. The hotel's stream of showbiz visitors and artists continued in the Sixties when the property played host to some of the city’s most colorful characters of the artistic village who animated the neighborhood. The nearby Rosati Bar was the meeting place for a group of artists belonging to the “Piazza del Popolo School” artistic movement: Mario Schifano, Giosetta Fioroni, Tano Festa, Franco Angeli, Pino Pascali, and Jannis Kounellis, among others. The pivoting spots, at a stone’s show from Hotel Locarno were the galleries “La Tartaruga”, run by Plinio De Martiis in Piazza del Popolo, and “L’attico” run by Fabio Sargentini.

50 meters away from the Hotel Locarno there is one of the world most famous lithography studios, “R. Bulla”, run by the siblings Romolo and Rosalba Bulla, that played an important role in the artistic community worldwide, having worked for artists like Carl Andre, Lucio Fontana, Cy Twombly. Most of them were staying at the Locarno.

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Federico Fellini and Giulietta Masina were among the habitués too, usually sitting near the fireplace with their friends. It is said that in 1966 Jack Kerouac and Gregory Corso hardly found their way back home to the Hotel Locarno after an alcoholic night at Piazza del Popolo.

Other famous guests include Alberto Moravia and Elsa Morante. They were dwelling at the 27 of Via dell'Oca and used to gather with friends at Locarno Bar.

The nearby Via Ferdinando di Savoia used to dwell in an important dubbing studio, so again the Hotel Locarno was the place to be for actors and cinema directors.

The Seventies

As the 70s approached, so did the first hotel chains which marked a major turning point in the hotelier business. Interior designer Maria Teresa Celli, the new owner of Hotel Locarno, decided to swim against the tide: her idea was to create something completely different than other hotels that "All look the same" as she defined them. Her vision was to renovate the hotel with a modern vision that would express the spirit of the Belle Époque.

Artists like Basquiat and Borges kept walking our walls.

Maria Teresa Celli has been described as a myth: she knew how to balance the management of a five-star hotel with a bohemian lifestyle of its own, fully immersed in creativity, occasionally witnessing rough nights. She knew how to pull the gang of artists together but she has never tightened their freedom.

The Nineties

Ms. Celli bought the east 'palazzo', next door to the original Hotel. This building was built in 1905 by a noble family from Venice as their holiday home in Rome. The secret garden in between the two buildings became a liaison space, the beating heart - and a beautiful leafy urban oasis - of the property.

Since the 70s to this day, the Hotel has been the setting for movies, theatrical performances, book launchings, as well as a source of inspiration for many writers and artists. In 1978 Bernard Weber directed his first film, a few years later Victor Cavallo wrote a play, and recently Alain Elkann and Antonio Mega Ferreira wrote two novels, all titled "Hotel Locarno".

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