

Luxury justified

Capri Palace and its collection

The first thing you catch as you enter Capri Palace are the glances of Hector and Andromache de Chirico. In fact, the geometrical-metaphysical objects have no eyes in this late version, painted in 1960 — just like in the previous versions of this immanent story of de Chirico. Still, you feel that glance straight away: the small painting faces the entrance. “It was the first serious piece of art that I bought”,— says Tonino Caccace, now the CEO and previously the hotel’s owner, which he sold to the Mytha Hotel Anthology group that specialises in Mediterranean hotels. “As I held this painting of de Chirico in my hands, I realised I can’t just hang it at home. I wanted it to be always seen by other people. So I hung it here. That’s how the Capri Palace collection story began”.

Elena Stafyeva

Next to the Concierge counter, by a big window in the foyer, is the Golden disk (Il Disco) of Arnaldo Pomodoro (similar but much bigger in size can be seen at the San Babila Square in Milan and in the courtyard of Moscow’s Museum of Modern Art). Further along, above the settees in the quiet far corner of the Bar is an artwork by Keith Haring. The restaurant L’Olivo, with its two impeccable Michelin stars, is enlivened by Paolo Sandulli’s voluptuous sculpture-sque bodies, full of Mediterranean vitality and humour. Signor Caccace’s collection includes artworks of painters from all over the world, but at the heart of it are the Italian artists, whom he loves and perceives, many of whom he knew and knows personally, whose art careers he follows closely, and whose vernissages he attends. Capri Palace hotel might as well offer a special service for its guests — “Italian contemporary art history in one hour”, a guided tour based exclusively on the hotel’s private collection.

Capri Palace is not the only European hotel with its own art collection. But what you find here is cardinally different from the collections picked by specially hired advisors, and which are just a means of investment or a marketing tool for their owners. Every piece of

art in Capri palace testifies to the passion for art and taste of the person, who hand-picked and strategically placed each and every one of them. And personal knowledge only confirms that. At dinner, we spend three hours talking about contemporary art, and our discussion continued in the morning for another hour and a half. And if Signor Cacace hadn't had to leave, we would have kept talking contemporaneously.

Tonino Cacace has come up with a very personal program "Artists in Residence" — the idea behind it is not to just let an artist stay for a week in one of Capri's coolest hotels, but to make sure the time is spent for the benefit of the islanders: "I've decided that artists will work on an art-project together with the high school seniors of Anacapri. It's important to me that teens don't view art as something elite and foreign to them. I want them to see how art is created and realise that it can be a part of their lives". This year's artists in residence are Jovana Silva, a photographer, and R  di Martino — a visual artist, photographer and filmmaker.

Every morning, as I sat on the veranda and had breakfast, I watched local school kids with their backpacks flock to the lawn. Then, Jovana would take one group to take photos of local swimming pools for a special project of the Landscape festival, and the rest would go with R  to shoot videos with their smartphones, to later make them into film clips. Jovana's works were exhibited at the 2006 Venice Biennale, she published several photo albums, worked for the *Abitare* magazine and got published in *Domus*. R  has just finished a short film featuring Valeria Golino and Filippo Timi for one of the programs of the Venice Film Festival.

The atmosphere of willingness for creativity and the vicinity of artwork subtilise all the feelings. The fabric from Loro Piana, the hand-crafted white and blue maiolica floors under your feet, the most tender crudo from the local red shrimp served in *Il Riccio* — every experience gets intensified. The benefit and pleasure from visiting the signature "Leg school" in the medical spa pump you up, the extra weight leaves faster after the special weight-loss program, and the realisation that you pass one of the de Chirico pieces of art eve-

ryday on your way to breakfast and enjoy an Aperol with Keith Haring's art above your head, makes the luxury here feel absolutely special.