

# Contemporary Art in Byblos Art Hotel Villa Amistà

Art, design, hospitality and fashion merge together at the splendid fifteenth century Patrician villa, which is Byblos Art Hotel Villa Amistà, an exclusive hotel inaugurated in September 2005.



Conceived as a permanent exhibition of contemporary art, the interior of the hotel displays works by artists of international fame, such as Vanessa Beecroft, Corrado Bonomi, Enrico De Paris, Loris Cecchini, Sandro Chia, Peter Halley, Damien Hirst, Robert Indiana, Anish Kapoor, Kimsooja, Sol LeWitt, Beatriz Millar, Begoña Montalban, Takashi Murakami, Luigi Ontani, Mimmo Paladino, Giulio Paolini, Patricia Piccinini, Arnaldo Pomodoro, Marc Quinn, Mimmo Rotella, Cindy Sherman, Sissi, David Tremlett, Giuliano Vangi and other talented artists.

The hotel is situated in Corrubio in the heart of the Valpolicella, just a few kilometers from the centre of Verona. Over the centuries its transformation has taken place. A Roman blockhouse was the basis upon which the architect Michele Sanmicheli, in 1400, designed the central body of the old villa, in perfect Venetian style. The present construction goes back to the second half of the seventeenth century and it is the work of the architect Ignazio Pellegrini.

The meticulous restoration of the architecture and paintwork, in collaboration with the well-known architect and designer Alessandro Mendini, and the careful choice of interior furnishings and works of art, have transformed this Venetian Villa into a real museum of contemporary art and design.



You can admire the photography of Vanessa Beecroft, an internationally followed and admired artist, with images of nude female figures, diaphanous pale girls with red hair, or figures which the artist has dressed with a wig. Slender almost androgynous figures stand out on the walls of the vast hall, which is dominated by a majestic chandelier, made with Murano glass.

In all the bedrooms, expertly furnished by the designer Alessandro Mendini, there are female forms as seen through the eyes of the Spanish artist Begona Montalban. Elegant and sculptural forms have been transformed into ethereal creatures. White androgynous figures are made human only by a smear of makeup on the eyes or lips. The lips are the focal point of the Swiss artist Beatriz Millar. "Coloured Lips" and "Morning Diary" are the titles of her creations. Coloured quivering mouths talk of poetic messages, prayers, tongue twisters and provocation. Words are brought to life in the crossword "One, one John" and in the love poem "Love Off". The artist has decorated the vast hall with an imposing glass cabinet as well as furniture, sculptures and digital photographs.



The American artist Cindy Sherman, who expresses her surreal images through photography, demonstrates and unveils the apparent respectability of American society with images which can sometimes even be shocking. Her “clowns” keep us entertained at the internet point.

The conference room has been prepared by Sissi, with photographs of her performances which demonstrate the metamorphosis and transformation of being.

On the walls of one of the three dining rooms, hang the works of the Calabrian artist Mimmo Rotella, who became famous in the fifties for his *dècollages* – pictures made by the overlapping of shredded posters to create a final unique intense image. These exclusive pieces were created specifically for Byblos from shredded advertisements of the well-known fashion label.

The restaurant in Villa Amistà is dedicated to the Florentine master who became artistically known in the seventies and is considered as one of the greats of contemporary plastic art, a central character of trans avantgarde art.

Peter’s Bar is set out with the works of Peter Halley, one of the protagonists of American art today. His striking works, created especially for Byblos Art Hotel, make use of fluorescent colours and a geometric layout.

The Japanese artist Takashi Murakami, famous for his naïf puppets is now a guru of contemporary art. Widespread throughout Japanese culture, the works are a fusion of typically formal Japanese culture and more contemporary habits.

The sculptures in the hotel are of Sol Le Witt, American founder of minimalist art; the works of the conceptual Italian artist Giulio Paolini; Arnaldo Pomodoro’s bronze sculptures, the famous sculptor from Romagna, who created an untraditional form of sculpture in the fifties; and the glass sculptures by the French artist Jean Michel Othoniel that enrich the double staircase which leads to the entrance of the Villa.

The American Robert Indiana focuses his Pop Art on the world of trademarks and street signs, and concave metal surfaces which distort and reflect the image of the visitor, by the Indian artist Anish Kapoor. Other contemporary artists help to decorate this residence, which is unique in the world.

It is due to the passion for art of the Facchini family, the owners of Villa Amistà, that such a project has been possible. A vast collection of design objects, both contemporary and historical, decorate the sixty rooms of the hotel and all common rooms. Furniture, lighting and famous objects can be seen throughout, such as the armchair by Proust, furniture in the bar by Anna Gili, cutlery by Giò Ponti, wooden tables by F.L. Wright, and chairs for the wine cellar, and so it goes on.

In a magnificent 20,000 square meter park there is a gourmet restaurant which is also open to the general public, as is the piano bar which hosts live music. The wine cellar in the fourteenth century vault houses wines from more than 300 different producers. An outdoor pool and the Espace Byblos wellness Centre, all contrive to make this an exclusive luxury hotel.

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