



Necchi Campiglio Villa Information Card

**Bagatti Valsecchi
Museum**

**Boschi Di Stefano
House Museum**

**Necchi Campiglio
Villa**

**Poldi Pezzoli
Museum**

The 20th century in Milan A villa of lombard entrepreneurs

The period of greatest entrepreneurial and social vitality of the Necchi Campiglio covers the period from the 1920s to the end of the 1960s. Notwithstanding the economic crisis of 1929 and the destruction of the Second World War, the history of Milan in this arc of time was inevitably characterized by great energy and industriousness. In this city then populated by about one million inhabitants the State University, the Catholic University, the new Central Station, the Museum of Milan, the Forlanini Airport, the Niguarda Hospital, as well as the Milano-Varese highway, the first toll highway in the world, were inaugurated during the 1930s-40s. Sports structures were completed, as well: the Ice Palace, the San Siro Stadium, the Tennis Club and the Idroscalo (an airport for aquaplanes). Later, the tragic events of the war were overcome thanks to a determination to reconstruct:

between 1945 and 1960, sites and activities of diverse natures and functions were reopened, from the monastery of Chiaravalle, to the department store Rinascente, to the Fiera (the convention center). Similarly, a restoration campaign permitted the recovery of the principal civic structures and the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele. The modernity of the post-war period was evidenced by the first line of the underground and the Pirelli skyscraper. At the same time, culture was disseminated more widely thanks to the new editorial activities of Fabbri, Feltrinelli and Polifilo, following in the footsteps of Rizzoli and Bompiani, already present in the marketplace. Even the large industrial companies experienced a phase of great development, for example, that of Alfa Romeo, Falck and Pirelli.

The Protagonists



*Angelo Campiglio e
Gigina Necchi Campiglio
in 1941*

*Nedda Necchi
in 1941*

The Necchi Campiglio (the sisters Nedda and Gigina Necchi and the latter's husband, Angelo Campiglio) were typical exponents of that entrepreneurial upper middle class that had a determining role in 20th century Lombardy: those directors and industrialists, who made Milan great with their economic enterprises, but who also demonstrated sensibility and interest even for civic aid. It was a middle class that loved the high life, that mingled with the ancient Lombard families, that participated in balls and hunts, and that went to the La Scala Theater and to private clubs. Their considerable economic patrimony - created by the production of objects in enameled cast iron and the well-known sewing machines - and luxurious standard of living align the Necchi Campiglio trio more with the noble Poldi Pezzoli and the high

society Bagatti Valsecchi brothers than to the Boschi Di Stefano, who belong to the different social sphere of the intellectual middle class characterized by culture and a modern life style. In the course of their lives led in via Jan, the Boschi Di Stefano were more interested in knowing and assisting young artists of the day than in following the high society rites and ceremonies of the city.

The House



A side view of the Villa from the garden

The home of the Necchi Campiglio is distinctly distinguished from the other homes of the Milanese historic house museum network by its very architectonic nature. It is not a mansion, such as the one in via Manzoni (Poldi Pezzoli) or in via Gesù (Bagatti Valsecchi), nor is it a condominium in an elegant multi-family building, such as the one in via Jan (Boschi Di Stefano), although this latter was designed by the same architect as that responsible for the villa in via Mozart: Piero Portaluppi. Instead, it is a villa in the very heart of the city, a truly independent one-family home, with a garden, tennis court, pool and appurtenances. The style is that of the early 1930s, influenced in part by the emerging rationalist style, which is evoked on the exterior of the building in the rigorous design of lines and surfaces, while the inside is characterized by a lively Art Déco style. In fact, brilliant creative imagination and taste of the 1920s are constant aspects

of Portaluppi's work, as also demonstrated both in the façade of the via Jan building and in the numerous decorative details of the Boschi Di Stefano condominium. Inside the villa of via Mozart, the ample volumes permit that fluidity of space so desired in 1930s-40s architecture, conferring on the entire architectonic project the additional value of modernity. On the other hand, however, the distinct separation of the floors of the house based on their diverse functions betrays a vision of the home tied to the centuries-old tradition of Italian buildings. In this, of all the other buildings in the historic house museum network affinities are shared above all with the Bagatti Valsecchi mansion, be it for the location of the kitchen and service rooms on the ground floor (in the case of via Mozart, in the semi-basement, or for the placing of the servants' bedrooms on the highest floor.

The Collections



Alfredo Ravasco, *Triptych in lapis lazuli and branches of red coral, with agate bowl, enamel fish and sapphires*, 1930-1935

When speaking about the furnishings, the Necchi Campiglio Villa originally was a coherent whole of architecture, furniture and decoration systems of the 1930s, since it was entirely of the hand of Portaluppi, at least at the beginning. This stylistic unity recalls that worked by the Bagatti Valsecchi brothers about fifty years earlier, albeit in the Neo-Renaissance style. After the Second World War, the taste of the Necchi Campiglio changed, however, and they filled the interiors of their home with antique furniture and art objects, mostly of the 17th and 18th centuries, having completely removed the original furnishings. The process of "antiquing," which took place thanks to the consultation with the well-known architect, Tomaso Buzzi, underscored the precise interest of the owners in bestowing a magnificent look on their home, as opposed to their contemporaries Boschi Di Stefano, more concentrated on the art works than on the furnishings of their home. Generally speaking, the collecting of the trio in via Mozart has little in common with that of the couple in via Jan.

While the latter were profoundly dedicated to then-contemporary artists, and acquired a great quantity of works with passion and competence, the former exhibited little interest for the artistic happenings of the 20th century, and preferred to acquire furniture and paintings on the traditional antiquarian market. Only the unmarried Nedda revealed a personal interest in that which was contemporary, and created a little exhibit room for her own small 20th century collection (now dispersed) of works by Jean Arp, Gianni Dova, Lucio Fontana, Roberto Crippa, Mario Sironi, René Magritte and others. With the arrival of FAI, two important donations contributed to the enrichment of the artistic patrimony of the Necchi Campiglio Villa. The precious collection of Alighiero and Emilietta de' Micheli consisting in decorative art of the 18th century is located in a room on the second floor, while Claudia Gian Ferrari's extraordinary group of paintings and sculpture of the 1920s/1940s is distributed in the rooms of the ground floor.