

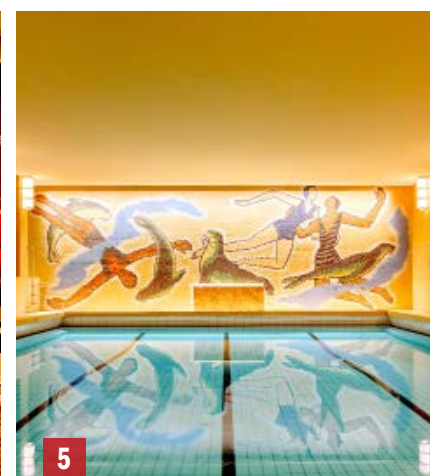
Oslo of old lives on at Villa Inkognito, Sommerro House



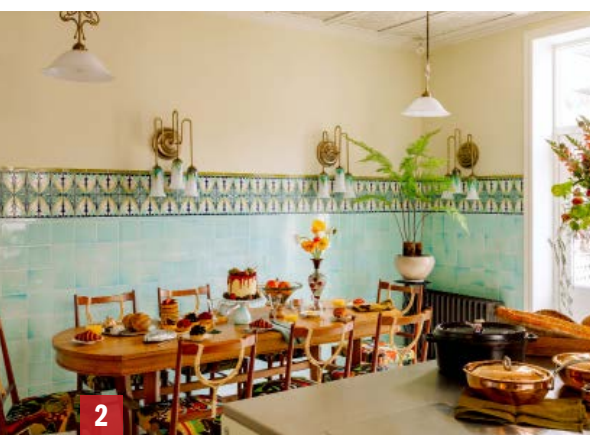
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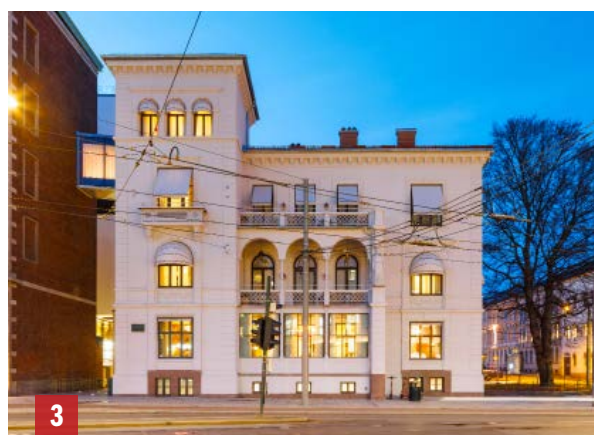
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1) Rooms at Villa Inkognito evoke the private residence of an art connoisseur. 2) Breakfast at the Villa Inkognito's Pipkin Kitchen is served at a communal table. 3) Villa Inkognito is connected to the adjacent Sommerro House hotel by an aerial corridor on the Villa's top floor. 4) Sommerro House's Ekspedisjonshallen. 5) Vestkantbadet's art deco swimming pool is notable for its mural by Per Krohg. 6) The panoramic rooftop views of Oslo and its fjord provide a perfect complement to TAK Oslo's Nordic-Japanese cuisine.

PHOTOS BY FRANCISCO NOGUEIRA

By Mark Thompson

There's something about an unmarked entrance that draws us to a door. All the better should that privacy be situated in a central location, hidden in plain sight a few short blocks from Norway's Royal Palace and the Nobel Institute. In which case, Oslo's new Villa Inkognito merits its name and the inherent promise of discretion.

Hidden beneath the building's 19th-century porte-cochere, Villa Inkognito's wooden doors open into a residence that evokes the home of a connoisseur whose patronage of the arts is matched by a generosity of spirit. There's a palpable sense of calm upon entrance into the Villa, where guests are greeted by the lady of the house, whose gracious demeanor exemplifies the Villa's intuitive hospitality. Everyone in service at the Villa seems to anticipate a guest's desires, whether it's an espresso croissant upon arrival or the return of a phone lost in a plush seat cushion.

Built as a private residence in 1870, the Italianate building subsequently housed the executive offices of Oslo's electric company, which was located in the adjacent Sommerro House hotel. After a meticulous renovation and redesign, Villa Inkognito opened this April as an 11-room urban retreat complete with conservatory, Champagne bar, library, private dining room and music salon with a Steinway & Sons grand piano.

In addition, Villa guests have access to

Sommerro House and its multiple restaurants and amenities via a private aerial corridor on the Villa's top floor.

Arriving at the Villa

Designed by the London/New York firm GrecoDeco, the spacious rooms and suites at Villa Inkognito open like a collection of Faberge eggs, bedizened with passementerie, art nouveau wallpaper, original paneling and gumdrop lighting. The carved oak sleigh beds with Svane mattresses are beautifully dressed in pressed linens and cotton candy-soft pillows that all but guarantee a blissful sleep.

Guests who arrive at the Villa after a transatlantic journey might consider a rehabilitative sauna and swim at Oslo's first rooftop pool, situated atop Sommerro House. Equally indulgent is Vestkantbadet, Sommerro House's spa and wellness floor that includes an art deco pool from 1932. Beautifully restored with vintage wooden changing rooms and a mosaic by Norwegian artist Per Krohg, the pool serves as a metaphor for the rebirth of

Sommerro House and the surrounding neighborhood.

Breakfast at the Villa is served in the Pipkin Kitchen at a communal table where a personal chef caters to guests and their morning whims. Guests who desire privacy are free to dine in their rooms — or at Ekspedisjonshallen (Expedition Hall), the historical dining room at Sommerro House that was once the central hall of Oslo's electric company.

Situated at the base of Sommerro's magnificent central staircase, the art deco-inspired Ekspedisjonshallen retains Krohg's original fresco of the history of hydraulic power as well as a sunken bar and a stage for musical entertainment in the evenings. High tea is served in the neighboring To Sostre, where a winter garden and rattan furnishings evoke Norwegian fairy tales.

At Sommerro House, it's not uncommon to witness the awe of an octogenarian who recalls the building's origins. According to Dominic Gorham, Sommerro's guest relations manager, numerous locals return to the hotel accompanied by relatives who learned to swim in its pool.

Staying at Sommerro House

The surrounding Frogner neighborhood is home to Frogner Park as well as the Royal Palace and the National Theatre; locals have embraced Sommerro House as a beloved icon reborn.

With water views of Oslo's port and fjord, Sommerro's Heritage Suites are

an homage to Norway's Art and Crafts movement, furnished with hand-knotted wool rugs, moire wallpaper and marquetry birch beds handmade in Java. Chandeliers in blown glass provide an ambient glow that mirrors the rooms' blond color scheme complemented by full-length Jacquard window drapes.

What appears as a spaceship crowning the roof of Sommerro House is actually the home of TAK Oslo, where acclaimed chef Frida Ronge rules the house with her Nordic-Japanese cuisine. During the golden hour, the panoramic views of Oslo fjord are particularly spectacular from the adjoining restaurant Izakaya Bar & Terrace, which buzzes with sunset cocktail vibes.

No trip to Oslo is complete without a polar plunge into the North Sea, in which case it's necessary to climb aboard a floating sauna and cruise into the Oslo fjord. Apart from the mesmerizing views of the archipelago and the Oslo skyline, there are the health benefits of plunging into extreme cold water.

A member of Legend, Preferred Hotels & Resorts and Historic Hotels Worldwide, the Villa Inkognito and Sommerro House are a short walk from the Oslo Opera House as well as the Astrup Fearnley Museet and the new National Museum. Single-room rates at the Villa Inkognito start from \$650, with full Villa rentals from \$10,200 per night. Rates at the Sommerro start from \$250 per double room, including breakfast.