

Against the backdrop of the Alps, the northern Italian city of Turin has been known for many things: It was the birthplace of espresso, vermouth and Fiat and is considered one of Europe's occult capitals, believed to sit at the nexus of black magic and white magic triangles. It was also Italy's first actual capital, after the country unified in 1861. By then, Turin had already served for several centuries as a seat of power for the Duchy of Savoy, and also, briefly, as a French departmental capital (it was occupied by Napoleon's empire from 1802-14). This stature gave Turin its wide boulevards and promenades, elegant Baroque palaces and gilded cafes.

It lies less than an hour west by high-speed train from Milan, where the [2026 Winter Olympics](#) kick off today (events will also be held in the northeastern mountain town of [Cortina d'Ampezzo](#)), making for a worthy side trip. Turin hosted the Games in 2006, a rare spotlight for this city of roughly 900,000 inhabitants. While the country's other urban centers are regularly overwhelmed with tourists, Turin, a place steeped in tradition but with a long history of innovation, has quietly evolved into an art hub. "People don't brag about it, but Turin definitely has the country's most intellectual art scene," says the jeweler Gaia Repossi, who was born in the city. Sarah Cosulich agrees. She's the director of the Pinacoteca Agnelli, which exhibits a mix of old masters and contemporary works in a former Fiat factory — the old rooftop car test track has been converted into an art park — while other institutions occupy repurposed castles and palazzos.



Image

The Lingotto complex in 1929. The legendary Fiat factory with a car test track on the roof is now home to Pinacoteca Agnelli, the art museum founded by former CEO Giovanni Agnelli and his wife Marella. Credit...Fox Photos/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

That partially explains why Cosulich has seen a growing number of international artists moving to Turin: In addition to its network of museums and galleries, they're drawn to its affordability relative to Milan. But there's another, less tangible quality that's equally compelling: a heightened sense of intrigue.

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“The nature of people in Turin is very private and reserved, and so you always have the feeling there’s some mystery behind everything you see and those you meet,” says Cosulich. “There might be something hidden around every corner.” To help lift the curtain, we asked Cosulich, Repossi and three other locals to share some of their favorite places — from chocolate shops and grand cafes to art-filled palaces and small hotels with expansive views.

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### **The Insiders**

Image



**Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev** is a curator and the former director of [Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea](#), as well as the founding director of [Fondazione Cerruti](#).

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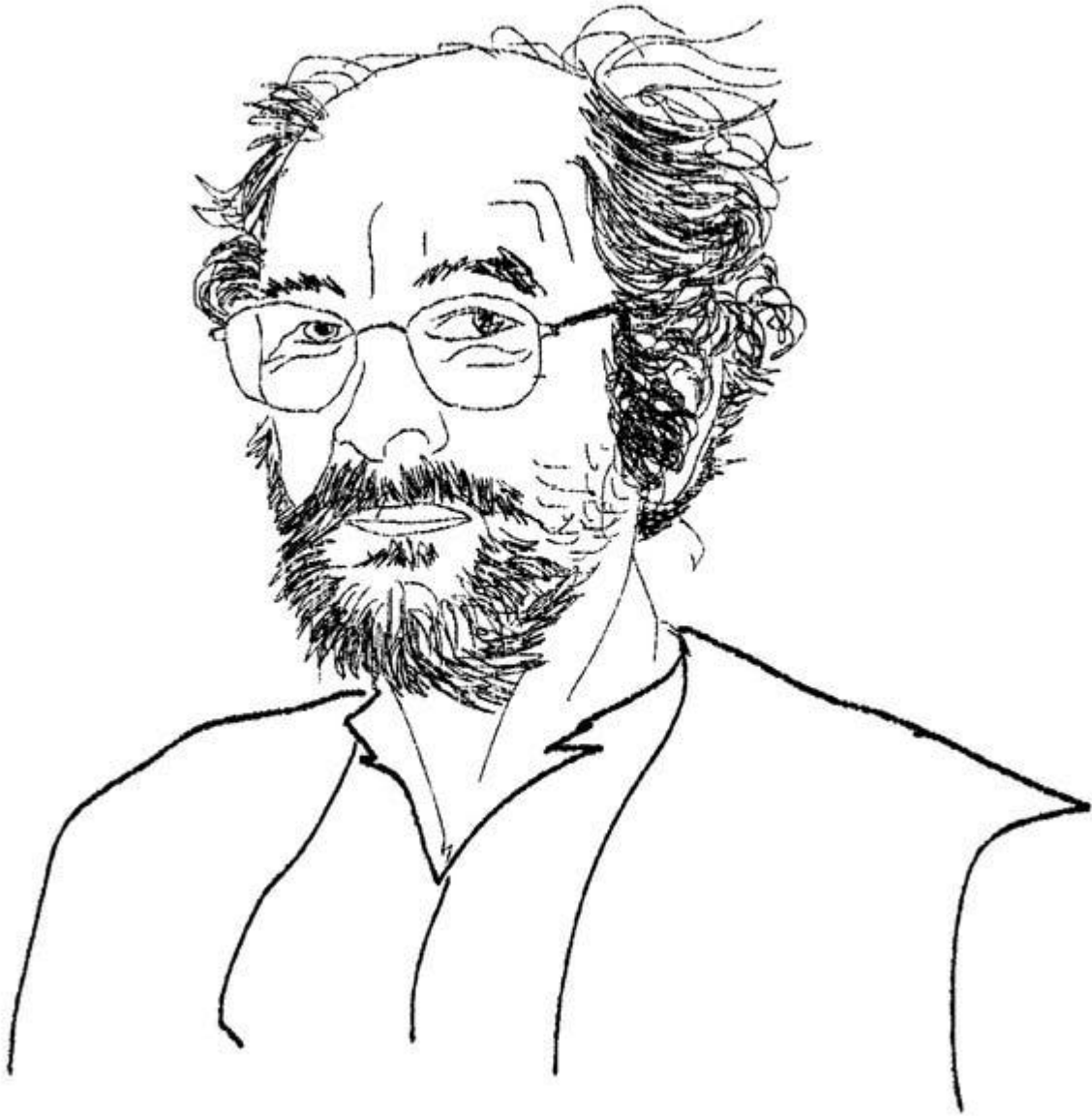
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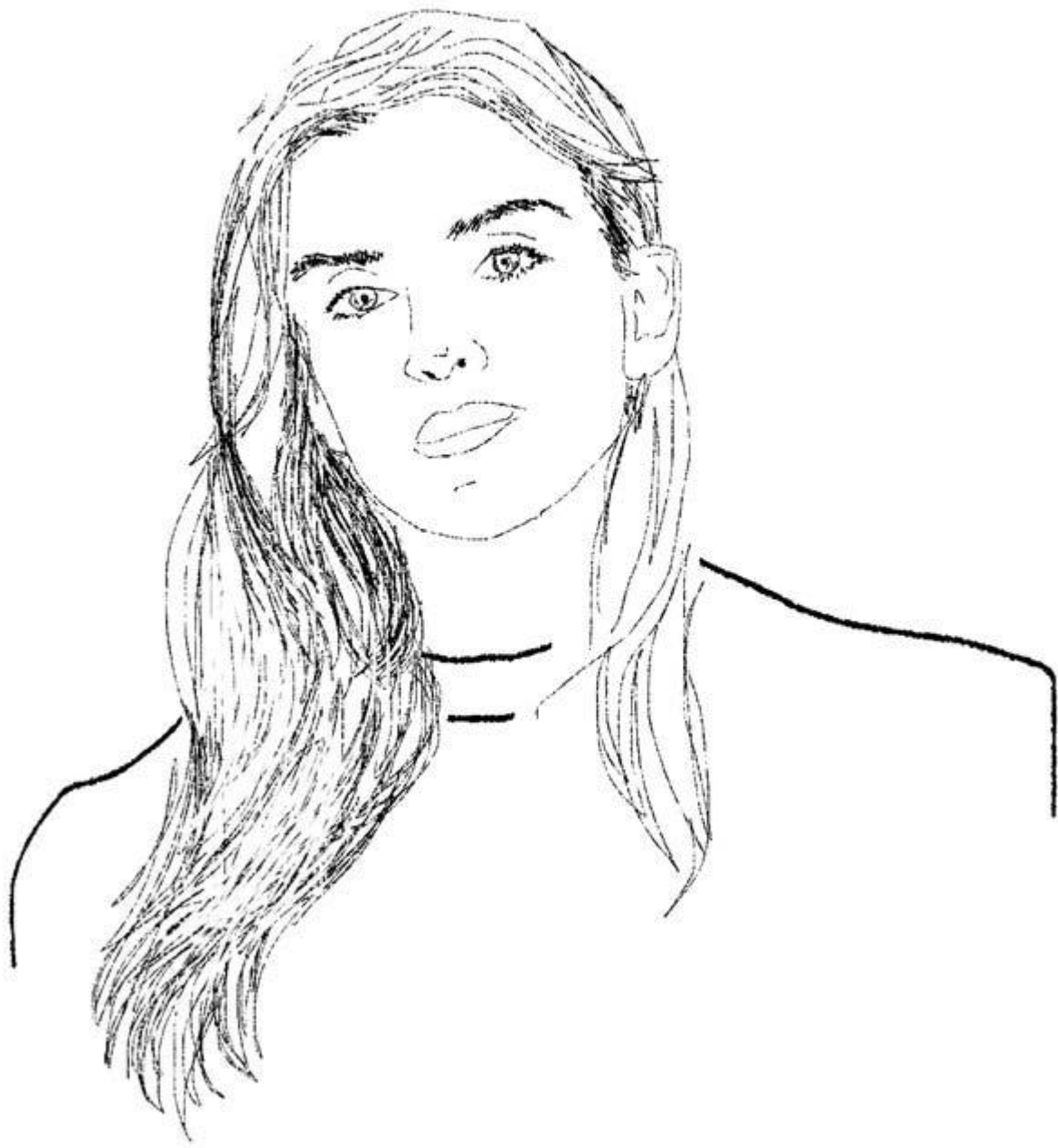
**Sarah Cosulich** is the director of [Pinacoteca Agnelli](#).

Image



**Fulvio Ferrari** is the founder of [Museo Casa Mollino](#), housed in the apartment that the architect and furniture designer Carlo Mollino furnished for himself in the 1960s but never lived in.

Image



**Gaia Repossi** is the creative director of [Repossi](#), a jewelry brand founded by her grandfather in Turin in 1957.

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Image



**Eugenio Signoroni** is a food and drinks writer who has lived in Turin since 2014.

Illustrations by Richard Pedaline

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**Sleep**

Image



Left: a suite at Turin's Hotel Victoria. Right: the courtyard at B&B Via Stampatori. Credit...Enea Arienti

“**Hotel Victoria** is a family-run hotel with a courtyard garden and an Egyptian-style spa. That sounds kitsch, but it fits the narrative of Torino, the city's Egyptian Museum and the love for the occult that permeates the city.” (From about \$245 a night) — Sarah Cosulich

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“Managed by a mother and daughter, **B&B Via Stampatori** is in the part of the city center that was Roman and is in one of [Turin's] oldest buildings. The rooms are all on the top floor, facing a courtyard.” (From about \$165 a night) — Fulvio Ferrari

“**Casa del Pingone** is a small gem with six suites right in front of the Duomo. Rooms are furnished with pieces from interesting Italian designers of the past [such as] Gio Ponti and Carlo Scarpa. Each room is different, and some have amazing views. (From about \$210 a night)

“**Turin Palace**, close to the Porta Nuova station, was built in the 1870s. The spaces have been restored, but it's kept the atmosphere of a charming old house. A beautiful staircase leads to the upper floors and a rooftop terrace.” (From about \$220 a night) — Eugenio Signoroni

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**Eat and Drink**

Image



Left: Al Gatto Nero, a fixture of Turin’s fine-dining scene for the past several decades. Right: a bluefin tuna bottarga antipasto at Al Gatto Nero. Credit...Enea Arienti

“Any guidebook would tell you to go to [Del Cambio](#). That’s where the unification of Italy happened in 1861, because Cavour [Count Camillo Benso di Cavour, Italy’s first prime minister] had his meetings there. It’s a beautiful, antique space and [one of the dining rooms] has been decorated with mirror paintings by [the contemporary artist] Michelangelo Pistoletto. It also has one of the best wine cellars in Italy.

“One of the greatest aspects of Torino is the cafes. [Unlike Milan], it isn’t about aperitivo, it’s more about the cafe culture of the 1800s, with its [ornate spaces], and hot chocolate. The best is [Caffè Mulassano](#) — it’s small, with beautiful old Art Nouveau brass and woodwork and the best tramezzini in town. [Caffè Baratti & Milano](#) is another historical cafe. [Caffè Torino](#) has a small restaurant area where I sometimes eat when I want to be very private. The cafe serves homemade fettuccine with truffles when they’re in season. I also like [Caffè San Carlo](#), which has gilded mirrors and, above the central counter, a magnificent chandelier.” — *Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev*

“The inside of [Al Gatto Nero](#), designed by [the Turin-born architect Pietro] Derossi, is done in all bricks and wood, and it’s very quiet. You can be with your fiancé and speak very sweetly. [It specializes in] classic Piedmontese recipes, and some Tuscan plates.

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“**Doppio Zero** is a delicatessen where you can buy fresh pasta. You can eat there too — though there are only eight seats. Everything is made fresh every morning by two women as talented as my grandmother.

Image



Caffè Mulassano, among the city's most popular historic cafes, opened in 1907. In addition to pastries and hot chocolate, locals come to Mulassano for tramezzini, the little sandwiches that are typically eaten as an afternoon snack and said to have been invented by the cafe's owners in the 1920s. Credit...Enea Arienti

“At **Sestogusto**, which is in a 19th-century building, the pizza is thick — an inch or more. You think it's impossible to eat a pizza this size. It's made with a double-risen dough that's as light as an angel.” — *F.F.*

“**Antiche Sere** is an osteria owned and managed by [the] brother and sister [duo of] Daniele and Antonella Rota. It's where you go for a typical Sunday lunch with your family. In the wintertime, [you can sit in] these warm and traditional rooms inside. When it's summer, there's a small courtyard outside that's completely covered with vines.

“Another, less formal osteria, **Consorzio**, prepares contemporary regional cuisine. Its sibling, **Banco**, is nearby. That's where I go to have a glass of wine — it has a wonderful selection of natural options — and to listen to good music.

“**Birrificio La Piazza** probably produces the best lager in Italy. It's a nice place to have a helles bock or pilsner or whatever they have on draft.” — *E.S.*

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**Shop**

Image



Left: the rare-book shop Il Cartiglio. Right: San Carlo dal 1973, a boutique that specializes in luxe materials. Credit...Enea Arienti

“Gianduiotto is a special classic chocolate we have in Torino, and the one made by [Guido Gobino](#) is the most beautiful on the market. Even the Easter egg is not normal.

“At [Libreria Luxemburg](#), a book shop in the 19th-century arcade Galleria Subalpina, you can sit and read in armchairs and stay awhile. There’s a little bar there, too.

“[Kristina Ti](#) designs dresses that are really sweet and not too commercial — [unlike what you’d find in] Milan. Kristina is much more poetic.” — *F.F.*

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“The Piazza San Carlo has a hidden clothes shop [San Carlo dal 1973](#) [off the courtyard of Palazzo Villa]. It’s not about brands, it’s very much about the cut of the outfits, understatement and materials — the right kind of cotton, the right kind of cashmere.

“Collectors from all over the world get antique books in Torino. You can find first editions, rare editions at [Il Cartiglio](#). The owner, Roberto Cena, is one of the world experts on rare books.” — *C.C.B.*

“The coffee roastery [Santaromero](#) is run by a Colombian woman and a Sicilian guy. They buy their beans from Colombia and do an amazing job with specialty coffee. In a city in which coffee is quite a big thing, they’ve introduced a new way to look at it.” — *E.S.*

“You can find beautiful things and antiques at [Balòn](#), the famous flea market just outside of the city center.” — *Gaia Repossi*

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## Explore

Image



Left: a view of Casa Museo Carol Rama, the studio and home of the provocative Italian artist, who died in 2015. Right: at Rama's former studio, visitors can see several of her paintings and assorted ephemera, as well as pieces by other artists including Man Ray and Andy Warhol. Credit...Enea Arienti

“Torino has a circle of castles around it that were built mainly in the 1700s. It's like a beltway. One of them is [Venaria](#), one is [Stupinigi](#) and one is [Castello di Rivoli](#), which houses a museum of contemporary art. Spend a day driving from one to the other. They usually have exhibitions.” — C.C.B.

“The studio and home of [Carol Rama](#) [1918-2015] — one of the pioneers of Italian art and an eccentric lady — is an incredible universe, which is intimate, esoteric, visceral and can be very explicit. It totally reflects her personality. It houses some of her works, together with works by Man Ray and [Andy] Warhol.

“There are also some unique little museums, like the [Museum of Criminal Anthropology](#) and, in the same building, the [Museum of Human Anatomy](#), which is an 18th-century collection of human remains, bones, and wax models of anatomical parts, displayed in these very old wooden vitrines. On the other side of the building, the [Museum of Fruit](#) exhibits hundreds of wax apples, pears and other fruits, many of them now extinct, that were created by the pomologist and craftsman Francesco Garnier Valletti in the 1800s.” — S.C.

Image



Left: in the the Hall of the Secret of the Golden Flower at the Schneberg Museum, a Chinese carpet made in 1750. Right: the Schneberg Museum is housed in Turin’s historic Palazzo Provana in Collegno. Credit...Enea Arienti

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“The [Schneberg Museum](#) has the most important collection of Chinese imperial carpets outside of China. It’s in a fantastic Baroque apartment, full of frescoes, in which everything is original. There are 36 carpets on display that are silk woven with silver, gold and copper. *Bellissimo!*” — *F.F.*

“My favorite of all is the [Egyptian Museum](#), which was recently refurbished. The collection is incredible. I remember visiting as a kid and seeing the way the antique pieces were presented, like in an untouched 1800s museum, though it’s been updated since then.

The [Galleria Franco Noero](#) has an eclectic roster of artists — Noero was the first to represent [the American photographer Robert] Mapplethorpe in Italy. And also, [Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo](#) — Patrizia [Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, the founder] is an important figure in the Italian art scene.” — *G.R.*

“From [Superga](#), a basilica a little bit outside of the city, you have the most incredible view of Torino and the surrounding Alps.” — *E.S.*

*These interviews have been edited and condensed.*

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