

Intesa opens secret art vault for miart

Posted on April 12, 2026 by Alina Trabattoni

MILAN — Milan's art week has a new centrepiece this year, and it is underground. Intesa Sanpaolo is opening the vault at Gallerie d'Italia, its cultural institution in Piazza Scala, to the public free of charge on April 17-19, coinciding with miart 2026, the international fair for modern and contemporary art now in its 30th edition.

The vault, designed between 1906 and 1911 by architect Luca Beltrami to house the safety deposit boxes of Banca Commerciale Italiana, is normally accessible only by appointment.

Inside, around 500 works from Intesa Sanpaolo's collection of over 3,500 pieces spanning the 20th and 21st centuries are stored on sliding panel systems, creating unexpected exhibition pathways through the archive. Last year the same space hosted works by Robert Rauschenberg to mark the centenary of his birth. This year the focus shifts to two artists who rarely share a room: Mario Schifano and Robert Ryman.

Entry is free for miart ticket holders; others can book guided visits on the Gallerie D'Italia website. Tours run every hour and last 45 minutes, with an English-language slot at 1:00 p.m.

The vault visit connects to a wider exhibition project curated by Nicola Ricciardi, also artistic director of miart. In Sala Manzoni upstairs, Ryman's monumental *Surface Veil IV* is on permanent display. At the miart lounge at Allianz MiCo, two works from the Agrati Collection, Schifano's *Analogo* (1961) and Ryman's *Winsor 20* (1966), are shown side by side under the title *Ryman / Schifano, Standard / Variations: 1960 to 1970.*

Source: https://italynow.co.uk/intesa-opens-secret-art-vault-for-miart/

“Intesa Sanpaolo’s Milan initiative adds a key chapter to our understanding of postwar art,” Umberto Croppi, President of the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome, told Italy Now. “The dialogue between Schifano and his transatlantic contemporary Ryman illuminates the sensibilities that defined the new avant-gardes.”

“The simultaneous opportunity to visit the vault and its extraordinary collection confirms the bank’s standing as a leader in the stewardship of artistic heritage.”



Caveau, 1911 (*Credits: Intesa Sanpaolo*)

Contrasting traditions

Schifano and Ryman in fact worked in different traditions, one rooted in European Pop Art and post-*informale*, the other in American minimalism, but shared a preoccupation with music and a balance between rigour and improvisation that Ricciardi links explicitly to modal jazz. The theme fits an edition inspired by Miles Davis and John Coltrane, whose centenary falls this year.

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“For this 30th edition, we have created a journey that connects the spaces of Allianz MiCo with the Gallerie d’Italia through the works of two great artists,” said Michele Coppola, Executive Director for Art, Culture and Historic Assets at Intesa Sanpaolo. “Hosting works at the fair highlights the value and full contemporaneity of our collection.”

Cristiana Fiorini, Director General of Intesa Sanpaolo Private Banking, framed the occasion as part of a broader argument about art and patrimony. “Collecting today is an increasingly relevant lens for understanding how Italian families and entrepreneurs manage wealth,” she said. “Art integrates economic value, identity, and generational perspective.”

Miart 2026 runs April 17-19 at the South Wing of Allianz MiCo. Vault visits at Gallerie d’Italia are free with a miart ticket or with standard museum entry. Booking is required.

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