



PALAZZO ALTEMPS, SALA GRANDE DEL GALATA © FORNASETTI

Ancient Meets Surreal

An exciting new exhibit brings together ancient Roman sculpture and Surrealist design objects in a thoroughly Renaissance setting. **Tiffany Parks** shares her preview.

Jewel of Renaissance architecture Palazzo Altemps is hosting an unusual new exhibit on occasion of the 20th anniversary of their inauguration as a wing of the National Roman Museum. *Practical Citations* features the works and designs of 20th-century painter, sculptor, and interior decorator **Piero Fornasetti**. Strongly influenced by ancient Greek and Roman prototypes, Fornasetti is perhaps most famous for his hundreds of black and white porcelain plates featuring different versions of the portrait of opera singer Lina Cavalieri.

The exquisite spaces of Palazzo Altemps, from the courtyard to the frescoed rooms that house its extraordinary sculpture collection,

are the setting of 27 artistic incursions made up of over 800 pieces by Fornasetti. The theme of classical ruins and antiquity runs through the entire exhibit, highlighting the surprising and irreverent exchange between the museum's permanent collection of ancient art and the creations born out of the unbridled imagination and surrealist innovations of Fornasetti.

The artist, and his son Barnaba who now designs in his father's name, are considered eclectic investigators of the everyday, making use of the architectural, archeological, and artistic past to create a completely new world. The rich and articulate history of Palazzo

Altemps is a thought-provoking setting for the playful and dreamlike interior decorations and objects on display. The highlight of the show is without a doubt the juxtaposition of the ancient sculptural group *Suicide of the Gaul* with the six-meter high backdrops depicting Fornasetti's *Practical Madness* (pictured). Drawings, furniture, and accessories retrace the near century of activity of the Atelier Fornasetti, from the 1930s to today, proving that interior design goes far beyond mere decorated objects. Instead it is "an invitation to imagine, to think," as Fornasetti himself put it. On all month at the National Roman Museum at Palazzo Altemps.