

The Pleasure of Water



Ingenious machines and swimsuits

Bathing in fresh or salt water, whether for therapeutic purposes or for recreation, is not a phenomenon related to the time of Art Nouveau, for as early as the 18th century there are variously equipped resorts.

They are mainly in Great Britain, but Italy, too, can boast the presence of a small bathing establishment in Livorno in 1781. It was in the nineteenth century, however, that bathing places sprang up almost everywhere in Europe and overseas, coinciding with a general growth in economic prosperity and the discovery of nature by “modern” tourism.

Stresa already turns out to have bathing facilities in the second half of the 19th century. The Rosminian historian Vincenzo De Vit, mentions “several floating boats for the use of baths, of various sizes, for one or more persons, and baths made as toilets with wheels to be conducted according to the height of the Lake”.

The “floating boats” could be a preview of the von Siemens family’s floating baths: wooden sheds with indoor pools, anchored by Carciano Bay and often photographed in the Lido, which was established in 1929.

The “baths...with wheels” are the “Bathing machines”, mobile cabins that are the “ancestors” of the fixed ones. Produced in Britain as early as the first half of the 18th century, they were also popular during the Belle Époque in France, Belgium, Germany, the United States and Italy.

They are wagons equipped with a ladder and a curtain that, pulled into the water by horses or pushed by men, allow women in particular to change and bathe away from prying eyes. There are some depicted on the shoreline of the Borromean Gulf and in Stresa in front of the Grand Hôtel des Iles Borromées, which, since its inauguration (1863), has shown itself to be in step with the times.

From the press of the time we learn that one could bathe at the “Kursaal e Terme” a complex-now vanished-opened in 1909 and equipped for sports, recreation and culture. Music, dancing and fireworks made it a glittering social gathering.



1860

The swimsuit from dress to bikini

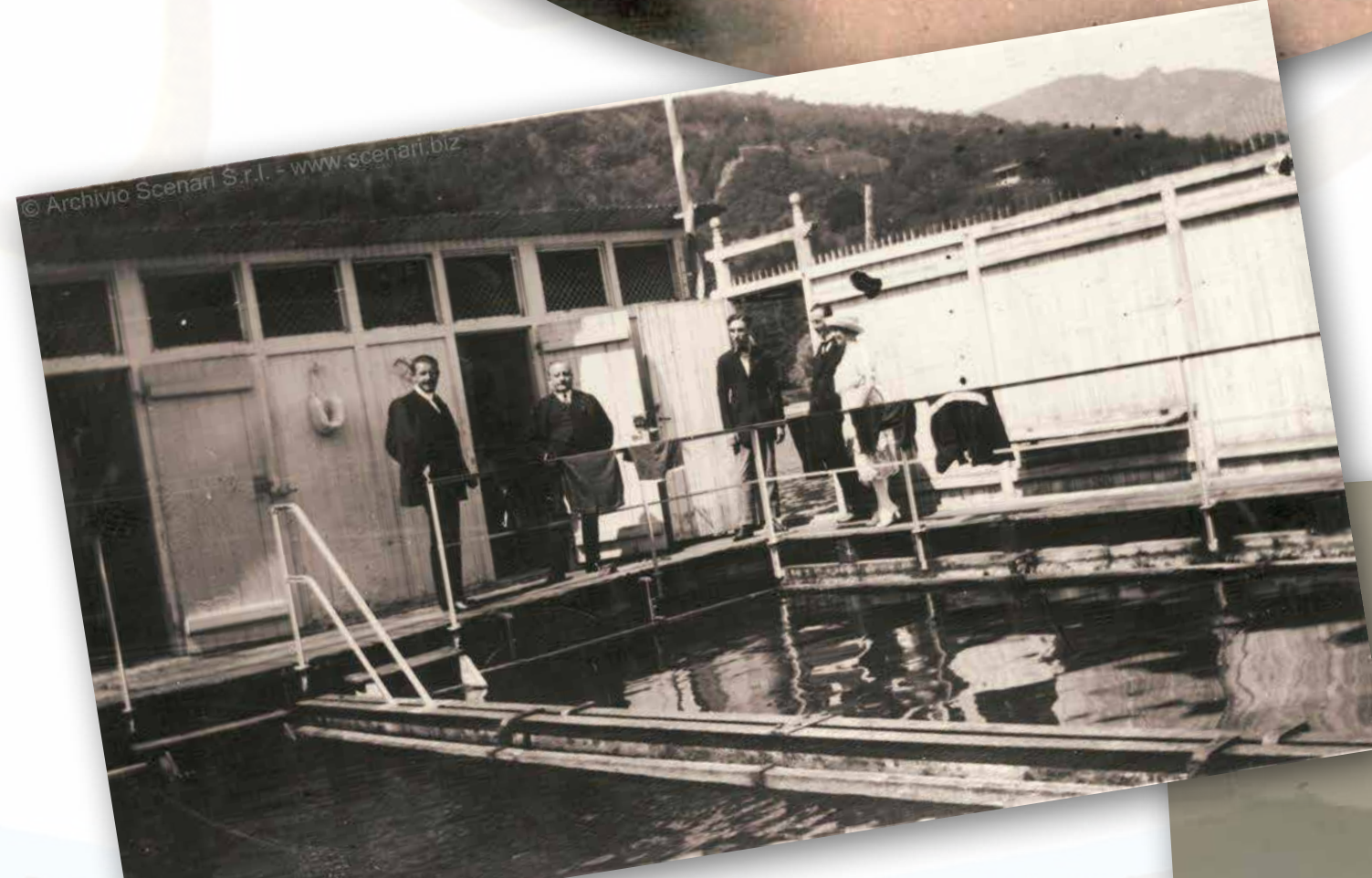
A sign of the changing times is the evolution of the women’s swimsuit, which from a long dress with trousers and shoes gradually leaves bare legs, arms and neckline. In one hundred years it will be transformed into a bikini that was first shown in Paris in 1946. Men wear comfortable and short striped suits or T-shirts and tank tops on shorts.



1880-1900



1900-1910

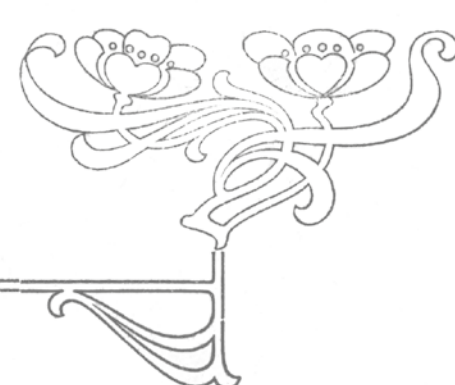
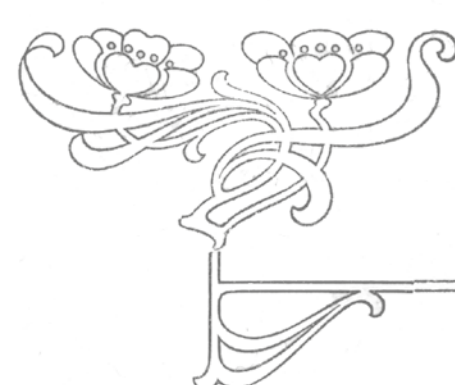


Il Kursaal e le Terme di Stresa

Programma dei divertimenti e Sports nel bacino delle Isole Borromee del Lago Maggiore.

Tutti i giorni: Alle Terme: Concerto Sinfonico dalle 5 alle 7 - Skating - Circolo privato - Thea Room nel Parco - Restaurant - Bar - Bagni nel lago - Spettacolo alla sera nel Teatro. Guignol di Bergamo alle ore 5 e alle 8 30.

Tutte le domeniche: Alle Terme. Fuochi artificiali alla sera.



English

