

Matteo Thun: The Index Book

There are no vanity editorials in 'Matteo Thun: The Index Book'. No ego boosting essays. And no statements on [the Italian architect's](#) long term impact on the world of design. Just six sets of indexes that allow you to access his work six different ways: alphabetically, typologically, topographically, chronologically, by client name and finally, according to visuals that correspond to each user friendly list.

Much like a helpful inventory of ingredients in the back of a cookbook, Thun's book brings a scientific organisational approach to his vast body of work, creating along the way a new lexicon for speaking about it. What results is 30 years worth of projects, 'from coffee cups to restaurants, from mountain resorts to wristwatches, from saucepans to solitary villas', neatly condensed into a singular, handy user's guide.

Our Milan editor-at-large, JJ Martin, caught up with the designer to hear more about his reinvention of the classic monograph.

The lists are sensible and original. Why did you decide to organise the material in this way?

The idea started because we were getting daily requests from people asking what the studio did. At a certain point my wife said, 'you really need to create something that functions like a phone book.' And here we are. It's the fastest way to find the 'who', 'what', 'where' and 'why' about our work.

You left out texts on your creative inspiration or mission. Why is that?

That was on purpose. The majority of books on architects and designers are done by creatives, for creatives. This book, on the other hand, doesn't speak to creatives, but rather to business people, CEOs, decisions-makers and whoever wants a service from this company.

What will non-creatives glean from the lists?

There are different index criteria so you can see what was done in 1982, what was done in Switzerland, what was done for private homes, for hotels, for spas - all the categories of my work, really. The introduction by Hans Ulrich Obrist is just two pages, a sort of 'back to the roots' that talks about Sotsass, my teachers and my beginnings. And basta. No, self celebration at all.

I'm finding myself in uncharted territory with an architect not in possession of a big ego...

No, it's the opposite! I want to avoid speaking subjectively about my work. There's too much 'fried air' in design and architecture today. I'm more interested in the idea of 'nachschlagewerk'. It's a German word - better than 'dictionary' or 'phonebook' - which means you open the right page to know what's going on.

And once you're inside the meat of the book with all of the images?

When you look through it you'll notice there's a huge linguistic discontinuity. Because if I build in Abu Dhabi, it's just completely different than if I build in the periphery of Milan or in Switzerland. So this means that every project needs to be started from zero and each time you need to create a new language. This fits in with my concept of [Zero Design](#).

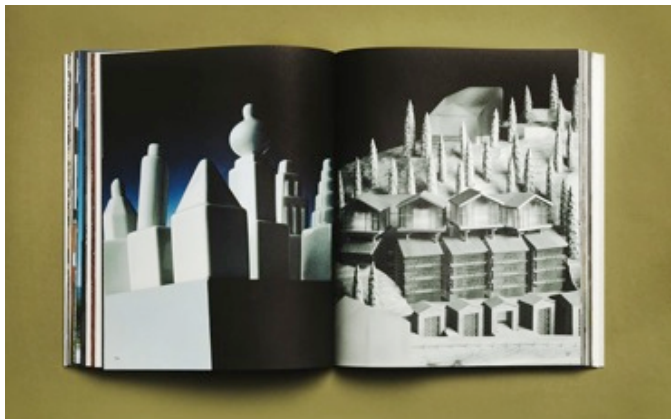
Is this your first book?

I did two others in the 1990s, then I decided to never do a book again because they were self-gratifying and showing your muscles isn't part of my character. But this is different; this I like.

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By JJ Martin

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Matteo Thun lightly
creates dream images
that on the one hand are innocent
and the other rational and
architectural. We rediscover
what we already know.
His work is a million
flower petals opening.
Robert Wilson

