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HOUSE &

MY FAVOURITE HOME MATTEO THUN

'Harmony often results out of contrasts'

Architect and designer Matteo Thun, 54, was born in Bolzano, Italy, studied at the Salzburg Academy and in Florence then moved to Milan, where he cofounded the Memphis Group. He set up his own studio in Milan in 2004, enjoyed a three-year stint as creative director of Swatch and now works across a diverse portfolio including architecture, design and communication projects. He has been awarded the Compasso d'Oro for good design three times.

Your practice is in Milan. Do you live in the city too?
I moved with my wife, Susanna, to Milan in 1979 and since then have lived in the city's Brera quarter. The apartment where we live with our two children feels like a little house because it has two floors and a very nice terrace overlooking Milan. You could say the interior represents the past 20 years of our personal tastes. During the week I walk to work at my studio and most of our weekends are spent either at our house in Sant Moritz or our house in Capri.

What do you love about Milan?
Milan is speed. It's about work. It's a place where you can quickly transform an idea into a project. The city is the only international business place in Italy but, nevertheless, the food here is excellent.

What do you miss when you are away?
My wife and family.

Would you describe yourself as a city or a country person?
Strangely enough, I love both. I like the urban feel and cultural activities of the city and yet I also enjoy nature and the countryside. Ideally, I like to have both aspects balanced. I can neither be a city person nor a country person but am able to live everywhere and feel most at home when I can balance the two. I feel at ease in a traditional setting or a modern one. I grew up in the continuously changing Italian-Austrian world of south Tyrol and have always loved to travel. This has greatly influenced my personal perspective and career.

You go away at weekends.
Leaving Milan and going to Saint Moritz is like taking a big breath of pure oxygen. It instantly makes me want to go skiing and roam down the

Some kitschy highlights. Hats often result out of contrasts.

What about your hotel project. Surely you include your own projects there?
My approach to hospitality progressed towards a good balance between architectural and design thinking. I think more about the needs of the consumer than a formal convention and more functionality than symbolism; for example, many of our bathroom products are used in hotels or even designed specially for our requirements. Our studio has everything necessary for a job working and functional hotel bathroom - starting with the end tags and ending with all inevitable technical parts. But functionality does not mean it neglects sensuality. Materials, untreated wood or stone, with qualities that encourage us to and feel, and indirect lighting to create a cocooning atmosphere.

Tell me about your next project. I am very excited about two hotels - in Davos and Zermatt, Swiss Alps. Our project in Davos has been approved by a popular referendum, which is unique in Switzerland.

Where do you find the inspire your designs?
By constantly monitoring what happens around me and with of my wonderful wife and her observing eyes.

Do you entertain at home?
When I succeed in re-designing a space over a 15-hour day to 10-hour day then I do entertain home.

Goodness you sound busy. Do have a housekeeper?
Kana, our housekeeper, comes Naples but is able to cook a 8 alla Milanese better than any I know.

Do you have a dream home?
A wooden treehouse on the top of south Tyrol mountains with fantastic view of the valleys is

Nicole Se
My *My Favourite Home* article: www.ft.com/inside/home

Matteo Thun: 'The best conversations between partners take place when they are talking'

Cosma Ross: Going to Capri means to take ease and total relaxation. Both houses have a place where I can retreat, a so-called "white box" without pictures, just a table, chair, paper, pencils and wonderful views. In Saint Moritz what I see from the window is the Rocca San Giovanni church. In Capri it's the Faraglioni rocks in the middle of the sea. The first is the Eugenio valley's landmark. The second is Capri's landmark. Both are very inspiring.

You've designed several award-winning hotels. Do you apply the same design philosophy to your own homes?
I am always driven by the guest's eye - the soul of the place. The design concept for a hotel or any other building must fit the location, the feeling of the place, the city or countryside around it. It's the same for my homes. They are all completely different because they are in different places.

Your latest hotel, New Milano, is very sleek and very contemporary. Are you a minimalist?
If you wish to describe my work as minimal you are right. If you mean that the design is minimalist - pared down to the essential - but my work is far from being without emotion. In the 1960s the mainstream movement of minimalism sometimes followed a "less is more" rather than "less is more" concept. The New

hotel is a modern, urban concept - pure but also very playful. Light, colours and materials are extremely important in its interior. All the artworks and some of the furniture displayed in the public areas, for instance, will be changed every three to four months. I call this fluid design. Even I don't know how it will look in three years' time. In a way the hotel acts as a showroom for Italian manufacturers, with designs by Moroso, Piretti, Edra, Poltrona Frau and Gasman Piretti. Each time you go there it will look different. But it's a multi-sensory approach - multi-linguistic and very democratic. The opposite of design statements made in the 1960s and 1990s. I think aesthetic contradictions should be part of the

game. For instance, the rooms have no wardrobes - just fixed hangers - because wardrobes destroy the proportions of a room. And open-plan bathrooms are part of a room's life. The best conversations between partners take place when they are bathing.

Various companies retail your lighting, furniture, ceramics and bathroom fixtures. Do you use these products at home?
I prefer not to be surrounded by my own products at home. We like design classics like Charles and Ray Eames chairs or vintage things found in the flea market - popular, simple and just beautiful. I like a good mix of glamour, simplicity and handcrafts and even



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'Harmony often results

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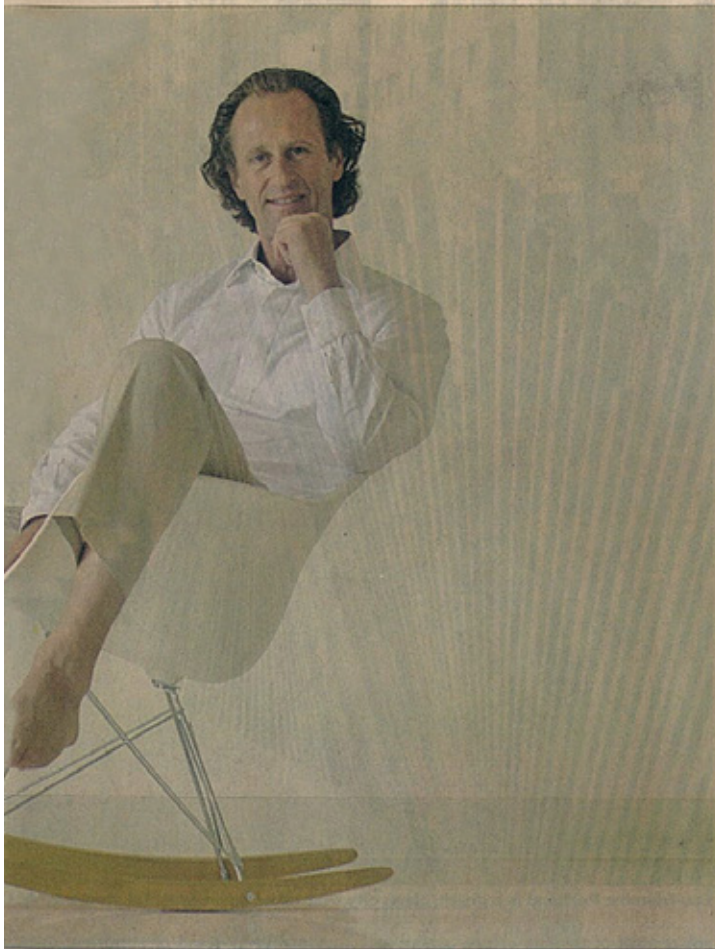
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some kitschy highlights. Harmony often results out of contrasts.

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My approach to hospitality projects is geared towards a good interaction between architectural and design thinking. I think more about the needs of the consumer than about formal conventions and more about functionality than symbolism. For example, many of our bathroom products are used in hotels or were even designed specially for contract requirements. Our studio has designed everything necessary for a good working and functional hotel bathroom – starting with the bathtub and taps and ending with all the invisible technical parts. But functionality does not mean that we neglect sensuality. Materials, such as untreated wood or stone, with tactile qualities that encourage us to touch and feel, and indirect lighting all help to create a cocooning atmosphere.

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When I succeed in re-designing my agenda from a 12-hour day to a 10-hour day then I do entertain at home.

Goodness you sound busy. Do you have a housekeeper?

Anna, our housekeeper, comes from Naples but is able to cook a Risotto alla Milanese better than anyone else I know.

Do you have a dream home?

A wooden treehouse on the top of the south Tyrolean mountains with a fantastic view of the valleys around.

Nicole Swengley

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