

# SLEEPER

GLOBAL HOTEL DESIGN

NOVEMBER | DECEMBER 2017



## Mondrian

The typically outlandish designs of Marcel Wanders bring a cacophony of pattern and colour to Doha

## Kimpton De Witt

American-born Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants plants its first flag in Europe

## Hôtel de Crillon

A delicate balance between conservation and transformation at Rosewood's Parisian palace

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SBE and Marcel Wanders venture into the Middle East with a typically outlandish design, embodying Arabian culture through a modern lens, whilst retaining strong sense of respect for the region's past.





# Welcome

We all suffer from tunnel vision from time to time, focusing so intently on the task-in-hand that we forget to take stock of what's going on around us. This is often true of the hospitality industry. While some had their heads buried in the balance sheet, others were developing new concepts, borrowing innovations from other sectors to help propel the industry forward.

It began with self-service check-in kiosks, already a common sight at the departures lounge yet equally suited to the hotel lobby. CitizenM and Yotel were amongst the early adopters, catering to a new generation of travellers for whom technology comes second nature.

Designers and developers have also looked to the retail and office sectors to create multi-use spaces, where guests are as comfortable grabbing a quick bite as they are setting up shop and tapping away on their laptop.

When Sleeper met with Matteo Thun recently, he spoke of the blurring of lines between wellness and hospitality. His new project, the soon-to-open Waldhotel at Burgenstock Resort Lake Lucerne, sees architecture meet cutting-edge medical standards. But it's not just a design story. Thun pointed out that the traditional low season for holidaymakers could be converted to a high season for medical tourism, resulting in a better return on investment.

Cross-sector practices were also highlighted at Radical Innovation Award, in which student winner Brandan Siebrecht presented a hotel concept based on transport design. Drawing from Elon Musk's Hyperloop One – a high-speed transportation system – his idea sees shipping containers repurposed as travelling guest suites. The transport sector on the whole has been a notable source of inspiration, with the limited square footage of luxury train cabins, cruise liners and aircrafts resulting in creative, space-saving solutions that have gradually found their way into the guestroom.

At The Annual Hotel Conference in Manchester, Lee Penson – newly immersed in the hotel industry having recently worked with AccorHotels on its new Jo & Joe brand – spoke of the need to look outside the industry for inspiration. Drawing on his design experience in retail, F&B and office spaces, Penson revealed that the starting point for the concept was to think of it as a hotel, but rather a series of zones that borrow from other sectors.

With the hospitality industry often under fire for its lack of innovation – due in part to the long lead times of projects – it's crucial that we don't lose sight of what's going on around us. Sometimes, inspiration can be found in the most unlikely of places.

Catherine Martin | Editor





## MEETING

# Matteo Thun

Italian through-and-through, product and interior designer Matteo Thun talks of the influence of his home city throughout his illustrious career.

Words: Molly Dolan | Photography: Courtesy of Matteo Thun & Partners

Originally studying under Oscar Kokoschka at Salzburg Academy, Thun achieved his degree in architecture from the University of Florence in 1975. Three years later, he relocated to Milan and co-founded Memphis alongside his friend and contemporary, the late Ettore Sottsass. Fast-forward 20 years and a plethora of accolades including Red Dot Awards for product design, and Thun is in 2001, setting up Matteo Thun + Partners.

Still based in Milan – but with an outpost in Shanghai and subsidiary in Munich – where we met on a rooftop at sunset in true Milanese style. We’re here to celebrate the launch of Very Wood’s Capri collection, designed by Thun himself.

The designer credits the role of the city in his studio’s success. “Milan holds significant importance to the practice. The flexibility in this town is fantastic: we have an unbelievable network of suppliers for our rendering, for prototyping, for printing, for everything. On top of that, is the city’s reputation.” Thun goes on to explain that the age-old reputation of high-quality Milanese design and production remains.

The studio’s team is a mixture of ethnicities, races and cultures, with an Italian and Spanish at the helm: Luca Colombo and Antonio Rodriguez. Thun continues: “The area brings significant inspiration to our staff. The team is completely international, yet they are all trained

here in Milan. They must stay here for at least one year and learn the holistic, Milan approach.” They affectionately call it the ‘Milan school’, a term coined in the 1950s by the likes of Achille Castiglioni. According to Thun, this era saw architects begin to try their hand at product design: “In Milan, they have had very little to do in terms of architecture. Italy has a lot of old buildings and so, in the 1950s and 60s, industries turned to architects for lamps, chairs, and so on.” He

quips: “That is how ‘Made in Italy’ became famous worldwide, because all good design is done by architects, not designers.”

Reflecting on his earlier work, Thun marvels at the success. Perhaps through surprise, but more likely through gratitude for those involved. Opened in 2000, Side

Hotel in Hamburg put him on the map in the hotel design world. “It is a big deal, but not because of my performance,” he recalls. “I asked Robert Wilson to work on the lighting design. He is not a lighting designer, but he had a fresh mind, so I thought, maybe someone from the theatre could give me new, simple ideas.” Thun interrupts his nostalgia for another observation. “I don’t trust specialists. I like the originality of outsiders. You have to reinvent yourself every project, and make every project a new experience. That is what I try to do.”

This re-inventive ethos allows Thun’s portfolio to span a complex variety of projects, from one-off atelier pieces to strategic partnerships

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**Above:** Waldhotel Health & Medical Excellence features local limestone along the exterior for seamless landscape integration  
**Opposite:** Thun's studio is currently overseeing the re-launch of InterCity Hotels, which are set to feature his 'Zero Design' approach

with leading suppliers, from wellness retreats to urban hotels. One such partnership is with InterCityHotels, a brand currently undergoing a re-launch, with Thun's studio overseeing 12 of the properties under construction. The brand's flagship, located in Frankfurt, is set to be the third international InterCityHotel featuring the concept he calls 'Zero Design'. This approach involves simplifying the lines of objects as much as constructions, seeking iconic shapes destined to become solid, timeless designs rather than concepts catering to fleeting trends. Thun explains: "Today, the world's leading hotel chains are asking for turnkey solutions with a recognisable personality to develop their brand portfolio. Timeless design entails creating solutions that can be replicated effortlessly and easily adapted to different styles and locations, without paying lip service to passing fads."

Another new project is Side Hotel in Hamburg. Thun's first hotel project is now undergoing a refurbishment that will see its 190 guestrooms and suites upgraded to sensual, urban elegance.

Keeping with the idea of zero, Thun applies the philosophy of the three zeros to the Vigilius Mountain Resort in Meran, Italy. "This is the first 'Three Zero' resort, both in its construction and subsequent management. This means zero kilometres in terms of nearness of construction materials, zero CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and zero waste through life-cycle management in the building process."

Looking to the future, Thun's face lights up at the mention of his latest project – and fascination – Waldhotel Health & Medical Excellence at Burgenstock Resort. "The Latin word 'hospes' translates as guest, so hospitality and hospitals are not that different," he starts. The five-star concept focuses on the relationship between the physical space and human wellbeing with exceptional wellness facilities accompanying medical care and treatments in a setting of unspoiled nature, just between the mountains and Lake Lucerne. He continues: "The very clever business idea is that the low season becomes high season. Low season is the ideal time for small surgery procedures, weight loss or treatments related to the body, but is typically quiet for hotels."

The 4,800m<sup>2</sup> project aims to accompany the healing process in an optimal way and patients are treated like guests. The nine-storey, building with 161 suites, has been conceived with the lowest impact on the landscape and with highest energy efficiency.

Setting architectural standards, the façades is partially designed with gabion baskets filled with limestone recovered from the excavation. The result is a perfect synthesis as surrounding walls retain the original stone, while the green, naturally insulated flat roof allows a seamless landscape integration. Meanwhile, the external lattice structure has been created using local larch wood, resulting





Above: Waldhotel Health & Medical Excellence in Burgenstock utilises wood aplenty alongside neutral, calming tones

in a brise-soleil that not only deflects the glaring sun during summer months, but also acts as a barrier to Switzerland's rain and snow throughout the harsh winter months.

Inside, neutral tones complement vast natural views with every suite boasting a south-facing private balcony, while accents in muted green tones create a sense of warmth. The hotel is finished with loose furniture by Matteo Thun Atelier. Aiming to make the experience as similar to a hotel stay as possible, Thun speaks about the guest experience: "There are very precise hygiene regulations, but other than that, this is exactly the same as hotel design."

Speaking of the merging of industries, he continues: "In general, the point of departure is the respect for the individuality of the brand and the soul of the place. We want to ensure design with a long life-cycle, which is particularly crucial when it comes to substantial hotel projects."

Another major factor in every one of Thun's projects is sustainability. "This is key to my work in every aspect, it always was," he tells. "I think creating sustainable, long-lasting projects and products is the responsibility of an architect. We aim for innovation, saving resources and energy, and taking the cost of engineering seriously. We do not want to be recognisable by a special architectural handwriting, but by a sustainable, durable design."

Touching on the need for sustainable products, Thun nods to

the industry that gave him his first successes. As well as gaining international acclaim for his hospitality work, Thun also leads the way in product design, with a portfolio listing collaborations with the likes of Klafs, Baxter, Artemide and Very Wood.

Initially collaborating in 2013 for JW Marriott Venice Resort & Spa, Very Wood and Thun's relationship is a deep and layered one. Very Wood's understated classic chairs were specified to enhance several of the deluxe rooms and suites and it soon became apparent that the two brands share a common flair: Zero Design.

The collaboration continues within the upcoming Waldhotel Health & Medical Excellence where Very Wood's collections feature in both indoor and outdoor areas, delivering enhanced ergonomics in a design reminiscent of the natural surroundings.

Thun concludes: "The design industry is doing well because they stopped trying to design; they stopped making fictional products. Real products are made through necessity and are usually made by architects. The industry needs to slow down the lifecycle of consuming products. It is so much cheaper to invest than buy cheap. The new generation of millennials are very wise in terms of consuming."

Looking forward, Thun promises to pursue his fascination with the merging of industries, shunning traditional design and seeking out the next innovative shift. Long may it continue.