

Matteo Thun

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MEMPHIS TO MILAN: At Nhow, the latest hotel from Matteo Thun, design pieces act like works of art, such as the mammoth Aster Paoposus seating (top), designed by the Campana Brothers

NHOW & THUN

Can the current darling of European hospitality design continue to churn out hotel after charming hotel?

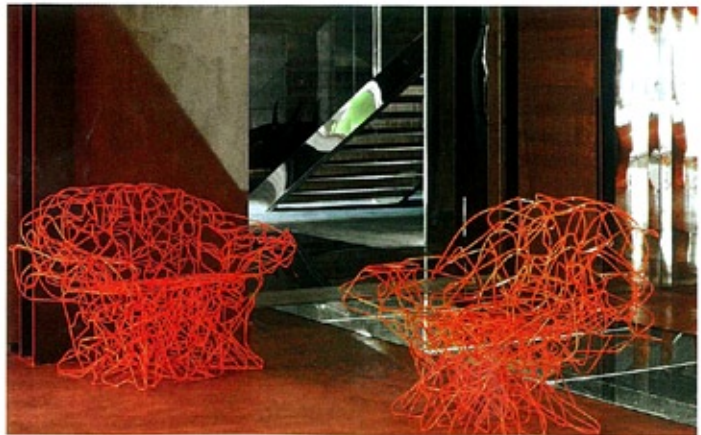
Writer PATRIZIA SCARZELLA

Following the completion of other picture-perfect hotel interiors in Austria, Germany and England, Thun recently completed Milan's Nhow Hotel. In the heart of "Zona Tortona," a former industrial area that is blossoming into the city's fashion and design hub, Nhow opened last fall. Though architect Daniele Beretta preserved some of the building's industrial chill, Thun warmed the interiors with color and softened its edges with curves and measured doses of ornamentation. Nhow can easily be converted into a space for temporary exhibitions, social events and even fashion shows. "We inherited a body," says Thun, "and we have given it a soul. I've interpreted the contrasts of Milan — its elegance, its street art, its industrial feel — and the fact that it's a capital of fashion and design."



Ian Schrager may want to have a little talk with Matteo Thun. Co-founder along with Ettore Sottsass of the influential Memphis group that dominated the early '80s design scene, Thun, at the age of 55, wears the experience of decades in the industry lightly. His Milan-based studio has crafted corporate identities (Campari), products (Ily) and interiors (Porsche Design) that are all familiar. But lately, the designer is carving away at a thick spate of hotel commissions. Call it a design monodiet if you like, but Thun is not only churning out destinations each with its own unique feel, but he seems to be getting better at it as he goes.

In 2001, Thun's first hospitality project, Hamburg's Side Hotel, won an award for its interiors. Two years later, he designed the Vigilus Mountain Resort in the Alps of Northern Italy, which can be reached only by cable car or on foot, has a graphically slatted wooden facade and is a five-star gem of sustainable architecture. "It's not like looking at a postcard," says Thun. "It's as if you were inside the postcard."





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The oscillation between the opposing poles of lightness and severity mirrors the balance between the historical memory of the site and its more contemporary complexion. Against the dark gray facade, a pattern of colored windows creates a gentle chromaticism. Inside, Thun, like a casting director, has selected furniture with larger-than-life personalities, but think character actors instead of staid leading men: Moroso’s Rose chairs, the puffy Astor Papposus sofa, an orange spun-metal loveseat by the Campana Brothers for Cappellini along with gaudy blown-glass chandeliers. The pieces, arranged sparsely, as if on display in a high-end showroom, have enough air between them to express their braggadocio with vivacity, humor and warmth. Naturally, this isn’t Thun’s final bow on the hotel circuit. While the designer is tight-lipped about rumored hotel projects in Germany, Italy, Switzerland and Croatia, he promises that the surprises will indeed be pleasant. And while Thun has no concrete plans for any stateside projects, it would come as no surprise if that conversation with Mr. Schragger happens sooner than expected. **PS**



THUNS OF FUN: (Clockwise from top) The restaurant in the Nisow hotel; the garden deck at the Viglius Mountain Resort; the resort’s indoor pool

