

Matteo Thun

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Nhow Hotel Milan



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interior design



Hotel Babylon

Inventively colonising an old factory, Nhow redefines the boutique hotel.

Habités of the annual orgy of chairs and canapés that is the Milan Furniture Fair will be familiar with the Zona Tortona, a former industrial quarter in the south of the city now recast as an effervescent locus of design and designers. Chock full of galleries, showrooms and studios, Tortona fizzles with frantically networking *belle figure* at Salone time. Yet what the area historically lacked was an appropriately chi-chi place to stay, a deficiency more than amply rectified by the much trumpeted launch of Nhow, masterminded by architect Matteo Thun and interior designer Daniele Beretta. Beyond its fashionably monosyllabic brand

name (a chimerical conflation of how and now), Nhow is a serious mission to redefine and evolve the familiar concept of the boutique hotel, notably in terms of scale. Cunningly inserted into the redundant shell of a former General Electric factory, Nhow boasts a heavy hitting 249 rooms, yet strives to create an impression of luxurious intimacy, proving that boutique-ness and bigness need not be mutually exclusive.

Though an unprepossessing industrial hulk, the GE factory could provide space, and its heroic proportions have been energetically seized upon by the architects to create a grandly

scaled backdrop for the swishings and swankings of Nhow's high-end clientele. The soaring public lobbies are bracing exercises in remodelled-factory-chic, their polished concrete walls and floors animated by zingingly Fauvist accents of pink, orange and red in the translucent panels that divide space and filter light like giant flattened-out sweet wrappers. Carefully choreographed scatterings of signature furniture from Poltrona Frau, Kartell and Artemide provide further sculptural brio, though at times you feel you have strayed into the prototypes department of an upmarket showroom.

- 1 Reception desk, with artful chandeliers.
- 2 Life lobby at ground floor level.
- 3 Translucent panels and signature furniture are bright foils to the door industrial vibe.
- 4 Sanitised 'graffiti' adorns the doors and corridors.
- 5 Dining room.
- 6, 7 Lounge area.

HOTEL, MILAN, ITALY

ARCHITECT

MATTEO THUN

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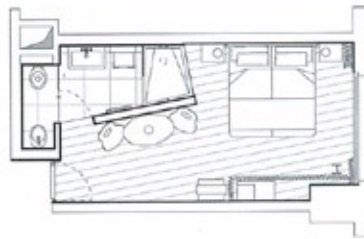


Guest rooms are also generously proportioned with high ceilings, like American lofts or modern versions of Georgian drawing rooms. Gauzy drapes and translucent panels tactfully screen bathrooms and storage areas, an old Starck/Schrager trick, but it still works. Rooms are double banked off a circulation spine, but the familiar banality of hotel corridors is dissipated by doors daubed with edgy silver graffiti and muscular riveted columns, the building's original structure.

On each floor, prairie-like lift lobbies are transformed into surreal stage sets, giving free rein to the wackier end of the furniture design spectrum, so that you can clock your location by the fake zebra head or the chaise longue shaped like a pinkly shrieking mouth. This sybaritic, Fellini-esque vibe also extends to the duplex presidential suite. Kitted out in soothing power-neutrals, it has an array of glass portholes in the ceiling, some of which are set in the bath in the upper floor, so that those below can enjoy the show.

Nowadays fashionable hotels, like fashionable shops, have the life expectancy of a mayfly, so the pressure to keep reinventing themselves to snare their target clientele is intense. Nhow has a demographic of *Wallpaper* readers, business groovers and people who lap up *Hip Hotel* books firmly in its cross-hairs, and, for now, its achingly contemporary circus of the absurd will work its magic and draw the crowds. But give me the calm, frescoed, opulence of the Four Seasons (a former convent) in Via Gesù any day. And it's nearer the shops. CATHERINE SLESSOR

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Photographs
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typical room plan (scale approx 1:200)

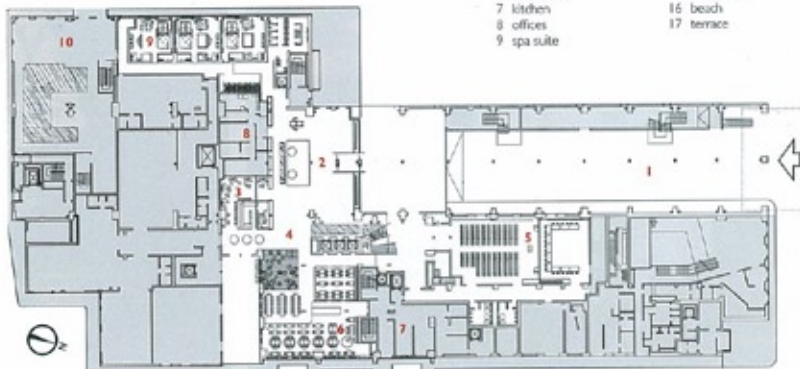


room cross section



typical upper level plan

- 1 entrance/event space
- 2 reception
- 3 bar
- 4 lounge
- 5 conference room
- 6 restaurant
- 7 kitchen
- 8 offices
- 9 spa suite
- 10 spa
- 11 standard room
- 12 superior room
- 13 junior suite
- 14 suite
- 15 lounge area
- 16 beach
- 17 terrace



ground floor plan (scale approx 1:1000)



80 | 7 long section

- 8 Fellini lives – one of the distinctive lobbies on guest room floors.
- 9 Presidential suite, with discreet ceiling portholes.
- 10 The building's original steel structure is exposed.
- 11, 12 Typical guest room.

