



# Matteo

THUN

ITALY MAY HAVE PRODUCED THIS PROLIFIC ARCHITECT AND DESIGNER, BUT IT CERTAINLY COULDN'T CONTAIN HIM. TODAY, HIS HOLISTIC APPROACH AND INNATE BRILLIANCE FOR CONVERTING SIMPLE FORMS INTO WORKS OF ART MEAN AN INFLUENCE THAT SPANS THE GLOBE.

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MATTEO THUN

It's rare that one encounters a modern-day Renaissance Man, yet Matteo Thun proves that they most certainly do exist. The multi-award-winning architect and designer has spread his talents across a remarkably diverse range of projects, from hotels and restaurants to bathrooms, kitchens, furniture, lighting, ceramics, glassware, and watches, working with top manufacturers and gaining numerous accolades along the way, including the prestigious Compasso d'Oro. Yet his prolific and varied portfolio is united by a common thread: a thorough understanding of materials and technologies, an ability to simplify forms and functionality, and a deeply held belief in the importance of sustainability.

Looking at Thun's recent designs, it's a surprise to realize that their eloquent simplicity comes from a man so closely connected to the Memphis Group—the colorfully daring movement that defined Italian design during the 1980s. Having gained an architecture degree in Florence in 1975, Thun moved to Milan and co-founded Memphis with Ettore Sottsass, becoming a partner at Sottsass Associati from 1980 until he founded his own studio in 1984. Collaborations with key manufacturers followed, including Artemide, Driade, Flos, Campari, Bulgari, Zwilling, Illy, Philips Electronics, Porsche Design, Swarovski, Villeroy & Boch, Zucchetti, and many others. Yet the broad scope of Thun's activities doesn't end there. From 1983 to 2000 he held the chair of Product Design and Ceramics at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna and was creative director at Swatch between 1990 and 1993.

With so many projects running concurrently, Thun's company is now streamlined into several divisions. MTLC—run by Thun and Luca Colombo—focuses on architectural and interior design projects in Italy, with an

emphasis on hotel work. MTD-R—an acronym for Matteo Thun Design Rodriguez—is a product design team led by Thun and Antonio Rodriguez. A Shanghai-based office, MTD-R China, which opened in June 2015, handles architecture, interior design, exhibition styling, and product design. Its team of architects and designers are native Chinese speakers trained in Milan who ensure that projects developed in Italy's design capital are correctly carried out in Asia. Atelier Matteo Thun—the most recent division—focuses on handcrafted furniture and lighting, presenting its initial series of limited edition glass and ceramics during Milan's Salone Internazionale del Mobile in 2015.

It all adds up to a huge responsibility whose cohesion relies on Thun's holistic approach. “Buildings need interiors, interiors need products, products need designers, manufacturers, and users,” he notes. His passionate belief in sustainability runs through every project, with energy efficiency, noise-reduction, and environmentally friendly materials as defining characteristics. “Our architectural and interior design projects follow the principles of sustainability through the three zeros—zero CO<sub>2</sub>, zero kilometers (for transportation of materials), and zero waste,” he explains.

Thun's hotel projects offer clear evidence of this approach. Take Vigilius Mountain Resort in South Tyrol, which won *Wallpaper\** magazine's Design Award 2004. This eco-friendly retreat is accessible only by cable car, offering inspirational views of the surrounding Dolomites. Using natural larch wood throughout—as well as a grass-covered roof—the hotel's architecture blends seamlessly with the landscape. The 41 guestrooms face either east or west, offering uninterrupted views of the sunset or sunrise. Internally

## SIDE NOTES

NAME *Matteo Thun*  
 COMPANY NAME *Matteo Thun & Partners; MTLC; MTD-R; MTD-R China; Matteo Thun Atelier*  
 COMPANY HEADQUARTERS *Milan*  
 NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN COMPANY *60*  
 WEBSITE *matteothun.com*  
 SIGNATURE PROJECTS *Hamburg: Side hotel South Tyrol, Italy: Vigilius Mountain Resort Milan: Tortona 37 Multi-Purpose Complex Coldrerio, Switzerland: Hugo Boss Business Unit Worldwide: Vapiano restaurants (interiors)*

## SIGNIFICANT AWARDS

2015 *Red Dot Award for Axent “One”*  
 2014 *Good Design Award for Antrax “Serie T” radiator shelves and towel rails*  
 2010 *Green Good Design Award for Rapsel “Ofurò” bathtub; Belux “Arba” lighting; Biomass Power Station, Schwendi*  
 2010 *Wallpaper\* Design Award for TVS “Terra” cookware*  
 2006 *Red Dot Award for Porsche Design Store*  
 2004 *Compasso d'Oro award for Catalano “Girly System”*



*At Vigilius Mountain Resort, in South Tyrol, Thun beautifully united muted browns and dark tones with a world of box-shaped elements.*



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heated clay walls in each room are highly energy efficient, while warm colors and natural materials foster a soothing ambience. It's an exemplary demonstration of sensitivity to the environment.

Even with city-center projects, Thun maintains the same principles. The public spaces in Hamburg's urban-chic Side hotel are characterized by voluptuously rounded furniture and a warm orange/yellow palette, while a dramatically dark bar is offset by a calm oasis of creamy, buttery tones in each guestroom. "Geographical, geological, meteorological, historical, and cultural characteristics—the whole context of a project—need to be taken into account to create a building or interior design scheme that respects the genius loci, the soul of the place," Thun says. "Only by respecting this can you create a building of long-lasting aesthetic value.

Sustainability also guides my choice of construction materials; I prefer local materials that help limit CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in transportation."

A similar approach is taken with products, furniture, lighting, and interior fittings. "Product design starts from simplification and reduction to the essential, striving towards an iconic form," Thun has said. The same considerations apply whether the project is a sleek wooden bathtub for Rapsel, globe-like Laguna lamps for Artemide, artistic Alla Morandi glass vessels for Venini, or the clean lines and minimal volumes of Baxter's Godard upholstered furniture. Thun believes in sticking to his principles. Yet it takes a truly Renaissance spirit to turn cerebral theories into such a beautiful aesthetic.

*Text: Nicole Swengley*

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1 For Baxter's Godard collection, Thun masterfully married a bourgeois luxury concept with fine materials, essential shapes, reduced volumes, and a carefully selected range of colors.

2 A truly sensory experience, Thun's Alla Morandi collection of bottles in blown handmade glass for Venini references the majesty created in still life paintings by Giorgio Morandi.

3 For the Hugo Boss Business Unit, in Coldrerio, Switzerland, Thun created a glazed volume wrapped with a wooden latticework, symbolizing the company's products and mitigating the relationship between the landscape and the building.

4 Inspired by the misty lagoon of Venice, Thun, along with designer Antonio Rodriguez, created this singular collection of spherical glass lamps for Artemide.

5 Using energy-regulating clay walls, a green roof, and a glazed façade, Thun crafted the sustainability-minded Vigilus Mountain Resort. To ensure that the hotel was in full harmony with its surroundings, he designed a structure that followed the outline of the mountains and the integrity of the landscape.



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