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JW Marriott Venice Resort & Spa

Venice, Italy

Award winning Milan based architecture & interior design firm, Matteo Thun & Partners, creates a new look for one of the world's top luxury resorts – the JW Marriott Venice Resort & Spa...

There is something strangely relaxing about drifting through the vein-like canals on the narrow gondolier above murky waters. Venice is charmed through its location as well as its culture, much like the award-winning JW Marriott Venice Resort & Spa, which captures the heart of the city from a unique perspective.

Surrounded by the Laguna Veneta's calm water and sitting in between the Lido and mainland Italy, the hotel is intimate yet enchanting. It's also a place where memories are made and barely forgotten. For Matteo Thun, founder of Matteo Thun & Partners, this was very much a highlight of the experience when restoring the buildings to create the new hotel. "I have revived the same emotions that I felt when visiting Venice as a small boy with my parents." He says.

The property is located on its own private island just a few miles off San Clemente. Artificially created around 1860/1870 with recycled sand and soil, the island was initially owned by the Royal Family and soon became the Venice Municipality. Over the decades it has changed a lot: from deposit to sanatorium to a research site for science and sea technologies. "This has led to the construction of many different buildings in different periods and with diverse size, structure, style and function... thus making our work extremely interesting and stimulating and making the island a unique place to stay." Explains Thun.

The 266-room property has been sensitively restored to unveil the historic buildings while incorporating sustainable, modern and elegant design. Thun explains, "The design theme was definitely given by the location. As the island is a state protected landscape, we conserved the 20 historic buildings as much as possible by applying, for example, a box-in-the-box-concept, to regenerate the original structure of the landscape of the island and to express ourselves with the interior design emphasising a link between interior and outdoors, privileging wide windows and glazed façades wherever possible."

The bedrooms and suites, some with private pools, are simply decorated with locally made bricks, glass and tiles to reflect the artisanal talent and styles of the region. Its rooms and suites offer both stunning views of the city, as well as secluded escapes into wonderful gardens. Locally sourced-bricks on the outside create impressive arches, which juxtapose wooden window frames. "We have used soft fabrics, wood, glass. For example, specifically for this project, we have created the Laguna lamp for the Italian brand Artemide, made with glass and inspired by the misty atmosphere of the sea in winter. And we have used the typical 'Briocole', the wooden poles directing navigation on the sea and in the canals, for some of the conference and bar tables." Says Thun.





JW Marriott Venice Resort & Spa, Italy
Interior Design: Matteo Thun & Partners
Brand: JW Marriott
www.jwvenice.com



Leading architect and designer, Matteo Thun of Matteo Thun + Partners speaks to Can Faik about the great opportunity he had in transforming the JW Marriott Venice Resort & Spa...

What is your role at Matteo Thun + Partners?

When I opened my studio in the early 80ies I was working, as many architects in Italy, from small

scale to big scale – from spoon to city.

Then, in 2001 I decided to found Matteo Thun + Partners together with Luca Colomba and Antonio Rodriguez. Today we work with a team of about 80 architects, interior-, product- and graphic designers and I see myself so to speak as a director that oversees and instruct the orchestra.

Tell me about your role on JW Marriott Venice Resort & Spa, – what was it like working on the hotel?

A fantastic project to realise! We created the entire resort; from macro to micro – from masterplan to interior details, by protecting the historic character of the existing buildings. We closely collaborated with the Cultural Heritage Office of Venice as the island is a state-protected landscape. From the very early phases and during the whole process and the different steps of the project the superintendence have been involved. With a project of this dimension we had to face different problems, but thanks to an outstanding collaboration with the investor, the owner and the suppliers - and thanks to our teams, led by architect Luca Colombo, the JW Marriott Venice Resort + Spa has been finalised successfully.

Why do you think your company was awarded the project?

JW Marriott Venice Resort & Spa is a state-protected island in the Venetian lagoon.

We highly respected the culture, the nature and history of the island. Very special attention was given to details and a remarkable sensibleness to recreate the old

walls. The result is an innovative luxury resort and park a "three zero" village, both in its construction and in its subsequent management: zero kilometers, zero CO2, zero waste.

What was the inspiration behind the design concept of JW Marriott Venice Resort & Spa?

When starting a project we always try to respect and understand the 'genius loci' best. The entire resort focuses on the lagoonscape, using and reinterpreting local materials while conserving the authentic spirit of the place, all out-door spaces and buildings.

How long did it take to bring this project from concept to completion?

We started planning in June 2011 and executed from June 2013 to April 2015.

How many people did you work with on the design project?

In total a team of about 20 experts worked on this project.

What was the highlight of the project for you?

Most parts of the buildings on the island have been almost broken. We decided to construct according to the 'box in the box system' – building inside the old walls in order to protect the historic character of the buildings. Another highlight was to recreate the parks and greens that include a large vegetable garden serving all resort's restaurants.

Were there any particular challenges? If so, what were they?

A barrier for the construction phase has been the waterway – everything had to be transported through

the lagoon. A particular challenge was the installation of the roof top pool since it was not possible to bring big cranes to the island...

Have you noticed any particular trends in hotel design?

Since there is Tripadvisor you cannot make any mistake!

What makes Matteo Thun + Partners different to other design companies?

Working interdisciplinary – from macro to micro – is the strength of our office. For JW Marriott Venice Resort and Spa we designed the master plan, created the landscaping, developed architecture, interior and styling. All different departments are used to work closely together. Working this way means that all different parts harmonize and come together as one.

How would you define your 'Hotel Style'?

The 'genius loci' determines the style of our projects. Is it a 5 star plus hotel, an urban city hotel or a hotel with medical support? We do not want to be recognizable by a special architecture handwriting but by a sustainable design. We aim for innovation, save resources and energy and take cost engineering serious.

What's the biggest change you have seen in hotel design?

For our latest project – a roll out for all IntercityHotels in Germany – we gave up the traditional front desk, but created a check-in that is the bar at the same time. Furthermore guests are more and more interested in digital facilities – the design must offer the corresponding solutions. And – there is a big trend back to hotel restaurants.