

SPACE

INTERNATIONAL HOTEL DESIGN

Jan/Feb 2023

PEOPLE

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PLACES

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PROJECTS

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PRODUCTS



AT A GLANCE
Owner: Mair family
Architect: noa*
Interior design: noa*
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HOTEL SILENA SOUTH TYROL, ITALY

Two distant cultures harmoniously intercept in a unique family owned hotel

The Alps meet Asia in an imaginative reworking of the historic Moarhof building that is now known as Hotel Silena. Nestled in Valler Tal – a valley in South Tyrol, Italy – the hotel's two-part transformation began in 2017 and was completed last year. The latest work gave the hotel a new entrance, six new suites, and an adults' wellness area – bringing the original concept to fruition. Each stage was carried out by noa*.

Inspiration for the makeover came during a long trip through Asia when the hotel's owners developed a passion for the customs and rituals observed along the way. They wanted these integrated as central elements of the hotel design. The entire interior concept draws on this imagery in terms of material and colour composition.

It begins in the newly designed entrance where guests pass through a round wooden portal crafted according to an Asian technique that captures the purity of traditional woodworking. The piece is simply constructed of horizontal and vertical trusses interlocked to one another at the joints. The walls of the entryway have been painted black using a rough trowel technique with mineral finish, which transforms the entrance into a sort of tunnel and intensifies the passage that marks the beginning of the holiday.

Visitors are welcomed into an open space and the eye is lead along the axis that stretches from the northern entrance towards the indoor garden to the south. A stone fountain, newly designed fireplace area, and cosy seating alcoves damper the rigidity of a classic check-in. This intention is emphasized by the placement of the reception desk to the side. Echoes of Asia are subtle yet omnipresent and reveal themselves in the form of dark wood paired with shades of blue and grey, delicate pine bonsai trees in ceramic pottery, vertical boulders of local stone, and discrete lantern-shaped lights. ▶



An entire wall is dedicated to Tibetan prayer wheels – wooden cylinders that spin at the touch of a passer-by's hand. Crisp lines create a harmonious atmosphere and give a sense of calmness and depth to everything. Juxtaposed with this a classic Tyrolean room – the very heart of the original Moarhof – its history, rustic style, and original wood highlighted by their proximity to the new bar area featuring minimalist tea ceremony platforms.

"They are separated from one another by a mere thin door frame. They seem to make the transition between origins and future of Silena visible," said Christian Rottensteiner, project lead architect.

Dark oak is a common theme throughout the building. The surrounding bog landscape that gave the original farmhouse its name ('moar' means marsh in local dialect) is echoed in the interior colours and materials. All custom furniture is made of oak, as are the floors of the hotel's six new suites.

Despite belonging to three distinct categories, with dimensions and furnishings that subtly vary between them, all the suites are bound together by a unifying room design and concept. A powerful sense of connection to the ground is present in every suite, with individual areas delimited by the podiums they each sit on, such as the bed, the meditation corner, and the ceremonial tea table, which can be lowered into the floor and out of sight. This arrangement draws on the Japanese tradition of

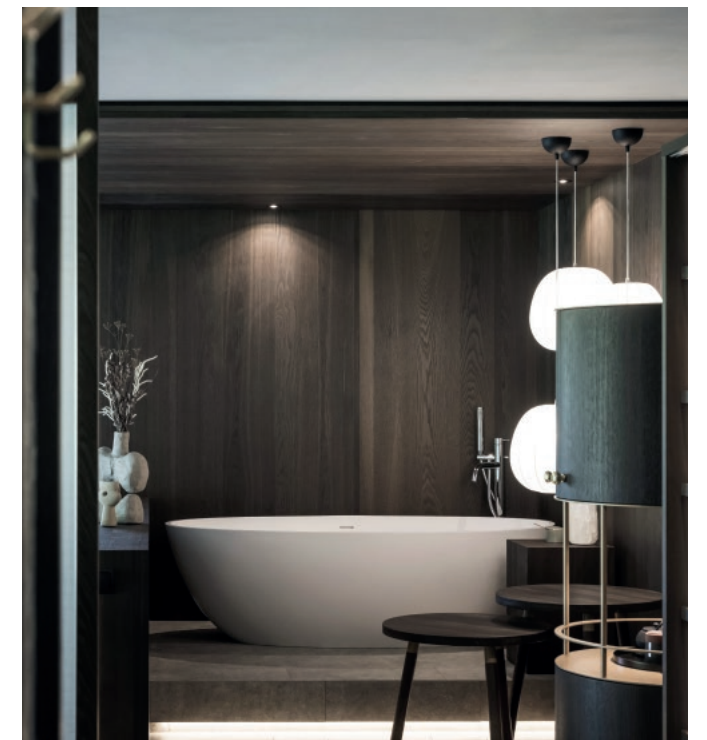


creating small, well-defined spaces. The Asian theme continues onto individual terraces conceived as outdoor rooms, each with a bathtub, small flower beds, and curtains.

"Everything is connected to that which touches the ground – the bed, the tea ceremony platform, the meditation corner – there is always a podium situation that shifts the centre of gravity downward when standing inside the room, so you remain firmly rooted to the ground," said Christian.

The 30-55m2 suites are characterized by an alluring interplay of light and shadow, of visibility and intimacy. The geometrically patterned wooden room partitions contribute to this, perpetuating the lively play of light that enters through the patterned aluminium panels of the façade. The separation between the sleeping area and bathroom is intriguing thanks to a partition inspired by Japanese rice paper walls. noa' created it partly of opaque glass panels, partly semi-transparent glass, and in some places of open panels, to maintain a relationship between the two spaces and evoke flow in the ambiance.

Two ceramic, tulip-silhouetted sinks are reflected in the vanity's glass countertop and underlaid wallpaper. The shower is positioned against the window, allowing direct access to open air. The building's façade ensures privacy, transforming the terraces into a semi-private space. The effect is a feeling of seclusion while at the same time allowing a magical view of the surrounding landscape. ▶





In the new wellness area on the top floor, noa* designed a retreat and wellness zone reserved for adults and inspired by Japanese Onsen springs. Here there is a relax area, showers for traditional purification rituals, and an open-air pool maintained at a constant 40 degrees. The pool's design, with exposed black concrete steps reminiscent of volcanic stone, creates a striking textured scene. The water that flows over the infinity edge and ripples across the rough concrete surface creates unforeseen reflections and becomes part of the ubiquitous meditative ceremony at Silena.

As a whole, this unconventional project opens a new chapter for Hotel Silena by respecting tradition and introducing impetus to an unfolding story. Forms were taken up, materiality continued, the new juxtaposed with the existing. In a traditionally alpine place, where the mystical and the enchanting invite contemplation, the architecture tells the story of two distant cultures that harmoniously intercept and complete one another.

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