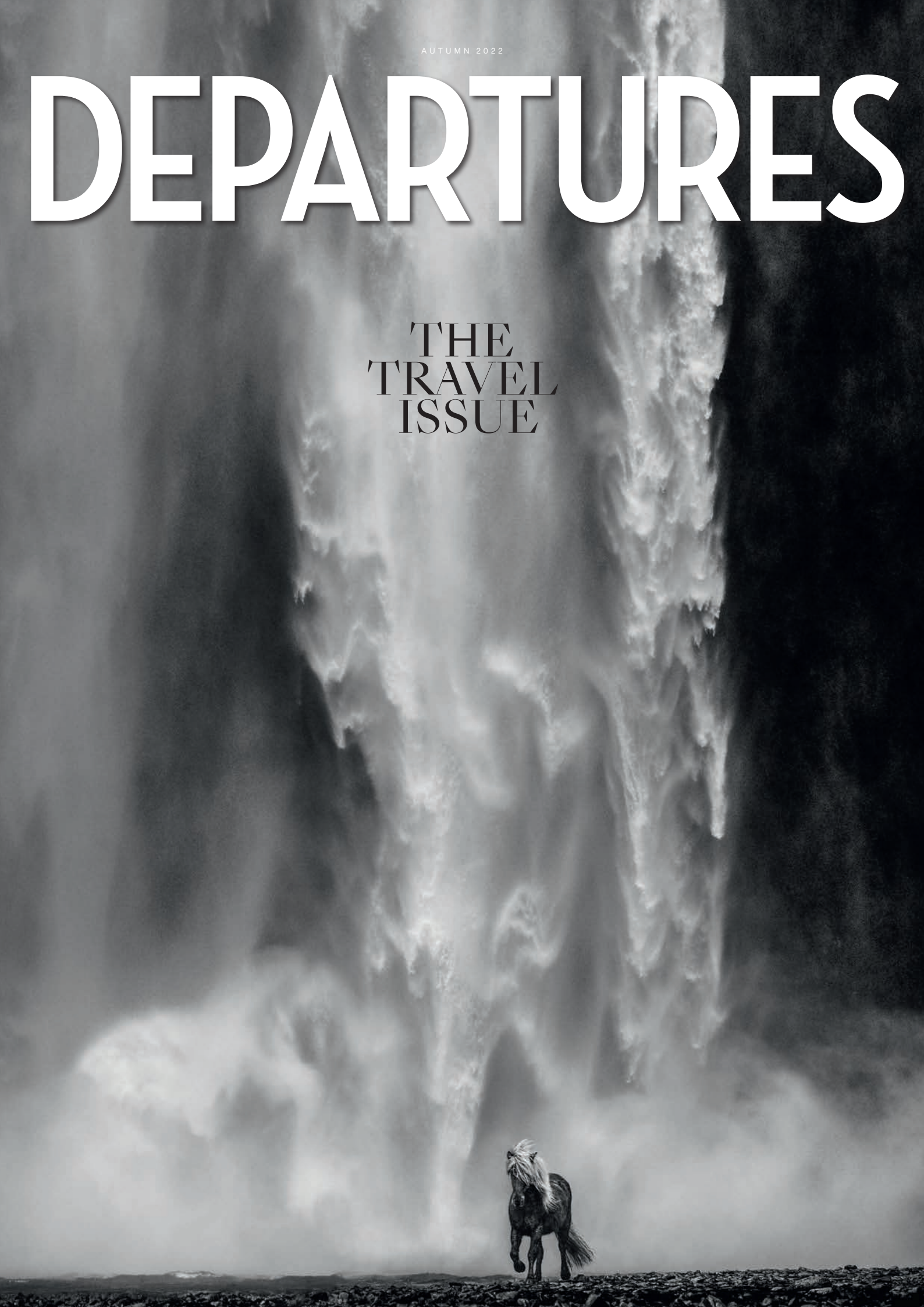
AUTUMN 2022

DEPARTURES

THE TRAVEL ISSUE



THE NEW VISIONARIES

With everything from Airbnb to Covid and the climate crisis disrupting traditional hospitality over the past decade, the hotel world is adapting and evolving in innovative and inspiring ways. If there is a common denominator for the next wave of hoteliers, it's a focus on sustainability and an aversion to the established Swiss-hospitality-school way of thinking. There are hotel concepts inspired by the Burning Man festival and by nomadic communities, gardeners treated with as much regard as general managers and luxury defined by how many surfboards or farm animals are on site. Welcome to the next generation of hotel brands.

by GISELA WILLIAMS



Arnaud Zannier

of Zannier Hotels

Before the 49-year-old French hotelier founded the Zannier Hotels group in 2011 with its first property, Le Chalet in Megève, he had already spent several decades working in fashion; in 2001, he had launched the successful N.D.C. Made by Hand, a line of bespoke European-made leather shoes. Not surprisingly, then, it's a passion for and focus on sustainable and artisanal craft that in many ways defines the design philosophy of Zannier Hotels. When it comes down to it, says Zannier, both companies are born out of "the same idea with the same values. N.D.C. was very personal. In the end, we were creating authentic, artisanally made products that we couldn't find for ourselves. This is what we continue to do with our hotels." What that means is that from the moment the Zannier family purchases a property that they want to develop – for example, outside Siem Reap in Cambodia – the in-house design team, overseen by Zannier, starts immersing itself in the culture, searching out local craftspeople, antiques shops and artists. "We want to bring all that local culture inside the hotel," explains Zannier, "everything from a uniform made with traditional fabric to a recipe taught by someone's grandmother." This artisanal approach has been a success: in the past decade, the Zannier family has opened five hotels, including Omaanda lodge, ten thatch-and-clay huts located in their nearly 9,000ha reserve in Namibia and the newly opened Bãi San Hô in Vietnam surrounded by rice paddies and overlooking the sea. Experiences are equally carefully crafted based on the location. This summer, Zannier opened Nonna Bazaar on a centuries-old farm estate on the island of Menorca, where the family owns several historical properties. He describes it as an immersive dining concept and, in a way, what Hauser & Wirth's contemporary art gallery is to the island for art, Nonna is trying to do for food: create a whole ecosystem of dining which includes a farm-to-fork dining concept, a fully supervised kids' club, a curated boutique, farm shop, pétanque court, and an ancient chapel for private parties and weddings. "It's more than a restaurant experience," comments Zannier, "it's about bringing together and gathering people."

Pablo Carrington

of Marugal



The first historical property that the hotelier Pablo Carrington transformed into a hotel was his 19th-century family estate, the Villa Soro in San Sebastián, which might explain his razor-sharp focus on creating an authentic sense of place in all of the hotels he manages. That was in the early 2000s when the term "sense of place" was not yet being thrown around and when Spain was all about starchitects and futuristic cuisine. Carrington went on to create Marugal, a hotel management company, in 2004, eventually opening the still-beloved Cap Rocat, a seaside resort built within a historic fortress in Mallorca. "From the beginning," explains Carrington, "we were ferociously anti-chain. We focused on unique buildings in unique locations where we would source as much locally as possible. We never offered Toblerone in our minibar. Instead, it was always local chocolate." Marugal stayed focused on Spain, primarily, opening up several iconic properties on the Balearic islands: Cap Rocat; Torralbenc in Menorca; and Gecko Hotel & Beach Club on Formentera. Over the years, Carrington has pushed the company to evolve the concept of sense of place to another level. "As hotels, we need to go beyond our own walls and help preserve a destination's identity and heritage," he explains. "What's the point of coming to Formentera when the sea beds or beaches are not protected?" That is part of the reason why the company started a "zero plastic" initiative five years ago, which means no single-use plastics are used in any of its properties. In several of its Spain hotels, it serves little sweets and pastries made by hand in several convents, including one in Salamanca. "We could, of course, make pastries in-house but we would rather support the convents so that the special culture stays alive," says Carrington. In order to do more, the Marugal company takes one euro per night from their guests, but matches it, using the funds to support local environmental initiatives. More recently, Marugal has started to work outside Spain; its most anticipated collaboration will be with the renowned shoe designer Christian Louboutin in Melides, Portugal, near the beach resort of Comporta.

COURTESY PABLO CARRINGTON; OPPOSITE PAGE: FRANCISCO NOGUEIRA; PREVIOUS PAGE: COURTESY ZANNIER HOTELS

João & Catarina Reis

of Singular Properties



João Reis, co-founder with his wife Catarina of Singular Properties, a collection of unique resorts on the Azores, a Portuguese archipelago in the middle of the Atlantic, started his career in the finance world, only going into hospitality later in life with the luxury of being able to think of their hospitality company as a passion project. “I love to create small hotel concepts,” he says. “I don’t do it for the money, I do it for the art of it, for the thrill.” Originally from the island of São Miguel, Reis is committed to building small sustainable hotels on the island and elsewhere on neighbouring islands, which adds value to the local community and acts as a bridge for travellers to the natural landscape of the Azores – volcanic islands that are so wild they seem almost prehistoric. The couple opened their first property, Santa Bárbara Eco-Beach Resort, on São Miguel in 2015. White, a contemporary house with nine suites and two villas perched atop a black basalt cliff and overlooking the sea, followed in 2017, but they continue to evolve it. “We wanted to further refine the interiors,” says Reis, in describing a recent renovation which involved moving away from a California bohemian beach vibe to a more minimalist, black and white palette, that they feel is more reflective of the Azores. They commissioned local artisans to make furniture from native wood and ceramic objects for the rooms. The concept of Singular is to go hyper-local, which means never expanding beyond the Azores, hiring only locals, and investing in regenerative farming so that their hotel’s restaurant outlets can source almost entirely from their own land. “I’m from here,” says Reis, “so I know it better than any outside investor, and my entire motivation has to do with creating value for my community.” In 2018, they expanded the Santa Barbara Eco-Beach Resort near a beach cove on the north of the island to a total of 30 villas and studios surrounded by landscaped indigenous plants and grasses, which overlook the sea. “We could have added an additional 20 villas,” says Reis, “But instead we built a farm and edible garden. For us and my guests, that adds more value.” Up next, the couple is working on renovating a historic 16th-century winery estate, also on São Miguel, as well as a project or two on the island of São Jorge, near one of Reis’s favourite surf spots. “It might take a few years to complete, but we’ll take our time,” says Reis. “We’d rather do things perfectly and sustainably or we won’t do it at all.”

Oliver Ripley

of Habitas



Even a decade ago, the idea that a hotel concept born out of the Burning Man festival would be taken seriously on an international level would have raised many eyebrows. But for Oliver Ripley, Kfir Levy and Eduardo Castillo, founders of the hotel brand Habitas, the music and community of Burning Man are at the centre of the company's DNA. Originally the three partners (Levy and Castillo are both DJs) came together to channel the spirit of the desert festival with travelling, invitation-only pop-up events around the globe, from a farm in California to a remote beach in Thailand. In 2017 they opened Habitas Tulum, a beachside resort of stylishly bohemian tents where at check-in guests are asked to first meditate on the purpose of their trip. Ripley recalled that a delay in construction ended up defining the design of the property. The lobby wasn't finished when their first guests arrived, so they cleared the space and, according to Ripley, Castillo says, "Don't worry. I've got this," and then created a big fireplace surrounded by overlapping carpets. "It quickly became like an agora out of Ancient Greece," describes Ripley. "When you light that fire, people automatically start gathering around it. It's now the place in our properties where guests come together to have conversations or listen to music. It's where the magic happens." After Tulum, the partners created Habitas Namibia, 15 tents within 51,000 hectares of nature reserve just an hour's drive from Windhoek, and then Bacalar, Mexico, a series of A-frames set between a turquoise lagoon and the Mayan jungle. More recently, they created a resort in AlUla, a cultural heritage tourism project in northwest Saudi Arabia that is home to ancient tombs carved into sandstone rocks by the Nabataean civilisation, who also built the legendary city of Petra in Jordan. This is Saudi's first Unesco World Heritage site, and Habitas was one of the first hospitality companies to open here. Ripley says that he was sceptical about opening in what he considered a conservative, traditionally closed country but very soon was convinced that the company could make a positive impact, especially with the help of their philanthropic arm, Habitas Rise, which supports women's education initiatives and a refugee project in Uganda. "After all," says Ripley, "it's not your hotel room you remember, it's the people you meet and the special moments you have in natural landscapes."

Marie-Louise Sciò

of

Pellicano Hotels



No one throws a party better than Marie-Louise Sciò, the managing director and CEO of Pellicano hotels, which consists of three legendary Italian properties: the Mezzatorre on the island of Ischia, La Posta Vecchia in Ladispoli and Il Pellicano perched above the seaside town of Porto Ercole. Sciò inherited the company from her parents – her father Roberto Sciò first purchased Il Pellicano from an American heiress in the late 1970s – and in the last decade she has deftly evolved it into one that feels modern and relevant, yet she still manages to create old-school glamorous settings that are right out of a Slim Aarons' photo shoot. "Hotels are like people," she says, "the more layers they have, the better. One of the most important factors of what I do is to attract a dynamic community of guests. It's like when you go to a dinner party and there's an interesting crowd, you have a more memorable evening." She adds that she sees her hotels as an extension of herself. "I put my heart and soul into them." With only three properties, open seasonally from April to October, Sciò is able to focus on all of them with a laser-sharp focus, making sure every single detail is perfect ("Quality to us is really important. Not just the quality of the fabrics and food but also the music and the service") and that all of her guests experience something exceptional. "We are in the business of sparking positive emotions," she notes. For Sciò, modern luxury is "all about discovery". That can mean meeting a talented designer (Sciò often invites Italian personalities like the Missoni family to give talks at the Pellicano bar) or it can reflect the outings that the hotel's staff suggest. The philosophy of discovery even influenced her choice to open up a third property on the island of Ischia, a volcanic island in the Gulf of Naples. "The location is unique and unexpected," she notes. "The island is extraordinary, and in the 1960s it was used as the setting for many classic films like *Purple Noon* and *Cleopatra*." In addition to her curated guest list and parties, Sciò translates the glamorous Italian dolce vita lifestyle with pops of colour (the dusty rose façades) and bespoke striped pool umbrellas. During the Covid pandemic, in order to keep her guests dreaming she launched Issimo, an online shop that offers a variety of Italian-made products, from Sant'Eustachio coffee to designer pieces that she creates in collaboration with Italian brands like Aquazurra and La DoubleJ. She even designed a version of Monopoly inspired by a road trip through Italy which she launched this past Christmas during another lockdown. As far as adding new properties to the Pellicano stable, Sciò says she's looking for locations but hasn't yet decided where. "We don't need to grow just to grow," she explains, "but I love what I do. As long as we could run a few more hotels with the same kind of obsession and control of details, I'd love to open up a few more."

GERARDO GAETANI; OPPOSITE PAGE: SASHA MASLOV

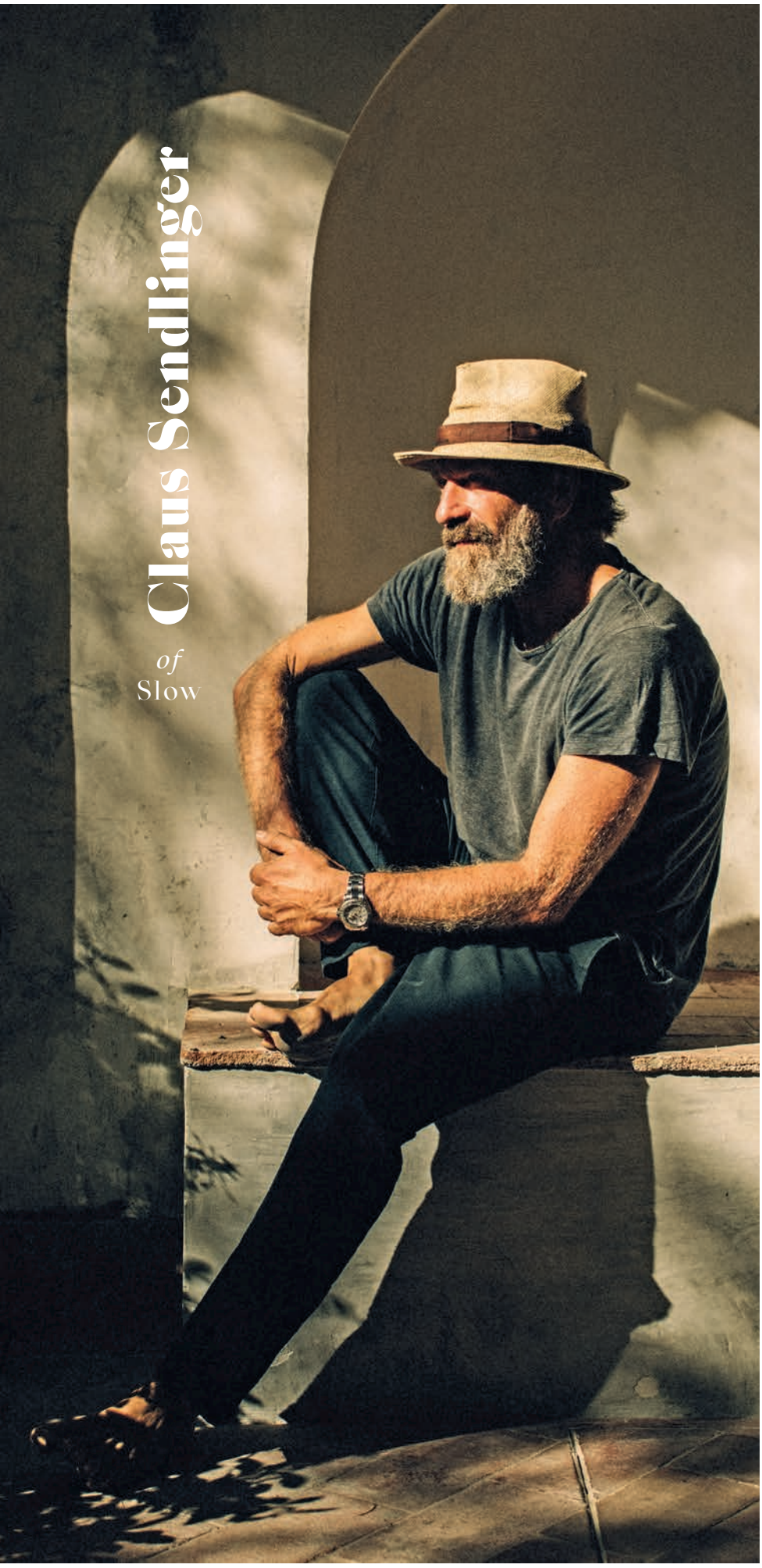
Thierry Teyssier

of 700'000 Heures



The French hotelier Thierry Teyssier followed an unconventional road to hospitality but in the end, it was his unconventional background – as a Paris-based theatre director and events manager – that gave him the tools to innovate the travel industry. Teyssier pointed out that there was once a time when a hotelier's job was relatively straightforward: they had to maintain and upgrade a hotel building, manage the staff and satisfy the guests who stayed there. For years now, though, that has not been enough. "You must organise special experiences for your guests, transform them!" he exclaims. Almost two decades ago, he opened his first hotel, the now cultish Dar Ahlam, dramatically located between Morocco's Atlas Mountains and the Sahara. From the beginning, he orchestrated surprises and moments of wonder into his hotel, pioneering the concept of having every meal in a different setting, from breakfast alone under a palm tree, to dinner under the stars on rippling sand dunes at the hotel's desert camp. He started to expand with his Maison des Rêves ("House of Dreams"), a company that opened permanent and temporary hotels in Portugal and Paraty, Brazil, and then in 2015 launched the Memory Road project, a curated 4x4 road trip starting from Marrakech with five diverse stopovers (from a remote mountain village in the middle of a lush palm grove to a tented camp in the Sahara) on the way to Dar Ahlam. But Teyssier's true calling was the launch, in 2018, of 700'000 Heures, a nomadic hotel concept that was born in a palace in Puglia, Italy and moves every six months, from Cambodia to Lake Como. The name refers to the number of hours, on average, that make up a human life. Teyssier's goal is to make sure none of those hours is wasted, at least when it comes to travel experiences. This autumn 700'000 Heures will be taking over an ancient village in the south of Morocco and then in spring 2023 moving to Santo Amaro in the north of Brazil. One thing Teyssier has learned after several years operating this project, and through Covid, is that he needs to return or plant something permanent in all the remote areas 700'000 Heures pops up in. "I started this project with the idea that I am creating a transformative experience for my guests with the support of communities," he says, "but now I realise that the most important part of the equation is the communities. The real purpose of travel is teaching our guests about these communities and what they have to share. Sparking empowerment and transformation that goes both ways." To that end, Teyssier says he realised that 700'000 Heures needs to grow roots in several places. "I still have a wandering hotel but it is giving birth to a collection of permanent houses that will be maintained by myself and the community they are located in." This, he explains, is the start of his movement into regenerative travel, a kind of tourism that can ideally spark a healthy economy and positive impact in remote places and give jobs to the next generation so that they can stay in their villages if they want to instead of having to find work in big cities. Teyssier is convinced that this is the way forward in the travel industry. He pronounces, "We cannot travel any more just crossing the planet to sit around the swimming pool and have a cocktail."

SHIN JINUSHI; OPPOSITE PAGE: COURTESY SLOW



Claus Sendlinger *of* Slow

One of the great visionaries of the modern hospitality world, Claus Sendlinger founded Design Hotels almost 30 years ago with about a dozen architecturally innovative hotels he admired. At that time, he predicted that hotels would be as important as the destinations themselves. After more than two decades of pioneering both sustainability and experiential concepts within the brand, he left in 2016 to start his next big project: Slow. The name is fitting: the company has yet to open up a hotel property. Instead, as is the case with their upcoming Berlin project, Flussbad, they take years to develop them, person by person, layer by layer. “When I started Design Hotels, I was thinking about what was missing from the hospitality sector and what consumers were looking for,” Sendlinger says. “With Slow, we want to build purpose-built destinations with innovative and diverse architectural frameworks and spaces in which to inspire personal development and lifelong learning.” Even before launching Slow, Sendlinger and his core team, which includes Serdar Kutucu, were always experimenting: La Granja on Ibiza was a small farm where they planted healers and artists alongside organic vegetables; and at the beach club resort Scorpios on Mykonos, they invited DJs from Berlin who were mixing both electronic and acoustic sounds. Sendlinger describes Flussbad, which is scheduled to open in 2024, as a multipurpose “campus” along the Spree river in the developing area of Rummelsburg which will bring together both hi-tech and traditional health and wellness entrepreneurs. The main hotel is a dramatic two-storey building designed by the avant-garde Berlin-based architect Arno Brandlhuber; in between that space and the water, a sort of UFO-shaped structure, dubbed the Reethaus, its façade and roof thatched with reeds, is rising. Designed by architect Monika Gogl to host wellness rituals and musical events, Slow has already activated the site with music and food. This past summer, the team of Ember, a culinary concept focused on cooking over fire, brought together friends and the curious, outside at Flussbad for sundown drinks and dinner. All of Slow’s projects, including a historic palace hotel in Lisbon and Herdade do Meco, a more than 120ha farm estate bordering the Atlantic, are planned and built holistically, typically planting trees and building communities before they even start constructing the architecture. “We started on Flussbad in Berlin ten years ago,” comments Sendlinger, “and when it comes to our farm projects, we’re looking at a minimum of five years. But we believe that building these projects with intention will naturally attract the people we want to attract.”

Guillaume Foucher & Frédéric Biousse

of

Les Domaines de Fontenille



YANN DERET

When the couple Guillaume Foucher, a contemporary art gallerist, and Frédéric Biousse, a fashion entrepreneur, bought and renovated a chateau with a vineyard in the Luberon last decade (it opened, after renovations, in 2016), they designed the property with their own eclectic, creative taste. Fairly soon they realised that they had a concept that appealed to many others: restore and activate unique historic properties within beautiful natural landscapes; splurge on the gardens as much as the interior design; and train a new generation of employees to be professional but personal, less formal, more friendly. This formula has proven to be so successful that they have opened almost ten hotels in less than six years. In their own way, they are changing what luxury hospitality is today. "Luxury is no longer about the gold things," says Foucher, "it's about the green things." When the partners purchased Catherine Deneuve's former estate an hour west of Paris near Givenchy, one of the first things they did was to keep on the legendary actress's gardener, Gérard Germaine, and to invest over a million euros into the gardens. An 18th-century chateau surrounded by a moat which is itself surrounded by more than 40 hectares of grounds, including Deneuve's semi-wild rose garden, they hired a team to help Germaine plant hundreds of trees and add an extensive potager (kitchen vegetable garden). "Both Frédéric and I come from agricultural families," Foucher says. "For us, connecting to the terroir and to the landscape is essential." Domaines de Fontenille has unofficially become the new face of Relais & Châteaux. Not so long ago the hospitality brand was thought of as a collection of dusty old castles, but now, like the Michelin-star system, it is reinventing its identity, shedding the cliché of white tablecloths and silverware and old-fashioned sommeliers. At Les Hortensias du Lac, a luxury lodge situated on a marine lake near Hossegor, a pristine seaside area with exceptional surf breaks, guests find surfboards, not crystal chandeliers, in the reception. On the island of Menorca, the company owns two historic properties – Santa Ponsa and Torre Vella – and both are working farms. "I love to have a glass of champagne outdoors in the middle of the countryside, but even more important for me than the champagne is that I meet a few chickens on the way," laughs Foucher. The food is an important focus for all their resorts but instead of hiring a big-name Michelin-star consultant, they prefer to bring on young ambitious chefs who are committed to the property and who are as concerned with the environment as they are with the taste of the food. Foucher adds, "A green attitude is very important for us."