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Matteo Thun | Matteo Thun & Partners | Milan, Italy

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Matteo Thun: Pushing the Limits of Design

Matteo Thun is a world-renowned architect, interior designer, and product designer. He got his start studying under the Austrian artist, playwright, and poet Oskar Kokoschka at Salzburg Academy in 1968 and received his architecture degree from the University in Florence in 1975 while working with Italian architect Adolfo Natalini.

Matteo Thun

In 1978, Thun moved to Milan, where he began collaborating with the well-known Italian architect and designer Ettore Sottsass. Shortly thereafter, in 1981, Thun, Sottsass, and other prominent designers including Andrea Branzi, Aldo Cibic, Michele de Lucchi, and Michael Graves formed The Memphis Group, which revolutionized the approach to design in the early 1980s and beyond, bending form while retaining function with fluorescent colors; shiny surfaces; asymmetrical, lopsided shapes; and wavy laminate patterns. Thun was appointed to the Chair in Product Design and Ceramics by the Vienna Academy for Applied Arts in 1982. He left The Memphis Group in 1984 and set out on his own to found the Milan-based Studio Matteo Thun. From 1990-1993, Thun also served as the Creative Director of the legendary Swiss watch company, Swatch.

STRIVING FOR LONGEVITY

More than 25 years after its inception, Matteo Thun & Partners (MTP) continues to thrive on speed and flexibility, powered by an international team of about 50 architects, interior designers, stylists, product designers, and graphics designers fluent in English, German, and Italian. This talented team focuses their attention on architecture for commercial and

residential spaces, including public spaces, energy units, and masterplans around the world; interior design for restaurants, hospitality venues, shops, and events; and even high-profile product designs ranging from furniture, to lighting, to food and beverage vessels—like the ubiquitous illy cup. Thun has worked with Bulgari, Campari®, CocaCola®, Fila, KFC®, Philips®, Porsche Design®, Swarovski, Swatch®, Villeroy & Boch, and many other international icons.

For their work, MTP has garnered a number of high-profile recognitions. The firm recently won the Good Design Award, The Simon Taylor Award for Lifetime Achievement by *Designer* magazine, The Green Good Design Award, and Product of the Year by the UK Grand Designs. Additionally, the Side Hotel in Hamburg was chosen as "Hotel of the Year" in 2011 for Thun's interior design, lighting, and product design. The Vigilius Mountain Resort won the Wallpaper® Design Award in 2004, and the Radisson SAS Frankfurt was chosen as the best hotel opened that year at the Worldwide Hospitality Awards in 2005. Thun also received the coveted Prix Acier Construction Award for the Hugo Boss Strategic Business Unit in Switzerland in 2007. He has claimed the prestigious ADI Compasso d'Oro three times, and was inducted into the

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At Hugo Boss' Swiss headquarters, larch wood weaves itself around glass, steel, and concrete to promote an airy and natural feeling.



Interior Design Hall of Fame in New York in 2004. He is a member of RIBA, the Royal Association of British Architects.

Thun's holistic approach to design concentrates on longevity in several areas. "Architecture means designing the soul of the place," he says. "This implies an aesthetic, economic, and technological sustainability. It means to create a synthesis of the existing, the purpose, and the area. The solution is different each time." In the breadth of work he has created, sustainability is a common denominator, even for varying designs. Product design, too, is meant to be long lasting. "Product design must reflect the soul of the brand. It is architecture of simple, pure, and beautiful gestures to serve a daily life that goes well beyond our present life. Less weight and more light is key," says Thun. "We create products that tell ideas without words—products that are mobile because contemporary lives are nomadic. We create products that tell stories of sustainability because environmental necessities ask for it."

ART BECOMES LARGER THAN LIFE IN HUGO BOSS' STRATEGIC BUSINESS UNIT

Set against the lush green forests of Canton Ticino in Coldrerio, Switzerland, the Hugo Boss Industries headquarters embodies transparency and light. With three stories spanning 14,460 square meters,

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Affixed to the balconies, diamond-latticed wood shields the building from sun and weather.

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the building features public areas, conference rooms, a showroom, and offices for over 300 people. A large and sun-filled atrium forms the hub-like center of the spaces, and absorbent wooden walls on two upper stories buffer the various workspaces. The natural effect envelopes you; even upon entry, you are surrounded by vertical, mirrored sheets capturing a cascading stream of water. This clean-lined building of glass, steel, and concrete is softened considerably by a large and rounded basket-like form of diamond-latticed larch wood, stretched over its form like the point of a suspended boomerang. Airy and natural, it also

serves to protect the building from sun and weather. It stands affixed to balconies as a soaring and larger-than-life tribute to Hugo Boss, symbolically telling the icon's textile history as it weaves together the story of the building itself.

Thun listened carefully to the surroundings, as well as to the company's past. "Architecture has a teacher, the genius loci," he explains. "It tells us how to draw a project that respects culture and nature in a territory where we are called to build. Listening to the genius loci, our ideas adapt to history and geography. Hence, an architecture emerges that makes the most of local traditions and new technologies in order to create sustainable solutions, save resources, generate measurable economic results, while contributing to beauty." He and his team integrated the building seamlessly within its location, choosing sustainable prefabricated materials for affordability and efficiency in the construction process, and designing the headquarters for maximum, state-of-the-art comfort and sustainability, with management systems that optimize heating

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and cooling, light, and many other features for the large, open space. The building was completed in 2006.

Thun and his team also designed the interior spaces to reflect the openness and sustainability of the exterior. Thun says, “Sustainability starts from inside. Most human relations and expressions of creativity happen inside buildings, just like most of our daily life. That means that cultures and social structures are what interior design is called to serve, inside buildings that we design, to save resources and energy. Thus, an interior design emerges that is simple, essential, and light because of the transparency of its form and function.”

To realize the project was a challenge in rapidity. “To work with a fashion company means speed,” notes Thun. “Furthermore, we needed to find a solution that worked without walls to create offices that enabled the creative teams to interact.” He and his team relied on Vectorworks® Architect software to devise an innovative solution for the space’s requirements, rapidly creating and updating plans, sections, details, furniture drawings, lighting, electrical, and reflected ceiling plans from conceptual design through final executive drawings. By dividing the layers of the building, he was able to define



Interior spaces reflect the openness and sustainability of the exterior.

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The entry features vertical, mirrored sheets, capturing a cascading stream of water.

building levels and use classes to note thicknesses and objects. For the interior design, he used custom layer standards to define walls, floors, lighting, electrical elements, ceilings, doors, furniture, and more—and then used classes to define the thickness and properties of the lines. In addition to the technical efficiency of the software, says Thun, “Vectorworks is very helpful for the final graphic result. With Vectorworks, we achieve a final presentation that is also very technical. Moreover, it immediately makes the proposed styling, materials, and color visible, giving a clear view of the project’s mood and style.”

When challenged to explain what inspires him, Thun says, “It’s always the next project.” From a base of beautiful and innovative work that is itself a testament to longevity, it’s the unfinished dream that still beckons.

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