



SERLAS WING

WORDS: *Andrea Vogt*

A SENSE *of place*

Drawing on his close association with the mountain resort, architect Antonio Citterio has designed a wing for the hotel in keeping with the true spirit of St. Moritz

FROM THE bustling centre of Milan, St. Moritz is just a few contemplative hours north by road. The placid waters of Lake Como, with its lush Italian gardens and elegant villas, gently give way to quaint villages of rustic chalets with mica slate roofs, which are typical of the Alpine valleys in this area, climbing higher towards the Swiss border along Italian State Route 36.

Since Antonio Citterio was a young man, the pull of these breathtaking mountain valleys north of Milan has proven irresistible for the world-renowned Italian designer-architect, who has worked with such prestigious names as Hermès, Kartell, Bulgari, B&B Italia, Vitra, Cassina and Knoll. “Ah, yes, that road,” he smiles. “For nearly 55 years I have been driving it, in many different cars, and with many different companions. In some sense, that road tells the story of my life.”

The highway winds up and up, like the trajectory of Citterio’s career. At the top, it spills into the magnificent Engadin Valley and St. Moritz, where the Italian and his ACPV Architects, co-founded with Patricia Viel, is designing the Neue Alpenrose wing for Badrutt’s Palace. Indeed, the route from his understated but elegant studio in Milan’s fashion district leads not just to another high point in his career and also a place he calls home.

In 1985, Citterio bought a 100-year-old Swiss chalet here. Birthplace of winter Alpine sports and twice host to the Winter Olympics, glitzy St. Moritz has inspired Hitchcock thrillers, set the scene for James Bond ski chases and seduced glamorous visitors over the decades, from Audrey Hepburn to Bridgette Bardot, and from Andy Warhol to Robert De Niro, not to mention Europe’s royalty and industrial magnates such as the Heineken, Agnelli and Onassis families. Both of Citterio’s children were born here, and still today it is his ‘happy place’, where his family reunites for special occasions, catching up by the fire as snow falls gently outside, with stunning glaciated mountain peaks rising from all sides.

CENTREPIECE OF ST. MORITZ

St. Moritz evokes a true sense of community for Citterio and at its core is the Palace, one of Europe’s few top luxury hotels that is still family-owned, thanks to the long-term vision of the Badrutt family. When families cross continents and oceans to gather at the establishment, be it for wildflower walks in summer or Christmas Eve in Le Grand Hall, guests are remembered and their needs and desires gracefully and discreetly anticipated. “I can walk into Mario’s Bar [as the Renaissance Bar is unofficially known, in honour of head barman Mario Da Como] and they know exactly how I like my margarita,” he smiles.

Antonio Citterio relaxing at
at his home in St. Moritz



The warm ambience, welcoming staff and legendary service are all part of why 65 per cent of Badrutt's guests are returning customers – a number that rises to 85 per cent during holiday periods. Business is booming, with new visitors from India, Saudi Arabia and South America now strolling the historic halls, allured by the stunning scenery and the hotel's pioneering Alpine panache.

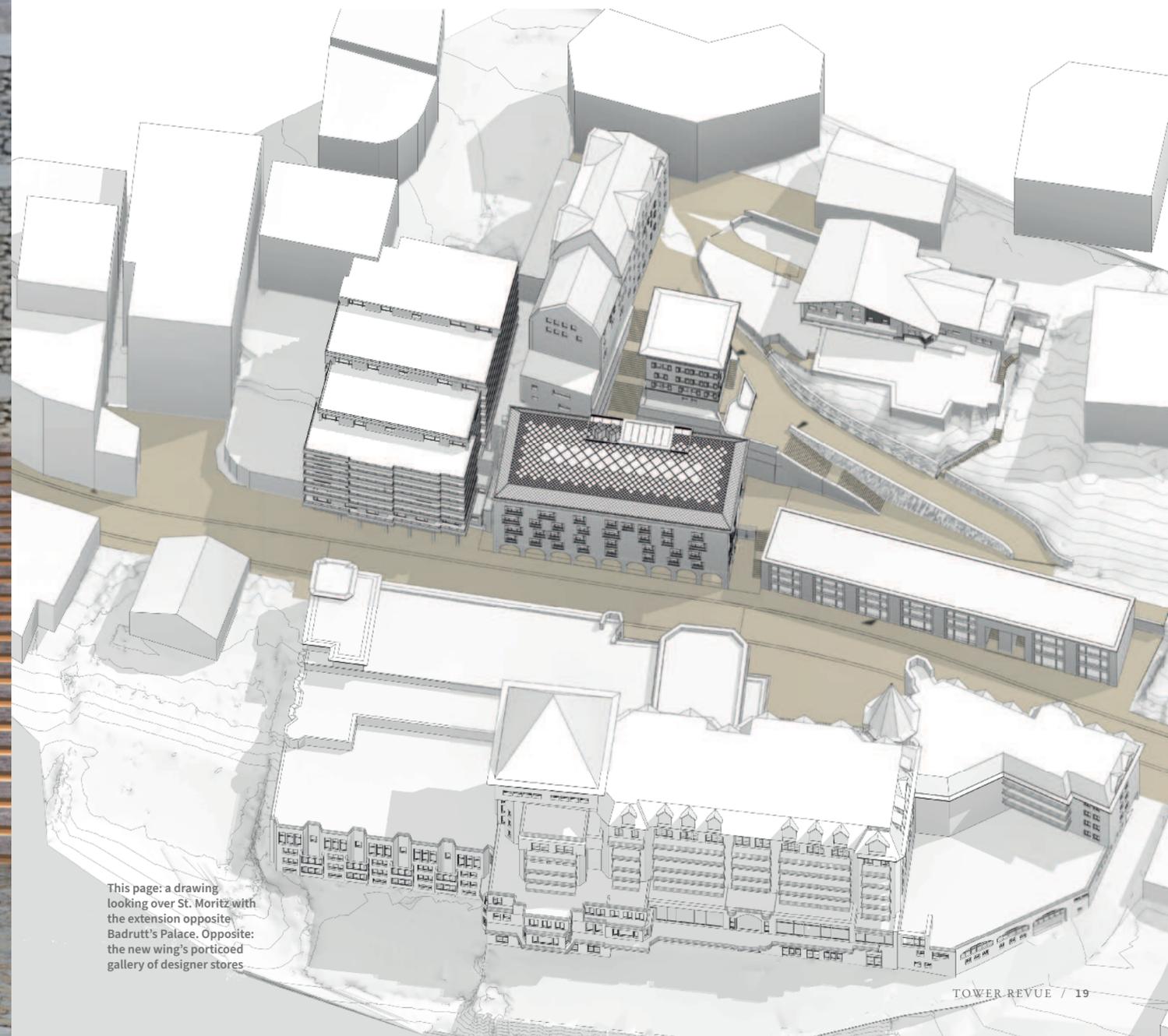
For an establishment that was one of the first to have electric light in Switzerland, and almost 150 years later is the first hotel to install a 5G antenna on site, it seems natural that today's master of innovation Antonio Citterio – three-time winner of Italy's highest prize for design, the Compasso d'Oro – would be commissioned for the challenge of designing its new building.

On Alpenrose's street level, a porticoed gallery of designer boutiques will bring new energy to Via Serlas. Citterio whips out a piece of drafting paper in his studio and quickly sketches out how the porticoes are being unconventionally carved by strategically removing pieces of the Dorato Valmalenco stone slabs that layer the façade, leaving a vaulted grotto of luxury

shopping, sheltered from the elements. "It is an arch not built for support as the Romans did, but by subtraction," he explains, becoming more animated with each fluid stroke of his extra fine-tipped pen.

The new wing is connected to the main hotel building by a private tunnel that will serve as a new central mobility hub for all hotel guests, allowing Alpenrose guests to move with ease towards the main building with its stately lobby and wellness centre, or for Palace guests to visit the designer boutiques or to ride an escalator in covered comfort up to the famed Chesa Veglia restaurants.

The 25 Alpenrose suites are designed with spacious living in mind – multiple units can be united if needed – and are equipped with modern innovations to suit the needs of guests seeking traditional Palace luxury in a contemporary context. The penthouse extends across the entire top floor, a wall of glass facing the lake under the cantilevered wooden roof. In a nod to rustic local architecture, windows were placed according to interior demands, such as a desired view.



This page: a drawing looking over St. Moritz with the extension opposite Badrutt's Palace. Opposite: the new wing's porticoed gallery of designer stores



“The windows are inspired by the farmhouse culture where people put them where they needed them,” he explains. “The façade will not have the aspect of a classic edifice where all the windows are perfectly symmetric. It is more spontaneous, still elegant but without formality.”

As his own century-old home in St. Moritz is in the traditional Alpine style, Citterio is keenly aware of how solidity and rock is built into the Engadin aesthetic. “We were searching for an architectural language that captures the spirit of the place but at the same time is contemporary, rather than just design a mountain chalet,” he explains. “Our take was to create a contemporary building that functions in a mountain location, that is not unjustified modernity just for the sake of making a building stand out but rather one that lives up to the expectations of those who desire to immerse themselves in that natural environment.”

He picks up *Antonio Citterio Design*, a hefty white book published this year that recounts 50 years of his projects. Opening to a page on his Bulgari Resort Bali, he explains how the ACPV team combined harmony with nature and contemporary flair by incorporating hand-cut volcanic stones, exotic native wood and fabrics to draw in natural elements and culture. We flip through the handsome volume together and he points out the that the same ethic went into design of high-rises in Taiwan and Taipei and luxury hotels all over the world, including the Mandarin Oriental Milan and Bulgari Hotels in Shanghai, Rome and Paris, capturing the

“I have always thought that buildings are like plants... they are unique yet they are all rooted to the Earth by a series of connections”

authentic spirit of the place “without being picturesque”, he emphasises, and then giving it contemporary context.

“Of course, in St. Moritz there is also a sentimental aspect,” he says, conceding that the project is particularly close to his heart. “I do expect some criticism – there is always debate – but I hope the Alpenrose generates discussion about contemporary architecture in the Engadin, because being modern doesn’t necessarily mean doing something absolutely out of place. I have always thought that edifices are like plants... they are unique yet they are all rooted to the Earth and linked by a series of connections.”

With Antonio Citterio behind the wheel of this distinctive aesthetic, the road ahead for the Neue Alpenrose wing of Badrut’s Palace appears golden: an interconnected yet discreet sense of community within one of the world’s most thriving luxury ecosystems of hospitality.

Computer-generated images of Neue Alpenrose’s contemporary rooms and suites

