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Nineteen Editor's Note

After a period of hibernation, COMPANION is back with The Leisure Issue. Yet what exactly do we mean by leisure? Enjoying the moment, regardless of how much time you have available. Having a more relaxed approach to life in general. After all, there is a lot to see if you slow down, open your eyes, and smell the coffee.

Take for example Berlin-based photographer Daniel Farò, who embarked upon a cycling tour around Berlin to see if he could observe his city from a different perspective in Berlin Shapes Revisited. Judging by the photos and his insightful commentary, it seems he indeed experienced something new. In Chronicles from Above, the Canadian writer Christian DeWolf discovers the “vertical metropolis” of Hong Kong. If you’re scared of heights, you will appreciate reading all about it from your comfy chair.

For those of you fortunate enough to be traveling, have you ever wondered who is behind the interior design of your favorite hotel? Check out Paola Navone Goes Dantesque, a story about how a famous Italian architect and designer created the concept for the new 25hours Hotel Piazza San Paolino in Florence. Be prepared to be wowed with her impeccably impressive designs.

Meanwhile, our September 2021 Activity Map takes you to Copenhagen, the place to be for witnessing sporty Scandinavians mastering the art of “hygge.” Certainly leisure is intrinsically connected to Danish life—a feeling of well-being and coziness permeates nearly every facet of the city’s cafés and shops.

Last but not least, our columnist Julian Kraft reminds us that no matter what happens, we can, and should, always start again. From scratch. Gaining new perspectives, and never giving up.

So perhaps, by merely reading about the people who are still creating, producing, building, writing, performing, cooking, inventing, and designing this issue, can inspire you to try out a more leisurely approach yourself.

Friends of Friends

Established as an online magazine for the creative community in 2009, Friends of Friends has grown into a global platform for inspiration and creativity, providing first-hand narratives and insights into the lives and work of the leading cultural class. For 25hours Hotels, Friends of Friends provides exclusive access to some of the most vibrant cities, neighborhoods and local communities. Select friends and voices from the Friends of Friends network contributed to COMPANION #19 and the overall magazine concept and content. Production and design is provided by sister agency MoreSleep.

↳ To find out more, check out the fully rebranded and redesigned www.friendsoffriends.com



Contributors

STARTING OVER!



The book “Romeo und Julius: Meine Suche nach der großen Liebe” (Romeo and Julius: My Search for True Love) by Julius Kraft takes readers on 25 dates in a quest to find Mr. Right. Ultimately it is less important whether he actually finds the object of his desire and more about what he learns about himself. In this issue, the column by the Berlin-based author takes us on a journey of self-discovery. He argues that we can and should always start again from scratch. And although the 32-year-old describes himself as a late bloomer, he seems to be bang on target with his courage and honest writing. Besides books, Kraft pens articles for various online magazines.

↳ Instagram.com/julius_kraft

DOWN TO EARTH



Stephanie Danial grew up in Switzerland, but was soon drawn to faraway places. She has now lived in Dubai for ten years. And although Danial does miss the mountains and nature, there is rarely anything lacking in the largest city of the United Arab Emirates. This entrepreneur and mother of four sons gives us insights into family life in the Middle East and tips on how to experience life in the big city, explaining in this issue’s Cosmos: “Dubai is actually quite down to earth!” Danial is full of praise for “Dubai with kids” and firmly believes that the city is as family-friendly as any other one she has encountered.

↳ Nara.ae

ABOVE IT ALL



Christopher DeWolf is a Canadian writer who focuses on urbanism, culture, architecture, and design. He was fascinated by cities as a child and began writing about them as a teenager, which soon led to a career in journalism. He fell in love with the ferocious energy of Hong Kong after his first trip there in 2005, and has been documenting the city’s unique history, culture, and urban environment through writing and photography ever since. He shares his long-time observations on particular rooftops of his favorite city with COMPANION. DeWolf now splits his time between Hong Kong and Montreal. He has kept himself sane since the beginning of the pandemic by taking long walks and bicycle rides every afternoon.

↳ Photo-credit: Nikki Wing



Think Big. Travel Big!

WORDS **SILVIA SILKO**

Dubai – just the name of the emirati city evokes images of larger-than-life architecture, artificial islands, and extravagant luxury. As interesting and exciting as that sounds, one would not assume that Dubai is the perfect destination for family vacations. Stephanie Danial, Dubai-resident and mother of four, knows better.

One of the problems of living in Dubai with kids is the huge range of activities, says Stephanie Danial. She moved here a decade ago with her family for her job—and hardly ever looks back. “Isn’t it amazing when one destination caters to the entire family?” Danial asks. Indeed Dubai seems to be a place where the only limitation is your own fantasy. In other words: There is nothing you can’t do here. Creating artificial palm-shaped islands right at the coast of Dubai in 2001 probably followed exactly that spirit. With this major million-dollar project, the Dubai coastline was

extended by 100 km. So having a nice, long, relaxing day at the beach shouldn’t be a problem when you’re in Dubai. Apart from that, any other passion won’t be unheard of either: “You can pretty much do anything in Dubai, from the sea to the desert, to the shopping malls that offer kids things like skiing and ice skating,” says Danial and adds, “But more importantly, it’s so safe you don’t even need to worry.” The mother of four boys also values the fact that Dubai is a very child-friendly place: “You can take your kids anywhere with you. They

are always, always made to feel welcome—which is not always the case in Europe!” Being out and about in Dubai with the whole family is also very convenient, as Danial describes it. But that doesn’t just have to do with the fact that this city is really child friendly—it is also quite uncomplicated: “You can find anything in Dubai, 24/7,” explains Danial when asked about her secret to a smooth trip around town. Anything she always packs with her? “I will always make sure we have a good supply of water, healthy snacks and good music—those are the basics.”



Ice skating and skiing in a city that usually ranges from 23 – 40 degrees Celsius? No problem in the most populous city in the United Arab Emirates. But there is way more to it than that. Dubai is known for its remarkable way of merging the traditional with the modern, a great mélange of oriental flair and exotic vibes, whilst being one of the most flamboyant places on earth with its palatial architecture and luxurious shopping malls, restaurants, and hotels.

For Danial, Dubai has a grounded side as well: “Dubai can seem ‘glossy’ from afar, but when you live here, your lifestyle is actually very down to earth—at least in our case.” She laughs and describes a lot of activities that are less high maintenance. “The old Dubai is a really nice area to visit, there is the Museum of Illusions and the Dubai Museum and Al Fahidi Fort* that my children love. They also like to go to Kite Beach, which is a public beach, and eat the best hamburgers at Salt. There are also many organic farms you can visit with children.”

Stephanie Danial has her own share of the wide range of activities in Dubai: In 2018 she founded Nara Escape. She is passionate about the beauty of the desert, but also loves comfort. The project Nara Escape reflects perfectly on those two aspects: “I wanted a place that wasn’t touristy, and with the possibility of enjoying amazing high-quality food. It is a very child-friendly experience: We offer things like camel rides, volleyball,

soft archery, sand boarding, and movies under the stars, just to name a few. Parents can enjoy a beautiful dinner, while the kids have fun.” The concept is very close to Danial’s heart, and she even named it after her sons Neil, Adam, Ryan and Adrian—the youngest being 9 and the eldest being 23 years old. “I was very much inspired by them when I created Nara Escape and Sonara Camp,” she says. Sonara Camp is Danial’s newest project: a restaurant in the heart of the Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve, an eco-friendly camp, designed to entertain both parents and children.

With its high standard of living, various possibilities and, as Danial describes, its friendly attitude, Dubai seems like a place anyone could have a good time visiting. It’s hardly surprising that since 2013 Dubai is one of the most visited cities of the world: over 14 million tourists come here every year! Dubai underwent quite the development, from being only a center of oil production to becoming a mecca for travelers from all over the world. Not coincidentally, as oil revenues are not limitless, Dubai’s leaders worked hard on offering tourists an extremely desirable destination. They definitely succeeded!

↳ www.nara.ae/sonara

*Please note, the Dubai Museum and Al Fahidi Fort is currently closed for renovations.

City Tips

BERLIN

Dear Humanity,

After their successful show "Human" comes "Human 2.0", an electrifying acrobatic performance by the contemporary Australian circus troupe Circa. Described as being "a love letter to humanity," the performance pushes the boundaries of both the circus and acrobatics while exploring what it means to be human—all to the beat of an electronic music soundtrack. Directed by Yaron Lifschitz, the spellbinding production of "Human 2.0" runs from 4.11 - 27.11.2021 at Chamäleon Theatre.



↳ Tickets and more information: chamaeleonberlin.com/en/shows/humans-2-0/



The New Neue Nationalgalerie

The Neue Nationalgalerie finally reopened its doors to the public on 22.08.2021. Designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the Neue Nationalgalerie quickly became a landmark of modern architecture. But it was in dire need of renovation, so David Chipperfield (known for his previous work on the Neues Museum and more recently the James Simon Gallery, to name a few) was commissioned over five years ago to do just that. He undertook a complete modernization of the building by updating construction elements, renovating visible surfaces, and improving all building facilities. To mark the grand (re-)opening of the gallery, three different exhibitions are on offer: "Alexander Calder: Minimal/Maximal," "Rosa Barba: In a Perpetual Now," as well as the permanent exhibition of the gallery's 1,800 works.

↳ More information: neuenationalgalerie.com

Exploring the Relationship Between Society and Nature

Deep within the infrastructure of Kraftwerk, an abandoned former power plant in the central part of the city, is the exhibition "Metabolic Rift", which explores the complex yet interconnected relationship between society and nature. Bringing together a series of art installations created by leading international sound and visual artists, "Metabolic Rift" invites small groups of visitors to immerse themselves in a choreographed exhibition, moving through a series of corridors, channels, and spaces inside the building that until now have been closed to the public. From futuristic city-scapes to sculptural pieces and sound installations, it is a visual and auditory experience you've most certainly never seen before. Presented by Berlin Atonal and running from 25.09 - 30.10.2021, the exhibition lasts around two hours.

↳ More information: the-metabolic-rift.com/en/
Tickets: berlinatonal.ticket.io



Lounging at The Lodge

Besides having plenty of little bars and kiosks along the Arno River, why not try something recommended by a local? The Lodge Club offers elegant dining, as well as the Jungle, a cocktail bar surrounded by the greenery of Piazzale Michelangelo. Food in the restaurant is simple, fresh and seasonal—with a unique and delicious twist. And don't forget about the live music and DJ sets for a night of dancing!



↳ thelodgeclub.com/en/



Park Bathing

Take a break from the city sights and head to the 400-year-old Boboli Gardens, known for being much more than the lungs of the city—the gardens were the prototype for "green architecture" in many other European Royal gardens, such as Versailles. Filled with old trees, sculptures, fountains, an amphitheater, grotto, and stunning views of the city, it's a great place to be no matter the season. And don't forget to pop into the Palazzo Pitti, designed by Filippo Brunelleschi and later the main residence of the famous Medici family, for some serious time travel.

↳ uffizi.it/en/boboli-garden

City Tips

FLORENCE



Creative. Modern. Sustainable. A Living, Open, and Connected Space

Ready for something a little more off the beaten path? Try Manifattura Tabacchi, a former tobacco factory-turned-contemporary destination for fashion, art, and design. Their cultural program ranges from exhibitions to workshops, an artist residency program, concerts, and even a cinema. Calling itself “a living, open and connected space,” Manifattura Tabacchi welcomes local, national, and international artists and organizations to create events and activities in its iconic spaces.

↳ manifatturatbacchi.com/en/



City Tips DUBAI



Damn Good Coffee

Definitely worth discovering is Alserkal Avenue, home to over 20 art galleries and Dubai's emerging alternative scene. Spread across the raw industrial estate of Al Quoz, Alserkal is a haven of creativity, unique homegrown businesses, and independent retailers. Dubai's arts capital is also home to the area's most popular spot for caffeine fixes and all-day breakfasts: Nightjar Coffee Roasters carefully selects artisanal coffee beans freshly roasted on the premises. With names like Cherry Bomb, Hokey Pokey, and Vanilla Gorilla, their selection is anything but ordinary. The eatery also offers a creatively delicious lunch and dinner menu (homesick? Try their mac & cheese). Whether chilling out over some hip hop music and a cup of coffee, or having lunch with friends, it's a great place to spend a few hours' time.

↳ Nightjar.coffee



Treasure Hunting

Established in 1850 and featuring original architecture from the time, a wander through the gold and spice souks in Deira is a must. Expect to be wowed with jewelry made by craftspeople and artists eager to design and create whatever your heart (or wallet) desires. Or surround yourself by herbs and spices bursting with color and olfactory intensity, where vendors are there to inspire you on how to incorporate the many exotic spices into your own cooking. You probably won't leave empty-handed, as it's a great place for getting souvenirs and gifts to bring back home.

↳ dm.gov.ae

À la Plage

Immerse yourself in a 1960's Riviera-styled oasis at Twigg by La Cantine, a beach club at the park Hyatt Dubai Lagoon. A bold, chic yet playful decor, cool sounds, a Mediterranean-style menu, and an altogether upbeat vibe make Twigg the place to be. The white sand beach, crystal-clear turquoise waters of the infinity pool, and boundless warmth of the hot sun will make you forget all your worries—and give in to total relaxation.

↳ twigg.ae



Paola Navone Goes Dantesque

WORDS MELANIE O'BRIEN

25hours Hotels collaborated with the renowned Italian designer to create a new, wondrously mesmerizing Dantesque hotel experience.

Close to Ponte Vecchio, in the heart of Florence's historical center, is the recently opened 25hours Hotel Piazza San Paolino.

Once the site of a Romanesque-style church, convent, and former pawnshop Monte dei Pogni, the complete renovation of three buildings (totalling 10,750 m²) was undertaken by locally-based architecture firm, Genius Loci Architettura. The refurbishment was part of a larger-scale urban regeneration plan to breathe new life into underdeveloped, slightly hidden areas of the city—giving them their own neighbourhood renaissance.

It was certainly a challenging task to design interiors that would both honor long-standing Florentine traditions, and at the same time create a contemporary, cosmopolitan look and feel that aligns with 25hours Hotels' aesthetic concept. So who better to push the interior design boundaries than Paola Navone herself?

The anti-designer

She was quickly drawn into the more radical and experimental aspects of design, challenging the ordinariness of the status quo by breaking the rules. Her involvement with Studio Alchimia and later the Memphis movement, where she worked side-by-side with designers such as Ettore Sottsass, Alessandro Mendini, and Andrea Branzi, only helped to solidify her unconventional approach.

Her collaborations with well-known design giants including Bisazza, Baxter, Crate & Barrel, Gervasoni, Serax, Rubelli, Ethimo, and most recently Fontanarte, clearly demonstrate her bold and eclectic genius.

The treasure hunter

Ever since the early days of her design career, Paola has always been a treasure hunter. Known for her uncanny ability to make the ordinary extraordinary, she has the magic touch, turning everyday, often cheap, utilitarian items into beautiful precious pieces. She is also a collector, passionate about transforming objects and materials, continually traveling the globe to scour countless markets and antique shops.

The world traveller

Paola mixes and matches her love of the flavor and colors of the exotic East, including Africa, Southeast Asia (she lived part-time in Hong Kong for many years), and the Middle East, going about design like a chef would prepare a dish: regardless of the kinds of ingredients combined together, it only works when the end result is delicious. It's the design as a whole that counts most.

The storyteller

Paola feels that design is more of a creatively evolving space for having conversations with people, rather than a linear and static "thing." She says, "Every project is a new adventure and challenge." Always open to trying new things, she is guided by her curiosity and intuition.

In addition to architecture, Paola can also add product designer, art director, and exhibition/event creator to her long list of talents. Somewhere along the line she began designing hotel interiors, including resorts in Thailand, USA, France, and now Italy.

Dantesque Design

The interior design of the hotel is in commemoration of the 700-year anniversary of Dante Alighieri's death. Born in Florence in 1265, Dante was a writer, poet, and philosopher, and his "Divine Comedy" is thought to be one of the greatest works of Italian literature. So Paola's choice to reinterpret his "Divine Comedy" as the main thematic and narrative element in the 25hours Hotel seems perfectly fitting.

A visit to the hotel is like an amusement park ride without the special effects or loops. Paola brings together an original repertoire of vintage furniture unearthed in markets around the world, furnishings and objects from the Italian artisan tradition, special pieces designed

by Paola herself and her studio of collaborators, and creations from original and new design talents. The resulting interiors are beautiful, bold, eclectic, funky, and amusing—all at the same time.

The color scheme was created based on Dante's symbols, together with a unique palette of exquisite and popular materials that range from marble to mosaics, terracotta to metals, tiles to wood, ceramics to glass. As in a studied choreography, each element combines with another to create a complex symphony of epochs and traditions, finding beauty in its deliberate and creative haphazardness.

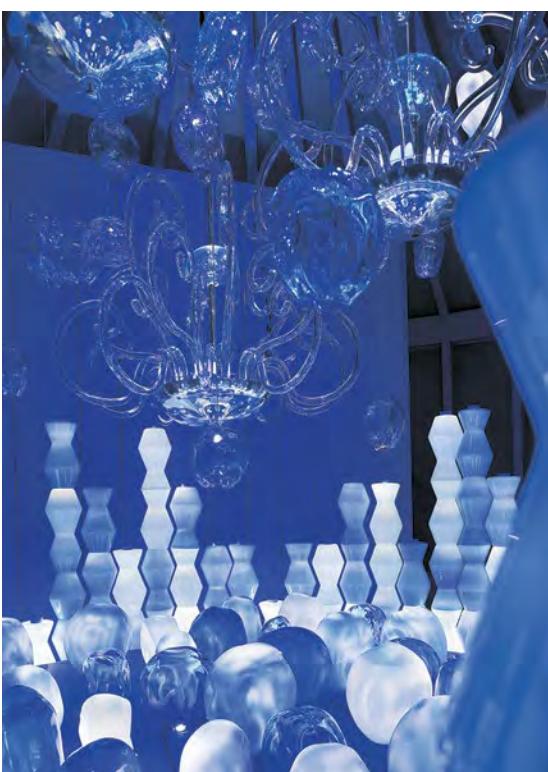
Even more evidence of Dantesque-inspired design is found in the area around the elevator, livened up with illustrations from the US artist Seymour Chwast, who reinterpreted characteristic scenes from the "Divine Comedy" in a humorous way. How about some divine entertainment? The "Cinema Paradiso" offers a large selection of Dantean inspired movies from the past and present.

Guests will be transported through Paola's wondrous reinterpretation while they stay in one of the over 170 hotel rooms (where they can choose whether to spend a night in paradise, or daring to go to hell). You can also dine in the restaurant serving dishes inspired by local cuisine, sip on a latte in the characteristic café, have a drink at the sophisticated bar, visit the gorgeous courtyard garden, or take a dip in the pool.



Can't get enough of Paola?

Available for purchase at the 25hours Hotel Piazza San Paolino shop:
Fish bottle by Serax for the Fish&Fish collection
Fish tray by Serax for the Fish&Fish collection
Book: "Thamm ma da, The Adventurous Interiors" by Paola Navone



Paola's Florentine Playlist

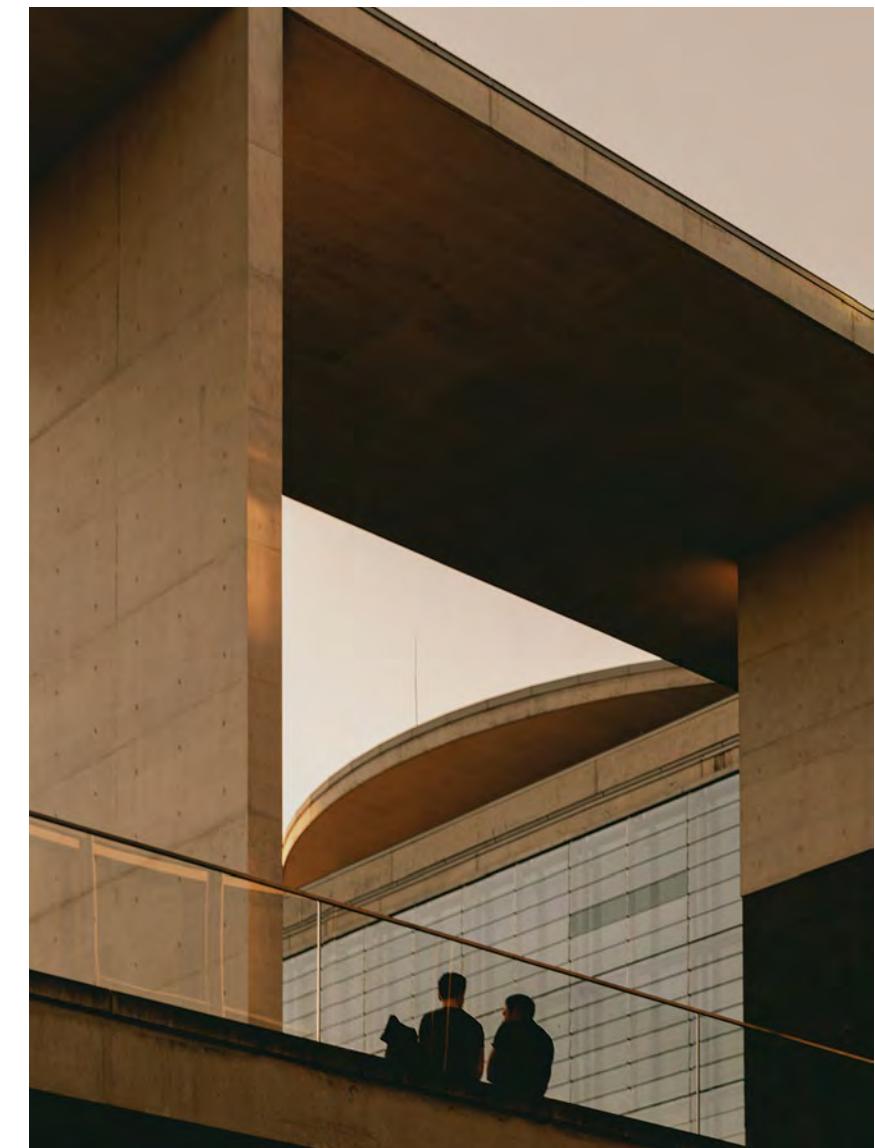
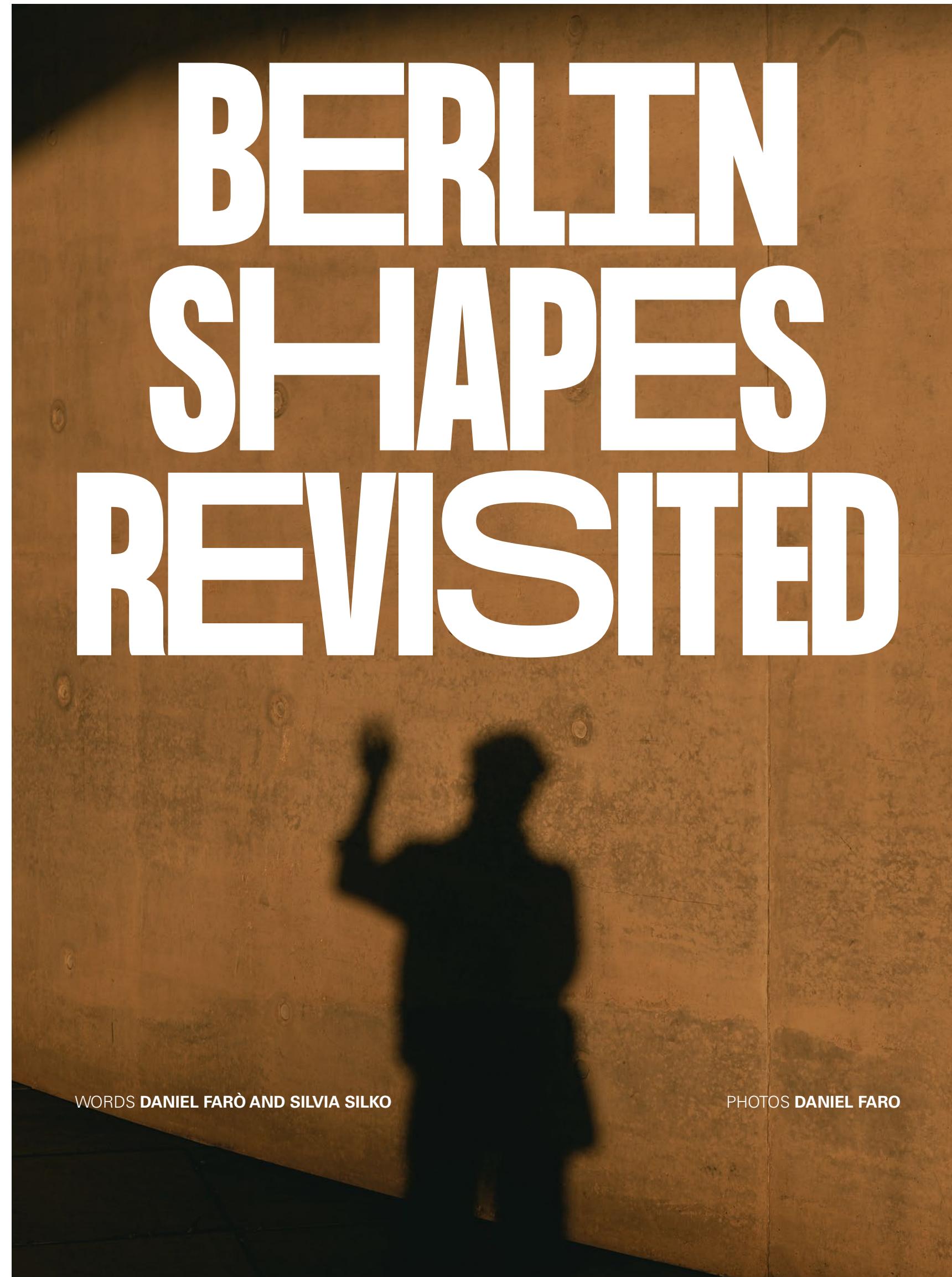
1. Highway to HELL - AC/DC
2. Paradise City - Guns n' Roses
3. Puccini: Gianni Schicchi - Firenze è come un albero fiorito.



BERLIN SHAPES REVISITED

WORDS DANIEL FARÒ AND SILVIA SILKO

PHOTOS DANIEL FARO



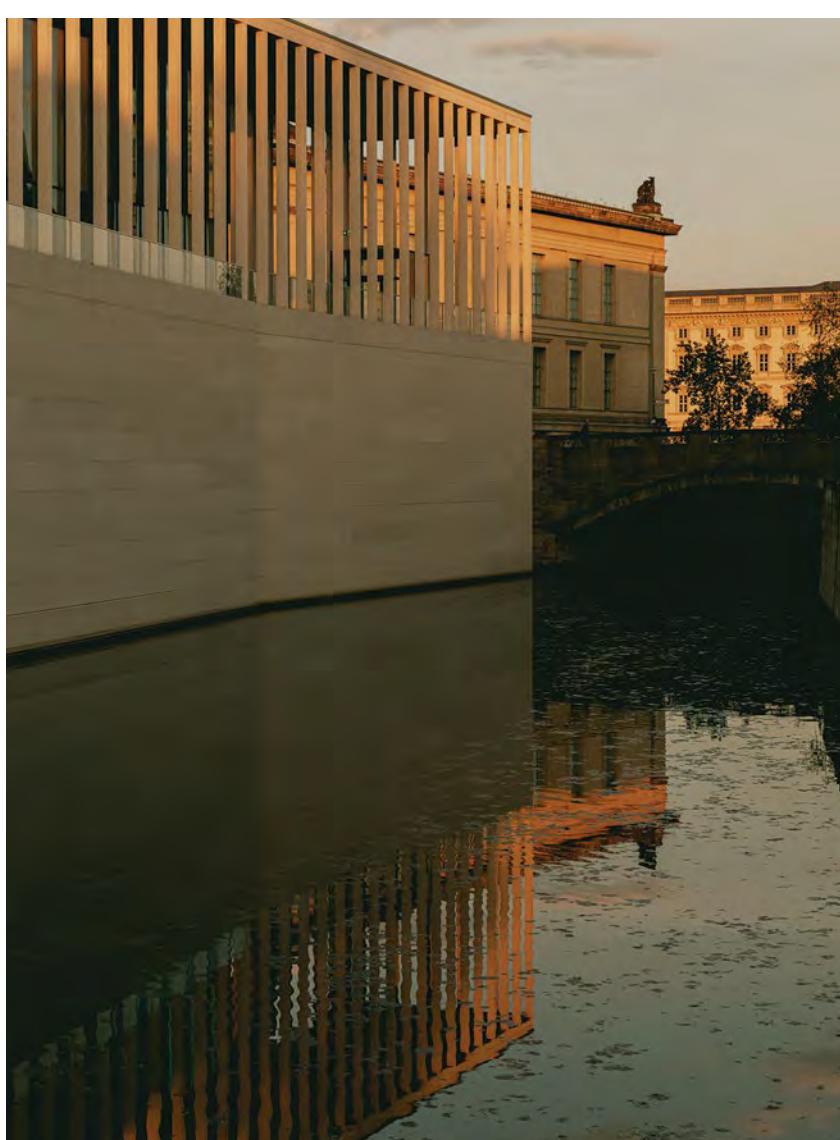
I have been living in Berlin for nearly three years. Would I call the German capital my home? Yes, I guess I would. Usually, three years aren't seen as long enough to truly feel settled in a new home. But, in a city where constant movement seems to be the only permanent feature, standing still for 36 months is quite an achievement.

In Berlin, it often feels like people are coming and going on a daily basis. At gatherings and parties you can always meet new people, have the possibility of a new fling, and find new inspiration. And, of course, there is always someone—a friend of a friend, a sister of a colleague, the son of your mother's best friend, or the cousin of the janitor from your old school—who is asking you for advice on how to find a cheap new apartment.

Although gentrification has started to rear its ugly head over Berlin's housing market, the city is still regarded as a relatively affordable place, offering a wide range of attractive features from culture to history, employment opportunities to an exciting gastronomy scene. To me, this is Berlin's most valuable asset and why it differs from other European metropolises such as Amsterdam and London.

Contrary to the feeling of constant movement in the city, true Berliners are actually not that keen to hop from one district to another. In Berlin, there is not just one city center: every "Kiez" (district) has its own center with a unique character and atmosphere. So, why would anyone living in Moabit travel 30 minutes on the train to Kreuzberg when the perfect café or a cool lunch place is just around the corner? While this makes things extremely convenient, the downside is that, in general, people stay put, and rarely venture outside their comfort zones to discover different areas. In my opinion, this is a shame, especially considering the vast array of architectural styles across the city.

When I was asked to do a District Tour for this issue of COMPANION, I thought it was the perfect opportunity to take a new look at the German capital. So, that's exactly what I did: I revisited the city I've been living in for the past three years by bike. I tried to look at the city, and its architectural sites in particular, with fresh eyes—and ended up finding even more interesting shapes and patterns than I was expecting...





JAMES SIMON GALERIE

Is any other landmark as synonymous with Berlin as the Fernsehturm? Probably not. But despite its iconic status, looking at Germany's tallest building—at 368 meters tall it's also Europe's fourth tallest TV tower—located at the center of Alexanderplatz is neither fun nor original. 100,000 people cross "Alex" every single day. It's busy, impersonal, loud, and dirty.

I decided to take a look at the landmark from a distance on Museum Island, from the newly completed main building: the James Simon Galerie. The center-

piece for the complex's modern buildings, it is also the site of the museum's main entrance. While renovations to the Museum Island aren't due to be finalized until 2023, parts of the museum are currently open for business. While you're here, don't forget to take a stroll around the area, enjoy the combination of old and new architecture, and admire how well it merges together. Visiting here on my bicycle, I noticed how closely the narrow pillars dotted around the island mirror the shape of the needle-like "Fernsehturm".

THE BRANDENBURG GATE AND THE MEMORIAL TO THE MURDERED JEWS OF EUROPE

As I was travelling by bike, it took me approximately five minutes to cycle down Unter den Linden to my next destination. Coming from this direction, the impressive Brandenburg Gate was waiting for me at the end of the road. Caution is recommended here: there is usually a lot of traffic on this main street as tourist busses, cars, horses, and bikes all compete with each other for space. There's no mercy on the streets of Berlin.

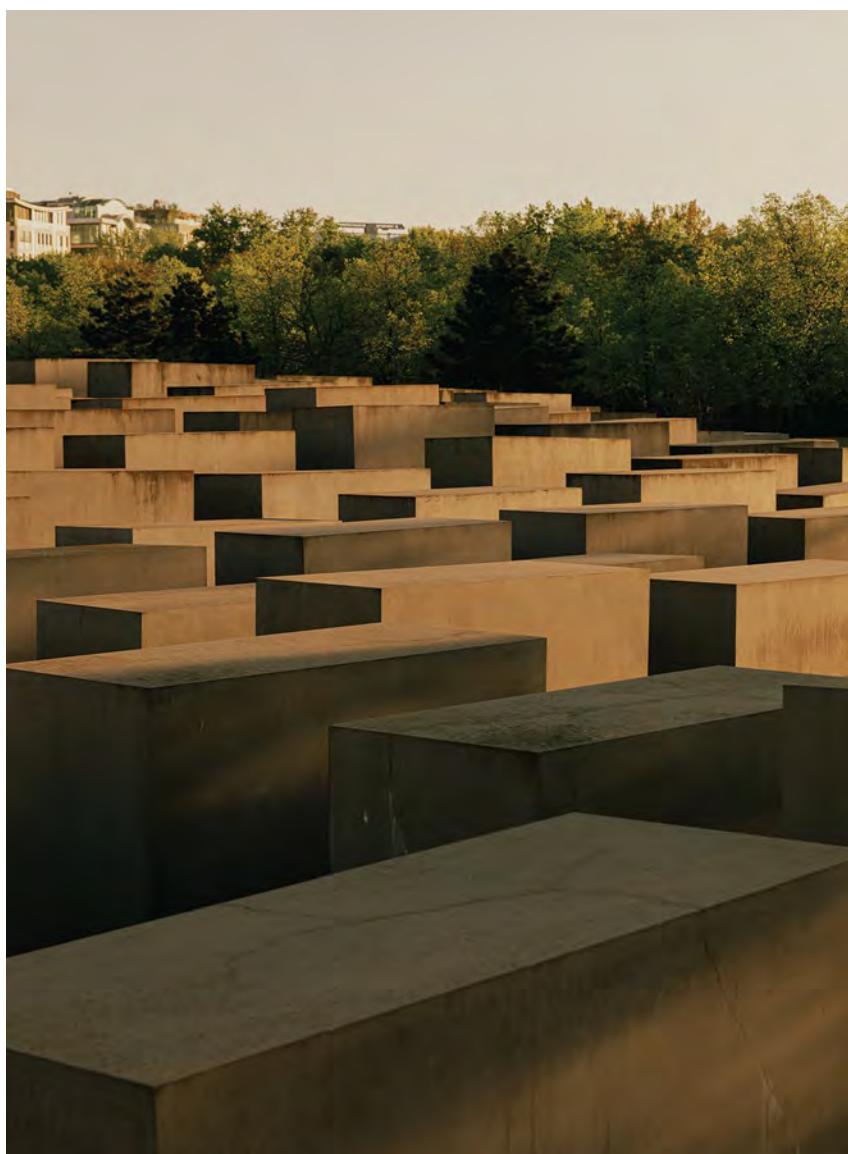
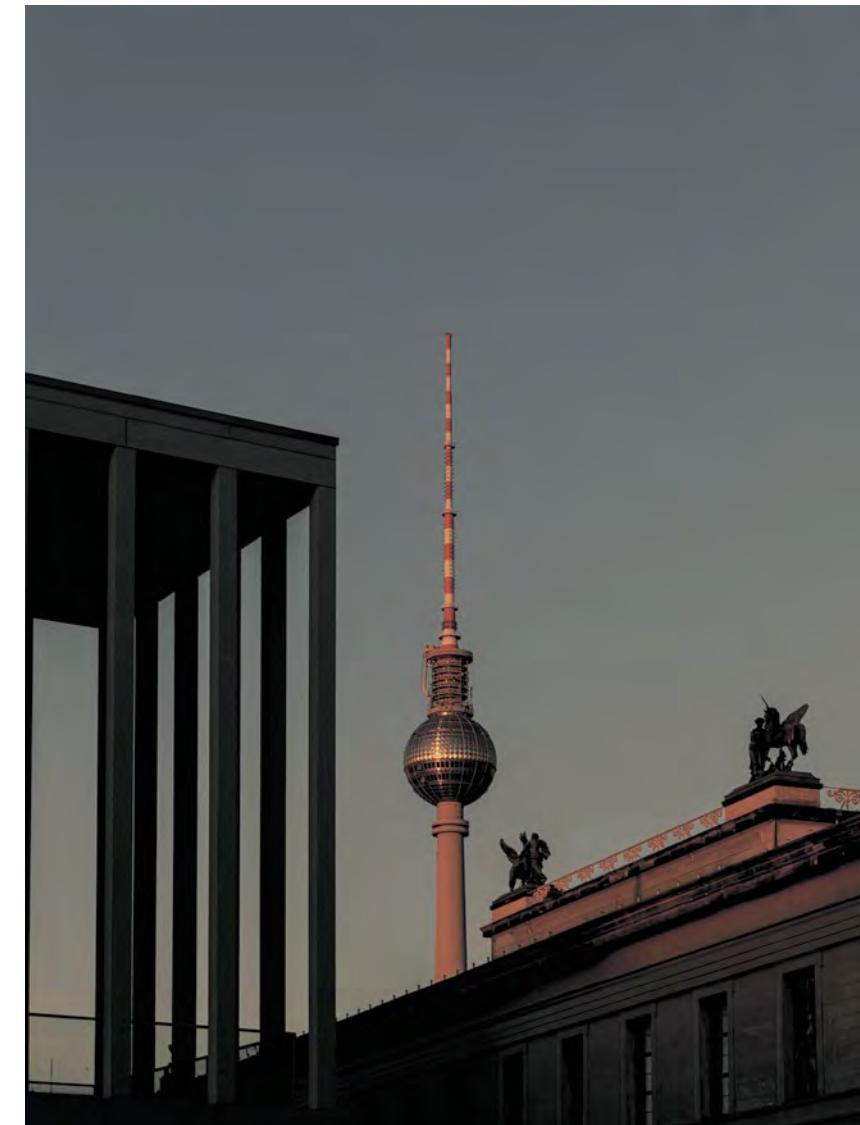
The Brandenburg Gate is a truly awesome monument. Completed in 1793 and located at the center of the city, it's witnessed its fair share of historical moments! During the division of the German capital, for example, the gate was situated right on the border between West and East Berlin. It was a symbol of the divided city, country, and all the families and friendships that were separated during the Cold War. Since the Berlin Wall fell in 1990, it's now become a symbol of a united Germany.

While gargantuan in size, The Brandenburg Gate also has a soft side. Its classic architecture and delicate lines are

best enjoyed early in the morning when not many people are around, and the sun shines warmly through its various passages.

Walking south from the Brandenburg Gate, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is reached within minutes. Erected between 2003 and 2004, not everyone was initially happy with this monument. A few people complained that it looked like a big "pile of stones," and that it was too abstract to represent the horrific crimes the Nazis committed.

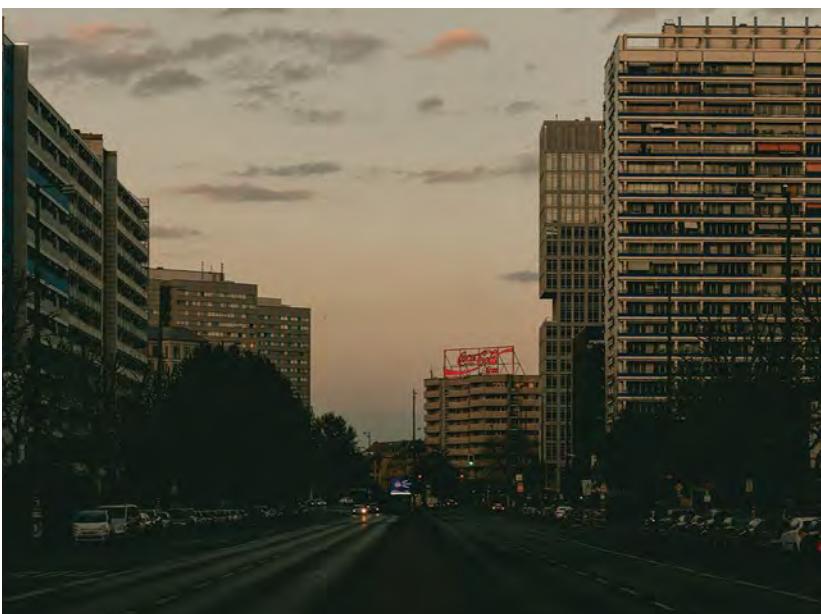
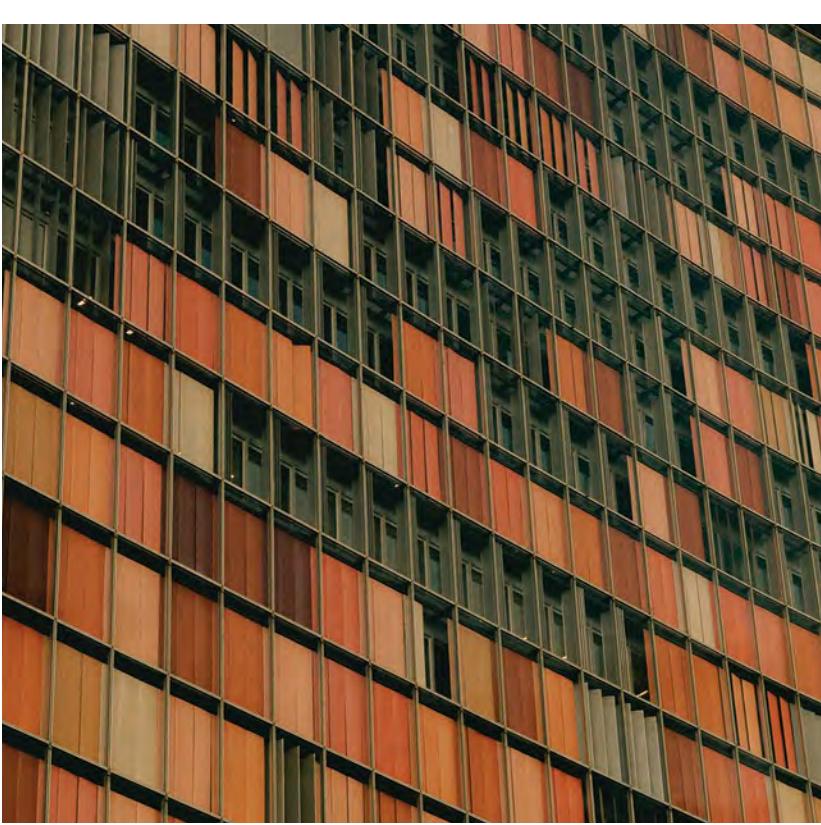
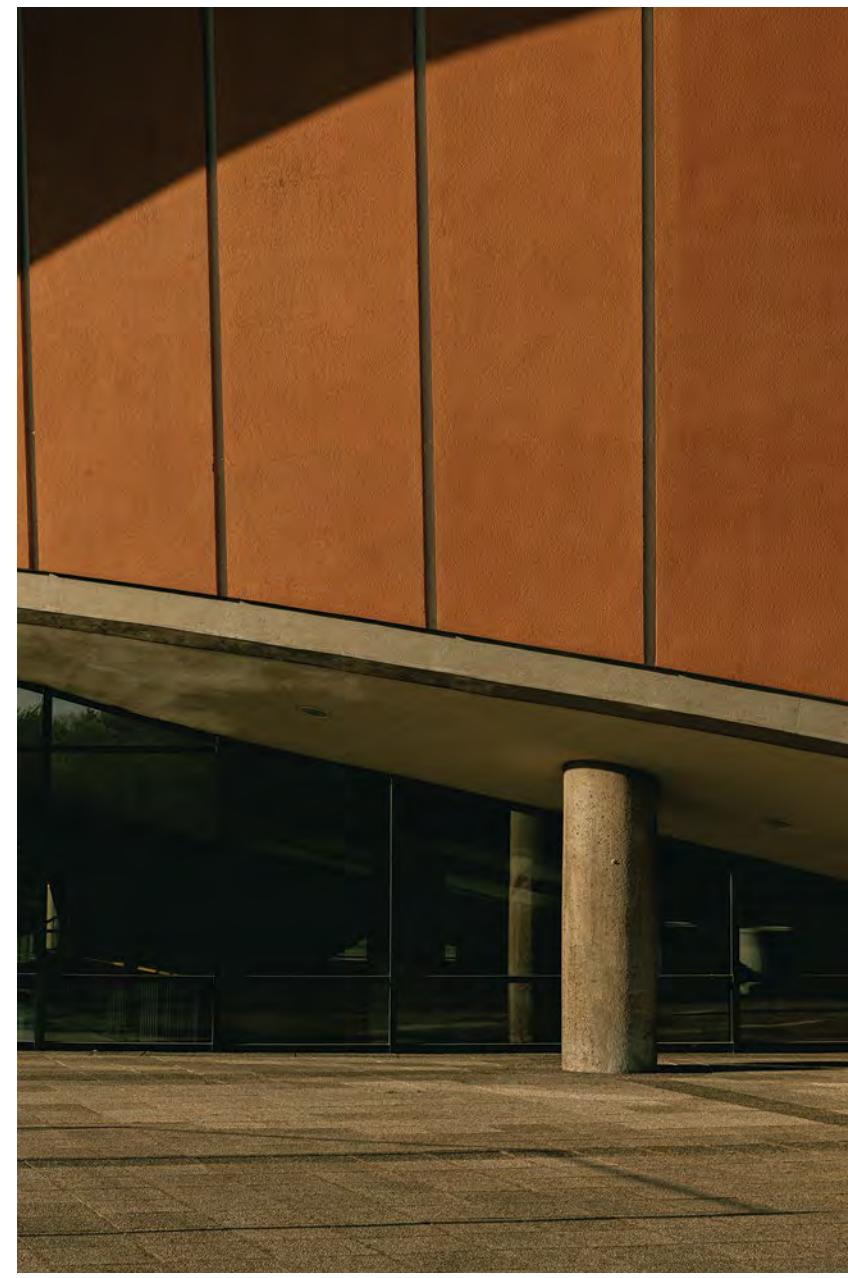
I couldn't disagree more strongly. To me, the memorial is at once groundbreaking and deeply disturbing. Composed of 2,711 concrete blocks spread across a 19,000 m² plot of land in the center of Berlin, the monument invites visitors to walk on the uneven ground in between its disparate blocks. From the center of the monument, all the surrounding noise from the busy city outside is muted, fostering feelings of unease and disconnection. It is an experience with symbolic power. To me, that is exactly what this memorial should be.



GOVERNMENT QUARTER AND HOUSE OF THE CULTURES OF THE WORLD

While in this area, one might as well visit the government quarter. The Marie-Elisabeth-Lüders-Haus, located next to the Spree, is particularly worth a look. Erected in 2003, it combines modern design with an interesting blend of materials and shapes. It's so unique that once you've been there, you'll always recognize it in any photograph—even if only looking at an isolated section.

Since 2010, an additional annex building has been in construction. While it should have been completed in 2012, the finalization has been postponed several times due to unforeseen problems and construction errors. Berlin is not just a city of endless transformation, it is also a city where endless construction dominates the talk of town. Sometimes they also leave you undecided as to whether it's funny or tragic that projects such as the new Berlin Brandenburg Airport swallow up unbelievable amounts of time and money. But that's another story.



MORE COLORFUL PATTERNS AND COCA COLA

After hitting most of the city's main tourist spots, I wanted to cycle towards Spandau, an area of Berlin that is not so popular with visitors.

But before that, I took a detour, heading towards Kreuzberg via Stresemannstraße. After a while, I took three turns to end up at Rudi-Dutschke-Straße, a street at the heart of Berlin's old newspaper district.

Named after a German left-wing activist, the street is at the center of a media feud between two famous German daily newspapers, *taz* and *Bild*. While not very charming, the street is lined with high-rise buildings and gives off a distinct big city vibe. One of them, the Rocket Tower, stands out. Built in the late '90s, it boasts a so-called flying roof, which is a homage

to '50s architecture. But what catches the eye first is its exterior façade and its countless windows, each adorned with blinds adhering to a strict color palette.

When standing in front of it, the tower looks like a giant grid of delicate pink, rusty brown, tangerine, and strawberry red.

Speaking of red: The Coca Cola sign on top of the concrete tower block at Spittelmarkt often reminds me of cities like New York and London. I don't know why; it's just one neon sign. I recently learned that it was installed shortly after political shifts in the late '80s. Since then it has been symbolic of West Germany finally claiming space in East Berlin. For me, it is indicative of capitalism. I would miss it if it wasn't there though.

SIEMENSSTADT

On my way to my final destination I passed through Wedding. Some people say that no one ever goes to Wedding unless they live there, which I do.

I like Wedding. It's not as overcrowded as other parts of Berlin, and it offered up unpretentious sights during my bike ride: a car park on the Müllerstraße sported a variety of shades of green and blue, while a variety of nonchalant, utilitarian cafes contrasted the hipster establishments I'm used to seeing in more popular districts.

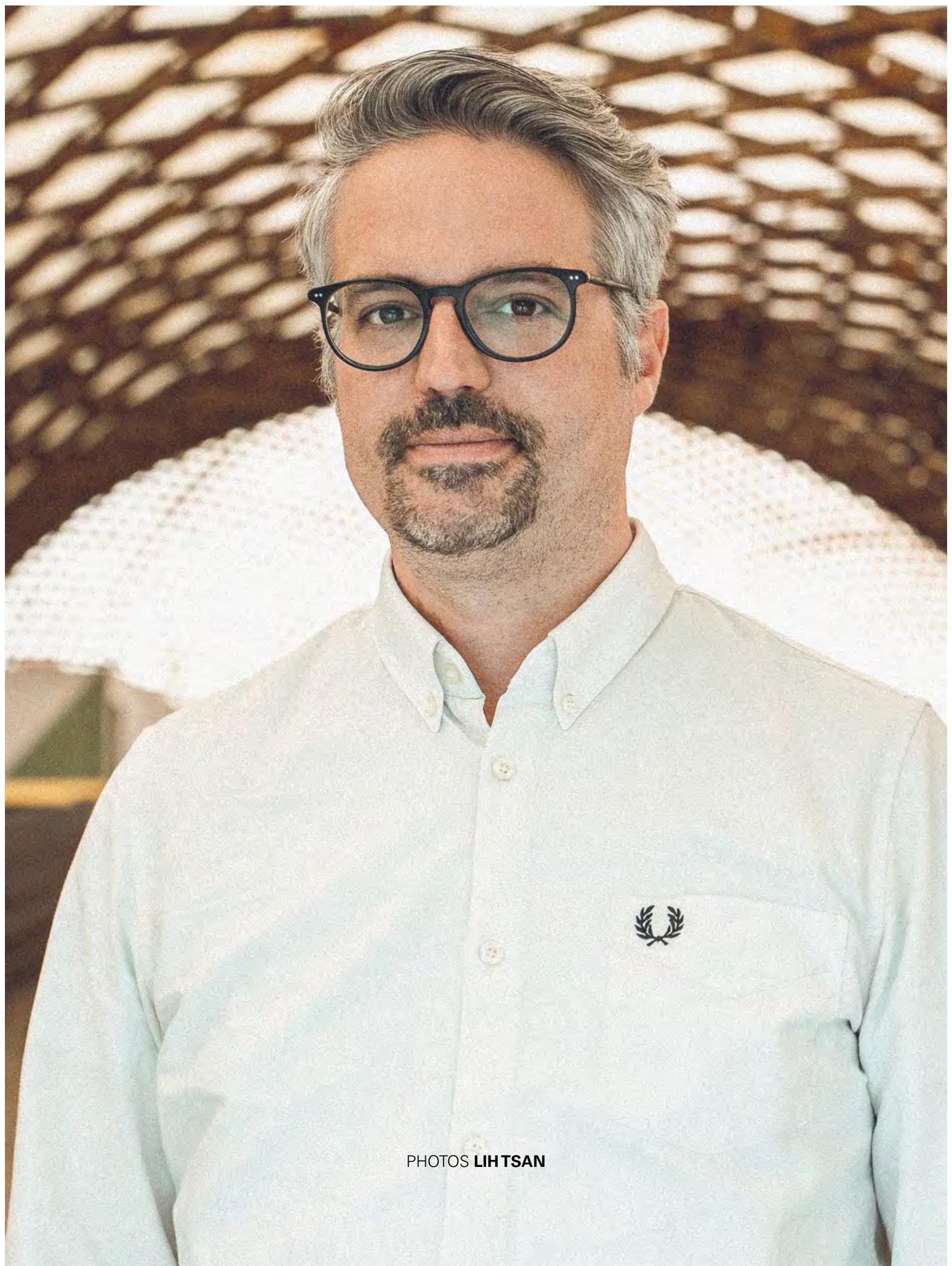
After almost one hour on my bike, I arrived at Siemensstadt, a housing complex located on the border between Charlottenburg and Spandau. Included in the list of UNESCO World Cultural Heritage sites since 2008, it is a functional building with a clean, simple aesthetic, and an important reminder of Berlin's modernist past.

Designed in 1930 by renowned Bauhaus architect Walter Gropius along with his colleagues Otto Bartning, Fred

Forbat, Hugo Häring, Paul R. Henning, and Hans Scharoun, the Siemensstadt was built to offer affordable housing to the employees of the nearby Siemens factory and office. To me, I thought it would be the perfect end to my day chasing patterns, forms, and lines. I was, however, rather underwhelmed when I saw the building for the first time. Parts of the Siemensstadt resemble any other typical Berlin prefabricated high-rise, or as we call it Plattenbau, which typically don't look very appealing. It made me wonder if what I thought was going to be the most interesting destination of the day was in fact the least.

Aside from the Siemensstadt, all of the locations on my bike tour were places that I'd visited before. It was challenging, but enjoyable for me to try to see them in a different light. Maybe, when I visit Siemensstadt again, I might look at it differently. Who knows: maybe I'll be able to tell that story in another tour.





PHOTOS LIHTSAN



WORDS **SILVIA SILKO**

Day and night are temporal dimensions of unequal stature: Night still has a bit of an image problem. After all, nightlife, clubs, bars and parties are often associated with excess, or even violence and vandalism. Yet having a lively nightlife scene is a demonstrable enrichment for cities. An attractive night time economy, which includes theatres, concerts, culinary delights and much more, makes a city worth living in—and accordingly, attracts creatives and professionals.

Dr. Matthias Rauch is convinced that nighttime should not be treated poorly. Rauch lives in Mannheim, where he is head of cultural urban development. Under his direction, the position of Germany's first "night mayor" was advertised and filled. In doing so, Mannheim—the UNESCO City of Music—followed in the footsteps of Amsterdam, appointing their first official night mayor 2012. His duties included polishing the reputation of the night culture and ensuring open channels of communication between all parties involved: an important office in an age of gentrification and urbanisation.

COMPANION spoke to Dr. Rauch about the duties of Mannheim's night mayor, the changing needs facing the cities of the future, and how often a night mayor actually has to go out and turn his nights into days.

COMPANION: 2018 saw the appointment of Mannheim's first night mayor. After two years in office, what has the position come to involve?

DR. RAUCH: Our view of the past three years is very good: we're satisfied with the implementation of this interface position. After all, the night mayor's office in Mannheim is exactly that: an interface between all parties involved in nightlife, including bar and club operators, residents, guests, public transport workers, police, and the city administration. The aim is to improve communication between these stakeholder groups, to prevent problems before they occur, and to try to work out solutions together.

COMPANION: So, Night Mayor Hendrik Meier, whose term of office is now coming to an end, worked mainly as a communicator?

DR. RAUCH: Absolutely. The networking and communication within the nightlife culture and night economy scene in Mannheim is much better today than it was two years ago. Now, in the times of the pandemic, the crisis has demonstrated just how important the position of night mayor is. During the pandemic, the main focus was on the dissemination of information. Our night mayor was basically tied to his phone during the first weeks after the initial lockdown. As the first point of contact, he was able to answer urgent questions, and has proven the importance of his role.

COMPANION: How essential is it to be an excessive party person in this position?

DR. RAUCH: To stop any potential clichés in their tracks: a night mayor is an office job with regular hours. It's a very demanding task that is communication-intensive in order to reconcile many different demands. No one expects the night mayor to party five nights a week. Nevertheless, it is always an advantage to know what you're dealing with from different angles. Knowing how a club works or having worked at a bar are definitely advantageous to this job, because they allow you to communicate eye-to-eye.

COMPANION: What else do you consider crucial to the position of night mayor?

DR. RAUCH: It's very important to pursue a proactive, creative dimension. Unfortunately, many cities tend to deal with nighttime in a reactive way: They take action when there are already complaints, and the damage has already been done. We believe that the night, just like the day, is an important temporal dimension of each city, and should be shaped accordingly in the best possible way for everyone and with everyone involved. This is exactly what we are trying to do with the position of the night mayor, who is integrated into the cultural urban development division.

COMPANION: Urban development has become a buzzword in recent years. How cities are developing and what the cities of the future will look like is being discussed from different angles. In Berlin, for example, there is an ongoing discussion about how the club scene is suffering due to gentrification. Would you say that a night mayor could also address this?

DR. RAUCH: This is a very big question, and not an easy one to answer. Ultimately, there are many dimensions involved in why a part of the nightlife in cities dies or changes, for example. Every city is an individual case and it is important to look closely at which problems need to be solved. Berlin is a completely different city than Mannheim and there are very different ways of dealing with the night scene and the night economy in each place. Germany's capital has decided not to appoint a night mayor. Berlin didn't want to have a single person in charge, and it already has the Clubcommission, which represents the interests of its clubs. Those differences are very valuable: It is important to exchange ideas and experiences, to talk and to learn from each other. Especially in the field of urban development: There is so much going on at the moment. There are sensible new principles that are being echoed everywhere.

COMPANION: For example?

DR. RAUCH: There is the so-called "agent of change" principle. This means that whoever comes into a local situation has to recognise the existing conditions and adapt their project accordingly. In concrete terms, this means that if, for example, a real estate developer approaches a neighborhood and wants to build apart-

ments next to an existing club, they must ensure that the living spaces are suitably insulated. They must therefore acknowledge the nature of the area, and take appropriate precautions so that noise complaints cannot arise afterwards—as is often the case.

COMPANION: Is the increased attention on night culture—including by politicians—a new phenomenon?

DR. RAUCH: Absolutely. But it is also a global development: 53% of the world's population currently live in cities. By 2050, that number will surpass 70%. This means that urban density will continue to increase, which is not a bad thing per se. But it poses new challenges. And we must respond to them.

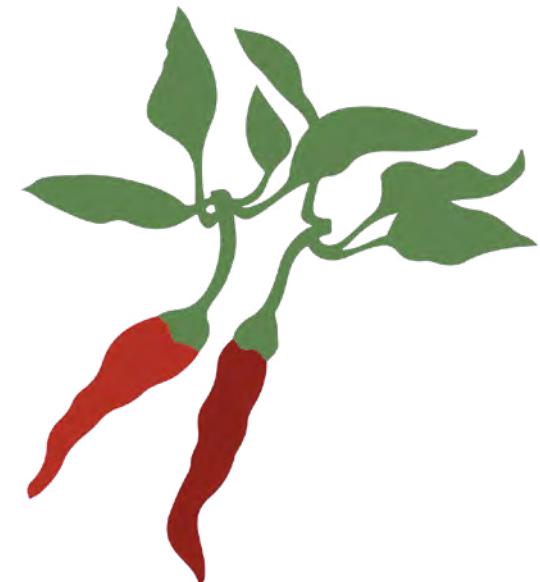
COMPANION: What do you think it will take for urban development to progress in the right direction, given the world's rapidly increasing urban population?

DR. RAUCH: It's quite hard to answer this briefly, but I think an important factor is that cities should maintain a balance that allows people from different backgrounds to live together in quarters and districts. We need cities to maintain diversity. Because this is what makes them exciting, and worth living in.

The aftermath of the pandemic will raise certain questions as well, for example, will cultural events take place mainly outside: We must then ask ourselves accordingly: How do we want to make the best use of our public spaces? Does it really make sense that there are so many cars in cities? Is parking space a realm we could use in a more productive way? What role does art and culture play in public spaces? This last question also touches on economic factors, as culture is a driver of innovation. In places with cultural dynamism, innovative activity and creative potential is much higher.

In general, we need to focus on community-based urban development. It should not be pursued in a vacuum, with a few experts sitting at a drawing board developing a theoretical city. The individual stakeholders and representatives of all districts should all be closely involved. If we do this consistently, I have no doubt that the cities of the future will be fascinating places to live in.





WORDS SILVIA SILKO

Food waste is as much a part of our everyday lives as bread and butter—alarmingly so. 1.6 billion tons of food around the world is wasted each year. And roughly a third of perfectly good food is regularly thrown away in Europe alone. The Too Good To Go app is designed to put an end to this by making it easy for suppliers and consumers to save food. COMPANION talks to Laure Berment, Germany's Country Manager at Too Good To Go, about wonky pickles, female managers and, of course, saving food.

No one seems to be totally blameless, as food is wasted at every conceivable link in the chain. And although we are quick to cast suspicious glances at the hospitality industry, even private households, producers, and supermarkets are unfortunately far too willing to toss out leftovers. Europe alone discards around 88 million tons of edible food each year! A shocking statistic.

Stian Olesen, Thomas Momsen, and Klaus Pedersen from Denmark certainly thought so too when they launched Too Good To Go in 2015. Their principle is as simple as it is ingenious: restaurants, cafés, bakeries, and supermarkets can register quickly and easily on the app and post whenever they have leftover meals or products. Users scroll through ads in their immediate vicinity, pay for the products in the app, then pick up their shopping within a defined period. Customers get delicious food at a reduced rate, and the providers can up their earnings compared to just getting rid of the food, while earning sustainability kudos as well. “We work together to save food—and everybody benefits,” says Laure Berment, the Country Manager for Too Good To Go in Germany.

Her best rescue so far was in a supermarket in Cologne, where she managed to scavenge a huge batch of vegetables, which she then transported back to Berlin by train. “I’m a big fan of supermarket options, because it’s easy to save bread or vegetables—something many of us don’t know,” explains Berment. Big selection, huge impact: just five years since its inception, Too Good To Go has expanded its reach to partner with nearly 110,000 businesses (including stores and restaurants) worldwide, and the app is currently supported in 15 countries. In the process, the start-up and its community of almost 44 million users have saved over 70 million meals from the

garbage can (by the end of last year). It’s also about the climate: food rescue campaigns have eliminated a whopping 193,000 tons of carbon emissions to date. After all, rescuing food is not only good for your own diet, wallet and conscience, but also the entire planet.

Does this sound way too good to be true? You can’t help but ask yourself whether there might be a few black sheep hiding amongst the providers, waiting to exploit the opportunities offered by Too Good To Go. After all, joining the system is not just simple and quick, but offers financial benefits as well: the start-up only receives a small percentage of the revenue for each product sold and the annual fee of under 50 Euro (in Germany) is largely symbolic. Does the company not run the risk of grocery stores coming up with the idea of earning a few extra pennies on inedible fruit and vegetables? “That never happens, actually,” explains Berment. “If simply for no other reason than because users would leave a poor rating. But apart from the shitstorm they would get from the customers, the fact is that the vast majority of our members sign up out of conviction. They just hate wasting food, and that eliminates any possible fraudulent intentions,” says the 32-year-old with a laugh.

Besides that, Berment firmly believes that criticism is the first step towards fruitful communication: “We get in touch with our customers and clarify the situation if they happen to receive a wrinkled apple or crooked vegetables. Then we can discuss what it means, and that the product they purchased might not look as perfect as the pristine alternatives—but that the food is absolutely fine and should definitely not end up in the garbage.”

Speaking of education, the company’s mission encompasses more than just saving food. “We want to catch people’s attention and raise their awareness.” Berment describes the Germany-wide campaign Often good for longer (Oft länger gut), which explains that the best-before date is actually just a guideline, and is frequently misinterpreted by consumers. For example, there is absolutely no need to throw away yoghurt simply because the due date has passed. Too Good To Go places a sticker next to the best-before date to encourage consumers to smell or taste the product before deciding whether or not to toss it. The start-up persuaded retail chains, supermarkets, and discounters to sign up for this idea and get involved.

Too Good To Go also raises the bar in areas beyond the food sector. Mette Lykke from Denmark has been at the helm of the start-up as CEO since 2017, and Laure Berment is not the only female manager—alongside her, there are many other women who call the shots at Too Good To Go in their respective countries. However nice that may be, it is sadly still the exception. Corporate management remains largely the preserve of men. “I don’t think that good management has anything to do with gender. I know and admire great male and female managers,” explains Berment. And she can follow through on what she says: “I make sure we pay our staff a fair wage. Our remuneration system is performance-based, meaning men do not get more as a matter of principle.”

Perhaps another thing we should all take to heart? Laure Berment would put it differently: “We want to inspire people and really make a difference. That’s the best thing about this job, anyway: we earn money by making our world a better place.”



Whether exploring the city, going for a walk in the forest, or heading out on a daytrip somewhere—it's good to be prepared. We found some products that are not only practical, but look good too.

YOUR NEW TRAVEL BUDDIES

Still hanging on to your wired headphones? The latest edition to the Beats by Dre family, Beats Studio Buds, might change all that. The smallest yet, these earphones use ANC (Active Noise Cancelling) to ensure what you're listening to is the only thing you hear. Out for a run but still want to be aware of your surroundings? Use Transparency mode and the outside world will blend seamlessly into your audio experience. With up to 24 hours of listening time, perfect fit, amazing sound quality, and compatibility with both Apple and Android devices, Beats Studio Buds will quickly become your new must-haves.

Beats Studio Buds from Beats By Dre, 149,90 Euro

↙ beatsbydre.com

VEJO BLENDER BLACK

Longing for a healthy smoothie you can prepare anytime, anywhere? Using 100% organic, freeze-dried fruits and vegetables in a biodegradable pod, the Vejo blender makes it easy to have a healthy and nutritious smoothie anywhere, anytime. Choices include Matcha Latte, Immunity Boost Berry, and Clean Greens, to name just a few. All you need to do is add some water and off you go.

Starter kit from Vejo, 129 Euro

↙ vejo.de

A CUT ABOVE

The Victorinox Signature Lite Onyx Black pocket knife includes a small blade, screwdriver, ruler, scissors, ballpoint pen, keyring, and even an LED light. It's one of those items you need when you don't have it. So why not have one with you all the time?

Signature Lite Onyx Black pocket knife from Victorinox, 75 Euro

↙ victorinox.com

EMERGENCY PROTECTION

Fall weather can be full of surprises, so why not have your SOS jacket handy just in case? Wind and rain are no match for the Arc'teryx Beta LT Gore-tex jacket. Simple, versatile, and durable, this breathable jacket looks great on, is easy to pack when the sun comes out, and comes in versions for both men and women.

Beta LT jacket from Arc'teryx, 400 Euro

↙ arcteryx.com

HAVING THE BEST TIME EVER

What can't this watch do? Keeping track of your fitness level, counting your steps, temperature and altitude/barometric pressure measurements, monitoring your heart rate, and even GPS capabilities make this watch an obvious addition to your travel gear. It even supports both USB and solar charging.

G-SHOCK G-MOVE watch from Casio, 399,00 Euro

↙ gshock.com

DON'T WORRY, GO HIKING

Hike, Sandqvist's new collection of bags, are made using 40% recycled materials from post-consumer waste, and encourage everyone to pack their bags and go outside. The Forest Hike backpack makes this an easy task with lots of comfort, pockets, and 29L of space. So turn off your phone and get some fresh air!

Forest Hike backpack from Sandqvist, 195 Euro

↙ sandqvist.com

HIDDEN BENEFITS

CBD oil has been used for many years and is known to relieve pain, inflammation, and even anxiety. The Vaay Sportgel containing warming cayenne, eucalyptus, and cooling menthol has been developed to soothe tired, sore muscles after a day of walking or working out.

CBD Aktivgel from Vaay, 29,90 Euro

↙ vaay.com

Elif's Güл: Fire & Family

Recipe by Mona Asuka

WORDS ROSALIE ERNST

Güл is a haven for families, as well as serving exquisite Turkish cuisine. Elif Oskan and her team take a lively and vivacious approach to running the restaurant in Zurich's city centre, radiating as many sparks of joy as the restaurant's Turkish oven spreads warmth.

The contrast between Elif Oskan's two restaurants could hardly be bigger: Rosi in Zurich serves traditional Bavarian fare, while Güл is the fulfilment of her dream of owning a traditional Turkish restaurant. You might say that the trained chef Elif, together with her partner Markus Stöckle from the Allgäu region, build culinary and cultural bridges—and in doing so enrich the food scene in Zurich.

"Our kitchen is our home," says Elif with conviction. Her restaurant has become a popular haunt and family-friendly location since opening a year ago and has earned a reputation for its wonderful dishes and very special attitude to life. Elif is proud to share with her hometown the recipes her family prepared and that she enjoyed during childhood and to bring them to life at Güл. That takes a lot of courage and needs plenty of support as well. Aside from Markus, Elif's life and business partner at Rosi also, it would be impossible to envisage Güл without her father, whom she affectionately calls Baba. He has been there from the very beginning, taking care of the guests and the tea, and is her right-hand man and amiable face of the Turkish restaurant.

At work, Elif sees herself more in the role of the matriarch who holds the various personalities together. "Harmony truly is the most important thing," says the professional chef, adding that she cares nothing for the hackneyed perceptions of harsh customs in the eatery scene.

Instead she attaches the utmost importance to trust, openness and certainly respect—qualities that Elif embodies as the female head of the community. All the same, Elif's mother still steps in and takes charge

from time to time. For example, when she looks after the stuffed köfte or when she gently criticises the odd culinary experiment vacillating somewhere between Turkish tradition and the hearty taste of Swiss cooking. But it is this bold approach that epitomises Elif's style and lends it a special attraction.

Courage, balance, openness—sounds like a great recipe for an eatery. Güл extends these principles to all other areas of the establishment as well. Take the work at the hob, for instance: "The times of having a separate kitchen are over," says Elif with a chuckle as she talks about her restaurant. A native of Switzerland, she is determined to include her guests in the experience. Elif believes it is an essential part of Turkish cuisine to share the fire, the ateş, that is used to grill and bake the dishes and that also burns in her heart. "All people are equal in front of the charcoal grill" is the motto at Güл, and Elif and Markus allow this mentality to permeate the interior design as well. Everyone can see the hustle and bustle in the kitchen from the spacious dining room, so they notice if someone occasionally burns themselves on the fire, but also how the crew dances exuberantly through the kitchen to Turkish music and how well the large kitchen family enjoys the experience of cooking together.

So Güл is more than just a unique blend of different tastes and cultures, but also the best of all worlds in which Elif grew up. Guests at Güл are invited to visit her in these worlds and to become part of the family, the aile, at least for a while.



RECIPE: SIMIT

Ingredients:

- 250 g flour
- 8 g salt
- 175 g water
- 25 g fresh yeast
- Grape syrup or table molasses
- Raw sesame seeds

INSTRUCTIONS

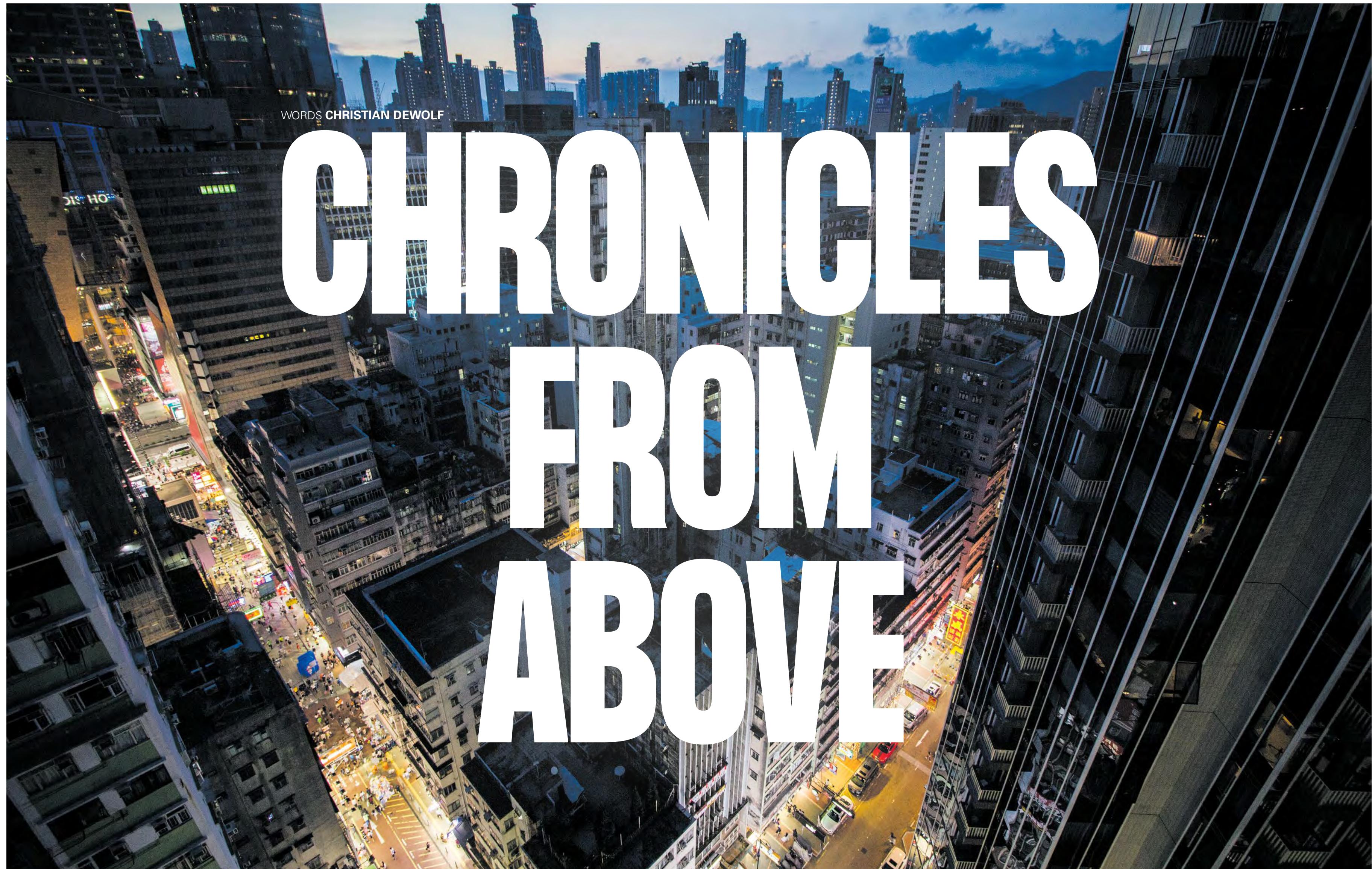
1. Place the flour and salt in a stand mixer and mix thoroughly.
2. Mix the water and yeast until the yeast has completely dissolved and add to the flour/salt mixture.
3. Knead for 10 minutes on medium speed with the dough hook attachment.
4. Once you are finished, cover the dough and leave to rest for around 30 minutes at room temperature.
5. Divide the dough into four parts, cover it again, and leave it to rise for 15 minutes at room temperature. Use this time to preheat the fan oven to 200 °C.
6. Roll the dough sections into braids, twist them like cords and then press the ends together.
7. Bathe the dough in the grape syrup, roll in the sesame seeds and place on a baking tray lined with baking paper, cover and leave to rise for another 15 minutes and then bake in the preheated oven until golden brown.
8. Remove from the oven and serve immediately.

Tip

Serve with lightly salted kaymak (also known as clotted cream) or double cream, honey and black tea.

WORDS CHRISTIAN DEWOLF

CHRONICLES FROM ABOVE



Fancy an urban escape, right in the middle of the city? Just head skywards. High above latticed streets criss-crossed with vehicles and people, rooftops offer a different—often surprising—perspective on quotidian scenes. And nowhere are their outlooks more thrilling than in Hong Kong. When writer Christian DeWolf moved to the vertical metropolis, his fascination with the view from the top was immediately intensified. “Here, rooftops are used as places to live, to dry laundry, to grow plants, to have parties,” he observes. “They replicate everyday city life, but in a serene setting, one that feels removed from the noise and stress of the streets below. In every building, the stairs lead up to another dimension of urban space: the heavenly platform.” For COMPANION, DeWolf shares glimpses into the diversity of daily life in Hong Kong, as observed from nine rooftops around the city.

ROOFTOP BARBECUE, 2008

There are signs that something is amiss as I make my way up the narrow stairs of a nondescript building, passing boxes of empty beer bottles towards the smell of charcoal and the sound of laughter. When I emerge onto the roof, I’m greeted by a verdant oasis filled with smoke and lively conversation. It’s a barbecue. To be precise, it’s a cook-it-yourself barbecue restaurant, no different from those in scenic countryside villages, except that this one is high above a busy shopping street in the middle of Mongkok, Hong Kong’s most energetic commercial district. The location actually makes sense. Rooftops are the most obvious escape from a crowded city—a place to get away to, without leaving anything behind. Up here, among the plants and sizzling chicken wings, the noise of traffic recedes and tranquillity sets in. It’s not the same kind of quietude you experience in the country, but something else entirely: an urban retreat, a cocoon amidst the highrises.



ROOFTOP VILLAGE, 2009

Wandering down narrow lanes, past rows of makeshift houses, I could be standing in a squatter’s village in the New Territories. Potted plants wilt in the heavy heat of summer. Peeling images of door deities decorate wooden entrance ways. It is quiet. But I’m not in a village, I’m ten storeys above a narrow street in the working class neighbourhood of Tai Kok Tsui, on the roof of a large block of flats built in the 1970s.

About 30 families live on this roof. Most are immigrants from the mainland or South Asia; others are longtime roof-dwellers who have decided they’d rather live here than in a faraway public housing estate. People have been living on Hong Kong’s roofs for decades; rooftop villages like this are a remnant of the massive tide of mainland refugees that swept over the city in the 1950s, ’60s and ’70s. Rooftop shacks have been bought, rented and sold ever since, in a kind of grey property market that is technically against the law but tacitly accepted by the government. There are no statistics on how many people live on these rooftops, but one community worker told me the number could be in the tens of thousands.

One of the rooftop’s residents is a 24-year-old university student named Sam Fong. I was first introduced to him by a social worker who helps to relocate families off the rooftops, which may be demolished and turned into a new housing development. Fong moved here with his family from Guangzhou a few years ago. Unlike many roof dwellers, he’s quite philosophical about his surroundings. The rooftop is a community where everyone knows each other and people keep their doors open. Every fall, Fong’s family hosts a mid-autumn feast in a small open space in front of their house.

“We live with our neighbours rather than just next to them,” Fong tells me as we sit in his cramped living room. His bedroom, which he shares with his mum, dad and sister, is on the second floor, up a narrow wooden ladder. “We depend on each other. Not many people pay attention to our problems. So many new immigrants are like us but since we have no political voice or power, we have no choice but to accept our situation.”



WAH LUEN INDUSTRIAL CENTRE, 2012

Wah Luen is the cheapest building in Fotan, a remote industrial district near the satellite town of Sha Tin in the New Territories. In the early 2000s, it became the epicentre of an artists’ colony populated largely by graduates of the nearby Chinese University of Hong Kong. At its peak, about 100 artists lived and worked in the area, most of them in high-ceilinged studios in the Wah Luen Centre, a brooding hulk of a building.

On the large, bleak rooftop, crisscrossed by rusty pipes and pockmarked by mysterious caged enclosures, it becomes clear just how odd Wah Luen’s setting really is—an outpost of industry set in a lush landscape. Facing the hills, your field of vision is occupied by greenery and small village houses, but your ears ring with the sound of distant machinery and the beep-beep-beep of delivery trucks backing out of loading bays. Occasionally, there are reminders of the building’s newfound artistic vocation. The last time I visited, on a sullen grey afternoon, a pile of cement bricks had been cryptically arranged into a miniature Stonehenge.



JOCKEY CLUB CREATIVE ARTS CENTRE, 2010

Eddie Lui looks out from atop the Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre (JCCAC), leaning on a cane, contemplating the scene before him. He waves his hand out towards the old housing estates of Shek Kip Mei, their pale yellow paint dulled by grey skies and damp air. “This is a space where you can really communicate with the vicinity,” he says. “You can see the evolution of public housing and the surrounding area. It shows you how we came into being.”

It has been two-and-a-half years and a half since the abandoned factory building on Pak Tin Street was converted into the JCCAC, a collection of artists’ studios, art galleries, cafés and performance spaces. Lui, the centre’s executive director, led the transformation. Though its location is considered by some members of the Central-focused art crowd as out of the way, the JCCAC is beginning to forge a relationship with its neighbours in Shek Kip Mei. In the afternoon, old men read newspapers in the centre’s atrium and teenagers head up to the roof after school.

The roof is central to Lui’s plans for the JCCAC. He has covered part of it in a layer of hardy foliage that helps to insulate the building. Two stages have been installed on the roof for theatrical performances and rehearsals. There are even plans to use it for film screenings. “We could show experimental movies,” suggests Lui, pointing to an open space that he says could fit about 70 people.

More than just a gathering space, though, Lui calls the roof a “surveillance space,” a place to reflect on the JCCAC’s role in the city. He points to a nearby peak. “That’s Signal Hill, used by pilots to guide them into the old airport.” Crossing the roof, he gestures down to a football pitch. “That’s where the Hungry Ghost Festival is held every August. A big bamboo stage is built for it. Last year there was a typhoon right when they were setting up, and it was all blown away.”



THE PAWN, 2011

The fact that a row of pre-war shophouses still stands on Johnston Road suggests we’ve entered a new chapter in Hong Kong’s history of urban development. Originally home to a range of neighbourhood businesses, the shophouses were bought by the Urban Renewal Authority, a quasi-public agency tasked with redeveloping old properties, and incorporated into a property development that included the construction of a luxury apartment tower. Now the buildings contain a high-end restaurant and café known as The Pawn, which takes its name from the Woo Cheong Pawn Shop, one of the building’s former tenants.

As part of the renovation, the shophouses’ fourth floor was converted into a rooftop terrace. In theory, it’s open to the public, but last year, a local newspaper revealed that The Pawn was discouraging public access, which prompted the Urban Renewal Authority to station an attendant there to explain to visitors that they were indeed welcome to visit, even if they did not want to pay HK\$180 for a plate of fish and chips. The roof is designed primarily to host parties and other private functions, but it’s a pleasant, green space with a nice view of the trams cling-clanging down Johnston Road. The benches near the edge of the roof make for good places to sit and contemplate such weighty questions as heritage, urban renewal and gentrification.

CONDENMED BUILDING, KWUN TONG, 2010

40 years may not come close to a lifetime for most people, but in Hong Kong, it's enough to witness the birth and death of an entire neighbourhood. In the mid-1960s, when Cheung Cheuk-kuen and his wife, Cheung Tsui-lin, moved into a flat on the top floor of a building in Kwun Tong, it was a typically bright, spacious place, newly built to accommodate Hong Kong's postwar population surge. Their life was comfortable; Mr. Cheung owned a restaurant in Tsim Sha Tsui. In the 1970s, however, the restaurant began to attract gang members, and Cheung decided it had become unsafe. He sold it and decided to earn a living by renting out his flat to tenants. He built tiny cage homes in the living room and wooden houses on the roof.

The whole neighbourhood is now condemned, waiting to be demolished for a \$30 billion redevelopment of Kwun Tong's town centre. The Cheungs, who are now in their late 80s, are some of the only remaining residents in their building. Mrs. Cheung suffered a stroke and can no longer walk, so she spends her days in a wheelchair on the roof. "It's better to stay up here, where there's more room and fresh air," says Mr. Cheung. The roof is surprisingly quiet; only the occasional horn and the rattle of passing MTR trains serve as reminders of the busy streets below.

Most of the old roof houses are now in ruins, surrounded by piles of debris. It's part junkyard, part living room, with five fridges (three of them functioning), three televisions (two of which still work) and a veritable garden of pot plants. A maid from a small village in Guangdong helps to take care of Mrs. Cheung. She washes the laundry in a bucket on the roof and cooks with a small charcoal stove. In the evenings, she sits outdoors with Mrs. Cheung, watching TV. A few people still live in the cage homes downstairs, so the Cheungs will stay put until they absolutely must leave; the rent is their only source of income. "We have no choice but to live here," says Mr. Cheung.



PENG CHAU BUILDING, 2018

Here on Peng Chau, 35 minutes by ferry from Central, the city is but a distant memory; a row of skyscrapers on the horizon. I make my way through sleepy streets to the tallest building on the island, a seven-storey apartment block. It has no guards, and no doors to prevent entry to its upper floors. I walk up past the sounds of children playing and dinners being cooked behind closed doors. When I emerge onto the roof, stepping out into brilliant sunshine, I'm greeted by a sweeping view of the entire island. Village houses sprawl up the surrounding hills, haphazardly stacked on top of one another. I can see the ferry pier where I arrived, the French café near the main square, and the beach lined with wooden fishing boats.

Most people on Peng Chau seem to have made good use of their village house rooftops, covering them with awnings and stocking them with tables, chairs and laundry. This roof, overlooking all the others, seems more unsure of itself. Its railings are festooned with rusting television antennae; its tiled floor studded with the occasional plant. Once, as I stood on the roof watching the sun dip lower in the sky, an old man emerged from below and began jogging laps around me. He ran methodically, eyes fixed at some point in the horizon, acknowledging my presence with a barely perceptible nod. When I left him to catch the next ferry, I could still see him from the street as I looked back on my way to leaving Peng Chau.

HIGH RISE APARTMENT TOWER, 2012

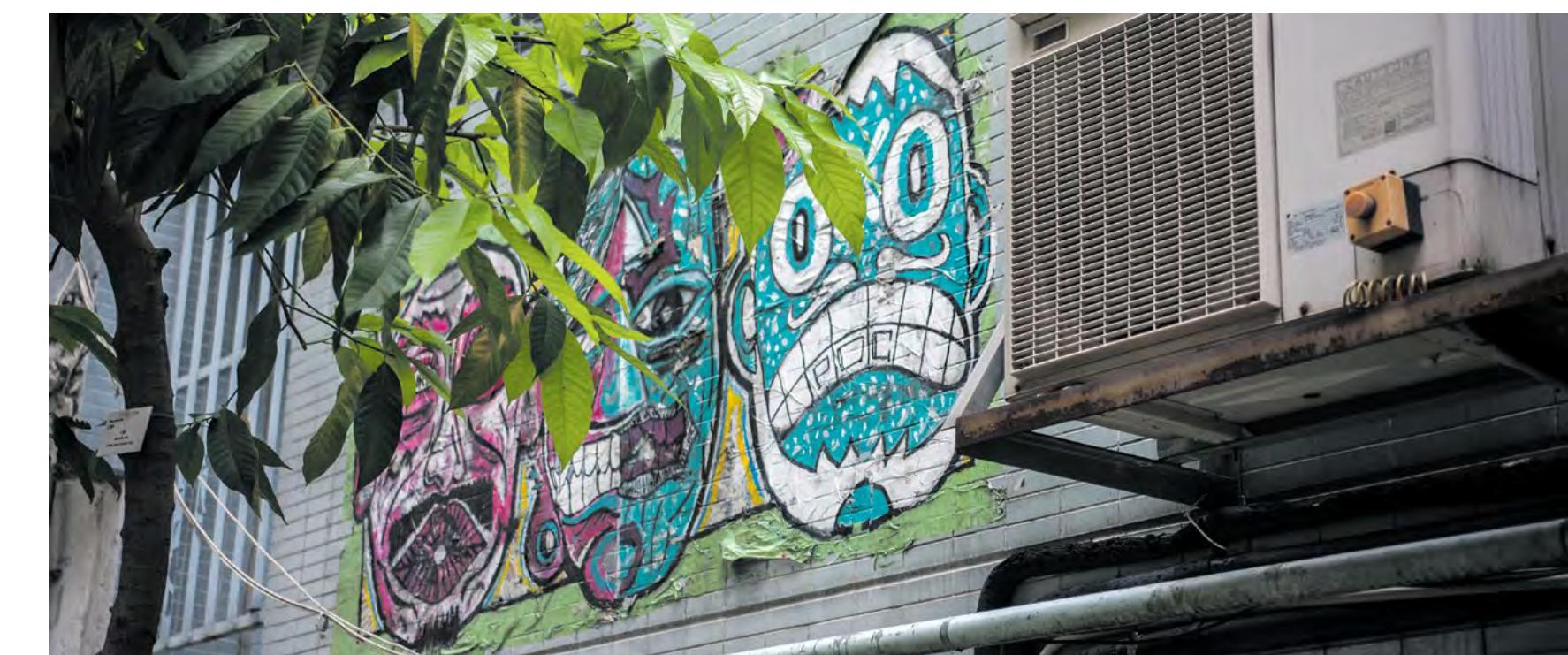
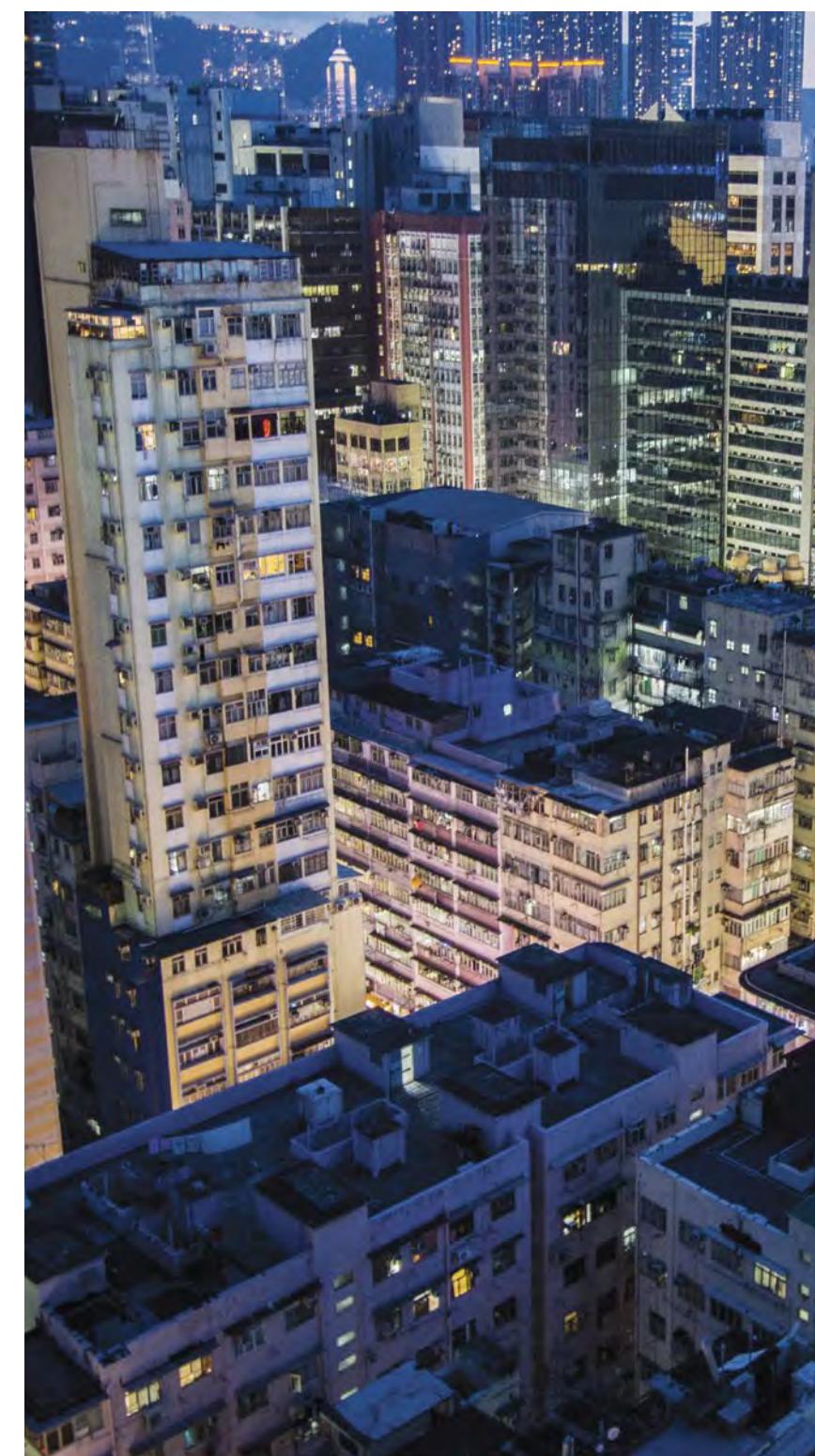
There's nothing particularly special about this building in Sheung Wan. Built in the 1970s, it's a highrise like any other, with a handful of small apartments on each floor. None of the homes have balconies; there is no club house or swimming pool; the only bit of shared space, beyond the dimly-lit concrete corridors, is the rooftop, which is divided into two narrow platforms on either side of the elevator's machine room. Laundry lines crisscross the roof, but on a drizzly night, there are no clothes to be seen.

The view from here is attractive because of its ordinariness. Below is a brightly-lit football pitch, emanating whistles and shouts that ricochet off the walls of surrounding buildings. To the south, apartment buildings jostle for space on the Mid-Levels, each trying to climb higher than the next in a quest for sea views. Exhausted, they pause for respite halfway up the dark, looming mass of Victoria Peak. To the east, the iconic International Finance Centre skyscraper makes an appearance in the narrow gap between towers. The glow of apartment windows stirs voyeuristic curiosity. In one, cool fluorescent strip lights illuminate a dingy kitchen. Another window reveals a posh living room filled with art. Each is a portal into another Hong Kong, another set of lives, another set of stories.

ROOFTOP GRAFFITI, 2010

Walk-up tenements are called "tong lau" in Hong Kong—translated literally as "Chinese building"—and this one is not in the best shape. That is despite its location on Russell Street, one of the highest-rent areas of Hong Kong, full of chain stores and shops selling luxury watches. Walking upstairs from the street, I pass a bookstore and a hair salon; after the third floor, the shops give way to apartments and the stairwell becomes dirtier. By the time I reach the top, I have to step over mounds of construction debris just to get outside. But I'm here precisely because this building seems to be overlooked, its roof now covered in graffiti. Compared to many other cities around the world, graffiti and street art are still fairly uncommon in Hong Kong; rooftops like this give artists a kind of sketch pad on which to practice away from the eyes of the public. There are lots of tags, but also some work by the city's best-known street artists, Graphic Airlines—whose chubby-faced characters are now as common in galleries as they are on the street—and Start from Zero, a crew of artists whose preferred media include stickers and wheatpaste.

There's more to this roof than graffiti, though. From here, I can see behind the giant billboards that face Times Square, and am surprised to see they are propped up by bamboo scaffolding. I would have expected something more elaborate and permanent, but perhaps bamboo allows the billboard to be easily dismantled in case the market for luxury watches and designer handbags collapses. It seems a fitting irony: the city's corporate advertising is supported by traditional craftsmanship; its presence as fleeting and ephemeral as the graffiti that is painted over or worn away by the sun.





Much of Pauline Beaudemont's artistic practice takes place in her sleep. Situating herself within the discipline of post-surrealism, the French-born globetrotter channels the hidden truths of her subconscious through dream journals, experimental drawing techniques, and by giving herself the space to slow down, read, and connect ideas. These actions were next set to play out during a summer residency at the 25hours Hotel Langstrasse Zürich, which due to the pandemic has now been postponed indefinitely. Intrigued to hear what's been keeping Beaudemont inspired, COMPANION gave the artist a call to chat about feminist superheroes, her current reading list, and the specific challenges the post-pandemic art world is likely to pose for women.



Growing up in the cultural epicentre of Paris, Pauline Beaudemont was surrounded by art from a young age. Having spent the weekends of her youth exploring galleries and museums, Beaudemont describes the French capital's myriad cultural venues as her childhood playground. But it is, in fact, her early experiences at bible class that she credits with inspiring her to express herself visually. She recalls being asked to produce a collage of the three wise men to prove she'd understood the story. At the time, her architect father was working on building a museum in Morocco, and provided her with a variety of papers and images from the project. "I had so much fun doing it. Even as a six-year-old, I loved being able to put my own vision down on paper. I thought it was a great way to express myself and show others how I understood the world."

Despite her early introduction to the worlds of creativity and self-expression, Beaudemont didn't decide to pursue a full-time career as a visual artist until her late twenties. Training first as a photographer due to economic pressures, she completed her MA in Fine Arts aged 29 at the Haute École d'Arts Appliqués (HEAD) in Geneva. Since then, she has worked across a variety of mediums ranging from concrete sculpture to film, making it impossible to pin her to one particular discipline. "My work is very conceptual, and more a question of translating my inner thoughts, feelings, emotions, and vision into art rather than staying true to one specific medium," she explains. That being said, Beaudemont's nomadic lifestyle has more recently led her towards producing paintings and collages—many of which she's posted on her Instagram and contrast images of nude male and female body parts with ancient, pre-Columbian artefacts—that are easier to transport when moving constantly between countries.

To date, Beaudemont has lived and worked in Berlin, Rome, Basel, and New York—where she set up her first artist space, Pauline's, in a former Jewish grocery store in Brooklyn—and most recently, Mexico City. "When I first visited around five years ago, I knew it was a city I could live in," says Beaudemont, who now spends around two to three months a year there, and has spent the coronavirus crisis self-isolating in the small village of Chacahua in Oaxaca. "It combines the atmospheres of all the cities I've been to: the delicacy of Paris, the energy of New York, and the artistic vibe of Berlin. Last year, when I had a studio here, work and ideas came so easily. I felt so energetic, like I could do anything I wanted," she adds. This sense of freedom contrasts to the other places she's called home. "There's no judgement in creation in Mexico. The mentality in Europe among many of my friends is that if you do things aside from art, you're not an artist. In Mexico, every day is different. You can be an artist, own a restaurant, or run

a honeycomb company if you want to!"

A self-proclaimed post-surrealist—"people hate it when I say that because they think it's totally uncool!"—who cites Meret Oppenheim as her "master", Beaudemont is a firm believer in the power of the subconscious. "I'm training myself to be more in touch with my inner self," she says, referencing methods she uses to do so, such as automatic drawing, a technique developed by the surrealist movement in which the artist suppresses conscious control over the making process: "I completely let myself go, and then just draw whatever comes to mind." Beaudemont also writes down her dreams every morning, calling them the fuel of her art. "Last night I dreamt about watering can-like drones that were flying around over people's heads, providing everyone with their own, personal cooling mists. I was probably very hot," she recalls, laughing.

By placing such importance on the subliminal, Beaudemont sometimes feels like she's "just a body that produces things. Yes, I have to make conscious technical decisions sometimes, but other than that, everything is very instinctive. I'm just a vessel that everything passes through." While this may seem like she doesn't have to put in much active thought to create her art, she stresses that the subconscious is like a machine that you constantly

need to feed by observing the world around you. "I spend most of my days reading," she says. "I read a lot of poetry, detective novels, and essays about art, because it's important to get to know your field. But as a child, I spent a lot of time working my way through Russian, French, and Japanese classics." Recent titles she's devoured include a biography of renowned American dance pioneer Isadora Duncan, and Nietzsche's novel Thus Spoke Zarathustra.

Messages from Beaudemont's subconscious are translated into her work in various ways, either as inspirations for drawings, paintings, and collages, or as written text. Two years ago at the Swiss Art Awards in Basel, for example, she exhibited a series of long white curtains printed with winding sentences taken from her dream journals. With phrases ranging from "she would paint her ears like you would paint your lips with red lipstick", to "her breasts were heavy and her nipples looked like two little phalluses," each sentence's curvature on the curtain seemingly reflects its meaning.

Although Dreams was to be the inspiration for Beaudemont's residency with 25hours Hotel Langstrasse Zürich (originally scheduled for Summer 2020), it has since been postponed indefinitely due to the pandemic. The 25hours Hotels residency program ran from April 2017 until September of 2019, and has so far provided 13 international artists with an on-site workspace for

2-4 weeks at a time—to prepare for exhibitions, presentations, or future projects. At the end of their stay, each artist was asked to leave behind an artwork to be displayed in the hotel. "I first met Pauline in 2019, while she was doing a different residency in Zürich," says Swiss artist Esther Eppstein, the residency program's curator. "She came across as the kind of artist who dives into the art scene of whichever city she finds herself in, really wants to get to know people. This was an important factor in selecting Beaudemont for the residency. "I'm really interested in how this program can cultivate long-lasting relationships in Zurich's art scene, and what future collaborations may arise from it."

WORDS
EMILY MAY



Collaboration would have played a central role in Beaudemont's residency. She had hoped to invite international creatives from various disciplines—including a musician, a lecturer, an artist, a tourist guide, and a performer—to spend a night with her in Zürich, exploring the topics of sleep and dreams through their respective art forms. The experience would have culminated in a book on sleep displaying the materials, texts, films, and music produced through these interactions. While the option of creating an e-book might have suggested that Beaudemont may have been able to conduct the residency remotely, even during the pandemic, she is resolute that being able to stay at 25hours Hotel Langstrasse Zürich would be paramount to her research. "It has to be in a hotel—they have such a different kind of energy," she explains. "I have the most amazing dreams when I stay in hotels."

The pandemic has not only affected Beaudemont's residency, but the entire art world in general. While previously closed galleries may be reopening across Europe, many fairs, biennales, and exhibitions have been moved online or postponed indefinitely. Conversations around creating a more environmentally-friendly art world can only be viewed as positive, but, according to Beaudemont, women artists are going to face increased challenges post-pandemic.

"The art industry is male-dominated anyway; people just seem to think women aren't very good artists," she says, incredulously. She is, of course, referencing the fact that historical bias of art history, galleries, and museums towards the work of male artists. The feminist, activist art group The Guerrilla Girls famously called out this bias in 1989, with their poster asking "Do women have to be nude to get into the Met. Museum?" and claiming that although fewer than 5% of artists displayed in the gallery were female, 85% of the nudes were depictions of women. Ever since, the movement campaigning for greater recognition for contemporary and historical women artists has gained momentum, with increasing numbers of institutions pledging to diversify their collections. The Tate Modern in London, for example, dedicated their permanent exhibition space to female artists for the duration of 2019—and podcasts such as The Great Women Artists and Bow Down: Women in Art by Frieze Magazine highlight the work of creatives from the past who deserve greater recognition. Despite this progress, Beaudemont believes that the coronavirus is going to be a big setback. "After the pandemic is over, I want to focus on supporting other female artists. We're going to have to rely on each other," she says.

Beaudemont has explored questions of gender and feminism throughout her career. She was particularly inspired when she discovered she was related to the Chevalier d'Eon, a French transgender spy

"I like the fact that it sounds a little bit old fashioned, like a Roman gallery from 20 years ago that has come to Paris, completely broke, and is trying to start something new."

and diplomat operating during the reign of Louis XV. "I've always been interested in people who exist in between genders. Ever since I was a little girl, I've felt like I have both stereotypically masculine and feminine traits, so discovering my link to the Chevalier almost felt like a personal epiphany," she explains. Then, "when I was living in Rome,"—Beaudemont completed a year-long residency at the Swiss Institute in the Italian capital between 2016-18—"I decided to create an alternate persona and transform into a feminist superhero," she says. Named Artemis Fontana, her alter ego was a homage to two of the first Italian female painters of the Renaissance to be considered equal to men: Artemisia Gentileschi and Lavinia Fontana. Signing all her work under this name allowed her to discuss feminist issues undercover. "It was like being another version of myself," she explains, referencing a series of grotesque sculptures she created of the male anatomy.

When she left Rome, Beaudemont decided to repurpose her pseudonym as the name for her own gallery in Paris, which she claims is the only exhibition space run by a solo female artist in the whole city. "No other galleries had a name like Artemis Fontana when I started up in 2018. They were all very serious," says Beaudemont. "I like the fact that it sounds a little bit old fashioned, like a Roman gallery from 20 years ago that has come to Paris, completely broke, and is trying to start something new." It's not just the gallery's name that sets it apart, however. Situated in a former sweatshop in the French capital's 11th arrondissement, the interior is run-down, with exposed pipes, faded paintwork, and loose wires hanging from the ceiling. It's a far cry from what one may expect from a sophisticated Parisian gallery. "Paris can be quite a snobby city, where everything is about money and power," says Beaudemont. But while art often needs and deserves to be well-funded, necessity, as they say, is the mother of invention. In this respect, this artist is perfectly equipped to take on the challenges of the post-pandemic world: "I believe that you can do great things with no money in a very simple, genuine way."



↳ 25hours-hotels.com/hotelatelier
messagesalon.ch

www.paulinebeaudemont.com



Saluti!

The Taste of Bella Italia

Bottled in Hamburg

WORDS MELANIE O'BRIEN

Why wait for the perfect travel conditions? 25hours Hotels partnered with Nordcraft and Si Puó Fare Bio to bring a taste of summer right to your own backyard with two COMPANION aperitivos.

When 25hours Hotels Managing Director and COMPANION founder Steffen Fox (together with colleagues Michael End, Christoph Hoffmann, Bruno Marti, and Henning Weiss) got the idea of creating a high-quality gastronomic bitter liqueur that would be easy to drink, refreshingly user-friendly, and unique to the market, who better to help bring their idea to fruition than third-generation spirit (the drinkable kind) guru Rainer Hosie and master distiller Mario Gallone?

The Hosie name goes way back. In 1918, Rainer Hosie's grandfather Charles George Hosie founded a Hanseatic trading company, dealing mainly in delicatessen items. But much later, when Bacardi white rum was added to their list of imports, the company was catapulted into becoming the leading spirit import dealer in Germany. Eventually Bacardi noticed, and bought the Charles Hosie company in 1993.

In the meantime, Rainer himself was busy practicing law in Hamburg. But he could never really shake his inherent connection to the spirit industry. "People always naturally assumed I was a spirit dealer since it was in the family. Eventually I called Bacardi and told them I wanted to get the company back."

Now, Rainer can truly call himself a spirit dealer. Together with Mario Gallone, they created Nordcraft GmbH, a Hamburg-based distillery. Not satisfied with mere production, Nordcraft is also a creative lab of sorts, a hub for practicing the art and craft of authentic, traditional distillation. Only high-quality ingredients go into their signature products—dry botanical spirits, with unconventional concoctions like dill with cucumber and red beet with beer.

This unique, innovative, and carefully-curated approach is also part of the genetic makeup of the two COMPANION aperitivos. Mario Gallone not only infused COMPANION Amalfi Lemon with galant and rhubarb roots, but also added aromatic herbs like Alpine mugwort,

wormwood, and oregano, which impart a light and subtle spiciness. As for the lemons? "Amalfi lemons are known for being the most aromatic in the world, and they create a surprising and original new flavor not found on the market today," Mario says.

COMPANION Sicilian Orange on the other hand uses orange peels that are mixed with gentian and violet roots, as well as cinchona bark. Aromatic herbs such as wormwood, marjoram, and chiretta contribute to its complex taste.

The oranges themselves are organically grown in Sicily, sourced from the socially-committed cooperative Si Puó Fare Bio (meaning "It works!"). The owner, Francesco Caristia, explains: "We started in 2015, with the idea of creating new spaces for integration through social farming. The workers in our cooperative are people with physical and mental disabilities, refugees, and those with problems stemming from addiction: each one has their role and works according to their abilities. Si Puó Fare Bio created a large family, and we hope that it grows through our joint efforts."

However, the cooperative is not only dedicated to helping people. They own over 220 hectares of previously neglected and abandoned fields in and around Noto, Sicily. "From the onset we chose to focus on an entirely organic way of farming, in order to represent our territory and the values that inspire us," says Francesco. With their three processing plants, Si Puó Fare Bio not only grows organic vegetables and other citrus fruits (including lemons, mandarins, grapefruit), they also produce juices, jams, and fermented vegetables. And let's not forget the delicious oranges used in COMPANION Sicilian Orange!

So go ahead and enjoy the aperitivos either on their own (on ice as a digestive), or as part of a mixed drink (check out some delicious recipes on page 41).



Both COMPANION aperitivos are available at all 25hours Hotels, as well as at select supermarkets throughout Germany, and online at charleshosie.de and drink.ch.



Sicilian Spritz

Mix together:

50 ml COMPANION Sicilian Orange
30 ml soda water
120 ml Prosecco

Serve over ice, add some slices of fresh orange, and decorate with mint.

Amalfi tonic

Mix together:

50 ml COMPANION Amalfi Lemon
Some lemon zest

Serve over ice, drizzle with some tonic water, and decorate with thyme.

Sporty Scandinavia

WORDS **EMILY MAY**

While Denmark may be known for its indulgent pastries according to Danish olympian Micha Østergaard, its capital is also filled with myriad opportunities to be active. Most famous for holding the Danish and Nordic record in the 200 m butterfly since the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Østergaard now lives and works in Berlin as a Nike trainer, but often travels back to Copenhagen to visit family and friends. From tasty porridge shops to up-and-coming running brands, here are her recommendations for the best places in Copenhagen for gym rats, clean eaters, and fitness enthusiasts.

A Bowl of Porridge a Day...

"I would say we have a strong porridge culture in Denmark," says Østergaard about her nation's love for the oaty-snack. It is fitting then, that the world's first porridge bar, Grød, opened in Copenhagen's Nørrebro district in 2011. Founded by Lasse Skjønning Andersen after eating porridge daily helped him battle obesity, the chain of health-conscious eateries offers a wide variety of dishes using seasonal ingredients from berries to seeds, sauces to sprinkles. According to Grød, porridge is for life, not just for breakfast, as they also offer a range of savory dishes—such as pea risotto and an Asian rice porridge with chicken, peanuts, and spring onions—on their lunch menu.

↳ groed.com/en

Sporty Aesthetics

Reflecting Denmark's long tradition of minimalist aesthetics, Saysky is a performance sportswear brand aiming to provide premium kit for a new generation of athletes who are both design-conscious and serious about sport. Founded in 2013 by former professional windsurfer Lars C. Pedersen, the brand specialises in apparel for runners and triathletes, making their products the perfect gear to don before an energetic run around Copenhagen's lakes.

↳ saysky.dk

Copenhagen's Lakes

Situated at the heart of the Danish capital, Copenhagen's triptych of lakes really sets the city apart. Allowing residents and tourists alike to easily escape into nature, the areas around the lakes are often filled with motivated joggers, cyclists, as well as brunch enthusiasts enjoying a morning snack at one of the many nearby cafés. Their proximity to the city center also means that you can easily segue back into town if you fancy cutting your run short to do some shopping. While particularly popular in summer, Østergaard maintains winter visits are just as enjoyable, especially when followed by a hot cup of cocoa in the snow.

↳ visitcopenhagen.com/copenhagen/planning/copenhagen-lakes-gdk412235

Vegan Treats!

Beyond the health of its customers, 100% organic vegan café The Organic Boho also aims to inspire visitors to be conscious about sustainability and the health of our planet. Offering a healthy menu of rainbow-coloured, seasonal, plant-based food, the café runs cooking classes so you can make your favourite dishes at home, know their nutritional value, and learn how to limit food waste. "It's also completely Instagram-friendly," says Østergaard, in a nod to their rainbow-coloured smoothies and treats.

↳ theorganicboho.com





Get Your Gló On

Another organic snack spot that will make your insides radiate happiness is Gló. Offering a range of salads, wraps, healthy burgers, and shakes made with fresh ingredients, the cafe's location inside department store Magasin Du Nord makes it an ideal spot for a clean eating pitstop amidst a shopping marathon.

↙ glofood.dk

Kayaking with a Conscience

Fancy a free boat trip along Copenhagen's waterways? With Green Kayak, you can head out on a no-cost kayaking trip in return for collecting trash in the water and sharing your experience on social media. Founded with the aim of combating plastic pollution in our oceans, the organisation has collected 25 tons of waste to date. So, if you want an exciting day out that also helps the environment—and gives you a unique view of the city—pick up your paddle, life jacket, and trash bag and get collecting!

↙ greenkayak.org

Pack on Some Meat

Located in an old butcher's shop, complete with stylish white-tiled walls, Butcher's Lab is a popular crossfit gym in Copenhagen. Aiming to build a sense of community, the gym runs a variety of social gatherings and competitions, and welcomes anyone who wants to train, regardless of their experience. Head over to fit in your daily workout with one of the gym's trainers, or to take one of their gymnastics or weight-lifting classes before enjoying a restorative meal in the surrounding restaurants of Copenhagen's famous Meatpacking district.

↙ butcherslab.dk

A Workout with a View

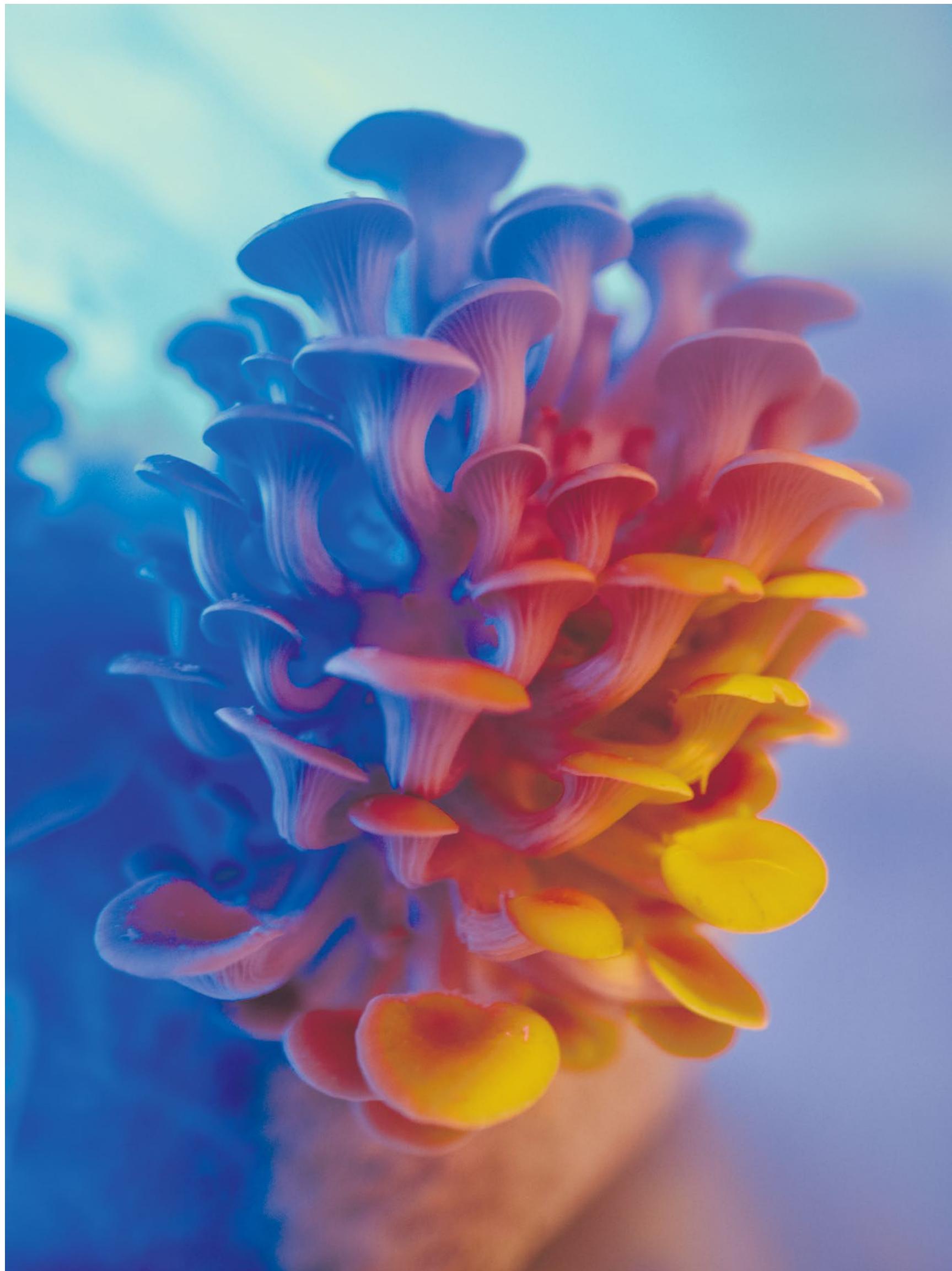
Want to take your workout routine to new heights? Why not check out Konditaget Lüders, a recreational space on top of a multi-storey car park in Copenhagen's Nordhavn district? Providing you with 2,200 m² to use as you please, this alternative urban space and playground boasts a wide range of equipment to facilitate your training, from a 60-meter sprint course to trampolines, swings, and a climbing spiral.

↙ visitcopenhagen.com/copenhagen/planning/konditaget-luders-gdk1091081

Danish Sushi?

Did you know that the popular sushi chain Sticks 'n' Sushi—which now has restaurants in London and Berlin—started in Copenhagen? The restaurant was founded by brothers Jens and Kim Rabbek and Thor Andersen, who took inspiration from their Danish-Japanese heritage to create a unique menu combining both countries' culinary traditions. Cooking up a storm with their fresh fish and grilled yakitori sticks—the latter of which they initially included on their menu “in case the Danes weren't ready to eat raw fish”—Sticks 'n' Sushi is regarded as one of Denmark's leaders in Japanese cuisine. Check out one of their twelve Copenhagen locations for a nutritious meal to revitalise you after your energetic escapades. “It's not just the sushi—they also have delicious salads and cauliflower!” says Østergaard.

↙ sticksnsushi.com/en



Meet the mushroom fanatics cultivating fungi before their customers' eyes

WORDS NATALIE SHUKUR

As new forms of urban farming increase in volume and sophistication on rooftops, up walls, and in basements around the world, there's one system that's proving especially resilient—and yielding good-looking, great-tasting results along the way. Taking a democratic approach to the food supply chain, mushroom cultivators Smallhold are leveraging pioneering technology to put farming in the hands of anyone, everywhere—and shining new light on the mushroom kingdom's many mysteries in the process.

It's a Friday afternoon at Whole Foods in downtown Brooklyn, one of the busiest grocery stores in the country. Over in the specialty section, wedged between counters heaving with artisanal cheeses, handmade ravioli, and cured European meats, sits a futuristic steel cabinet with curved windows that emits an eerie, neon blue light. It resembles a set piece from the starship U.S.S. Enterprise, or a submarine porthole into an oceanic tableau. Inside the glass, plastic bags sprout intricate tendrils in bluish-gray, yellow, and salmon hues, alongside amorphous, pillow-like white organisms. From a distance, they look like decorative coral, yet on closer inspection, they turn out to be mushrooms—golden, pink, and blue oyster, king oyster, chestnut, lion's mane, and pioppino. And they're not just sitting pretty, but growing (and being sold for consumption) right here, in the middle of the supermarket, with the aid of technology masterminded by urban mushroom cultivators, Smallhold.

"I'll be at Whole Foods doing a cooking demo, giving mushrooms to people in line who have their backs to the unit," says Adam DeMartino, who founded Smallhold with his college roommate-turned-business-partner Andrew Carter, in 2017. "And they'll ask, 'Where are they from?' Because that's what the Whole Foods customer asks. And I'll say, 'We grow them right here.' And they're like, 'Oh great, great.' And I'm like, 'No, they grow them right there!'" he continues, gesturing toward the glowing structure known as a "Mi-ni-farm". "And it's just like their heads explode, and it

gradually sinks in for them that we are now living in the future." DeMartino laughs as he says this, but he's only half joking. What he and Carter have created is at the cutting edge of food production—the first and only certified organic farm in New York City, and the city's only mushroom farm. It's a shining example of how artificial intelligence married with human innovation is paving the way for the future of farming.



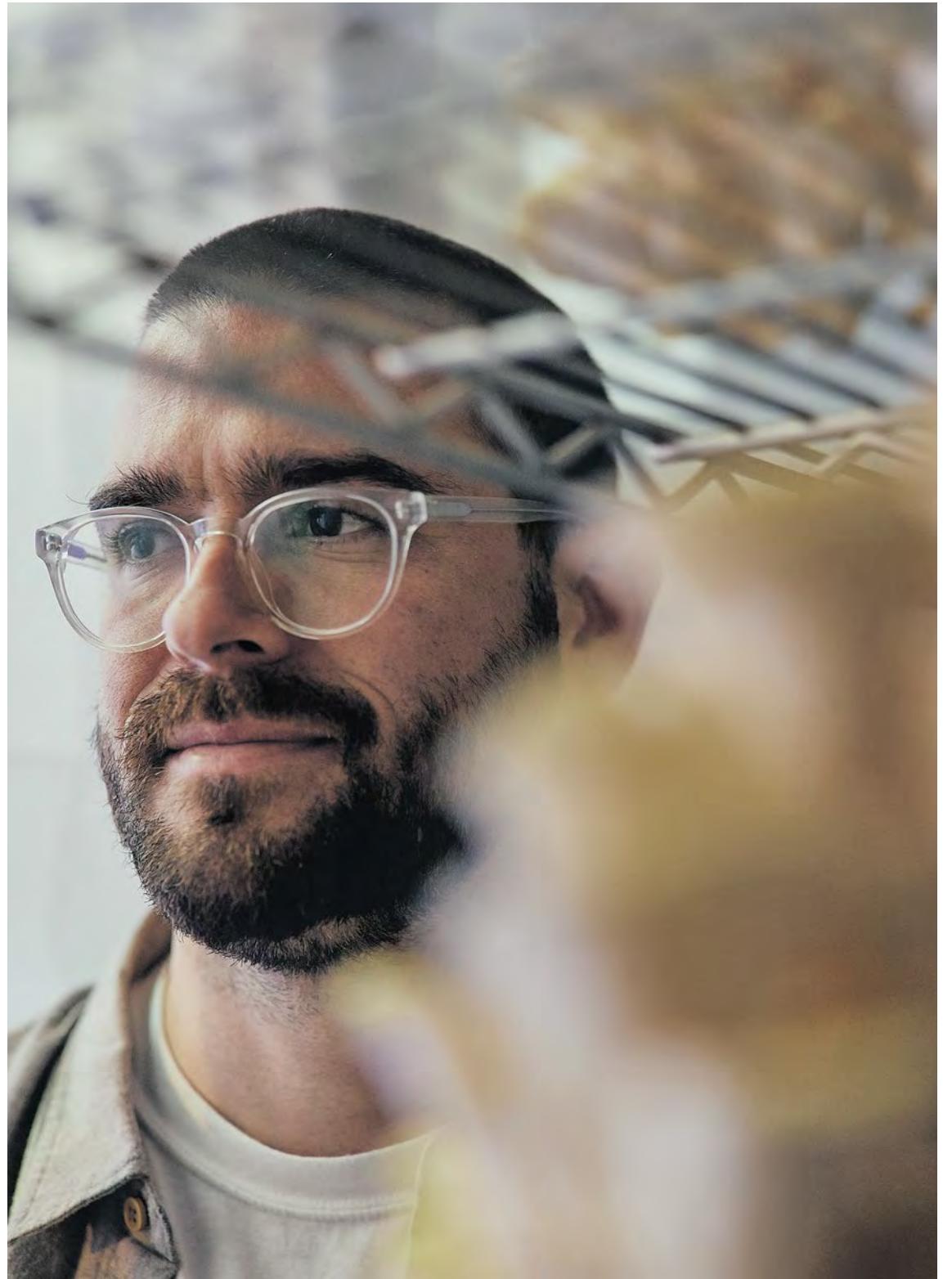
Part urban farm, part tech startup, Smallhold began as an experiment in a Brooklyn basement. Carter studied ecological design and environmental sciences, and has worked in hydroponics (a method of growing plants without soil by using mineral nutrient solutions in a water solvent), including a stint with Window Farms, producers of indoor hanging gardens. He started tinkering around with mushrooms on a whim. "It was real hacking," he says with a laugh. "It was a lot of fun, but kind of just testing out the market, seeing if people in New York would respond to locally-grown mushrooms. Through that process, we realized that there was a need for it, but there was also a lack of technology and a lack

of ability for people to grow commercial quantities of produce on site. So we started building the technology out." With a background in startups and sales and marketing strategies (he even published his own fashion magazine, *FutureClaw*), DeMartino rounded out the skill set required for Smallhold to thrive. The pair had previously worked on other projects, including building drones and restoring and selling old motorbikes, and their catalytic dynamic is the stuff of entrepreneurial dreams. "He keeps a lot of things secret now, because I tend to try and turn them into businesses," DeMartino says of Carter. "He's a wellspring of ideas in terms of how systems should work."

Smallhold went through a startup accelerator called Techstars, secured investors, hired a small staff, and quickly went from a basement to a shipping container to the Minifarms that they have installed at a growing number of grocers and restaurants, including Mission Chinese Food, Kimchee Market, and North Brooklyn Farms. Smallhold's proprietary technology allows their physical operation to remain incredibly

lean and nimble. The team pre-grow the mushrooms for three-to-four weeks until they begin to fruit, then it's off to the in-situ Minifarms, where they mature and are eventually harvested, dramatically reducing the distance between farm and table. All of this is controlled via automated, responsive cellular networks that operate 24/7. "But the bigger thing is allowing us to constantly update the parameters if necessary. So if they want to grow a different variety, our systems can update it. The customer never has to look at their cell phone or computer, or control it in any way," says Carter.

Of course, the idea of urban and indoor farming isn't new. Hydroponic growers, vertical crops, and rooftop gardens are flourishing the world over, but each of these models still requires ample space and a cold-chain distribution network (a series of refrigerated production, storage and distribution activities, which maintain the desired low-temperature range for storing and transporting fresh produce). "There's a lot of new agriculture technology out there," says Carter. "And what happens is that either you have these large-scale facilities outside



of the city, or you have stuff that's happening in the city, but it's not producing enough to make a big difference. And so we needed to create technology and a model that allows us to grow in the city, but actually make an impact on people's buying habits."

Each Minifarm yields anywhere from 14 to 54 kilograms of mushrooms per week. "One of our main goals is to make local food affordable," says Carter. "There are many projects out there that can grow food locally but end up being kind of expensive and not really accessible, and there are a lot of waste statistics. We see this going large scale before it goes small scale. I think there's potential in doing this anywhere." In fact, when Smallhold started, the idea was to bring the Minifarms to traditional farmers to supplement their off-season periods. "There are so many different ways that we can sell this thing," adds Carter. "But we found a customer base in restaurants and grocery stores, and we have to concentrate on those for now."





DeMartino believes they are at the very tip of an industry that's in its nascent stage. "If you look at a picture of a skyscraper that's overflowing with greenery, and it's providing this abundance for the surrounding urban environment—that's a picture of sustainability," he says. "But if you take it a step further and use the readily available technologies, what you have is an environmentally friendly, nutrient dense type of produce that, in a very short amount of time, anybody can farm, anywhere."

Chef Tara Norvell, who, pre-pandemic, was running a dinner residency at Honey's in Bushwick, has been a champion of the project since its basement days. "After cooking and eating Smallhold mushrooms for the past six years, I feel like I'm just starting to scratch the surface of their culinary potential," she says. "It's limitless! I love grilling the blue oysters; the pink and yellow oysters are stunning showstoppers and have distinct

and delicious flavors. All of them are amazing to use in a broth. The lion's mane is my favorite, it's so much fun to work with and eat. I've made Bolognese, fried "nuggets," tamales, chocolate cake..."

Though DeMartino himself quickly became a mushroom fanatic, reading up on mycology and becoming versed in the vast (and largely untapped) mushroom kingdom, it was Norvell who changed his perception of viewed mushrooms as food. "If you look at the food pyramid, you don't see mushrooms on it.

You just have everything that's mandated by the FDA, the USDA, from, like, the 1970s," he says. "And Tara said, mushrooms basically go around the pyramid. And they also do that on a menu—they can be the center of the plate or go well in an Alfredo."

Working with chefs has been the highlight of DeMartino's job. "Mainly because the feedback we get about our produce is the most valuable thing—it has

guided our intuition," he says. But to realize Smallhold's true potential, they want to feed the entire country. "There are so many reasons why mushrooms are the produce they are today, and I think people are only just beginning to realize what sort of power they have. The chefs are awesome, but they're in a part of Brooklyn, not somewhere in the middle of the country. If we can't reach the cook at home, then I don't think we'll have done our job."

Norvell agrees: "Real food for everyone," she says. "It seems simple, but capitalism has leached into every part of our food system and I believe in a future where everyone can have access to real food. Smallhold is disrupting the industry by creating a completely new design. More importantly, they aren't just giving people direct access to real food, but the nutritional value of adding fungi to your daily diet is a type of health insurance on its own."

“There are so many reasons why mushrooms are the produce they are today, and I think people are only just beginning to realize what sort of power they have. The chefs are awesome, but they’re in a part of Brooklyn, not somewhere in the middle of the country. If we can’t reach the cook at home, then I don’t think we’ll have done our job.”

Adam DeMartino and Andrew Carter are co-founders of Smallhold, an organic farm that's distributed throughout partner restaurants, grocery stores, and markets using their Minifarm System.

↳ smallhold.com

The Unexpected Familiar

WORDS **MANUEL ALMEIDA VERGARA**

Vacationing close to home doesn't have to feel like a consolation prize. Staycations, day trips, exploring your own city: less distance can sometimes mean more relaxation. In fact, having an all-around more sustainable approach to travel has been a long time coming. With shorter travel times, going on a spontaneous trip can turn into your very own MINI vacation. And, with the right vehicle, the holiday feeling starts as soon as you hit the road.

To quote Buddha: "The journey is the destination." With this in mind, the best holidays start long before you unpack or pitch your tent. Travelling can be so relaxing (especially when you don't have delayed flights to worry about). Besides: Exploring by car is the best way to embrace a new found freedom, as well as being a sustainable alternative to long-haul flights.

Ease, comfort, and Covid-19 are not the only reasons why staycations have been trending since last year. Discovering the forgotten corners of your own backyard can offer refreshing surprises, and give you new perspectives on areas you thought you already knew. It's therefore no surprise that social media has been filled with snapshots of Timmendorf Beach on the Baltic Sea, the Mecklenburg Lake District, Saxon Switzerland, the Alps, Munich, Hamburg, and Berlin: places that previously might not have been on the map when planning your vacation, but turn out to be the perfect destination for short breaks and close-to-home hideouts.

The Elbe Valley, for example, which stretches from Saxony to the Czech Republic, has endless attractions for tourists, including a hike along the river and camping grounds directly on the waterfront. Still

a relatively unknown tourist destination, the Elbe Valley is anything but crowded. By contrast, the Neckar River in Tübingen, Baden-Württemberg is already a popular destination, particularly for water sport enthusiasts. Alongside passionate stand-up paddleboarders, the student city is known for its punts, similar to Venetian gondolas. In Germany, you'll find such punts in the previously-mentioned Tübingen, or Brandenburg's Spreewald, where they weave their way through the fine web of small rivers.

Internationally, Germany is best known for its North and Baltic Seas with islands such as Rügen, its Bavarian mountains, historic old towns, and vibrant metropolises such as Hamburg and Berlin.

Having hosted 39.4 million guests from abroad last year, Germany is currently ranked the 9th most popular travel destination according to visitor numbers, making German residents who can reach the country's beautiful holiday destinations in just a few hours' drive incredibly lucky. You don't even have to spend many hours in the car to have an exciting adventure: spontaneous trips to a nearby forest, lake, pretty mountain inn, or an interesting exhibition in the city can be easily planned last-minute, especially when going by car,

which offers the added bonus of complete flexibility.

The new, fully-electric MINI Cooper SE is the ideal vehicle for staycations, day trips—or for zooming around the city. With its compact form and an exciting go-kart feeling, it's just as well-suited to sightseeing in the city as it is to day trips outside the city—making wherever you go a fun experience. For example, after completing the North Sea tidal flat hike, the MINI Cooper SE makes it just as quick to head to dinner in a trendy Hamburg restaurant as it would be to go from the Taunus Mountains to the City Hotel in Frankfurt. From the center of Berlin, you can easily drive to the idyllic Brandenburg countryside, and from Cologne, it only takes a short time to reach the other major cities in the Rhineland region.

When the journey is just as thrilling as the destination, there's no reason to get there as quickly as possible. The MINI Cooper SE invites you to relax and take a break whenever you want to gaze at a beautiful view, or stop off at a quaint town en route to your final destination.

Exciting and sustainable holiday destinations are closer than you think. Have fun exploring, and enjoy the ride.





MINI Cooper SE: electricity consumption (NEFZ) in kWh/100 km: 17.6–15.2, electric range (WLTP): 234.0–203.0 km. The official data on electricity consumption were determined according to the prescribed NEDC measurement procedure and comply with Regulation (EU) 715/2007 as amended. The specifications take into account

differences in the selected wheel and tire widths. The data for electric range were determined using the WLTP measurement procedure and take into account the optional features. For more information about the WLTP and NEDC measurement procedures, visit www.mini.de/wltp.

Scan to learn more about the highlights of the new MINI Cooper SE.



A Plea for Curiosity



PHOTO FLORENCE BAKIC

Words Julius Kraft

"Look up, Julius! The façade of this house is beautiful, isn't it?" my close friend Toni says, pointing to the sixth floor of a building on Zionskirchplatz. Toni and I are going for a walk in Berlin Mitte today, as we do almost every Sunday. Over the last year, our weekly walk has become a ritual, one that I like a lot, although it has arisen from a lack of alternatives. I would like these meanders to accompany us for a long time, preferably until we are old and grey and we have to hold onto each other shoulder to shoulder to be able to walk at all.

But at this moment, Toni and I don't walk much further. Right now we are just standing there, rooted to the ground, looking up to things that would otherwise not be in our fields of vision. First, we look at two sparrows flirting with each other in a treetop, then we admire the chestnut trees—how they blossom so beautifully—and in between, we peek into windows and see people throwing curious glances back at us. "I don't think I've noticed any of this for ages," I say as we get going again, sighing a little out of reflex. "Somehow I wasn't open to it anymore," I continue and for a second I notice a strange feeling in my chest, which I can't quite grasp.

As I come home to my apartment alone after the walk throwing the shoes off my feet the feeling creeps in again. I think it wants to stay. "Damn," I shout at the walls in frustration. Toni and I have lost track of time over our chat and now I'm late for my online yoga class. I really don't need this right now: What is this cluster of emotions nestling in my chest on this bright Sunday evening? What does it want me to acknowledge? That sparrows make me sad? Or that chestnut trees make me angry? What is the matter with me?

"We don't want to judge today," my friend and yoga teacher Gesina says ten minutes later in a soothing tone through the speakers of my laptop, as if she had been eavesdropping on me throughout the day. "We just want to relax and breathe in, and then breathe out again,"

she says during Savasana. "Okay, Julius, was that I had lost my curiosity. My ravenous hunger to get to know the world around me was gone. I was no longer curious about what else to see, read, or where to travel to. And not just since the outbreak of Covid-19. I didn't care what was waiting for me out there far out of my comfort zone. One, two, three, long jumps into the sandbox. I didn't even try. In general, I didn't put my feet in the sand anymore, not even mentally. I didn't run away like my breath just did, didn't look up anymore, didn't search for what was out of my field of vision, let alone reach for a medal or the stars.

"I want to take you on a fantasy journey now," Gesina continues unimpressed, not suspecting that I am almost hyperventilating on the other side. "Oh great!" I roll my eyes, though surprisingly my breath becomes calmer with each of Gesina's sentences.

"You're at the beach looking out to the sea," she says. "Your feet are stuck in the sand. Bury them deeper," she asks gently. "Can you feel your feet? Can you feel how warm the grains of sand are wrapped around your toes," she asks, and I finally recognise that I don't have any control over myself or my body anymore as I feel tears running down my cheeks.

"Shit," I think, because right at this moment, tears falling on my yoga mat, I am at last able to grasp the feeling that has been accompanying me today: I've missed out on so much.

Personally, the last 24 months—world events aside—have been marked by two things that have torn me in different directions. On the one hand, my very first book – a book about my search for great love – was published, which has always been a dream of mine. On the other hand, and this came after, there was the disappointment that I had not found my great love, "the one"—the happy ending of the book after all. Of course, I didn't need today's feeling to remind me that I was alone, again. To remind me of the bitterish aftertaste of a dream come true. But the intensity of that hit becomes clear to me only now, when I think back.

I guess the last two years for me have passed in the same way as the Federal Youth Games in school used to. I was there, I was present and I took part, but that was it. The reason for my passiveness

was that I had lost my curiosity. My ravenous hunger to get to know the world around me was gone. I was no longer curious about what else to see, read, or where to travel to. And not just since the outbreak of Covid-19. I didn't care what was waiting for me out there far out of my comfort zone. One, two, three, long jumps into the sandbox. I didn't even try. In general, I didn't put my feet in the sand anymore, not even mentally. I didn't run away like my breath just did, didn't look up anymore, didn't search for what was out of my field of vision, let alone reach for a medal or the stars.

Actually, it's no wonder I didn't do that, after all for most of my life I thought that I would only reach the stars if accompanied by a partner. Maybe deep down I still believe that. The idea that a partner would take my hand in his, pull me along and lead me to the stars while Coldplay is playing in the background and Chris Martin is singing, "Look at the stars. Look how they shine for you. And everything you do. They were all yellow." I did not dare imagine this alone.

"Julius, why are you so good at putting yourself down when you're always ready to give your love to a man time and again?" Toni asks as I walk with her again down the chestnut-lined avenue the following Sunday. "I think that's a question for another day," I answer, pulling my shoulders far up, letting them fall and having to laugh. "I've missed this lightness," she says and gives me a long-awaited hug.

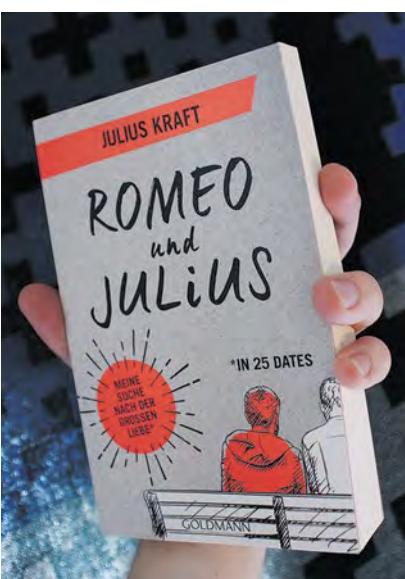
"But, and this is important, I love that you want to take care of yourself more. You are absolutely worth it."

When we say goodbye, Toni gives me some advice for my renewed curiosity. I should write down a list of all the things I want to do again. Yesterday I finally did it and I want to encourage every person who reads this and who has lost themselves or their curiosity a little bit to write one as well. Mine sounds like this:

I want to look at myself in the mirror again and I want to look properly. Curiously let my eyes wander, count birthmarks, examine the spaces between

my teeth and smell my feet. I also want to start the day with loud music and dancing. I want to look at the people around me more clearly again. Notice how they run their fingers through their hair. I want to look more intensely into their eyes, noticing the colour and every other detail and I want to actively listen to them when they share their stories. I want to sit with them in restaurants we have never been to before, join them on bicycle tours, even if that is not my thing, and plan a day trip or travels together.

I want to see Vienna—I've never been—and I want to eat Schnitzel there. I want to open up to the world around me more. To stand up for others as they fight for their rights. I want to inform and educate myself so that I can be an ally. I wrote down a quote from Grey's Anatomy. Something Christina says to her friend Meredith: "You are a gifted surgeon with an extraordinary mind. Don't let what he wants eclipse what you want. He's very dreamy. But he is not the sun. You are." Maybe I'm not a brilliant surgeon, but I'm good. Slowly. Getting there. Baby steps. Good. My hands are strong as they slide smoothly across the keyboard. Maybe almost like a surgeon's. Baby steps. Good. My journey begins again. I am walking. Seeing. And there is love in my life. Even without him.



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COPENHAGEN, DENMARK

Groed
Vesterbrogade 105B
Monday-Friday 07:30-21:00
Saturday-Sunday 09:00-21:00
↳ krutzler.at

The Organic Boho
Strandgade 95
Daily 11:30-21:00

The Organic Boho
Strandgade 95
Daily 11:30-21:00

Glø - Tivoli Food Hall
Bernstorffsgade 3
Monday-Thursday 11:00-23:00
Saturday-Sunday 11:00-24:00

Green Kayak
Arsenalvej 10
Monday-Friday 10:00-15:00

Butcher's Lab
Staldgade 22
Monday, Wednesday-Thursday 07:00-21:00
Tuesday 06:30-21:00
Friday 07:00-19:00
Saturday 09:00-14:00
Sunday 10:00-14:00

Konditaget Lüders
P.Hus Lüders på Helsinkigade, Helsinkigade 30
Daily 07:00-22:00

Sticks 'n' Sushi
Multiple locations

BERLIN, GERMANY

25hours Hotel Bikini Berlin
Budapester Strasse 40

Monkey Bar at 25hours Hotel Bikini Berlin
Monday-Thursday 18:00-02:00
Friday-Sunday 17:00-02:00

Neue Nationalgalerie
Potsdamer Strasse 50
Tuesday-Sunday 10:00-18:00

James Simon Galerie
Bodestrasse
Tuesday-Sunday 10:00-18:00

Memorial to the Murdered Jews
Cora-Berliner-Strasse
Tuesday-Sunday 10:00-18:00

The House of the Cultures of the World
John-Foster-Dulles-Allee 10
Daily 10:00-19:00

HAMBURG, GERMANY

25hours Hotel HafenCity
Überseeallee 5

25hours Hotel Altes Hafenamt
Osakaallee 12

Nordcraft Hanseatische Destillerie
Holstenstrasse 194C
Monday-Thursday 09:00-14:00
Other days by appointment

FLORENCE, ITALY

25hours Hotel Piazza San Paolino
Piazza di San Paolino, 1

Manifattura Tabacchi
Via delle Cascine, 35
Monday-Sunday 08:30-01:00

The Lodge Club
Viale Giuseppe Poggi, 1
Monday-Saturday 18:00-02:00

Boboli Gardens
Piazza de' Pitti
Monday-Sunday 08:15-18:30

MARRAKESH, MOROCCO

DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

25hours Hotel One Central
One Central

Museum of Illusions
Al Seef, Dubai Creek
Monday-Thursday 10:00-22:00
Friday-Sunday 10:00-23:00

Kite Beach
Umm Suqeim, Jumeirah 3
Daily 10:00-22:00

Salt at Kite Beach
2C Street, Umm Suqeim
Daily 09:00-03:00

Twiggy by La Cantine
Dubai Creek Club Street, Port Saeed
Daily 09:00-02:00

Gold Souk
Gold Corner Building, 3rd Floor, Deira
Monday-Saturday 09:30-21:30
Friday 16:00-21:30

Nightjar Coffee Roasters
Unit G62, Alserkal Avenue
Daily 10:00-21:00

NEW YORK CITY, U.S.A.

Whole Foods Market
214 3rd Street, Brooklyn
Daily 08:00-22:00

Open 24/7

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

Dolphin Beach
Table View
Open 24/7

ZURICH, SWITZERLAND

25hours Hotel Zürich West
Pfingstweidstrasse 102

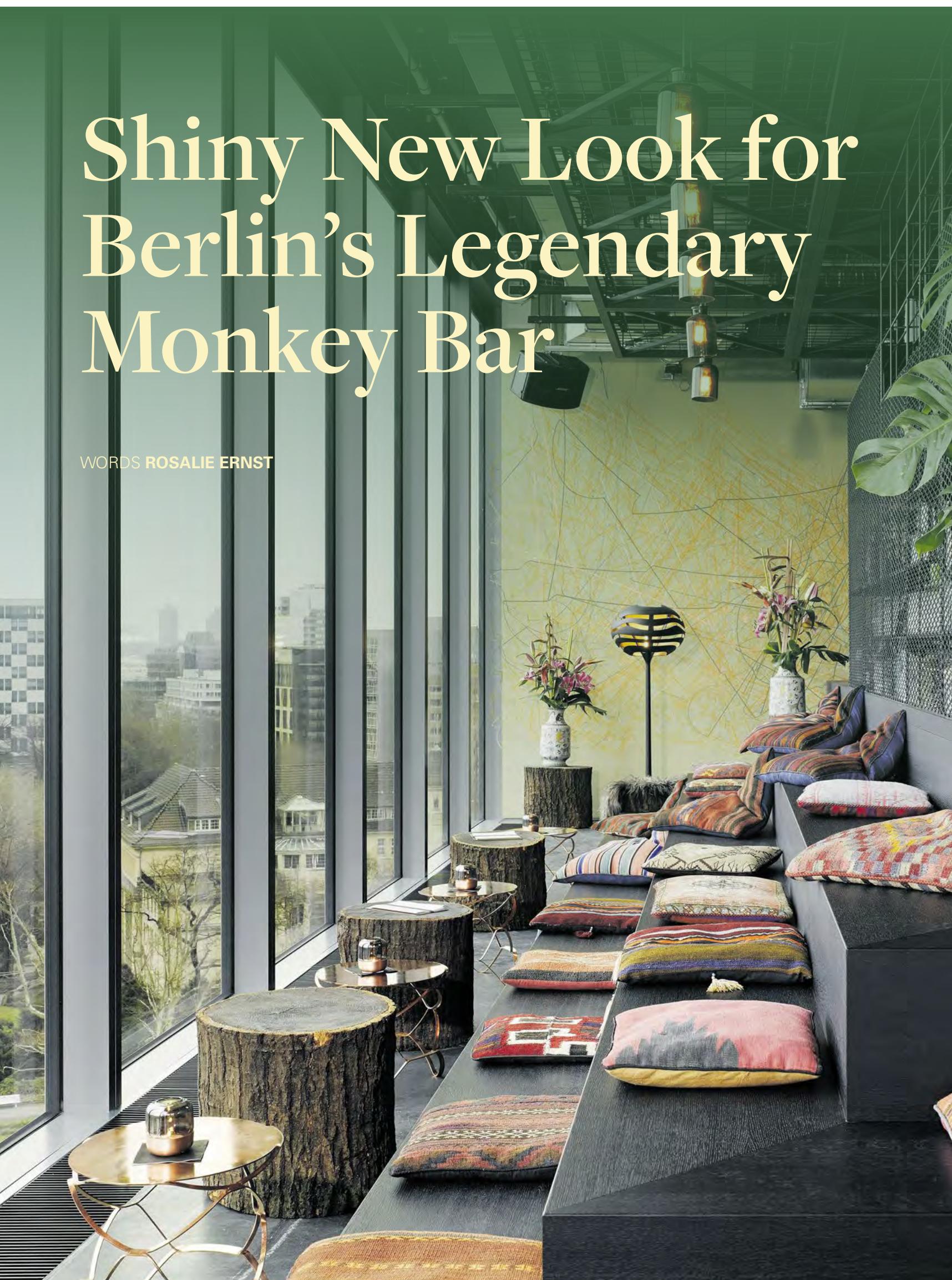
25hours Hotel Langstrasse
Langstrasse 150

Restaurant ROSI
Sihlfeldstrasse 89
Tuesday-Saturday 18:00-24:00
Sunday 11:00-24:00
Monday closed

GÜL
Tellstrasse 22
Monday-Friday 18:00-24:00
Saturday 11:00-15:00 and 18:00-24:00
Sunday 11:00-15:00 and 18:00-22:00

Shiny New Look for Berlin's Legendary Monkey Bar

WORDS ROSALIE ERNST



Urban, wild and inherently mercurial—the Monkey Bar at the 25hours Hotel Bikini Berlin is just like the city it inhabits. Since its opening, it has been the premium location for first-class drinks in a chilled atmosphere with a breathtaking view of Berlin. The legendary Rooftop Venue has now been redesigned by its creator, Werner Aisslinger. The architect speaks with COMPANION about the process.

The 25hours Hotel Bikini Berlin bar is no longer just an absolute must for every tourist, but also the venue of choice for Berlin's party people to strut their stuff. The Monkey Bar is perched high above the bustling Ku'damm; a small urban jungle to gaze upon the city and observe the wildlife populating Berlin Zoo. So as the apes swing from tree to tree down below, guests can sample one of the exquisitely mixed cocktails in the Monkey Bar after a stressful day at work, mingle with amiable guests or watch the bartenders, masters of their trade, at work.

Like the city it overlooks, the bar itself is always lively—especially since its stunning recent revamp. Werner Aisslinger, who created the Monkey Bar back in 2016, also took charge of redesigning the premises. He is firmly convinced that the bar needs to reflect Berlin's character and remain constantly in motion. "The Monkey Bar is where you come to absorb the spirit of Berlin, this unique blend of *laissez faire*, openness and creativity," the designer says. He perceives the redesign as a process of "embracing the specific location, exploring what sets it apart and discovering its character." The artist and his team use this insight to develop leitmotifs for the redesign and to rearrange the space in a surprising way that brings its character to life.

"The Monkey Bar is where you come to absorb the spirit of Berlin, this unique blend of *laissez faire*, openness and creativity."

Naturally, the Monkey Bar's unique location is among these leitmotifs, and is reflected by Aisslinger and his team in the playful colour scheme. For the 55-year-old, the steps for people to sit on, right in front of the sweeping windows, are the most important structural element. They imbue the location with a unique vibe, and create an ideal space to remain constantly in motion. "The inspiration did not come from the outside, so from moods or associations with other places, but entirely from the extraordinary location between the zoo and City West, the architectural history, the geometry of the building and the determination to create something new and hitherto unseen. We want it to be unique, created entirely from scratch." For Aisslinger,

it is particularly important to take existing structures into account and to incorporate sustainable cycles into the interior design. Installed in the 25hours Hotel, for instance, are original tiles from the Alexanderplatz underground station, and seemingly old objects are repurposed as lamps or decorative elements in the bar as well. Aisslinger's work is continuously inspired by functionality and futuristic ideas, and his unusual furniture has already been exhibited in the museums of New York.

The redesign was also shaped by a series of artworks, combining both traditional and urban styles that act as additional eye-catchers. They now give the eponymous monkeys a very exclusive perch in the bar and aptly epitomise the decidedly wild side to its character. Although there is just as much to discover in the Monkey Bar as there is in the urban vista behind the windows, the designer has not created a single work of art. "You might say that designers are 'spatial DJs' that remix elements into a holistic composition—the perfect collage is our goal!", says Aisslinger when summarizing his job. Anyone keen to convince themselves of his atmospheric flair can do so while sipping brand-new drink creations. After all, in the same way that Berlin's permanent revolution flows into the design, the Monkey Bar menu is also reworked on a regular basis.



MONKEY BAR



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Masthead

COMPANION is a magazine about the people who shape and enrich our cities.

25hours-hotels.com

companion-magazine.com

friendsoffriends.com

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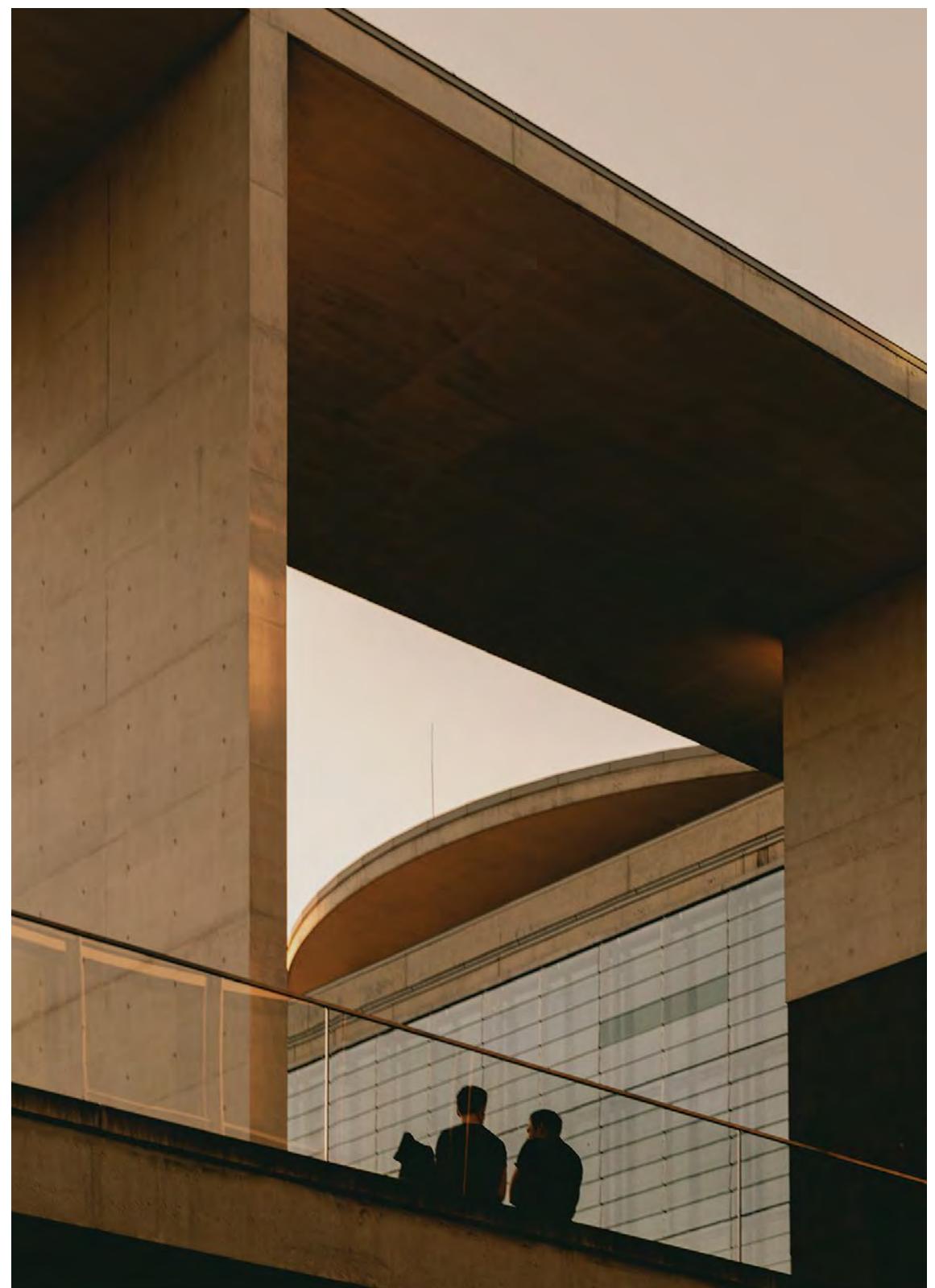
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MASTHEAD

Discover a Curated World with the *Sisters of Paradise*

WORDS ROSALIE ERNST

The family business Sisters of Paradise is the brainchild of Ronja, Valentin and Prof. Stephan Gerhard, and together they invite guests to discover the world through their eyes. The extraordinary hotel concept is interwoven with a saga about two sisters who search for their brother all over the world and encounter the most hidden locations and secret attractions in the process. In real life, this fictional story intersects with the exclusive Sisters of Paradise hotels, all of them establishments that the founders themselves—and the mythical sisters in the saga—carefully scouted on their travels. It goes without saying that Ronja, Valentin and Stephan draw on their own family history!

As children of a hotelier, Ronja and Valentin were born with a passion for travel, adding a family touch to the trio's concept, along with the expertise of Prof. Stephan Gerhard. Anyone wanting to become part of this saga is enticed not only by the fantastic Sisters of Paradise apartments, but also by a series of recommendations for the selected locations around the world. This means that anyone can use the attractive tips from the multi-talented team to compile their very own personal itinerary. Founder Ronja and her team give their guests access to exclusive experiences and highlights that you would never find in an airport tourist guide book.

For instance, the Sisters of Paradise have already uncovered numerous little sensations in Barcelona, Batumi, Miami, and Marrakech to guarantee their clients extraordinary holidays. Besides magnificent apartments, their service includes little extras like contact with the doorman at the hottest club—but what you make of these exquisite flourishes is, of course, entirely up to you.

The Sisters of Paradise hotel service has strong similarities to the 25hours Hotels' philosophy—after all, each of the 25hours Hotels offers something new to discover and exudes its very own character and vibe. So even as a dyed-in-the-wool travel professional, Ronja can always look forward to being surprised by the richly varied experience of residing at the 25hours Hotels. In this interview with COMPANION, founder Ronja speaks about the guaranteed adventure of her unique service.



COMPANION: What does it mean to become a member of the Family of Paradise?

RONJA: Our family members have the opportunity to visit beautiful and hand-picked places and to draw on the family's experience and contacts. It is a community of like-minded individualists, ardent travellers who crave adventure wherever they go. We enable them to spend an unforgettable time at our favourite places, like you do among friends.

COMPANION: What role do you play in this concept?

RONJA: We see ourselves as location scouts, or rather, we have personally selected the places and properties and already explored the surroundings, and make recommendations based on our own experiences and preferences. This always includes an Italian restaurant, because pasta is simply the best food in the world, but also "hipster cuisine" or even contact with the doorman at your favourite club, to name just a few of the services.

COMPANION: What is the most beautiful place you have visited so far?

RONJA: We do not believe there is only one most beautiful location, although obviously we will all have places we prefer more than others. My father, for example, has been to Marrakech many times and simply adores strolling across the Djemaa El Fna, the city's central market-place, to watch the colourful hustle and bustle. That is why we have decided to include in our destinations a riad in the Medina Quarter. Personally, I feel particularly at home in Cape Town with Kite Beach right on my doorstep. The vineyards all around also produce superb local Crémant, which I think convinces us all.

COMPANION: Have you ever been disappointed by a travel experience?

RONJA: We've never really had a bad travel experience in the traditional sense. That's probably because we do our best to adapt to the local culture. We are always determined to grasp the local mentality and therefore behave accordingly. Apart from that, we travel to the locations without preconceived notions and simply allow the experience to unfold.

↳ sisters-of-paradise.com



