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Chiemgauhof

ÜBERSEE

Matteo Thun creates an elevated lakeside retreat defined by his signature blend of minimalism and sustainability.

Words: Guy Dittrich • Photography: © Elias Hassos

The unique quality of Chiemgauhof lies in its simplicity. These are the carefully considered words of Matteo Thun describing his latest project – a waterfront retreat on the shores of Bavaria’s largest lake.

His is a simplicity borne out of a restricted material palette, the quality of those materials and the precise craftsmanship applied to them. There is also a respect for sustainability, nature and the locale – Thun’s genius loci. There are moments of brilliance and bravura too.

Set on Lake Chiemsee within the Chiemgau Alps – 100km from Munich and 50km from Salzburg – Chiemgauhof was acquired by Ursula Schelle-Müller and Dieter Müller, creators of Motel One and properties such as Das Achental in nearby Grassau and Hotel Kitzhof in Kitzbühel. This new venture has been brought to life by Matteo Thun & Partners, led by Karola Gröger, head of the Munich office, together with Thun himself.

“I love the studio’s philosophy and always wanted a Thun-designed hotel,” explains Schelle-Müller sitting on the sunlit terrace overlooking the lake. Part of that philosophy is a respect for nature. The hotel’s handsome timber structures sit within a nature reserve, and given the abundance of mature trees, are barely visible during the summer months.







The main lounge is anchored by a Kachelofen heating stove, adorned with intricate clay tiles

And such is the regard for nature that one particular pergola was built around the bough of a young tree so as not to damage it.

Of the materials used, the focus is on local woods including larch for the traditional roof shingles. Stone also plays a starring role, from the greys of Ceppo di Gré in public areas, to Ceppo di Pompei in the guest bathrooms, where it is beautifully matched by the satin cement finish of the Catalano Premium washbasins.

The seemingly all-wood exteriors beg comparison with Thun's early hospitality work at Vigilius Mountain Resort, a property in the Dolomites with a similar north-south axis. Vigilius was environmentally ahead of its time with glass and lamella timber façade treatments, similar to that at Chiemgauhof, but this is the Bavarian Alps, so a different approach was required. "We tried to stay close to the culture of the location," explains Thun. "The hotel looks very similar to the construction of the local farmhouses in the region."

And indeed, it does. Three large barns are arranged in parallel on the north-south axis, allowing for the all-important sunset views. "We had to respect the original footprint of the farm buildings," Thun notes. "Normally we would try to preserve the old buildings, but it was not possible this time."

The next best thing was re-use – the foundations of the existing structures were processed and re-used. Local sourcing started here but included Schelle-Müller's appointment of main contractor Pfeifer, from nearby Rosenheim. Energy initiatives include photovoltaics, the use of recycled wood pellets, ground-source heat pumps and the local processing

of biowaste for natural gas. Sustainability extends to interior treatments too, with plush guestroom rugs made from upcycled fabrics and lambswool by LPG Studios in Aschau im Chiemgau.

The high volume of the entrance hall is bright and airy in the morning sunshine, and either side, symmetrical staircases step up to the guestrooms. Most suites have balconies and views over the lake towards the setting sun. So too the F&B areas of the lower level.

The three main structures are interconnected, with the majority of suites on the upper level. The southernmost building has four ground-floor suites, each with their own loggia leading to the lawns. The middle building sees regular suites sandwiching the two symmetrical Royal Suites, each featuring a lounge in the eaves with a fireplace and views to the distant Herreninsel Palace. The northern section, plus guests-only lounge, the Boathouse, together cradle a garden that includes a sunken seating arrangement around a firepit and 18m stainless steel pool. Here, guestrooms are on the first floor to mitigate any noise issues. Below, the wide, glazed corridor overlooks this garden and doubles as a gallery for local artists and a lengthy dining room for special occasions.

Overseen by three-Michelin-starred chef Edip Sigl, the F&B offering is centred around the Chiemgauhof Restaurant, where chef Max Müller uses locally sourced ingredients to create modern Bavarian classics with utmost delicacy and flavour. The restaurant has two semi-private dining rooms and looks onto the wide terrace and lawns.

The Lakeside Bar meanwhile serves sushi using fresh



fish delivered by boat from Fraueninsel. There are several different seating areas including a long and broad black-stained communal table, made from a single trunk. Acoustics are dealt with using carefully grooved timber ceiling. Reclaimed from old barns, it has a rich patina. Generally, ceilings here and in the Boathouse are dark-stained to create an intimate atmosphere.

Touches of joy abound. Colourful Modernist floral patterns decorate the asymmetric stairway carpets. Petite motifs taken from the traditional dirndl dresses provide constancy between vertically striped corridor wallpaper and cut-outs of the sliding bathroom doors. Other whimsical touches include regional antique furniture, often handpainted, as well as artworks from Julius Exter, an Expressionist of the Munich Secession who ran a summer academy at Chiemgauhof. There is also a Baselitz from the Schelle-Müller collection.

In the main lounge, amidst the Pierre Frey and Dedar fabrics, the Cassina and Carl Hansen furniture, pride of place is the Kachelofen.



The clay tiles of this heating stove were delivered across the water from Inselmöbel Klampfleuthner on Fraueninsel.

On the grey stone plinth of the bar corner, the open mouth of an oversized dark blue ceramic koi carp waits to be fed. He is near the large gong, which is rung every evening at sunset to announce 'blue hour' – a time to reflect. These Asian-inspired moments mirror the simplicity of Thun's hand. Guestrooms see this in the curvaceous Ofurð Onsen bathtubs designed by Thun and Antonio Rodriguez for Rapsel. Haptic and visually pleasing, there is added value when the line-up of the brushed-chrome Vola spout, the vertical and horizontal joints of the stone wall finish and the ceiling spotlight are so precise as to throw the perfect shadow on to the bath water. An exactitude seen across the property from swimming pool to balustrade.

Doubtless it was the time spent getting such results that prompts Gröger to comment on the process of developing the many elements of the property. "There was passion from all parties

to consider every detail," she explains. "Often, we already had the answer, but every issue has been discussed."

A case in point is the spa suites – as with the guestrooms, each has its own terrace yet with slightly offset lake views. Private Klafs outdoor saunas were added to these larger terraces. Further luxury comes with the automated rotation of the slatted roof to give shade, or in the winter months, to protect from heavy snowfall. Guestrooms are masterly restrained with plenty of space and use of wood. Colourways are muted – pale green entrance lobbies, textured clay wall finishes in neutral cream by Matteo Brioni. Other touches include a larch bathtub, Flos lighting and rimless Geberit toilets with integrated bidet function.

At Chiemgauhof, Thun's hand is evident in the palpable exactitude of execution and closeness to nature. "Guests feel the perfection but don't see it," concludes Schelle-Müller. Perhaps this is because the combined grace and modern elegance shines through in every aspect.



EXPRESS CHECK-OUT
 Owner: Müller
 Architecture and Interior Design:
 Matteo Thun & Partners
 Main Contractor: Pfeifer
www.chiemgauhof.com