

Originals

Vittorio Curatella

A Family Affair

Words Ken Baron Images Robert Rieger

They created a space to showcase an ever-evolving pool of local design talent. And the world has beaten a path to their door.

Those who know Vittorio Curatella and his father well describe the duo and their hospitality projects as being driven not by money but by heart, by strong Italian values, and by traditions. These core attributes have seen them create masterworks in the country's biggest cities yet return each weekend to the small southern Italian town of Bella, in the province of Potenza, where they're from. "Vittorio has never abandoned his roots," says a colleague who worked with him on Elizabeth Unique Hotel. "Some people lose their perspective, their sense of who they are, when they come to the capital. Vittorio's values are very pure. He and his father are good people with good hearts."

Do you see yourself more as a builder or a hotelier?

I am still adjusting my perspective to that of a hotelier's. But that said, design is very important to me and it plays a key role in Elizabeth Unique, to the point where it stands for everything! All of the pieces were born from the vision of a true artisan and then manufactured by an important Italian contractor. I must admit that the uniqueness of each item has made an immense difference in the look and feel of the hotel.

Tell me about the conversion of the space that would become Elizabeth Unique. What was your biggest challenge?

The conversion and renovation were extremely tough. To work in the heart of Rome was not easy! The biggest challenge concerned the structural plan of the property: seeing two floors come together to form one space, two floors which originally were not joined in any way. It was very satisfying to pull off from an engineering perspective alone, to say nothing of the daily growth and progression of the hotel as it moved from concept, to plans, to finished project.

Where and when are you most at home?

Well, I certainly feel at home at Elizabeth Unique! My grandmother had a deep sense of hospitality and she has transferred this value to us with all her magnificent simplicity.

Your late grandmother is the namesake of the hotel, of course. Describe the moment when her name went up on the building?

I am not moved easily; however, I must say that seeing the sign go up on the façade of the building facing onto Via del Corso was an extremely powerful and poignant moment, one that I would define as extraordinary. For my father it was a bittersweet moment filled with emotions. There was a great sense of pride, of course, but simultaneously sadness, considering the passing of his mother a few months prior to the event.

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Moving away from work and family for a moment, tell us about your vintage car collection?

It's a passion of my father's that has been transferred to me, and it unites us that much more. For me, it represents a hobby without limits and without barriers. There are quite a few dream cars missing in my collection, which still has a long way to go! In particular, I am fascinated by cars that are rich in stories, whether they are from a special era or have been owned by an important individual. I am mainly drawn to Italian automobiles, but I do have a particular soft spot for British cars as well.

What is inspiring you at the moment?

My biggest ambition is to see the entire family business group grow. It is humbling to manage a "creature" that has been passed down through multiple generations. I have a deep sense of responsibility to the family. My father has always welcomed my ideas, since I was a young boy. I am very proud of this.

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