SLEEPER

HOSPITALITY EXPERIENCE & DESIGN



BIRCH – CHESHUNT • LIRAN WIZMAN • LA RÉSERVE EDEN AU LAC – ZURICH



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Samantha Drummond

Having designed a number of integrated resorts across Asia, the Managing Partner of **Habitus Design Group** escapes for a fantasy break in a Tuscan castle.

Where are you?
I'm staying in a 14th century castle in Tuscany where Leonardo da Vinci was once a guest of the family. Today, it is an exclusive retreat following a meticulous conversion that has taken place over several generations, maintaining and enhancing the rich heritage. Everywhere I look, there are views of Tuscan olive and wine groves and impeccable gardens with enclaves of private terraces from which to soak up the panorama.

How did you get there?
I flew first class to the nearest airport, where I was met by the hotel chauffeur, a man of a certain age who has lived here all his life. We talk about everything, from the region's history and the best village restaurants to the meaning of life itself. I cherish such conversations; they make for a perfect start to a relaxing vacation full of sense of place.

Who is there to greet you on arrival?
There is something not only personal but understated when the owner greets you. They know just enough about me to make me feel a special; I really respect hotels that do their research before the guests arrive.

NOTABLE HOTEL PROJECTS
Marina Bay Sands, Singapore; Four Seasons Hotel Macao; Solaire Resort, Manila
www.habitusdesigngroup.com

And who's at the concierge desk?
Chef Cesare Casella; his knowledge of local produce, culture and people is incredible, and his personality is infectious.

Who are you sharing your room with?
My family, they are my favourite people to travel with, particularly my seven-year-old son, who loves ordering up room service.

Describe the hotel, your room and the view…
Our room honours the original architectural features but is not enslaved to the past. I enjoy well-curated rooms with an eclectic mix of antiquities, modern abstract art, local curiosities, plenty of books and sophisticated amenities. The flooring is timber, seasoned over the years and full of character, and the huge bed is one I struggle to leave in the mornings.

Who designed it?
Only the best for my Tuscan idyll – Filippo Brunelleschi, the founding father of Renaissance architecture and the designer of the dome on Florence Cathedral. The scale and indulgence of his buildings is hypnotic; he was masterful in his craft and had a unique approach to detail that must have come from his training as a goldsmith. The latest interior refurbishment is by Patricia Urquiola; her sense of pattern and colour is truly inspiring and she brings a modern touch that feels totally in keeping.

What's the restaurant and bar like?
Intimate and discreet, where every element harmonises to create incredible memories. The cuisine is prepared to bring out the best of flavours and the ingredients are local. I really appreciate it when a restaurant provides local farmers a platform to showcase the fruits of their labour. There is a magnificent planted terrace for outdoor dining, and background music is thoughtfully curated to evoke emotion.

Who are you dining with this evening?
Maria Callas, Édith Piaf, Vivienne Westwood, Anthony Bourdain and Frida Kahlo.

Who's manning the stoves?
Massimo Bottura, Chef Patron of Osteria Francescana in Modena, Italy.

And what's on the menu?
To start, we sample the best local olives with sourdough and olive oil, followed by salad freshly pulled from the garden served with goat's cheese. Then we eat homemade pasta with a sauce made from locally-raised game, and for dessert, something innovative incorporating vegetables such as beetroot and parsnip.

Would you like something to drink with that?
A bottle of vintage wine from the Vosne-Romanée region of Burgundy.

What's your essential travel companion?
Anything that promotes sleep.

Early morning alarm call or late check-out?
Early morning alarm call. I like to get on with the day very early, as that's when I feel at my most inspired.