

# Spaces created for connection

How to build the neighborhood that you want to live in.

An interview with

## Klaus Dissertori

by Karin Novozamsky

We are in the north of Italy, in a little area called South Tyrol. South, of course, is a question of perspective. For the people north of the region, the name refers to being south of Tyrol, an Austrian state (in German: Südtirol). For Italians, who mostly live to the south, the same place is called Alto-Adige, which means above the River Adige. This multi-faceted character is reflected in the landscape, stretched over 7,000 square kilometers (2800 square miles) of high mountains and deep valleys, and in the three languages actively spoken: German, Italian and Ladin. Austria and its capital

Vienna seem closer in some ways for the people than their own national capital of Rome. All this is owed to a turbulent history and challenging geography.

We are here because of Klaus Dissertori, who was born and raised between vineyards, apple plantations, and high and mostly snow-covered mountains, in the town of Lana. Growing up on his grandmother's farm with animals and taking regular strolls in the woods, he has always been connected to nature and the seasons. He was raised with an understanding of what the rhythm of life

means for what we eat, what we do, how we do it and who we are.

Klaus left his home for years, studying economics abroad, learning the business of hospitality and consulting in hotels. Then he came back to bring his experience to his mother's hotel, Schwarzschild, which means blacksmith. The story goes: the blacksmith practiced acupuncture on the side and was well known for his pain relieving abilities.

In all of his projects, Klaus brings the combination of business understanding on the one hand, and a sensitivity for basic human needs and desires on the other. He started by extending the existing hotel to create spaces indoors and outdoors where guests would feel comfortable and at home. The hotel offers movement classes as well as stillness, good, regional food and a cultural program including concerts, talks and lectures.

"I think I just learned to see things in a different way. Where others see an old building, I see the opportunity for a new experience."

With his considerate and sensitive touch, Klaus' parents hotel grew in space and clarity. New sun-filled rooms with terraces and balconies ensure that time outdoors is just a doorknob away. Interiors of light



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wood and soft materials soothe and support guests, encouraging you to relax into your stay at the hotel. The brisk morning air from the mountains invites guests to swim in the heated outdoor pool before heading in to enjoy a long breakfast. Fresh food from regional farmers awaits, from vegan delights to comforting, locally sourced meats and cheeses.

Over the last few years Klaus has expanded, opening two more inspired spaces: Villa Arnica and 1477 Reichhalter. Each location is a different world - and a distinct brand - that you can choose from depending on your preferences. And each one shares a distinct link to its history. Potential guests have a clear understanding of what a vacation in each magical place will feel like.

The result of this fine-tuning, a melding of history and tradition with modern sensibilities, is more than just hotel and restaurant spaces. Klaus has developed an ecosystem of spaces that brings together like-minded, interesting and interested people from the region and connects them with visitors from all over the world. A small society is organically built of people who want to dive deeper into the culture of the place as well as into their own place within the community.

What was Klaus Dissertori's vision? Are today's hotels the result of a



strategy written down in a marketing or business plan? Talking to him it becomes clear that everything was created by Klaus in the way that he himself wants to live. The inspiration comes from what he believes is important: uplifting spaces, good quality materials, regionally sourced food prepared by chefs who know their craft, and access to nature, knowledge, social gatherings and culture. Having traveled a lot himself, he knows what is happening outside his village and what makes sense to offer in an authentic way. He has brought back the outsider perspective, so he can share the insider's best tips with anyone who comes to stay.

About three years ago, Klaus began the renovation of an old building with a traditional tavern called Reichhalter. It sits in the center of the village of Lana and it had been

"I deeply enjoy seeing people from the village enjoying their beer after work at the bar and seeing guests from the hotel talking and sitting on the wooden stairs with a bottle of wine."





abandoned for fifteen years. He found the perfect chef to serve delicious food. He renovated the eight rooms upstairs with elegant simplicity, reconnecting guests to the life that people living in busy cities can only dream about. The thick walls of the townhouse date back to 1477 and they will tell their ancient stories while you fall asleep.

In 2019, the Reichhalter restaurant was ranked #1 in the annual Ranking of Best Restaurants by Monocle Magazine. This honor was a gratifying confirmation that Klaus is on the right track. But even more rewarding for Klaus is that Reichhalter is a magnet for locals, and serves as a place to meet, eat, drink and laugh with friends and strangers alike.

Klaus has the vision, but he knows that there is strength in numbers and that he needed a team that would work together to bring his vision to life. He has surrounded himself with a group of experts that support him with their experience and knowledge in the fields of architecture, interior design, branding, graphic design, photography and press relations. In every house, he and his team have made the effort to build a new brand, respectful of the different spaces, their history and what makes them unique.

**"I was amazed by the luscious garden, the pool from another time and all the stories and experiences that we would create in this private garden."**

The third house, Villa Arnica, was opened in 2019. Here you feel as if you are visiting friends in their Villa, hanging out by the 1960s pool, listening to the music playing in the pool house, enjoying an earlier-than-normal glass of wine with your friends and not with the kids (the Villa is adult only). The garden provides fresh vegetables that are brought straight to the grill, along with fresh fish and meat from the

region. Dinner becomes a social gathering around the big community table in the garden. Long nights, relaxed days: that's how you spend your time at the Villa.

You will run into Klaus and other members of his family every day at one of the houses. He's always present, often silently in the background, but available in case you need something or want to know more. If he's not there, he is somewhere in the mountains recharging, or he's traveling with his family to find inspiration. He is probably working on his next project, as for him this is just the beginning of building a world that he wants to live in. And he wants to share this life, in the village where he is at home. He is inspired to create a life of connection: to other people, with the environment and to himself.



