

Maistra 160 – The Chaplain of Calm

A soulful modernist, a deeply rooted sanctuary of diligence with a gorgeously retracted remit of interior precision and silent sophistication

Introduction

A considered masterpiece of modernist hotelery and curated design completed in 2023 by Grisons architect Gion A. Caminada, the hotel & spa Maistra 160, in the alpine mountain village of Pontresina, is a tributing manifesto to the beauty of minimalism accentuating nature and the art of resonance. Caminada's sleight of hand in design and founding 'sanctuary hotel' concept is a true devotion to the precision of functionality, craftsmanship, integrity and restraint. Interior furnishings continue the design narrative with pieces from Molteni, Cassina Official, Audo CPH, Tribu, and Aram, and lighting from British designer Lee Broom. Together with owners Plattner & Plattner, hotel Maistra 160 defies the convention of too much, opting instead for an opaque simplicity that closely mimics the outdoors and the 1,800 metres above sea-level alpine panorama of the Engadin Valley in a sweet brutalist camouflage of locally mined "Bodio Nero", Ticino gneiss.

Hand-poured terrazzo flooring containing a jade stone from the Valposchiavo, a nostalgic nod to the carnation flower 'Engadiner Hängenelke' and extensive use of arven wood (Swiss stone pine) symbolically cocoon Maistra 160 with hushed traditions – a clever relevance to the panoramic playground of the Engadin Valley's surrounding peaks of Alp Languard, Bernina Massif, Piz Julier and Val Roseg.

Found high in the Alps, design hotel Maistra 160 is a soulful modernist, a deeply rooted sanctuary of diligence with a gorgeously retracted remit of interior precision and silent sophistication.

The Colours of Bernina

Maistra 160 makes an architectural statement departing from the chalet template and stands deliberately juxtaposed to the ornate Belle Époque façades dotted throughout Pontresina. Yet, the boldness of the building has a rooted familiarity. Located a mere seven kilometres from glitzy St. Moritz, the only 'sparkle' is embedded in the Maistra's exteriors of the dark millennia-old slate gneiss, setting the quest to be rather more in tune with the mountains and nature, a narrative that populates the

house's interiors. The colour concept for Maistra 160 was commissioned to specialist Lucrezia Zanetti (Farbkunst Graubünden) and stone sculptor Christian Aubry, who drew inspiration from the rocks and colours of the Bernina mountains around Pontresina, grinding the stones into pigments. Zanetti then formulated the interior colour palette, literally adopted from nature.

The design process of creating a new resort hotel in the village took cues from the architect, Gion A. Caminada and the owners, Plattner & Plattner. As Caminada explains, "Strong places touch us, create belonging and identity. A house lives with its inhabitants, and they live with the house. That's how a sense of home is born." Taking this mantra into the hotel-scape has meant that every detail was conversation-worthy, and the Plattners were equally compelled to let this new build cover new territory in the hotel design, anchoring to the concept of "a joyful and unforgettable experience, a house (hotel) that enriches the guests' stay", Bettina Plattner-Gerber explains. One particularly fascinating aspect is the creation of the terrazzo floor, which took four months to install and was created by Christian Aubry and Lucrezia Zanetti. It's a form of architectural artistry. Sharing the collaborative philosophy of Maistra, artist Christian Kathriner, a freelance artist from central Switzerland, was an integral part of the project team with tailor-made pieces for specific spaces and architectural settings.

Symbolism, Urushi, ZZZZZ, Stüvetta and Stone Pines

Hushed complexity narrates the hotel's interior design in a distilled lineup of natural materials and designer touches like the Seal lounge chair by AUDO CPH, which collectively embellishes Maistra 160 with a holistic touch of Swiss style. Timber sourced from the highest woods in Europe, pinus cembra, AKA Swiss stone pines or Engadin arven wood, seamlessly envelopes 36 bedrooms and suites and 11 lodges (apartments) in a brush stroke of easy simplicity. The ancient art of Urushi, a centuries-old Japanese lacquer technique, seamlessly blends with modern minimalist design in the bathrooms. All rooms feature a loggia and a Stüvetta—a 'room within a room' that serves as an intimate retreat, offering a quiet space to relax, work, or even enjoy undisturbed naps. The design of the hotel room ceilings draws inspiration from the centuries-old tradition of ceiling painting. Thirty-six floral motifs, ranging from the Engadiner Hängnelke (traditional Grisons carnation) to the elegant rose, are meticulously applied to the ceilings through intricate handwork and expert

wallpapering skills.

Terroir Foodies, Terrazzo & the 'Pöstli'

Restaurant Maistra, housed within a decorative scene of terrazzo floors, Aurora XXL Chandeliers by Lee Broom, granite columns, a textile cassette ceiling, dark tables made of black walnut, and the Captain's Chair in black leather, is home to the culinary duo Priscilla Cavagliotti and Sebastian Cigolla, who playfully represent authenticity, terroir, and quality. Regional alpine ingredients are skilfully combined with oriental flavours and contemporary gastronomic trends. At Hotel Maistra, beloved classics meet innovative new creations, offering a fresh twist on familiar favourites. Their menu highlights regional Alpine products, creatively paired with oriental aromas and contemporary food trends. Familiar, beloved dishes meet innovative, unexpected creations.

Maistra cuisine is designed to be fresh, simple, healthy, and diverse. A carefully curated wine cellar featuring over 300 selections perfectly complements the culinary experience.

At the heart of the hotel is the Maistra Bar & Lounge, a vibrant hub for house guests and locals alike. The bar itself forms part of the larger, open space that connects in all directions. It leads to the cosy regulars' tables by the windows overlooking Via Maistra, and to the restaurant terrace. Another nod to tradition is the Pöstlikeller, created in tribute to the legendary Pontresina cellar bar of the former Hotel Post; the "Pöstli" has been meticulously rebuilt in its original location – a remarkable revival of a beloved classic.

Snow Flakes and an Open-air Cloister

Centred around an open-air cloister and fireplace, the Maistra continues its narrative of closeness to nature and the mountains. The spa and wellness refugio with the hotel spans two levels and engages the elements of warmth, coolness, water, fire, stone, air and earth.

Within this central space, guests can enjoy an atrium with an open fire, a warm-water pool with massage jets, a bio sauna and a Finnish sauna, a shimmering blue-black basalt steam bath and a relaxation room lined in Swiss stone pine and featuring a sun deck. A fully equipped yoga and fitness room completes the Maistra Spa world. In the

treatment rooms, succumb to massages, body treatments by [comfort zone], shiatsu, and manicures and pedicures. Yoga lessons can be booked in classes or privately, and there is the latest Technogym at hand. Facilities include an outdoor relaxation pool, Finnish sauna (85°C) & bio sauna (60°C), and a basalt steam bath (42°C, 100% humidity) designed by artist Reto Müller, which is entirely clad in basalt tiles.

Take in the fresh Engadin mountain air in the cloister that is open to the sky, watch the snowflakes or simply observe the sky. This meditative space is the centrepiece of the Maistra, where the hotel's planning began.

900 Titles and a Love of Books

Integral to the concept of retreating, book-loving owner Bettina Plattner-Gerber was determined to house a specially curated library with more than 900 titles. In addition to shelves dedicated to artists and writers who flocked to Engadin, the library is rich in women's literature of Grisons, in the history of the hotel industry, architecture and agriculture. Also find titles on the history of the emigrated and returned sugar bakers, in the development of alpine cuisine or in the alpine world of the monasteries and in the fates and stories of the mercenaries. The space is populated with beautifully curated design furnishings providing perfect little reading snugs like the bubblegum pink sorbet Bibendum chair by ARAM, the classic Cassina LC& or sit back in the D.156.3 armchairs designed by Gio Ponti and produced for Altamira.

People Culture

Seasoned hoteliers Martin and Irene Müller are not just hotel directors; they are the guardians of a people-first culture that marries the well-being soul of Maistra with thoughtful management. Rewriting the traditional hotel book, the duo are pioneering in their approach to the team, whereby each one is a stakeholder and involved. The Müllers are innately at ease with guests, staff and suppliers; they are the hosts and enjoy hospitality for the right reason. The Maistra 160 is decidedly different, due no less to the creative and practical input of the couple, who were involved way before the hotel opened its minimalist doors.