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# SIMONE MICHELI: Terme Alte Di Rivisondoli

ph by Maurizio Marcolato



**Simone Micheli**  
Architect

**T**he latest dream of architect Simone Micheli has taken shape and become reality at 1300 m. above sea level. Terme Alte di Rivisondoli, a recently opened spa and wellness facility, expresses excitement, rigor and simplicity. Fully integrated with the wild nature of the Abruzzo mountains—still little known despite their rare beauty—Terme Alte is a project not only of aesthetic refinement, but also of intelligence and strategic design and communication. Set in a natural corner equidistant from the tourist centers of Roccaraso, Rivisondoli and Pescocostanzo, thanks to the expressive power of its spaces and the high quality of the treatments it offers, this oasis of relaxation aspires to become a major attraction, a means for energizing, enlivening and invigorating the handsome plateau it overlooks, the ski resorts of the surrounding mountains, the nearby golf courses and equestrian club, and the cycle hiking paths and that wind through the woods that surround it on three sides. Here Micheli has transformed his vision into a project of excellence and acumen.

Exemplary in its approach, it reaches beyond the concept of eco-logical and eco-nomic sustainability, taking as its aim not a seemingly satisfying balance of the status quo, but the enrichment of the territory itself, the enhancement of the natural and human resources that are there but, until now, have been poorly developed. A will hidden at the very heart of the Terme Alte: the sulphurous waters of a spring located in the adjacent forest, discovered, nurtured and studied by Dr. Luigi Altamura, whose professional distinction and unceasing determination and passion have brought them to the forefront of the national stage.

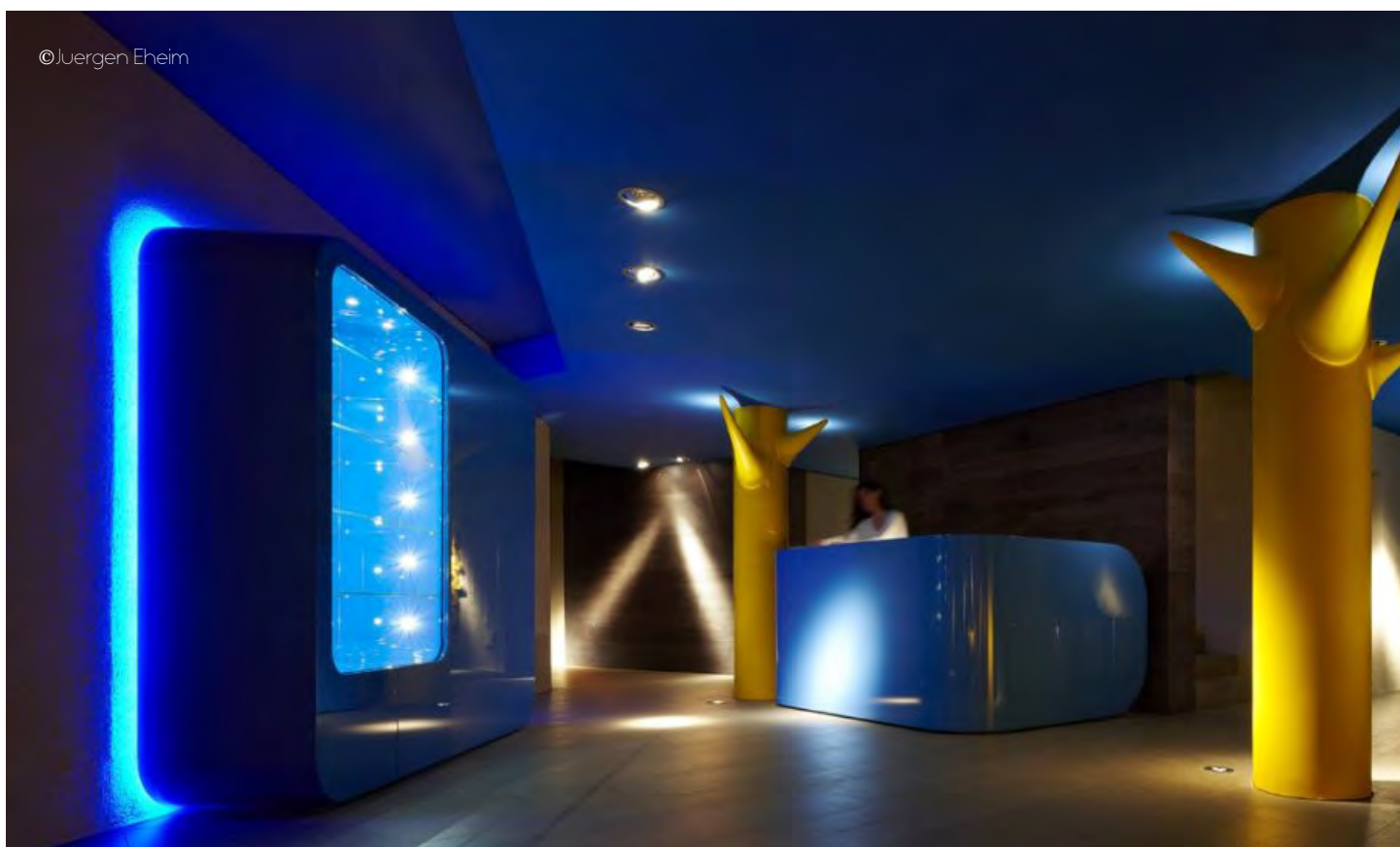
The waters of the baths, sulphurous by nature, are in fact rich in an enzyme that helps significantly to





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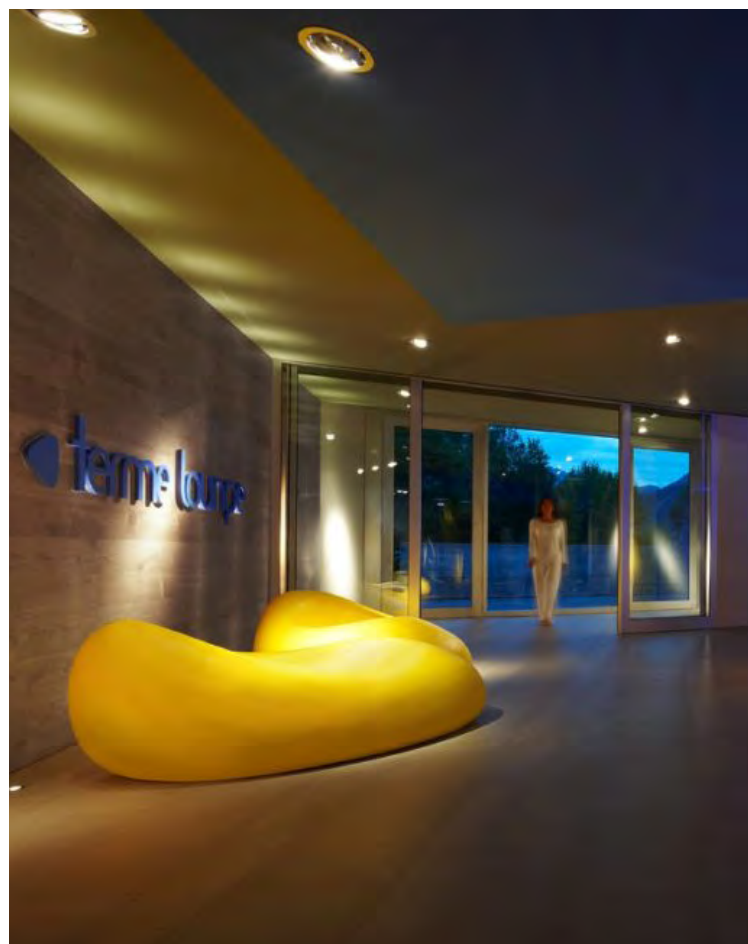


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counter the effects of aging, guaranteeing an exfoliating action on surface skin layers and acting on deep layers to promote the production of important constituent elements that enable the skin to fulfill its protective function properly.

The spa offers treatments and therapy sessions that take full advantage of the beneficial properties of the spring water and the mud it contains, and so is the perfect place to cultivate the well-being of body and mind.

A place of architectural spells and charms as well, poised between the surreal and the dreamlike: lighting effects, scents, colors, transparencies and improbable geometries characterize this three-dimensional realm suspended between dream and reality—effects by which we humans can be stimulated synaesthetically, and our visit, our use and enjoyment of the spaces, given a sense of unicity. The spaces open up and revolve around the large double volume of the lounge bar, where we are received and entertained, then encouraged to circulate to the other areas. The adjacent shop, set at the side of the entrance, where we can see and buy a wide range of products made with the thermal water and its muds, is its natural continuation and anticipation. Showcases that seem suspended, floating on a halo of blue light, guide us with their soft shapes and winking LEDs to the cen-





tral meeting place, teeming with life, dynamic and constantly moving. The sense of flow is underlined by the seating, which is reduced to spheres that appear to slide freely between the shaped logs that form the tables in the ground-floor lounge bar. Two large walls, entirely faced with wood planks, warm our view and embrace us, the stone floor enhancing the natural, yet extraordinary, almost magical atmosphere in which the blue sky of the ceiling, a counterpoint to the azure spheres on the floor, seems to be supported and pierced by surreal yellow trees with sharp, upward-reaching macro-thorns. From above, a large window overlooks the double-height space of the bar, concealing the most secret, silent zone of the center: the spa, which occupies the whole second floor of the building. Glass etched with a transparent texture of thorns and twisted branches conceals and confounds the profiles of those approaching the stairs on the ground floor and walking through the sauna on the first floor. A large suspended fireplace opens up in the middle of the ground floor window-wall, the fire catching the attention of passers by, together with the long shadows of the columns and their thorns projected on the ceiling. A surreal atmosphere based on light and

its reflections, like the reflections in the mirrored cabinet that holds a large monitor and hides the coffee machine from view, envelopes the materiality of the bar, a monolithic block clothed, in continuity with the adjacent walls, in wooden planks. Shelves, and elliptical windows and portholes, all rigorously shiny yellow and perfect in their simple geometries, float on uncertain walls of rough plaster—gritty, tactile and extremely powerful, like walls of rough rock. The contrast between the irregular and natural materials, such as the stone floor laid in strips of various sizes, the wood planks lining the walls, or the coarse grainy plaster, and the furnishings, marked out by clean geometries, lacquered to a shiny finish or mirrored, and the brightly colored, thorny columns, creates an unrepeatable singularity, a surreal transfiguration of a mountain environment dreamt of, remembered, imagined. The same powerful contrast characterizes the stairs, the walkways in the spa and the treatment rooms. The walls, illuminated by grazing light from the floor up, or by the blue LED strips of mirrors suspended in midair, reveal a rich articulation of matter; the treatment beds shine, white and ethereal, in the middle of the rooms, suspended beneath a blue ceiling, a pocket-sized sky. Each room is equipped with two separate showers, one with normal water and one with thermal water, so that clients after a massage or a beauty treatment can boost the session's effectiveness with a spa shower. A special place among the center's treatment offerings is entrusted, thanks to the beneficial effects of the thermal water, to the round bath, a central element and fulcrum of the spa's layout. Around the pool of sulphurous water, which is naturally odorless, contrary to what one might think, are set the Turkish bath, the sauna, the experience showers and the relaxation room. If the Turkish bath, bright and ambitious in its geometry and its solid-surface seating, playfully reveals itself to view through a large porthole that opens directly onto the entrance to the spa, the sauna appears instead reserved and discreet, and can be reached only at



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