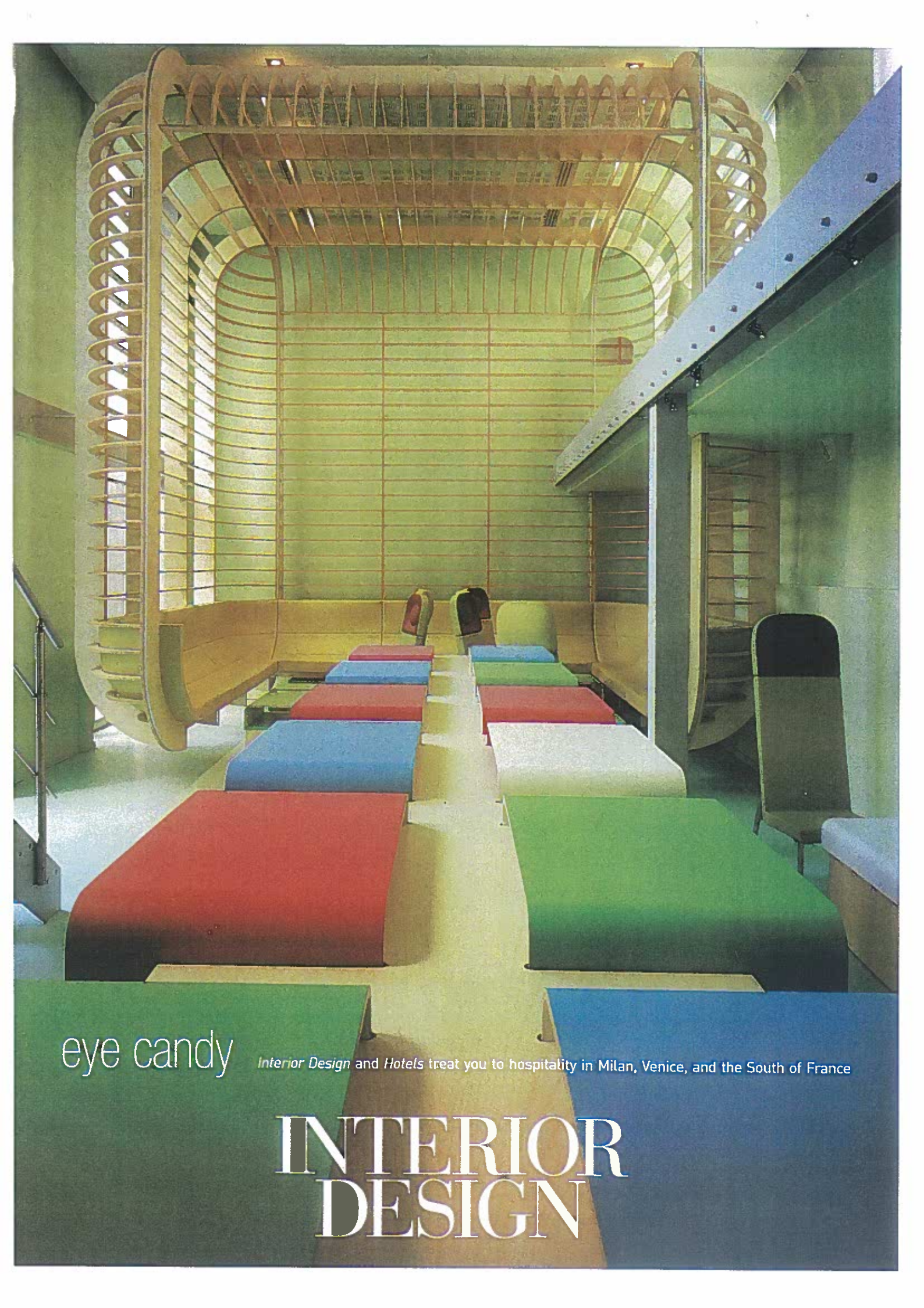


text: ian phillips photography: uwe spoering

A photograph of a modern interior space. On the left, a large, curved wooden structure with multiple horizontal shelves is mounted on a wall. The shelves are empty, except for a few yellow and green cylindrical objects. To the right, a dining table with a green tablecloth is set with white plates, glasses, and silverware. Three green chairs with black backs are arranged around the table. The background features a curved wall with a large arched window and a balcony with a purple railing. The floor is a light blue color.

The Hi Life

Taking guest accommodations to the next level at Hi in Nice, France

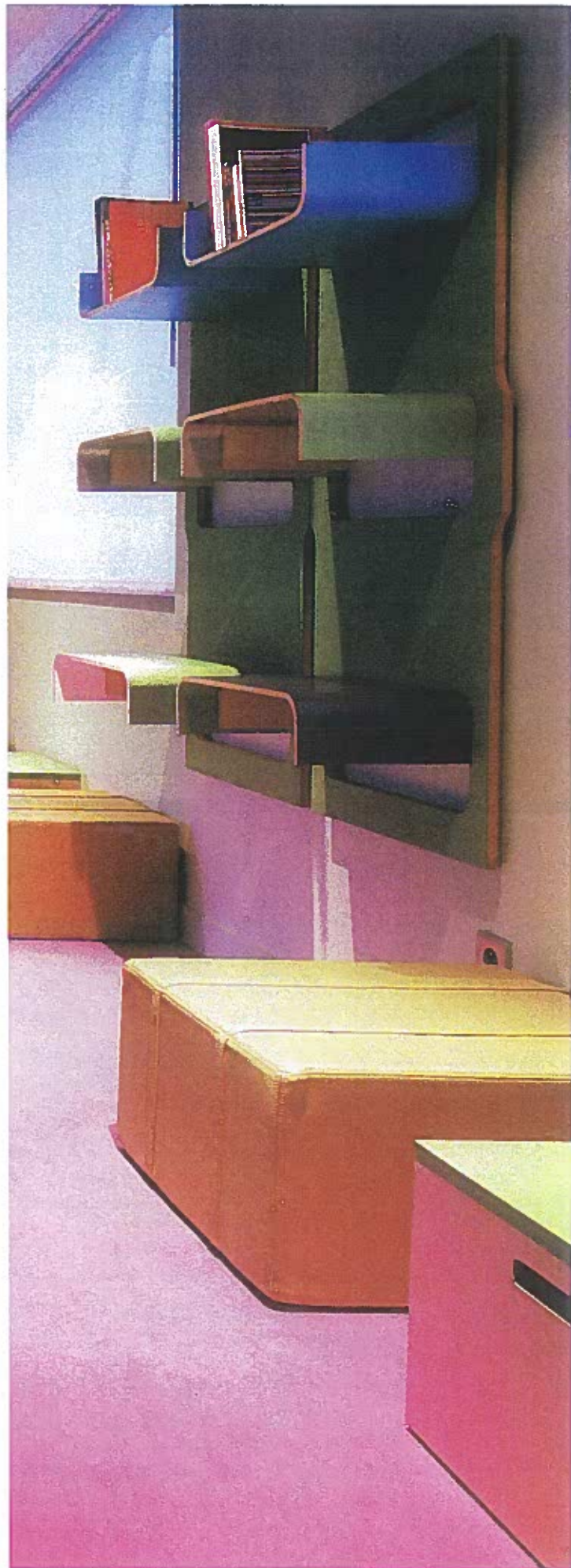


eye candy

Interior Design and *Hotels* treat you to hospitality in Milan, Venice, and the South of France

INTERIOR DESIGN





Previous page: At the Matali Crasset-designed Hi hotel in Nice, France, a cage of laminated birch plywood surrounds the self-service café and bar. Crasset designed the chairs, covered in faux leather, and the removable laminated-wood tabletops.

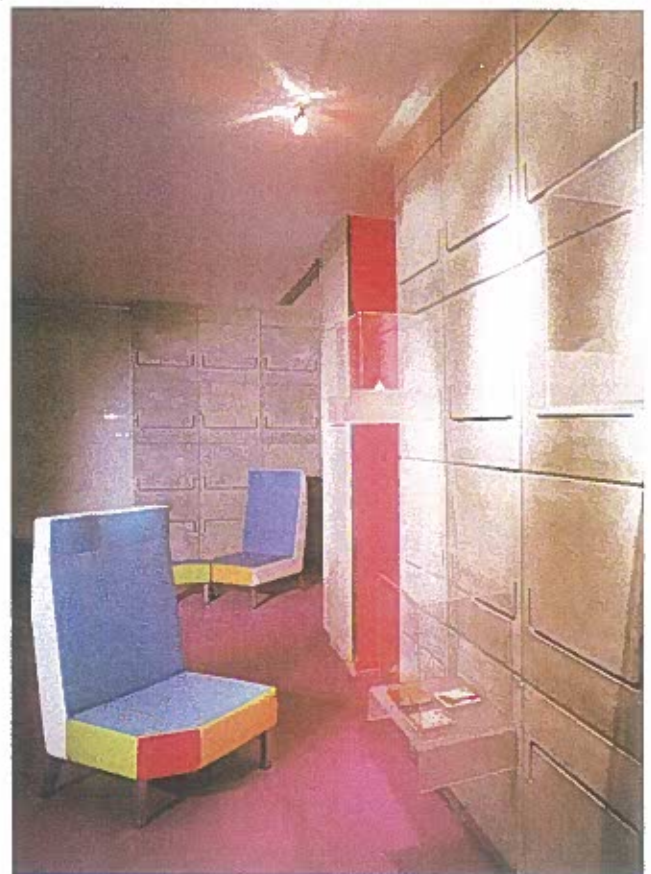
Left: Ascending from a leather-covered banquette, the cage terminates on a mezzanine. Ottomans on the mezzanine feature tapes to guide the tray tables stored above. Right: In the lobby, Crasset color-coded modular furniture to indicate how it attaches. The walls are concrete slabs.

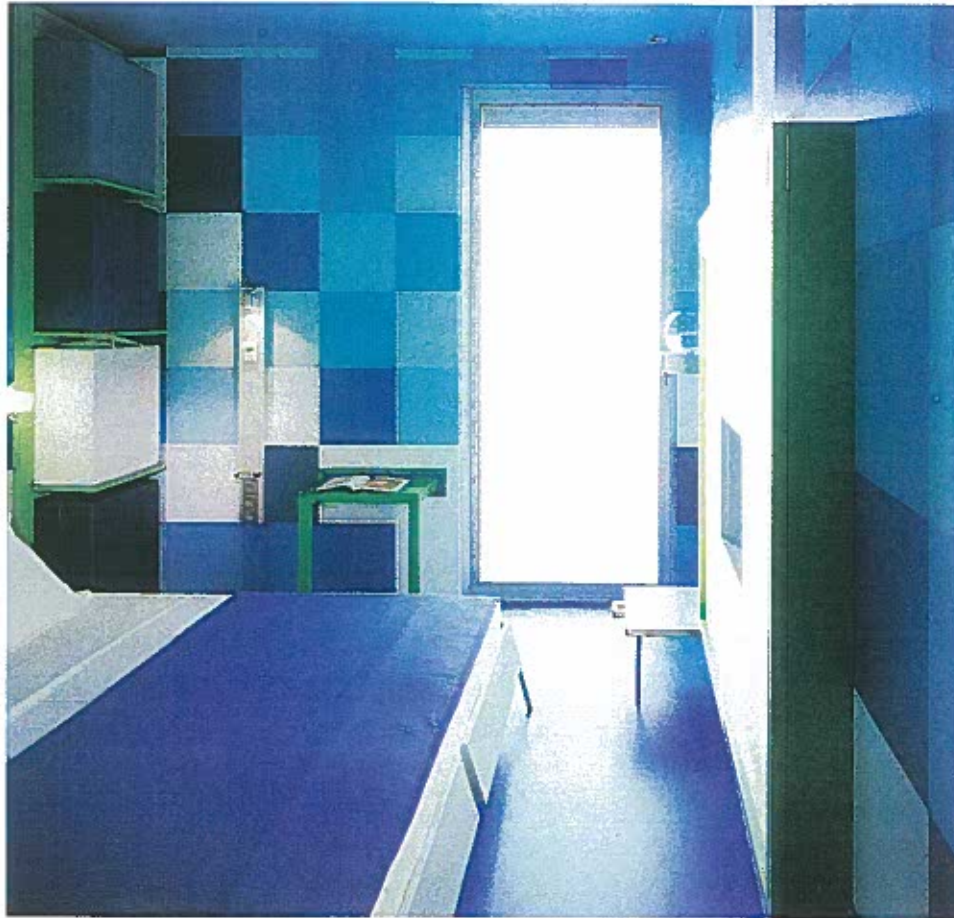
Hi is no ordinary French hotel. In some guest rooms, the bed is separated from the bath by a huge projection screen. In others, you get to sleep on a table. Sounds kooky? It's meant to be. (Not to mention that Hi's name derives from the word for a mark on the body of a koi.) "We're proposing an alternative to today's hotels," asserts co-owner Philippe Chapelet.

To achieve this goal, Chapelet and Patrick Elouarghi—who previously owned and operated a hotel-château in the Anjou region of France—called on up-and-coming designer Matali Crasset. Since working with Philippe Starck at Thomson Multimedia, Crasset has decked out the Paris office of ad agency Red Cell and created kitchen appliances for Tefal,

highball glasses and tumblers for Cristal Saint-Louis, and light fixtures for Artemide. Earlier this year, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London honored her with a solo show.

One of the notions Crasset most often explores is that of hospitality. However, the Nice building that houses Hi was anything but hos- →





pitable before her intervention. Despite a five-star location near the Promenade des Anglais, the property was a no-star guest house. The 1930s structure featured a stairwell covered in depressing gray roughcast and rooms that were “small, badly laid out, and full of unspeakable furniture,” she declares. “I carried out a complete metamorphosis.”

Initially, that involved reducing key count from 50 to 38 and adding 20 balconies and two private terraces, each with a whirlpool. Crasset even managed to build a swimming pool on the roof—a technical exploit achieved by distributing the pool’s weight over the top of a new concrete elevator shaft. As for the facade, she painted it off-white, put in large aluminum-framed windows, and uncovered an original concrete canopy above the main entrance. “The idea,” she explains, “was to be rather discreet with the exterior to save the surprise for inside.”

Surprising it certainly is. “Guests should feel *not* at home,” says Crasset. “We’re offering them a completely different experience →

“Guests should feel not at home. We’re offering a different experience”



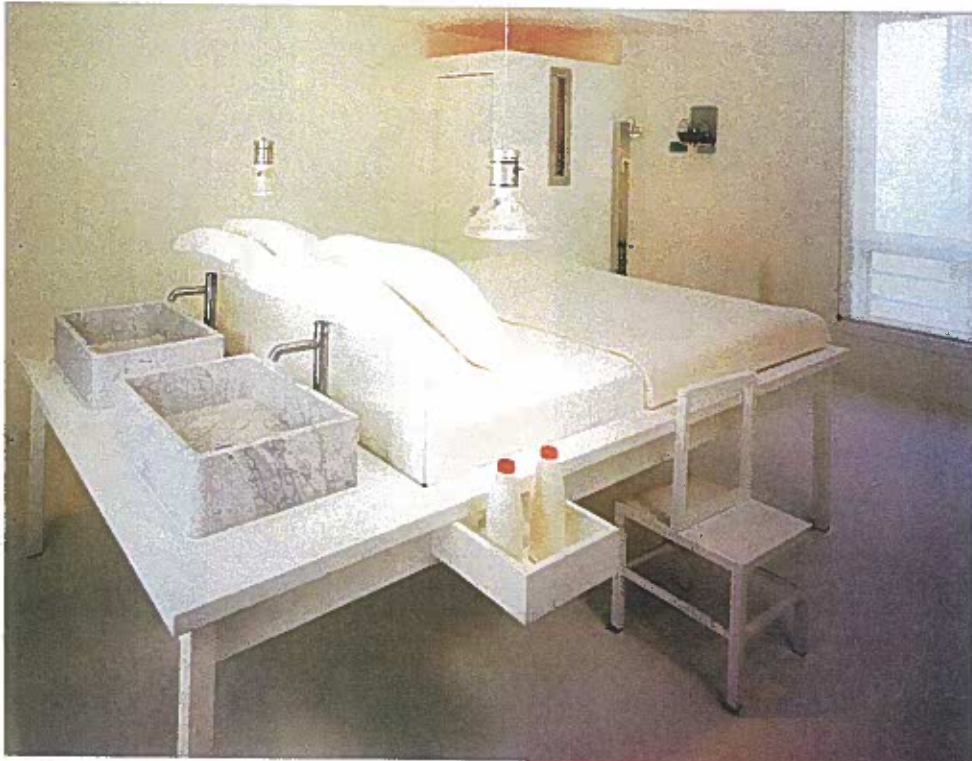
Top: A side table extends through a Digitale room’s wall—painted to resemble giant pixels—and terminates on a private balcony. Next to the bed, a laminated-wood frame holds ottomans for balcony use. Bottom: In Happy Day, the daybed backs up to a fluorescent-lit toilet enclosure. Crasset designed the hanging wardrobe

from the usual." To that end, practically everything can be modified. On the mezzanine overlooking the bar, furniture moves to accommodate reading, playing chess, or listening to music. The bar below is encased in an enormous cage of laminated birch plywood, and the floor is coated with a resin normally used

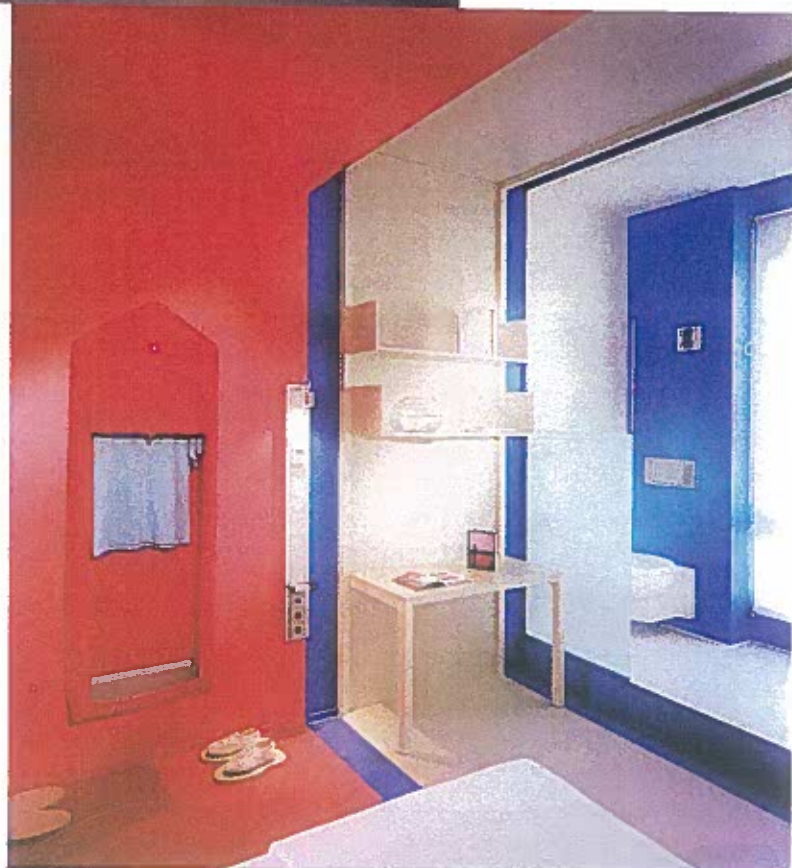
in hospitals and industrial settings. The ceiling of the elevator is a purple-filtered light box.

Crasset decorated guest rooms according to nine very daring concepts. In the Indoor Terrace rooms, for instance, she grouped all furniture on an iroko deck in the middle of the space. In Strates, she placed everything at different heights. The toilet perches in full view, on a 3½-foot-high platform; the shower is raised 2½ feet. Digitale's walls are painted in blue squares like giant pixels, and the wardrobe and bathroom's melamine-framed doors resemble computer-screen pop-up windows with the words *wear* and *breath* appearing in aluminum cutouts directly above. What first appears to be just a sofa in Happy Day is actually half a bed, the other half being hidden in an alcove behind doors. White & White rooms, meanwhile, "take existing furniture archetypes and give them other functions," Crasset says. The bathtub has a canopy like a four-poster, and the bed consists of a mattress placed on a table, with one of the table's drawers serving as a nightstand.

Virtually everything on the premises is by Crasset, from the Technocorner rooms' Sofa-blaster sofa, with its integrated speakers, to the omnipresent Hi pendants and sconces, conceived in collaboration with a glassblower →

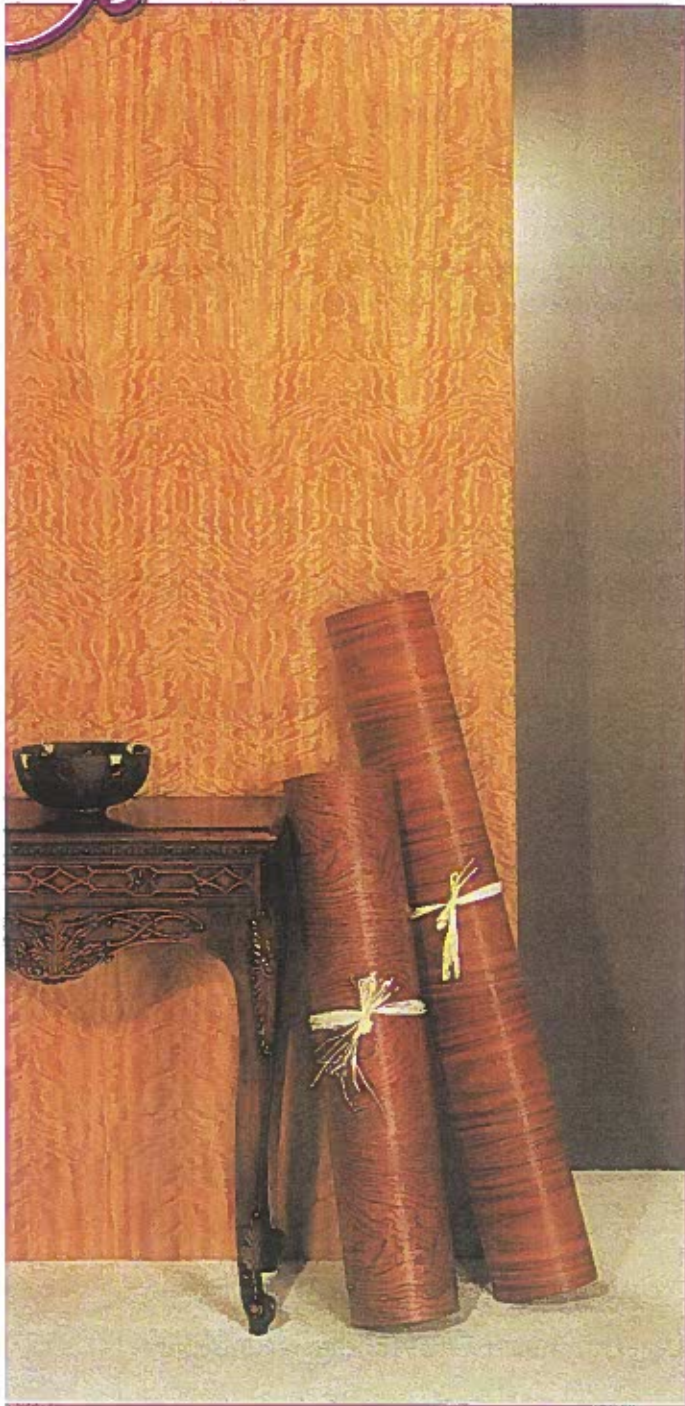


Top: White & White's oversize painted-metal table supports two marble sinks and a bed with a drawer for a nightstand. Bottom: Nothing but bands of paint and birch plywood divides Monospace.



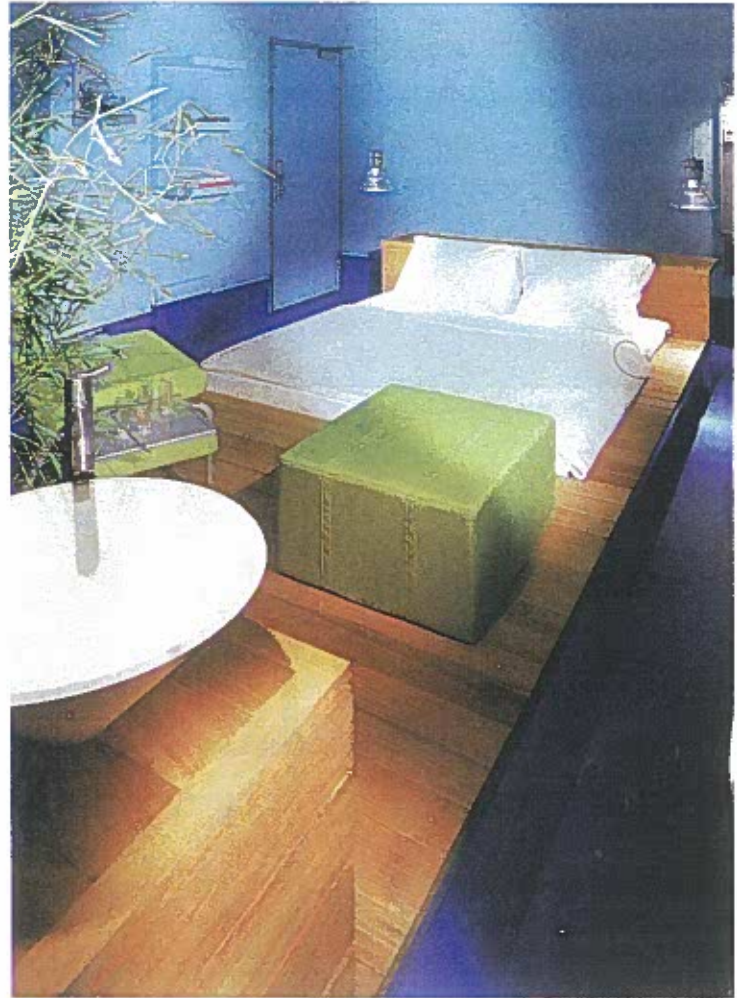
SanFoot

Flexible Wood
Wallcovering



Wall: Movingui Q.C.
Left Roll: Bubinga R.C.
Right Roll: Andes Rosewood F.C.

Crasset placed Indoor Terrace's furniture on an iroko deck beneath which she stowed an extra mattress for friends spending the night—free of charge. A papyrus thicket separates the bed and the shower; the basin is wooden.



in Verona, Italy. Rendez-Vous and White & White's lava bathtubs, now manufactured by Aquamass in Belgium, were developed specifically for this project. For Hi's self-service café, Crasset designed inter-connecting porcelain plates, bowls, and cups called Link.

Missing, on the other hand, are hotel staples. There's no gym, just a "wellness center" with massage tables and a Turkish bath. There are few desks in the rooms and not a mini-bar in sight. Instead, machines on each landing dispense refreshments. "That way, people don't stay locked up in their rooms," explains Chapelet. "They have to get out and explore." What they'll find, he hopes, is less hip hotel and more "house of happiness."

PROJECT TEAM: CHRISTOPHE THELISSON; OSCAR DIAZ; FRANCIS FICHOT.

PORCELAIN TABLEWARE (BAR): MANUFACTURE DE MONACO. CHAIRS (BAR, MEZZANINE, LOBBY), OTTOMANS, FRAME (MEZZANINE, DIGITALE), HANGING WARDROBE (HAPPY DAY, MONO-SPACE), PENDANTS, SCONCES: DOMODINAMICA. SINKS, FITTINGS: AGAPE. LEATHERWORK, CARPET: DOMEAU & PERES. STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: LASRY ET MORO INGENIERIE. GENERAL CONTRACTOR: HCF.