

Interior design as a health and relaxation factor:

Andreas Erke, Head of Design at KLAFS, on the influence of wellness design



Spa Suite in the HUBERTUS Mountain Refugio (Photo: ©HUBERTUS Mountain Refugio Allgäu)

Mr Erke, wellness design has gained enormously in importance in recent years. How do you define wellness design and why is it so relevant for architects and designers today?



Andreas Erke: Absolutely, the significance of wellness design has evolved significantly in recent years with the growing importance of health and well-being in our society. The understanding of how the environment directly affects our psyche is increasingly being integrated into planning. The biggest change in wellness design is therefore undoubtedly the transition from a purely aesthetic approach to a holistic approach that appeals to all the senses and takes into account the mental and physical needs of users. Today, wellness design is more than just a concept for 'beautifying' rooms. It is about creating places that actively promote well-being and where both

body and mind can find peace and quiet. Our planning incorporates findings from psychology, architecture and even biophilia. These help us to design spaces that are more than the sum of their parts. Spaces that are conducive to relaxation, but can also actively contribute to positive change in the lives of their users. This holistic approach is essential today.

For architects and designers, this means that they should consider a space not just as a physical surface, but as a dynamic experience capable of evoking emotional and physiological responses. This is where KLAFS really adds value - through our in-depth knowledge of the interactions between interior design, lighting, choice of materials, various furnishing elements, acoustic design and the wider psychological effects on the user.

It's remarkable how many aspects need to be considered when planning wellness areas. As a wellness designer, what are the key elements that you always have in mind when tackling a project?

Andreas Erke: One crucial point is the multi-sensory effect of rooms. When planning wellness areas, it's about much more than just choosing the right colours and selecting a sauna or steam bath cabin. You have to understand how light, acoustics, haptics, fragrance and temperature interact and how they work together to create an atmosphere that really brings people to rest and allows them to regenerate.

Another key element is individualisation. Everyone has a different idea of wellness and relaxation, which is why rooms need to be flexible and customisable. A standard spa or sauna is no longer enough - the needs of the user must be taken into account in the design. In the end, the key is to design the space in such a way that it is both functional and flexible. At KLAFS, we have the ability to tailor rooms precisely to the needs and preferences of users and create a customised feel-good environment - be it through individually adaptable lighting moods, variable humidity, temperature regulation, equipment details and various sound effects or a wide selection of different woods and



Andreas Erke (left) and Antje Marquardt (right) - both from the KLAFS design department - selecting materials as part of the planning and design process

materials. We also adapt our concepts flexibly to the specific conditions of each room and floor plan in order to achieve a perfect symbiosis of aesthetics and functionality.

You have mentioned the connection between interior design and well-being several times. What can you tell us about the scientific findings that you take into account in your work as a wellness designer?

Andreas Erke: This is where it gets exciting! The influence of space and environment on our mental and physical health is now well documented. Biophilic design in particular - the targeted integration of natural elements - has been proven to have positive effects on our well-being. This starts with the choice of materials: Wood, stone and natural textures have a calming effect and create an immediate connection to nature. We consciously bring daylight into the room, open up the structure to the outside and create views of the greenery. The power of fire and water also flows into our



DAS.GOLDBERG (Photo: ©Alex Gretter)

design: The soothing warmth, cosy light, as well as the diverse forms of water - whether as ice or snow - not only have a sensual effect, but have also been proven to reduce stress. A return to natural originality, which is becoming increasingly important.

At KLAFS, we also work with high-quality woods whose warm tones and natural grains are both aesthetically pleasing and emotionally calming.

Generous glass fronts ensure maximum daylight and create flowing transitions to the outside world and nature. We also specifically integrate acoustic elements and warm light - both important factors in promoting relaxation.

These findings flow directly into our planning. We design spaces that are visually calming and also have a physiological effect - for example by reducing the stress hormone cortisol. The aim is to create places that not only relax in the short term, but also inspire a natural, healthy lifestyle in the long term.

That sounds like a fascinating combination of art, science and technology. What role does technology play in your design process and how do you ensure that it doesn't interfere with well-being?

Andreas Erke: Smart technology is an integral part of modern wellness design, but it must always be in harmony with the natural atmosphere of the room and serve the purpose of absolute relaxation.

We use intelligent systems that optimise the room climate, lighting conditions and the wellness application to enhance the holistic experience. One example of this is the automatic control of lighting, music and temperature - right through to the infusion. We also use technology for personalisation. But technology should never dominate the room.

Rather, it is an invisible companion that helps the user to relax completely and stay in control without interrupting the meditative atmosphere. Our solutions offer places for digital detox combined with smart comfort. So the moment of relaxation can be enjoyed at its best.



BERGWELT GRINDELWALD

What role does sustainability play in your planning process?

Andreas Erke: Sustainability is not just a trend - it's a necessity. And the good thing is: Sustainable design can even improve the quality of the wellness experience. By using natural, environmentally friendly materials and energy-efficient systems such as insulating glazed fronts, we not only create spaces that conserve resources but also promote good health. The real challenge lies in harmonising sustainability with aesthetics and functionality and providing inspiration that stands out from the crowd. At KLAFS, we have managed to find solutions that are both functional and efficient - without compromising the experience and beauty of the wellness area. This is a great advantage for architects and designers who can work with us: You get sustainable concepts that are convincing in every respect.

Finally, what can architects, designers and planners expect from working with KLAFS?

Andreas Erke: You can expect us to be a genuine partner who not only knows the technology and materials, but also understands how to design spaces that really do people good. We have the expertise to develop wellness areas that perfectly reflect the needs of users - multi-sensory experiences, sustainable designs, comfortable and customisable. Our collaboration thrives on a close dialogue between designers, operators and, last but not least, future users. We accompany the entire planning process and help to realise ideas, find innovative solutions and turn every project into an unforgettable feel-good experience.



Corinthia Hotel London (Photo: ©ESPA Life at Corinthia)



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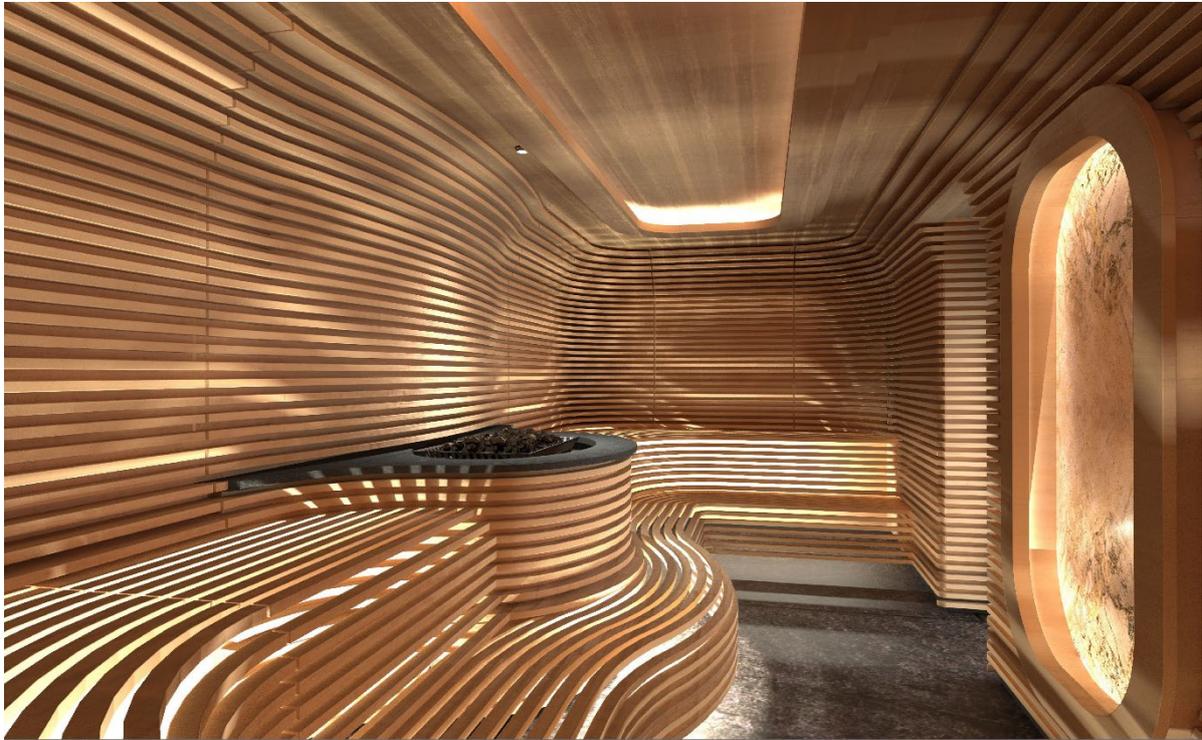
— 60 °C

AIDA



— 40 °C

From the design process: Rendering Wellnessdesign (1)



From the design process: Rendering Wellnessdesign (2)

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About KLAFS:

KLAFS has been creating places of relaxation for body and soul since 1928. Time and again, the company manages to surprise with groundbreaking innovations – such as the space-saving sauna KLAFS S1, which transforms from the size of a wall cabinet to a fully functional sauna within 20 seconds at the push of a button. Thanks to this innovative strength, KLAFS advanced from what was once a small family business to a global industry leader. Today, more than 800 employees work to meet - and exceed - the ever-increasing demands of customers. From small private sauna rooms to luxurious hotel spas. And they do this all over the world, with expert advice from carefully trained technical consultants and on-site service from experienced teams. As a trendsetter in the sauna, pool and spa industry, KLAFS continuously invests in research and development, for example to further increase the energy efficiency of its products.