

**Working with the layers of the past.** BWM Designers & Architects developed a sophisticated hotel concept that extends far beyond just the buildings themselves, and were responsible for the overall realisation of the project. The acclaimed Vienna-based architecture firm was commissioned by Hirmer Immobilien to restore Bad Gastein's Straubingerplatz to its former glory – in line with the principle of preserving history while judiciously complementing it with new elements.

**The Vienna-based architecture firm BWM had the overall responsibility for rehabilitating the hotel ensemble consisting of Hotel Straubinger, Badeschloss and Alte Post, located near Bad Gastein's picturesque waterfall, as well as for designing new interiors and additional structures. The new 4-star superior / 5-star hotels aim to establish Straubingerplatz as a vibrant hub for visitors and locals alike. With this in mind, BWM Designers & Architects, who pride themselves on having successfully realised countless hospitality projects, developed an open hotel concept that extends beyond the 18.000m<sup>2</sup> in floor area.**

#### **A thoughtful approach to heritage-protected architecture.**

Built between 1791 and 1888, Hotel Straubinger, Badeschloss and Alte Post (the old post office building) have long served as an emblem of the popular spa town's historical centre and are now heritage-protected monuments. "Working with the layers of the past" was BWM Designers & Architects' guiding principle for the redesign of Straubingerplatz. "Our planning ideas are always preceded by a precise historical analysis," BWM designer and architect Erich Bernard explains, "in line with the maxim – loosely based on Adolf Loos – that you can change anything, as long as you know what you are changing." The rehabilitation of these heritage-protected buildings called for a thoughtful approach; all measures were coordinated with the Federal Monuments Office and the Bad Gastein municipality. "It is important to us to work with – and not against – the remnants and layers of the past," Bernard continues. "It's precisely those layers that give old buildings their charm and special appeal and make them so unique."

#### **More than just the buildings ...**

The open hotel concept developed by BWM Designers & Architects is mindful of each hotel's unique character and its role as part of the ensemble, as well as taking account of Straubingerplatz as a whole. This centrally located square has all the makings of a lively hub – for visitors and locals alike. BWM not only redesigned the existing buildings (13,000m<sup>2</sup> floor area), but also developed ideas that extend beyond them. The goal was to breathe new life into the entire Straubingerplatz and restore it to its former glory.

#### **Born from the facets of the past.**

A high degree of expertise, care and passion went into renovating these hotels, which have reopened under the Travel Charme Hotels & Resorts brand. In collaboration with moodley brand identity, BWM developed a brand philosophy for the ensemble as a whole. The new Hotel Straubinger, named after a prominent local hotelier family, pays homage to the original grand hotel. It was born from the facets of its past, boasting understated elegance and poignant grandeur. The adjacent Badeschloss celebrates its own history, while taking a playful approach to bathing culture. It is a place where the past meets the present, and its atmosphere is vibrant and sociable. The interior design concept was partly inspired by the production entitled "Mystery Sonatas / for Rosa" by the Belgian choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker.

**Curated art concept.**

Together with Schwanenfliess's Andrea von Goetz, initiator and mastermind behind the renowned art festivals *sommer.frische.kunst* and *art.bad.gastein*, BWM Designers & Architects also developed a specially curated art concept for both Hotel Straubinger and Badeschloss: contemporary artists from both Bad Gastein and beyond (for instance, from the US and South Africa) have provided an exclusive selection of works that interact with the town and its tradition and history as well as with the hotels themselves.

**Down to the smallest detail ...**

The art concept is complemented by a greenery and styling concept specially tailored to both hotels and developed by BWM together with Atelier Peter Weisz. The bamboo palms in the grand hall of Hotel Straubinger, for instance, are more than 2m tall and underline its sumptuous French flair. The Badeschloss, on the other hand, features greenery that reinforces the hotel's retro, bath-inspired look. The décor and styling concept also aligns with the "layers of the past" storytelling. Every single detail – whether a historical found object, a special coffee table book, or a classic or contemporary work of literature – corresponds with the spirit of each individual hotel and has been thoughtfully selected and positioned.

## Grand Hotel Straubinger

### Honouring the historical fabric.

When guests enter the new Grand Hotel Straubinger, they are immediately captivated by the history of this venerable building. In the historical reception area, their room cards are handed to them from a velvet-lined drawer as if they were pieces of jewellery. The grand staircase that leads to the upper floors is straight ahead, while the F&B area is located to the right of it. The double doors of the café, which can seat 40 in total, give onto Straubingerplatz, where the outdoor seating directly on the square can accommodate 12 guests. The bar and the salon directly adjacent to the café provide the perfect setting for the end of day; the salon can be closed off with curtains as needed. In line with the principle of “working with the layers of the past”, all areas feature a contrasting mix of old and new, such as the combination of the existing wainscoting with modern, adapted wall panelling. “Depending on the time of day and how the respective areas are used, the furniture and colour scheme get progressively darker,” says BWM project manager Marlene Gesierich. The colour scheme in the café is dominated by the trendy shade “strawberry cream”. In the salon and bar, sage-green paint was discovered beneath the old wall panelling in the course of renovations, inspiring the use of that same colour for the new look. And the Straubinger cake serving trolley is a nostalgic detail ...

### With a contemporary spin.

The original restaurant entrance, which features stunning rediscovered mural paintings, was transformed into a private dining room for 10 guests. The new entrance to the grand hall is in the new adjacent building with floor-to-ceiling glazing. In the course of restoring the grand hall, gold accents and the original ceiling in the side wings came to light. Historical elements that could not be preserved were given a thoughtful contemporary treatment. With seating for 86 guests, the grand hall features modern, fresh colours such as green, apricot and amber, while abundant greenery, refurbished Lobmeyr wall panels and a new chandelier reinforce the French-inspired atmosphere. Thoughtfully selected colours and patterns, such as the orange used for the pillars and stucco lustro<sup>1</sup>, characterise the 195m<sup>2</sup> hall. The heritage-protected solid oak parquet flooring was restored to its original state. An eye-catching, round dining table is positioned in the centre of the room atop a specially designed carpet that mirrors the ceiling rosette. Placed on top of the table is a spectacular chandelier, newly created by Lobmeyr but based on the lost original piece. The two balconies afford a view of the church.

The wine cellar is located in the basement, which – by virtue of the building’s location on the hillside – features a balcony with a view of the church. The wine cellar transitions into an oblong room with a coved vault, where the chef’s table has a direct line of sight with the kitchen. The original wood ceiling needed to be replaced, and after removing the thermally treated dowelled timber beams, they were used to make the chef’s table, which can seat up to 14 guests. The wine & dine area features original, wrought-iron lamps (restored by Lobmeyr) and terracotta tiles on the table surfaces.

### Swimming out into nature ...

To the left of the entrance, on the west side of the building, is the spa area, which spans the top three floors. Coming from the lobby on the ground floor, guests first enter a courtyard with a chessboard floor (including chess figures), based on the chessboard tile floors in the original treatment rooms. This is a recurring pattern that is also found – albeit in different colours – in the restrooms, corridors and spa reception. On the mezzanine floor are the five new treatment rooms as well as four spa suites, which are spacious rooms featuring free-standing bathtubs, showers installed in converted original basins, and integrated pine saunas. There is a new pool landscape above

the original thermal bath tract, where guests can gaze across Gastein Valley and “swim out into nature” to the sound of the nearby waterfall.

The spa area spans a total area of close to 700m<sup>2</sup> (350m<sup>2</sup> indoors, approx. 330m<sup>2</sup> terrace with pool) and seamlessly merges the old building and the newbuild. Guests coming from the reception and fitness area in the old building can cross into the new building with its outdoor infinity pool and indoor pool. The panorama saunas in the sauna area are located on the top floor; the rest area, furnished with a fireplace, wood storage space and wooden slat acoustic ceiling, is on the second floor. The spa’s colour scheme has a maritime feel, with the ceiling above the pool clad with blue tiles. This is complemented by a mix of thermally modified ash wood, exposed concrete, and chrome and wood details.

### **Unobstructed view.**

The structure adjacent to No. 1 Straubingerplatz could not be preserved and was redesigned as a projecting glass structure with a lamella facade mounted in front of the two upper floors. “The expansive glazing opens the building up to the valley, giving guests an unobstructed view of the natural surroundings,” says Markus Kaplan of BWM Designers & Architects. “The wooden lamellas in front of the glass prevent prying eyes from looking in, thereby ensuring the privacy of these rooms.” Incidentally, in the course of this redesign, the original gap between Hotel Straubinger and the house at No. 1 Straubingerplatz, which was closed up in the early 20th century, was opened up again.

### **Like a painting ...**

With regard to Hotel Straubinger’s 46 guest rooms, the objective was to preserve the historical fabric, while judiciously complementing it with new elements. Both the old and new elements are informed by the motto of “new luxury”. It is the specific charm and authenticity of the historical fabric that makes this place unique. The patina on the walls, the surviving doors and other original artefacts are priceless vestiges of the old hotel. These have been thoughtfully complemented with new elements in order to meet modern standards and requirements. The overall composition of colour and light is inspired by the chiaroscuro of historical oil paintings, resulting in an expressive use of light and dark shades. As much as possible of the historical building was preserved. It gives the appearance of having been dipped in dark oil paint; beyond that “paint line”, it remains untouched.

## FRAME AWARDS 2024 WINNER/ Hotel of the Year

IN AUSTRIA, A RESTORED HERITAGE HOTEL IS DESIGNED TO INTEGRATE ITS NATURAL SURROUNDINGS

Situated in a picturesque Austrian valley, the BWM Designers & Architects-designed Grand Hotel Straubinger was named Hotel of the Year for its integration with its striking surroundings.

‘Stunning location’ was the first remark from jury member Ismael Abedin Ingelmo, founder and director of DXMID, about Grand Hotel Straubinger, a hotel in Austria’s picturesque Gastein Valley, a spa and winter sports destination. Indeed, the hotel is designed to integrate with its surroundings, with a new pool that offers panoramic vistas of the mountainous landscape and nearby waterfall.

But to win in its category, the hotel had to do more than merely offer breathtaking views. BWM Designers & Architects collaborated with the Federal Monuments Office and local authorities to meticulously restore the heritage-protected buildings, blending historical charm with contemporary luxury while minimizing waste – a factor that resonated strongly with the jury. Arthur Guimarães, CEO of Arthur Guimarães Architects, described it as a ‘really inspiring project that demonstrates careful research during the design development phase. The dialogue between nature, people, history and contemporaneity provides a sophisticated and welcoming ambience. Every detail was carefully considered, resulting in a high level of design that’s reflected in each aspect of the hotel.’ Ronnie Belizaire, studio practice leader and principal at HKS Inc., shared a similar sentiment: ‘This project does a great job of blending old and new, juxtaposing timeless and classic design with modern natural elements.’

## Facts & Figures

### Task

Design-build services for the revitalisation of three existing listed hotel buildings (gross floor area approx. 13.000 m<sup>2</sup>) and construction of a new building (GFA approx. 6,000 m<sup>2</sup>), as well as development of the corporate design for the hotel ensemble consisting of Grand Hotel Straubinger (46 rooms) and Badeschloss (102 rooms)

### Client

Straubingerplatz Immobilien GmbH

### Project data

Completion: autumn 2023

Address: Straubingerplatz 2–4, 5640 Bad Gastein, Austria

GFA: approx. 19,000 m<sup>2</sup>

### BWM team

Erich Bernard, Markus Kaplan, Peter Foschi, Marlene Gesierich, Martina Lehner, Claus Hasslinger, Elisabeth Albenberger, Ismail Berkel, Maximilian Fasslabend, Lena Hainzinger, Tanja Hainzl, Clemens Hörl, Marlies Klauser, Ales Kosak, Sonja Leitgeb, Massimiliano Marian, Elisabeth Morillo-Napetschnig, Fridolin Öhlinger, Tjasa Rus

### Project partners

Design-build / interior design: BWM Designers & Architects

Brand strategy and branding: moodley brand identity

Execution planning: zwei Architekten

Construction supervision: edelmueller.architektur.management

Structural design: Gschwandtl & Lindlbauer ZT GmbH

Building services engineering: Ingenieurbüro Lothar Mayer GmbH

Construction physics: TAS Bauphysik GmbH

Fire protection: Norbert Rabl Ziviltechniker GmbH

Construction coordination: Lackinger BauKO GmbH

Historical architectural expert opinion: EIDOS Architektur ZT GmbH

Surveyor: Gernot Fleischmann

Landscape planning: Simma Zimmermann Landschaftsarchitektinnen OG

F&B consulting: Baysics, Georges Desrues

Lighting design: Pokorny Lichtarchitektur

Carpet design / guidance system contributor: Gabriele Bruner

Interior styling concept: Atelier Peter Weisz together with BWM Designers & Architects

Art concept: BWM in cooperation with Andrea von Goetz of Schwanenfluss

# Straubingerplatz, Bad Gastein

Preview press photos



BWM\_Bad Gastein\_Grand Hotel Straubinger\_Suite View  
©BWM\_Designers & Architects\_Ana Barros



BWM\_Bad Gastein\_Hotelensemble\_01  
©BWM\_Designers & Architects\_Lukas Schaller



BWM\_Bad Gastein\_Waterfall\_  
©BWM\_Designers & Architects\_Ana Barros



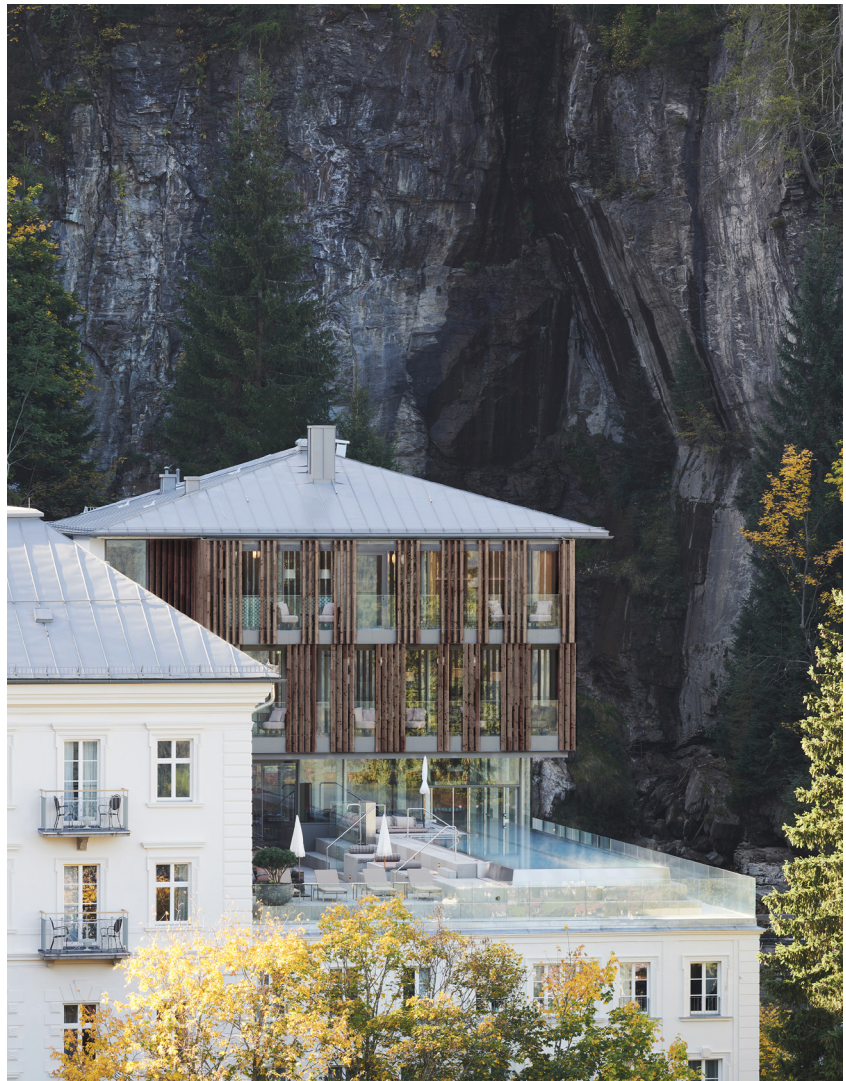
BWM\_Bad Gastein\_Hotelensemble\_02  
©BWM\_Designers & Architects\_Lukas Schaller

# Straubingerplatz, Bad Gastein / Grand Hotel Straubinger

Preview press photos



BWM\_Bad Gastein\_Grand Hotel Straubinger\_Spa02 ©BWM\_Designers & Architects\_Ana Barros



BWM\_Bad Gastein\_Grand Hotel Straubinger\_Spa\_Outdoor©BWM\_DesignersArchitects\_LukasSchaller.jpg



BWM\_Bad Gastein\_Grand Hotel Straubinger\_Spa Pool 00 © Arne Nagel AMOAeK



BWM\_Bad Gastein\_Grand Hotel Straubinger\_Facade © Arne Nagel\_AMOA eK



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BWM\_Bad Gastein\_Grand Hotel Straubinger\_Staircase\_©BWM\_Designers & Architects\_  
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BWM\_Bad Gastein\_Grand Hotel Straubinger\_Corridor\_©BWM\_Designers & Architects



BWM\_Bad Gastein\_Grand Hotel Straubinger\_Reception01\_©BWM\_Designers & Architects\_  
Ana Barros

# Straubingerplatz, Bad Gastein / Grand Hotel Straubinger

Preview press photos



BWM\_GrandHotelStraubinger\_  
PrivateDining\_©BWM\_DesignersArchitects\_  
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BWM\_Bad Gastein\_Grand Hotel Straubinger\_  
Cafe 02©BWM\_Designers & Architects\_  
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BWM\_GrandHotelStraubinger\_  
ChefsTable\_©BWM\_DesignersArchitects\_  
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BWM\_Bad Gastein\_Grand Hotel Straubinger\_  
Bar ©BWM\_Designers & Architects\_  
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# Straubingerplatz, Bad Gastein / Grand Hotel Straubinger

Preview press photos



BWM\_GrandHotelStraubinger\_Restaurant\_GrandHall\_©ArneNagel\_AMOAeK



BWM\_Bad Gastein\_Grand Hotel Straubinger\_ Grand Hall 01©BWM\_Designers & Architects\_ Ana Barros

# Straubingerplatz, Bad Gastein / Grand Hotel Straubinger

Preview press photos



BWM\_Bad Gastein\_Grand Hotel Straubinger\_Pine Suite01 ©BWM\_Designers & Architects Ana Barros



BWM\_Bad Gastein\_Grand Hotel Straubinger\_Pine Suite 02\_ ©Arne Nagel\_AMOAeK



BWM\_Bad Gastein\_Grand Hotel Straubinger\_Room Detai 01\_ ©BWM\_Designers & Architects \_ Ana Barros



BWM\_Bad Gastein\_Grand Hotel Straubinger\_Room Detail\_02 ©BWM\_Designers & Architects Ana Barros

BWM\_Bad Gastein\_Grand Hotel Straubinger\_Suit02 ©BWM\_Designers & Architects



# Straubingerplatz, Bad Gastein / Grand Hotel Straubinger

Preview press photos



BWM\_Bad Gastein\_Grand Hotel Straubinger\_groundfloor © BWM\_Designers & Architects



BWM\_Bad Gastein\_Grand Hotel Straubinger\_first-floor © BWM\_Designers & Architects

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