

# Different league

Looking to revamp your spa's thermal area? Klafs' Detlef Jaeth and Thorsten Bichler tell **Amanda Pauley** the design trends that will set your journey apart and the fads to avoid

**G**etting the thermal area of your spa just right can be a real challenge, whether you're a small resort, hotel-based operation or huge wellness destination. These facilities can make or break a client's experience at your property. Operators are now putting more time, thought and energy into designing a thermal journey that wows.

German sauna and spa solutions manufacturer Klafs has been in the industry for 91 years, helping more than 10,000 businesses across the globe deliver a luxurious experience through heat, ice, steam and salt. The company's projects include creating a functional and understated steam bath in Chalet Anna Maria in Lech, Austria; a luxurious ancient Arab spa area in hotel Mondrian Doha, Qatar; and a classic wellness sauna at the Faena Hotel in Miami Beach, Florida, US.

We quizzed Klafs' managing director of spa division, Detlef Jaeth, and managing director of international sales, Thorsten Bichler, on the thermal trends shaking up the industry and the common design challenges spa operators face.

## What common mistakes do operators make when designing a thermal journey?

**Thorsten Bichler:** It's mainly wrong planning that can turn a spa vision into an economic disaster. There are numerous preconditions that need to be taken into account, and in advance. For example, are there cultural

peculiarities? What's the climate like? What does spa mean in that specific environment? Does it suit the market position of the business – for example, whether it's a hotel-based spa or a destination resort? It turns out that copying a successful spa concept and transferring it somewhere else is more than risky in this regard.

**Detlef Jaeth:** The technical infrastructure and daily operation and processes are simply a matter of profound planning, expertise and experience. The same applies to the urge of following design trends. It requires a wider look at everything to find the exact trade off between timelessness and a contemporary atmosphere – unless you can afford to rebuild everything from scratch every five years.

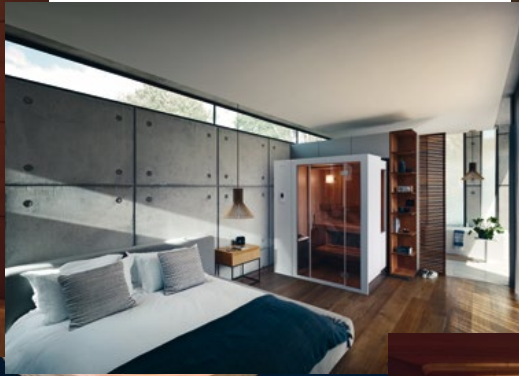
## What product innovations are you launching this year?

**Jaeth:** This year's innovations can be assigned to the main idea of multifunctionality and multi-sensory perception. Definite highlights in this regard are the Klafs Ice Lounge – a sophisticated new refreshment concept; Klafs Atmosphere – high-resolution video screens that convey high-quality nature motion pictures in sauna cabins; and our patented dry salt inhalation module Microsalt.

We've also worked a lot on our new Event Sauna, which serves as a complementary offer for all spa concepts that focus on particular "wow effects", rather than on the conventional and minimalistic detox spa area.

**Bichler:** Some outstanding places we are working with include the Great Northern in

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Left to right: Klafs Ice Lounge, The Faena Hotel in Miami, space-saving Sauna S1, spa area in Doha's Mondrian Hotel, Atmosphere by Klafs, the Sauna Aurora

Denmark, the Hyatt Regency Aqaba Ayla Resort in Jordan, and the Reebok Sports Club in Armenia. What we provide for these businesses is turnkey solutions to ensure that each and every individual place turns into a popular and prosperous spa area, taking into account the different premises in terms of climate, culture, target groups and sustainability.

### What are the big trends in thermal area layouts?

**Jaeth:** There's not a blueprint for the perfect facility composition. Variety is the word because wellness has now become even more of a lifestyle – developing into a diverse arena which is experience-driven. That's why consistency is more important than ever.

Whether your business is a day spa, wellness weekend stay or business hotel spa, visitors are more informed on what the market has to offer and are keen to find their preferred treatment, or the facilities for the sauna bathing they individually need. Moreover, they appreciate authenticity and sustainability, which are two aspects that turn a visit into an experience that's likely to be shared with friends and family.

### How do you think the sector will develop in the coming years?

**Jaeth:** Our strategy in the commercial sector is somewhat double-tracked when looking to the coming years. On the one hand, there is an ever-growing request for "clean" and "detox" spa areas – calm places to breathe and recover, with a functional design, timeless atmosphere and sustainable operating.

At the same time, there is now the need for "wow" effects and the desire to offer guests everything that's possible: staging events, creating immersive spa worlds with dedicated designs, sophisticated automation, and the like. Both worlds are the subject of further research and engineering in the company.

**Bichler:** Moreover, in a global context, we will be active in learning and understanding the varying needs of different sauna and spa cultures. For example, if you compare Europe with the US or China, they are quite different. We want to understand and ensure that we can successfully continue realising every spa vision, everywhere, as a turnkey solution.

For many years in Central Europe we've been working in a supporting and cooperative network consisting of planners, architects, partners and designers, which ensures our customers the utmost innovation, expertise and quality. We are more than confident that this will work out as well in emerging spa markets over the coming years. **WSW**

Detlef Jaeth (pictured left) is managing director of the spa division at Klafs, and Thorsten Bichler (right) is in charge of international sales. Klafs has more than 91 years' experience creating private and public spas according to the specific needs of small, medium and large commercial projects.

