



MASTER OF MAXIMALISM

MARTIN BRUDNIZKI is the gilt-edged interior architect making playgrounds for the super rich. As he unveils his latest project in Hong Kong, *Prestige* meets the most in-demand name in luxury hospitality.

Words: MADELAINE CLARK



Martin Brudnizki

For a man whose past output includes installing a candy-green striped swimming pool in a Le Marais basement, adorning cocktail bars with giant aquamarine mermaid statues, fashioning bathroom taps from majestic gilded swans and designing a restaurant where customers dine underneath flying unicorn statues, Martin Brudnizki isn't quite the raving eccentric you'd expect.

Prestige meets the Stockholm-born interior architect and product designer via Zoom to talk about one of his latest projects, Deep Water Pavilia in Wong Chuk Hang. His level-headed and calm demeanour belies his status as the most sought-after name in luxury hospitality – and now residential – design.

If the name isn't ringing any bells and you consider yourself at least *slightly* well-heeled, then you've surely sipped champagne at a Brudnizki-designed bar, dined in one of his theatrically adorned restaurants, let loose in

one of his fabricated private members clubs, and will likely have the Instagram content to prove it. Full marks if you've stayed in a Brudnizki-designed hotel room or even managed to snag a reservation at another of his latest projects – Hotel Splendido's Villa Beatrice in Portofino – this summer.

His decorative, colourful and often wackadoodle approach to interiors has amassed an almighty inventory of successes, including Annabel's London, Fouquet's New York, Le Grand Mazarin in Paris, Soho Beach House Miami, Broadwick Soho Hotel, Chiki, Sexy Fish (Miami, London and Dubai) and The Dorchester's Vesper Bar, cementing his status as the maestro of unabashed maximalism, defying the stuffy mores of luxury hospitality one clashing colour scheme, tasselled chaise longue and lavish mosaic-tiled bathroom at a time. In a social-media age when quality service and food alone won't cut it, the social media

appeal of his projects is helping them defy hospitality industry challenges post-Covid.

In fact, Brudnizki's aesthetic has become so coveted he was forced to add a residential practice to his repertoire. What began as a favour to do up the house of long-term collaborator, billionaire Richard Caring (more on him later), seven years ago, is now a full-blown business with a dedicated team. "Suddenly we've got all of these incredible projects with incredible people," he says. "Now we do royal palaces and residential projects all over the world, from America to Europe, the UK and the Middle East." (Although when asked which, he remains tight-lipped.)

Deep Water Pavilia isn't Brudnizki's debut in Hong Kong. The 2019 design of the Tsim Sha Tsui Fortnum & Mason store and the 181 restaurant above it was his first dalliance, which he decked out with zingy orange banquettes and an art deco-inspired cocktail bar whose backdrop is a hand-painted exotic jungle mural commissioned from artist Melissa White – and where, on a busy day, you're sure to pass people posing for photos on its staircase.

The latest project – which opens in late 2026 – took him and his team to the south side of Hong Kong Island to design the communal living areas and common rooms for Deep Water Pavilia, the newest upscale residential project in the district. Comprising 447 luxury flats, the space has been co-developed by New World, Empire Group, CSI Properties, Lai Sun and the MTR Corporation, and is set to become the next enviable address, thanks to its additional proximity to Aberdeen Marina Yacht Club, Deep Water Bay and Aberdeen Country Park.

The brief was quite directive, with the client telling Brudnizki's team to take inspiration from a painting: Henri Rousseau's *The Dream*. Thought to depict a reverie of his mistress, the 1910 fantasy work by the French artist depicts an exotic jungle scene with birds, fruits, flowers, animals and trees, with a reclining female nude on a sofa. While the project is still under construction, sketches and renderings showcase Brudnizki's approach inspired by Rousseau's surrealist greenery, with the lounge resembling a verdant, leafy space with high ceilings; there's also an aptly named peacock billiard room and an emerald cinema room. "The idea was really about bringing the outside inside the garden and nature, but making it in a much more stylised way," he says. Proof of Brudnizki's caché saw offers



Above: a rendering of the lounge at Deep Water Pavilia. Right: the bar at 181 Fortnum & Mason Hong Kong

for the apartments at Pavilia reportedly 21 times oversubscribed.

Has a client's demand ever been too outlandish? "Not really, we're the designers who love the most outlandish ideas and work on them and make them a reality. Look at Annabel's or lots of our other projects. We love that conversation with our clients, it excites us. A lot of designers have a very strict idea of what they do, and they don't like to venture outside of that comfort zone, whereas we love that challenge of getting something done and sort of doing it the right sort of way for us."

Born and raised in Sweden to a Polish father and German mother, Brudnizki studied economics at the University of Stockholm before enrolling at The American University in London to study interior architecture. He cites his early influences as architect Carlo Scarpa and designers Paul Dupré-Lafon and Dorothy Draper. He first gained experience in the industry working for art gallerist David Gill and interior designer David Collins before establishing his own studio in 2000.

Six years later came his first high-profile project, the redesign of Scott's seafood restaurant in Mayfair. "The second oldest restaurant in London, it was a really big thing," he says. Next came Soho Beach House Miami in 2010, which he says boosted his profile further in America, and led to his setting up a New York studio in 2012. He's since been involved with Fouquet's, the Fifth Avenue hotel and The Beekman.

"But the clear moment that brought us to where we are now is really Annabel's, London," he says. The private member's club

in Mayfair, opened by Mark Birley in 1963, who named it after his first wife, has since upheld its reputation as one of the most exclusive haunts in the British capital. In 2007 it was bought by Richard Caring, the British billionaire who first made his fortune in the rag trade exporting from Hong Kong before venturing into hospitality. As the owner of Caprice Holdings, Caring's restaurant empire includes all 40 branches of the Ivy, Harry's Bar, 34 Mayfair, Daphne's and Sexy Fish. In 2018 he carried out a £55 million refurbishment of the club, opening in a new four-floor townhouse, with Brudnizki charged with the interiors.

The redesign made headlines around the world for being one of the most lavish and outlandish interior projects the world had seen. For which Brudnizki eschewed the old cosy county house decor favoured by Birley and instead created a full-on flashy den of bacchanalian frivolity. Out with dog portraits and low-lit lighting, in with pink onyx sinks, rose chandeliers, hand-painted murals of maharajas and elephants, intricate De Gournay wallpaper, and tigers and parrots and flowers adorning the carpets to walls. Brudnizki even installed a statue of a winged unicorn floating on a hot air balloon on the staircase.

"For Annabel's, the first task was

converting the nightclub into a day and night club," explains Brudnizki of his magnum opus. "And so I thought about Richard as a person and how he loves gardens and plants and animals. So the narrative became about flora and fauna. The ground floor is the English garden, the second floor is about the Brazilian garden, because his wife is Brazilian, and then there are the Indian and Mexican gardens at the top." The basement nightclub invokes Paradise Lost, the poem about Adam and Eve. "It's the perfect sort of story because it's about the fall of man, and that's what always happens at the end of the night in a nightclub when they've had too much to drink."

While the project raised his profile significantly, he cites his greatest satisfaction thus: "When people tell me when they walk in they smile and know they're going to have the best time there; that for me means everything." Does the concept of fun drive his designs? And does he think the world needs more of it? "I think it's about fantasy and escapism. Life is busy. There's lots going on, and we all have to deal with so many things today. I think having escapes is very important not only to relax but to feed your mind too."

Brudnizki explains that although he's always had an inclination for fantasy, its



Left: interiors at the new Villa Beatrice. Below: Le Grand Mazarin's candy-striped swimming pool


developed further over his 25 years as a designer. "With Annabel's, Richard gave me the opportunity to explore that side of my brain even more. If I'd done this with any other client, they'd just think I'm absolutely mad." What makes his relationship with Caring work so well? "We've known each other and worked together for almost 20 years. And I think we just understand each other and there's an enormous amount of respect. It doesn't matter if I'm in a bad mood or if he's in a bad mood; we always want to make it work."

This month will also see the opening of a slightly more demure Brudnizki project, Villa Beatrice, part of the Belmond Splendido hotel in Portofino, where last year his renovation of the hotel rooms opened. The achingly beautiful interiors of the five-bedroom private villa, which can be rented out in its entirety, feature hand-painted furniture, pretty whitewashed walls and scagliola, local textiles and ceramics. "It's all based on coastal design the Italian way and informed by the Ligurian coast. So we're using mainly things that historically come from this region, so it feels like part of Italy." He claims to love all things Italian and cites Visconti's *Il Leopard* (The Leopard) as one of his favourite films.

As well as the nonstop demand for projects, Brudnizki is also occupied with By Objects, his design company from which you can buy his creations – sofas, tables and chairs. "We design a lot of furniture, and I always wanted to do my own product

brand. So we started it a couple of years back, and then we opened a shop on Pimlico Road in Chelsea one and a half years ago."

Expect a themed book, *My Life in Colours*, published by Rizzoli later this year too. "It's a journey through my projects arranged by colour," he says. Does he have a favourite hue? "I like most colours, and I like combinations of colours. I like mixing yellow with blue, or yellow with green, or pink and green. I also like the trifacta where I worked with three finishes and three colours, but you have to make sure they all work."

And that's the thing with Brudnizki: just one will never do. 



Brudnizki-designed interiors at the Broadwick Soho Hotel