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STORYTELLING
WITH SHERLOCK
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ANDREW SCOTT

TECHNOLOGY
VERSUS FASHION,
ART, FILM
AND FOOD

WILL.I.AM
ON TURNING
POST-CONSUMER
WASTE INTO A
LUXURY BRAND



Do Not Disturb

Words by Vicky Ilankovan

Protruding out of a landscape of rolling meadows, scenic ponds and thick forests, is Glampark – a city created between central Zurich and its airport that promises to encapsulate a completely new and modern neighbourhood by 2020. It is here, ahead of the trend, and in impressive style, that Carsten K. Rath elected to erect the colossal monument to architectural finesse and contemporary hospitality that is Kameha Grand, Zurich.

Straight-talking, pragmatic and relaxed, as is his reputation, Rath has no qualms about explaining his reasons for building here as “one: there is no free space to build on the lake anymore; two: this area is very hip and up-and-

coming and will be a busy area, like Canary Wharf; three: here we have a lot of space which we need because it’s a grand hotel, not a small hotel.”

Rath started the company seven years ago after successful stints at Ritz-Carlton, Kempinski, and Starwood in Europe. Tired of “corporate games,” he set about looking for a name that exemplified his philosophy that “whatever we do, the guest is at the centre of the universe” as well as being “available on the internet.” This is how he found out about King Kamehameha, the first and only emperor of the Hawaiian Islands, whose given title translates as ‘The one and only.’ “This name,” Rath states, “describes my guests.”

However – ever practical – he chose to drop the “King” and “-meha” to make the Google search easier.

Kameha Grand sees unconventional interior designer, Marcel Wanders, join forces with architectural powerhouse, Sebastian Knorr, to create 224 Premium and Deluxe rooms; two Executive Suites; the opulent King Kameha Suite; six Business Suites; two restaurants; a gorgeous spa with outdoor areas; the largest ballroom in Switzerland; and 11 unique theme suites ranging from The Workout Suite with its personal inbuilt gym, to the Burlesque Suite shrouded in plush red velvet and containing all sorts of naughty props for guests to (per) use. Each room is large and bright with incredible attention to detail and fun touches such as Swiss chocolate wall paneling, an interactive Do Not Disturb button, and a sauna system contained within the Kahama Lake motif shower. Suites even contain mini hidden kitchens with induction stoves.

When questioned on this rather unusual feature, Rath casually shrugs and says, “I believe today that luxury is a matter of choice. I don’t think that today you can tell a great what to do. It’s a matter of choice: some people want room service, others want a vending machine, others want to go to a restaurant, and others want to cook their own meals.”

Throughout the hotel’s interior, Wanders pairs his Dutch heritage with his Swiss environment, stamping tulips alongside Kameha flower-on-cowbell lights. International marriages continue in the two restaurants – the Italian L’Unico and the Japanese Yu Niyo – the PureGold Bar – a pun in itself whose walls are adorned with gold Swiss Francs – the English Gentleman’s Smoker’s Lounge, and the colourful Shisha Lounge. What ties everything together is a sense of luxury coupled with high-tech functionality, emblazoned with the overarching Kameha motto: “Life is Grand.”

After having the opportunity to live in 12 different countries over four continents, Rath claims that he has learnt a lot from his travels about what is best for his guests and we are certainly in agreement. His admiration for Japan is clear as he speaks of his other Japanese restaurants in Germany, stating that, “The Japanese have the highest respect for food.” His selection is much appreciated, as the quality of food at Yu Niyo is truly outstanding.

Gesturing absentmindedly, he elaborates, “Everything you see here is a result of what I believe the international traveller wants: something built for the future, with coziness



but also surprises, all of the highest quality at all times.”

If only one thing can be said about Kameha Grand, it is that it certainly has been built with the future in mind: there are Power Kitz buttons in the bar that you can place your phone over to automatically charge; the lift has a card activated touch panel outside of it, with no buttons marred by the black mirrored interior. Despite this, the innovations feel effortless and comfortable. The clinical strictness one feels in high tech environments is distinctly absent, this may be partially due to the inclusion of the ‘Kameha flower’ motif that propagates amongst the modernity, as well as the stellar yet candid service.

“Today, nature and natural feel is also a sign of flamboyancy: I want technology to make my life easy but want to be surrounded by a different feeling. I think the 90’s style of having everything strict and in order and almost Bauhaus is gone. That’s yesterday. Today is more about individuality; it’s more colourful. Sometimes I think it’s a remix of the late 60’s.”

Having cornered the market with its kooky design aesthetic after only a few months – the hotel officially launched on 1st March 2015 – Kameha Grand is not slowing down anytime soon. October will see the launch of Rath’s favourite suite, the Space Suite (although all he will tell us at this point is that it is an art suite), whilst this winter will be marked by the opening of a traditional Swiss Alp restaurant on top of the roof, complete with Swiss fondue. Next summer, Rath plans to “tear this down and create a rooftop beach bar” but like all good businessmen, recognises that “We have to walk before we start to run.”

LEFT: KAMEHA GRAND ZUERICH DOME
ABOVE: RELAXATION ROOM