

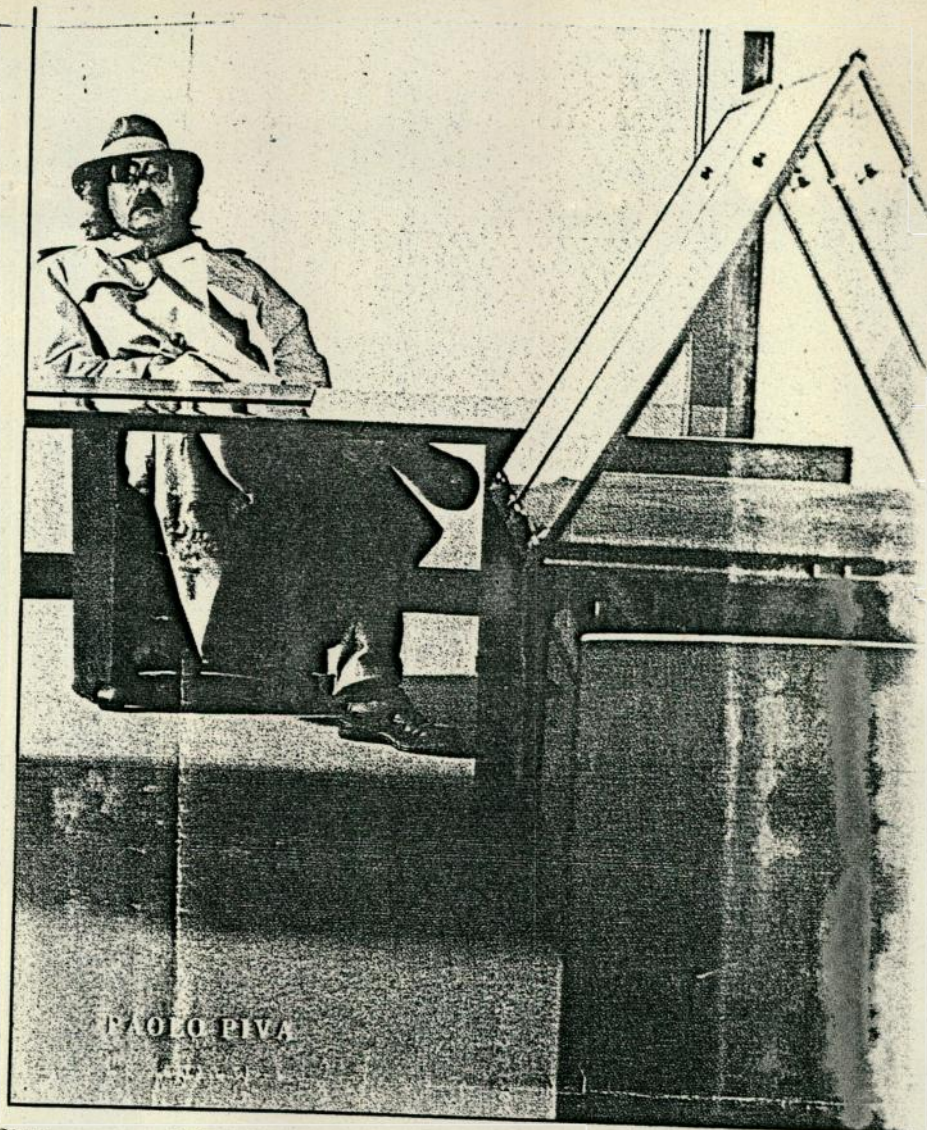
MILAN

#12 *Ferre*

ZEST FOR LIVING

Artful interior designs from
nun and Piva—combining
form, function and fantasy . . .

The restaurants favored by
Italian fashion designers for
whom dining, too, is an art.



PAOLO PIVA

MATTEO THUN



Sitting on top of the world of design

Matteo Thun, the dashing charismatic Italian interior designer, declares that he has renounced the philosophy of "cultural utopianism" in his work for what he sweepingly calls "worldwide communication with pictures."

Heavy stuff, but beneath the grave pronouncements Thun is so fond of making, there are some very simple, honest truths. "Rather than emphasizing the technical function in design, I emphasize the visual function, which doesn't require any cultural knowledge," he continues, holding aloft his celebrated sugar bowl with enormous Mickey Mouse ears (the bowl's handles) as an example. "You don't need to have read any book to understand it. They laugh at it in Uganda the same way they laugh at it in Japan."

A founding member of the Milanese architectural group, Sottsass Associati, as well as of the groundbreaking Mem-

phis design collective, Thun went into business for himself in 1984—and has never looked back. He hasn't had time. Corporations in search of an identity line up outside his door in Milan for the kind of assertive, fiercely imaginative image they say only he can provide. For Campari, he has designed a best-selling cocktail shaker; for Tiffany, crystal and ceramic vases. (He has even designed watches for Bulgari.)

Many of Thun's friends are fashion designers, and he has been inspired by their work. "Of course, you can deal with carpeting like fashion," he says. "It's like buying a new dress. Why not, after all, dress your room?"

Why not indeed, especially if Thun, 37, is doing the decorating, yet another service his company offers. No matter what the nature of the commission, his aim is not "to satisfy my cultural frustrations," as he might easily have done in his Memphis days, but to rigorously satisfy the needs of the client.

—Christopher Petkanas

On the cutting edge of both furniture and architecture

Three years ago Paolo Piva took the interior design world by happy surprise and created for B & B Italia a collection of seven chairs, all with the same square base but each with a different back. His goal, he says, was to "destroy" the traditional dining room landscape and introduce an element of tension between table and chairs. Since then, European dining rooms have never been the same.

On the cutting edge of Italian furniture design from the time he sold his first work to Fama in 1970 at age 20 (the piece is still in production today), Piva is also a wildly successful architect with private clients scattered all over the Continent. His home is his office, Il Torrione, a 16th-century castle in Biella, 37 miles outside Milan. With a staff of 10, he produces everything from Swatch watches to kitchens (for the Italian firm Dada) to upholstered armchairs (for Wittmann in Austria).

Though his prestigious clientele may be pleading for more, each company receives from his studio only one work per year. "It's better to do a few pieces that are original and sound than to do many that are technically imperfect and not especially creative," reasons Piva.

The idea for spinning off seven variations of the same chair originated at Il Torrione, where Piva has no less than 30 chairs—no two alike—pulled up to a massive table in the dining room. Some are by designer friends, others are his own and still others are antiques. "I discovered that everyone who came to dinner wanted to choose their own chairs," he says. "Today people entertain more at home than in public places. And in the space in which you live, you should have the possibility of expressing yourself in all your complexity."

Piva says if he has a "signature" it can be divined in his use of, and respect for, materials. Typically, although wood is employed in very small quantities, only the very best wood, such as walnut burl, is used. Materials "that age gracefully as you do" are the ones he finds himself working in the most. "A leather couch is like a leather jacket," reflects Piva. "The more you use it, the more comfortable it becomes."

—C.P.

A fashionable love affair with food

If there is one thing the Milanese establishment is just as good at as designing, it's dining. Ask the city's top tailoring talents where they like to eat and what they like to eat once they get there, and stand back. The hotly expressed opinions and preferences flood in like descriptions of their latest collections.

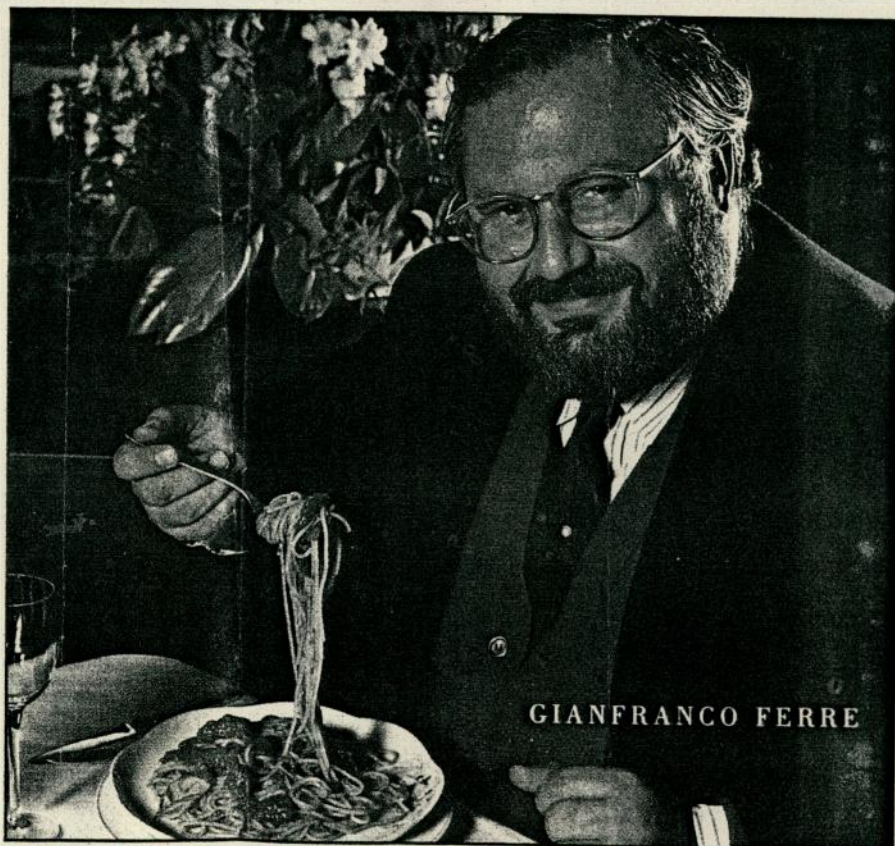
For Gianfranco Ferre, who couldn't hide his love affair with food if he wanted to, St. Andrews, Torre di Pisa and Santa Lucia have the most savory kitchens in town. "St. Andrews is perfect for lunch, even a business lunch," says the couturier. "The atmosphere is soft, smart and refined, the crowd made up mainly of businessmen, well-groomed Milanese ladies and not so many fashion people. It's very convenient because it's close to where I work—I've been coming here for ages."

Ferre starts his favorite meal there with antipasti—either a large salad made with a variety of greens in a light vinaigrette dressing, or prosciutto, cut fine, and served with grated horseradish. The first course is spaghetti combined

with filets of San Marzano tomatoes, slightly heated, finely grated shallots and fresh basil leaves. The main course, "Filetto alla Ferre," is a half-pound filet mignon, grilled rare, on a bed of red salad. This is accompanied by lightly sautéed arugula and baby zucchini, covered with filets of tomatoes and thyme. For dessert, he will have an assortment of fresh fruit or apples cooked with cloves and a dash of Piccolit, a dessert wine.

If Ferre frequents St. Andrews for a breather from the fashion world, he goes to Torre di Pisa to be around others who share his métier—models, photographers, journalists and fellow fashion designers. "A nice, noisy, funny restaurant," he says it's "good for dinner with cheerful friends who, like me, love various kinds of pasta and homemade apple pie." Ferre also prizes the place because it's refreshingly unpretentious, the waiters (he lets them choose the wine) are fast on their feet, and the proprietors are friendly and welcoming.

In spite of the "grumpy" owners of Santa Lucia, Ferre insists it's the "right place" for a late dinner, which for him inevitably includes fried spaghetti and skewered mozzarella cooked on a spit. Like many of (CONTINUED ON PAGE 133)



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the restaurant's patrons ("well-to-do 'bohemians,' actors and singers"), he tends to book late, arriving after an evening of work in his atelier or after the theater.

Giorgio Armani never budges from his office for lunch, but when dinnertime rolls around the designer can often be spied, along with Ferre, at Santa Lucia, at La Briciola or at Bagutta. "Briciola is full of beautiful young people and very good families," says Armani, who usually orders one of the many risottos and a plate of nicely charred, mixed grilled vegetables.

At Bagutta, a magnet for writers, bankers and out-of-towners, which he recommends in the summer because of the garden, tradition dictates grilled sole and rigatoni alla Bagutta—the pasta sauced with tomatoes and cream. To wash it all down, there's lots of Armani's favorite red, Dolcetto Jiacosa.

Two of Krizia's Mariuccia Mandelli's three top restaurants are perfect for star-gazing: During the ready-to-wear collections in March and October, she says, both Bice and Torre di Pisa (as Ferre has noted) are filled to overflowing with designers, retailers and American, English and French journalists. Whereas those places are unmistakably trendy, she observes, her third favorite, El Toulou, is "elegant, chic and sophisticated—a restaurant you'd reserve for a very important evening party." The exquisitely steamed fish is also a powerful draw.

Tai Missoni was going to Boeucc (pro-

nounced "birch") even before the war and says the refined atmosphere has hardly changed in the decades since. The only difference now is that he goes with his wife Rosita. "The owner Paolo Brioschi is a friend of all his customers, the service is very precise and attentive and the cooking is classic and extremely good," says Missoni. "Everything is just as it should be. And while it's adapted to work lunches, I tend to go in the evening with a few good friends."

What to order? For Missoni, the choice is automatic: filet of John Dory with Champagne sauce and a bottle of Sauvignon dell'Abazia di Rosazzo, as well as osso buco with saffron risotto and a red wine from Lombardy like Ca'del Bosco.

If Gianni Versace can be said to have a real hangout, it's Bice, where mamma Bice keeps the plates of filet of beef with arugula coming until Gianni cries, "Basta!" His craving for pasta is taken care of with a single dish comprised of gnocchi, tagliatelle with mushrooms, and macaroni with eggplant. And though Versace drinks no wine, a needy sweet tooth is thoroughly satisfied with Bice's chocolate gelato.

For Luciano Soprani, gustatory satisfaction means scampi at Nino Arnaldo. "It's friendly and warm at lunchtime and very romantic and soft at dinner. I discovered it one night walking through the old streets of Milan." Like all these other restaurants, it certainly is worth discovering.

—C.P.