

**SOFITEL STEPHANSDOM**

LOCATION: Vienna, Austria  
DESIGN: Jean Nouvel



One doesn't usually hire Jean Nouvel to design a basic tower, but that's what Accor Hotels initially told the architect they wanted for their first Sofitel property in Austria. "Nouvel wanted something in the context of the surrounding buildings," says project manager Ingrid Menon. "He tried to make a building that wasn't a tower building, but wasn't a small building either. It's a mixture of both." The resulting 18-story project (with a five-story volume that juts out from the main structure, housing the lobby and entrance) lies on the island district of Leopoldstadt. Each side is a different color—grey to the south, black glass to the west, a mirrored east-facing facade, and a glass one to the north. The only shots of color are from three installations by Swiss video artist Pipilotti Rist. One, on the rooftop restaurant's ceiling, achieves what Menon says was Nouvel's goal of making a "modern interpretation" of the nearby St. Stephen's Cathedral. —RIMA SUGI

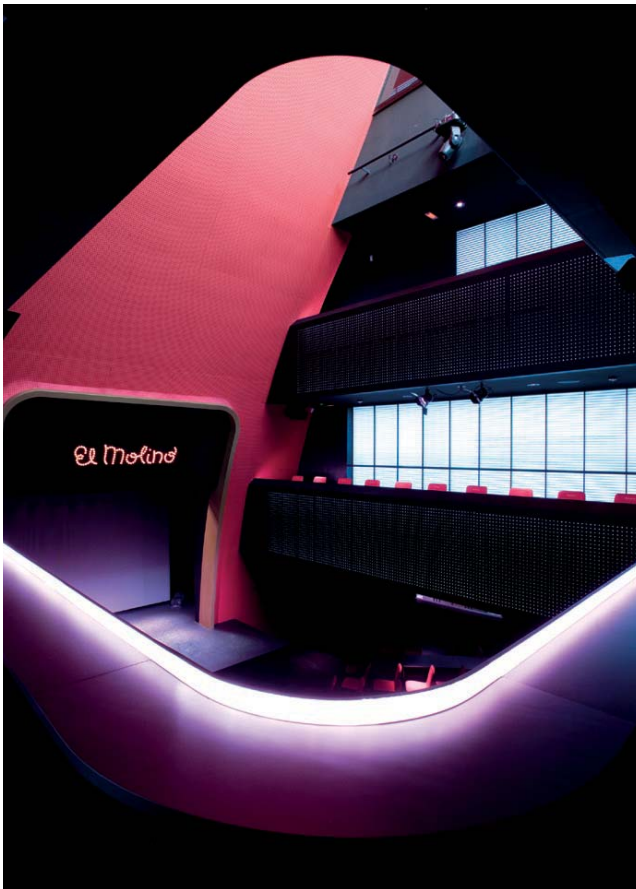


**EL MOLINO**

LOCATION: Barcelona, Spain  
DESIGN: BOPBAA / Fernando Salas

El Molino, a theater near Barcelona's Parallel Avenue, opened in 1899 and quickly became renowned for its intimate burlesque performances. Actors and the audience were—quite literally—at arm's length. In 1997, however, the company running the place went bankrupt and shut it down. Afterwards, a botched renovation job gutted much of its interior. This led to a new buyer, who hired local architecture firm BOPBAA and interior designer Fernando Salas to spearhead an 11-year restoration of the space, keeping intact the close audience-performer proximity while bringing its design and technology into the 21st century, from Swarovski-embossed leather seating to LEDs animating the interior railings.

Central to this re-imagined 14,000-square-foot, 230-person-capacity venue is its curvy 88-foot high red wall situated above the stage, which BOPBAA partner and architect Josep Bohigas calls "the tongue"—a reference, says Bohigas, to the fact that it looks "like a tongue coming out from a mouth," but also to the romanticism of the place, as well as to the "clear and correct" speech of the actors. Enveloping this empty, exaggerated vertical space, for a closed-in yet comfortable feel, are other new additions, including a basement kitchen, mezzanine-level indoor-outdoor cocktail bar, backstage rehearsal rooms, and a glazed facade. —S.B.



PHOTOS: SOFITEL; ROLAND HALBE; EL MOLINO; EVA SERRATS

**CAFE JUGEND**

LOCATION: Helsinki, Finland  
DESIGN: Bond

Helsinki's century-old Uschakoff Building houses Jugend Hall, one of the city's most expressive representations of Art Nouveau. So when the branding and creative agency Bond was approached to reinterpret the space into a café last year, its plan made staying true to the original architecture a central priority. "We thought this would be best achieved by keeping the design language and material palette as far away from the original as possible," says head designer Alekski Hautamäki. The resulting fixed furniture, gunmetal accents, custom oiled-oak tables, Crassevig chairs, and Swedish loungers not only fit the bill, but comply with the Finnish National Board of Antiquities building-standards

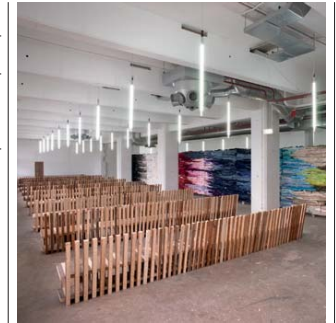
codes. Because nothing was allowed to be fixed or screwed onto any surface, the regulations simplified the firm's design process. "This led us to making everything very functional and robust," says Hautamäki. Bond designed raised platforms for the seating and service-counter areas where electricity and plumbing could be incorporated as necessary. A unique text is lasered into the surface of each table, telling the story of the building throughout its 107-year history. "Our aim was to create a living room for the people of the city to enjoy this historical space," Hautamäki says. With clever use of up-lighting and sleek sitting areas, Bond's ambitious endeavor has triumphed. —TIFFANY JOW



PHOTOS: RECYCLE OFFICE; RALPH KAMBERA

**RECYCLE OFFICE**

LOCATION: Rotterdam, The Netherlands  
DESIGN: Doepel Strijkers Architects



For the recently completed Recycle Office, a project located in Rotterdam in a former grain-packaging plant built in 1932, the local firm Doepel Strijkers Architects focused on ways to, as partner Duzan Doepel puts it, "use as little material and transport as possible, to design using the intrinsic quality of the materials." In accomplishing this, the team worked with carbon-footprint experts and used only sturdy and rugged materials—wood, mostly—salvaged from several neighboring buildings bound for demolition. Second-hand clothing also played a role, providing material for portable, multi-colored walls. All told, it's a roughly 10,700-square-foot office, which includes an auditorium, exhibition space, reception desk, kitchen, and conference room. "Our concept," says Doepel, "addresses and answers all sorts of issues—unemployment, the economic crisis, the resource crisis, and vacant space." —S.B.