

# Heinz Julen

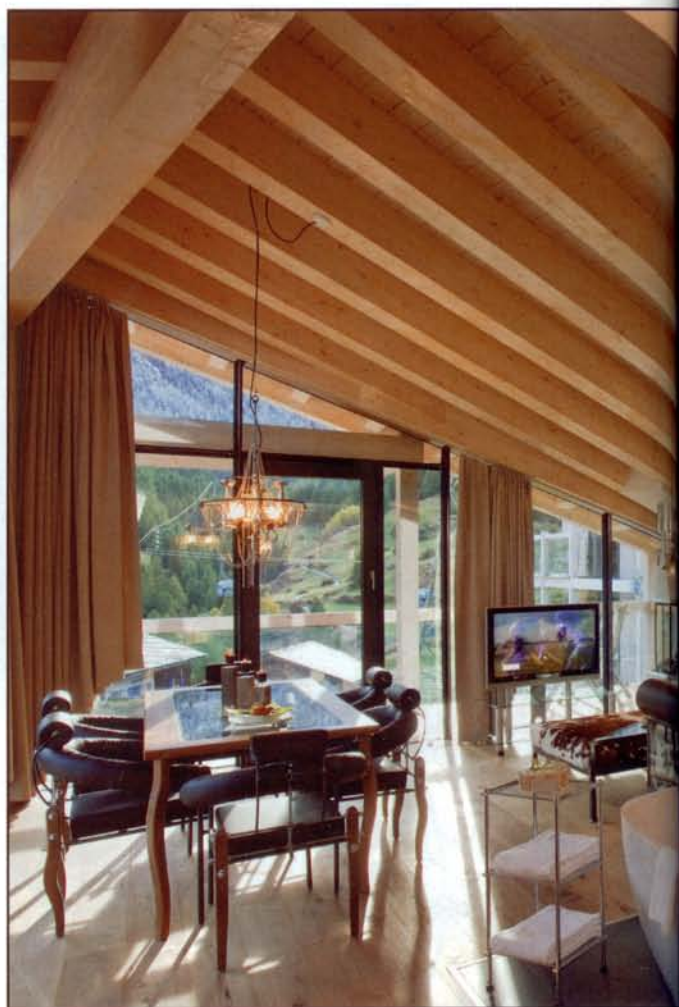
## Finds Calm After 'Into's Storm

The Hotel Matterhorn Focus lets him Realize a Vision

The town of Zermatt was once far less touristic than it is today. The small mountain hamlet used to endure a quiet, undisturbed existence, and it was only in the mid-20th century that the rail stop there began to run year round. Today, travelers flock there with their Swiss Rail passes in hand to see the mighty Matterhorn, and while the town is a hot-spot for tourism, its sense of remoteness still exists. It is amid the Alps of this small town where Heinz Julen, a self-taught artist, architect and designer whose local work has brought him international attention, grew up. One of his most recent projects, the Hotel Matterhorn Focus, exemplifies the success possible when a provincial designer finds hotel owners who believe in his creative ambitions, even when he is wading through a sea of controversy.



Heinz Julen



ting made Schärer and his girlfriend jealous. Supporters of Schärer claim it had to be shut because its design was impractical and non-operational. Rather than reacting angrily to a situation which deeply pained him, Julen created a piece of public art displaying his emotional connection to the project. He painted 30 portraits of key collaborators, naked in a room which was essentially a black box, and appeared "almost like a funeral," as he said. The piece, entitled "The Last Room of a Vision," was displayed at the International Contemporary Art Fair in Zurich and again in Zermatt. While 28 of Julen's subjects complied, Schärer and his companion did not, and went so far as to sue Julen in the nation's highest court.

"It became a big thing here about whether an artist can paint somebody," Julen said. "It went to the high court in Switzerland and I lost the case and had to give the paintings to them. The artist's liberty was in question."

Ultimately, the whole debacle turned positive for Julen, who quickly became recognized in the art community as someone with a vision and a voice. With invites to museums who thought his work was a relevant contemporary art performance, Julen wrote a book



Left: A suite at the Hotel Matterhorn Focus; Top to bottom: Exterior of the Focus and the imposing Matterhorn; Heinz Julen's Loft Table on a steel cable

about the experience, "Into the Performance: Heinz Julen and his Hotel in Zermatt."

Though he remained a local celebrity in Zermatt (complete with supporters and critics), Julen was unfulfilled in that his vision for a contemporary hotel in town was still not realized. Finally, in late 2008, two local supporters granted him the opportunity he was waiting for with their property, which would soon become the Hotel Matterhorn Focus. Sonja and Christian Noti, who had left Zermatt to live in Zurich, came back to town with aspirations to build an apartment-style hotel and had heard much about Julen's story.

"They loved Into the Hotel so much and wanted to make a project with me with my architecture, design and my spirit and my soul," said Julen. "As an architect after Into, I had to go through hard times. People were suing me...the whole nation was following my case. I was all over the news. It was in a way a kind of spiritual experience I would not like to miss. You learn where your values are, what life is about. At the Focus, they had no problem that people were talking negatively about me."

"I believe that the projects are as good as the freedom in them. If you have freedom and a good soul and spirit in the project, someone

who loves the project, and they bring good vibes, and energy into the project, it's heaven on earth."

With the Notis, Julen found such a paradise.

The Focus is a display of his artistic vision and progressive ideas but does not feel like a lament on what he lost at Into; it's its own triumph. Serving as a window to the Matterhorn above, and with close proximity to the main cable car which whisks people up to the mountain, the Focus is built as a lens of concrete, steel and wood that looks onto the natural majesty of the area, reestablishing Julen as a local artist, architect and designer to watch — and *not* in the tabloids. **BD**

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