

# CHANINTR LIVING

*Spring 2021*





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## BELGIUM'S FINEST

VINCENTVANDUYSEN.COM

Vincent Van Duysen has always known he would become an artist. Born into a family of lawyers and doctors, Van Duysen had a creative soul that shone through from a young age; his parents recognized early on that their only child was on a path very different to theirs. Van Duysen spent childhood weekends visiting galleries and museums, flipping through fashion magazines and taking dance lessons. It was this passion and curiosity for the arts that eventually led him to study architecture in the '80s before returning to Antwerp to make his own mark on his hometown. In 1989, he established Vincent Van Duysen Architects.

Since opening his design studio 30 years ago, Van Duysen has become an international household name. His understated style and novel use of materials were pivotal in shaping what is now known as the 'Belgian aesthetic.'

"My education was during the peak of Postmodernism where there was an exhilarance of colors and materials. But from the beginning of my career, I've always felt the need to go for a style

that is more calm and more contemplative,” Van Duysen said. “It’s not minimalistic. It’s pure. It’s essential. It’s warm, yet very rich at the same time. This is the VVD style that people recognize. When you go through my work [from] 20, 30 years ago, you will still recognize it. It’s a very consistent way of thinking.”

The ‘VVD style’ that Van Duysen describes (“a discreet way of living—not too obvious, not too showy—but elegant”) is coveted by design lovers around the world, and has led to collaborations with renowned brands as well as high-profile projects—from hotels and retail spaces to celebrity homes and luxury residences. Van Duysen’s work has been featured in prestigious publications and has earned him multiple awards, including Belgian Designer of the Year and the Henry van de Velde Lifetime Achievement Award.

With his countless accolades and veteran status in the industry, one might think that Van Duysen would be ready to slow down;

yet, this couldn’t be less true. We sat down with the multidisciplinary artist to learn more about the man behind some of our favorite works and find out what the future holds for his design firm.

#### HOPES FOR 2021?

We’re all wishing for a new glorious world to come—COVID-free, of course. A world where we can spread our wings again fully and we can enjoy the freedom of life without being limited.

#### SOMETHING YOU WISH YOU COULD TELL YOUR YOUNGER SELF BEFORE YOU MADE IT?

When I was young, I was always looking and comparing. I was very curious and always jumped from one topic to another. My mind was restless. I mean, I still am that person, but now I am much more aware and more conscious because of my age and meditation, and those are two things I wish I had when I was younger: higher awareness and consciousness. But on the other hand, it was probably this restlessness that got me here.

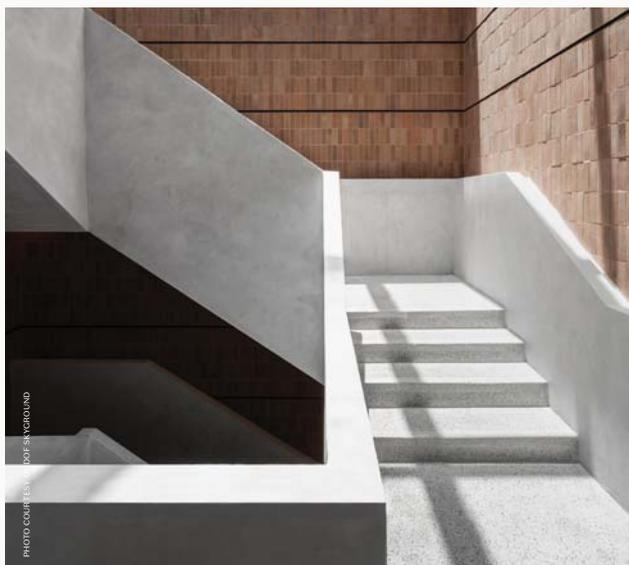
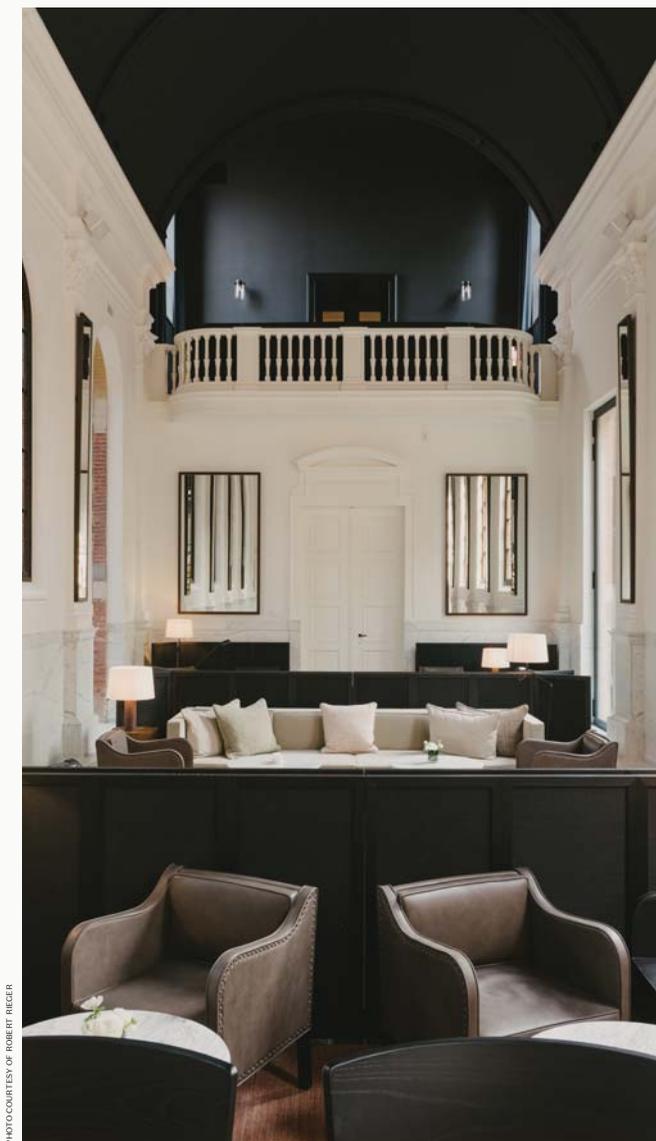


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**YOU COULD ALWAYS GO FOR A DELICIOUS BITE OF...?**

Fresh sashimi. I love Japanese food and eat it maybe once a week. I think it's a little bit linked to who I am: it's the hunger for the purity of the food, the ingredients and the essence of the flavors, which is the same pureness I aim for in my work too. But of course, I also love Thai food even though I have to avoid it sometimes because it's spicy.

**YOUR WEEKEND ROUTINE?**

On the weekends, I'm super lazy. I mainly just want to stay home and spend a lot of time with my three dogs; not to be cliché, but they are my kids. Maybe have quality time with friends with a homemade dinner in the evenings too. Most of the time, especially before this, I was constantly moving around and traveling during the week for work, so the weekends are sacred moments to be with myself, my loved ones and my dogs.

**MOST PRIZED POSSESSION?**

It's always very hard for me to pick one thing because I cherish everything I have around and with me. It could be anything. It could be my art collection, my furniture or my books. And again, not to be cliché, but my dogs and my family. At this moment though, if you ask me, I'm cherishing quality time with my parents.

**FIRST PLACE YOU WANT TO VISIT AFTER THE PANDEMIC?**

Well, it might be Thailand if I'm being honest. I want to see my client and my project. I love Thailand. I've been many times and I still want to discover a lot more of it. The aesthetic and beauty of the architecture with respect for the culture, the heritage, the food and its people is breathtaking.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KOEN VANDAMME

#### **CAN'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT?**

If I'm being really pragmatic, it's my smartphone. It's my work. It's my life. I FaceTime with my parents twice a day and for me, that is already very, very important. It's a device that helps me connect with the rest of the world. For me, it is one of the most incredible inventions ever in the world.

#### **FAVORITE HOTEL?**

I have many. I am an Aman junkie and love Amanpuri. I remember before that, the culture of hotels was pretty generic and there was nothing special. Then all of a sudden there was the opening of Amanpuri. It was so appealing to me. The experience I had arriving at that place was so unique. It is a sanctuary. I've never ever seen a place like that before. In terms of being disconnected though and not talking about hotels specifically, I would also count my house in Portugal. It is like my own private hotel.

#### **'LIVING WELL' MEANS...?**

It's feeling protected. If you live in an environment where you don't feel comfortable, protected, calm or serene, where you might be visually disturbed by anything, I would say you would not live very well. I like environments where everything excessive has been erased so you can really calm down and can enjoy yourself. This is the ultimate environment that I would consider as 'Living Well.'

– Uracha Chaiyapinunt