

TOTAL PACKAGE



Portrait: ZEB DAEMEN Words: KAREN MCCARTNEY

Armed with an holistic vision, architect and designer Vincent Van Duysen creates beautiful spaces to deliver a complete experience in which to thrive.



This page, clockwise from top left JNcQUOI Beach Club in Portugal showcases Van Duysen's holistic approach. The 'Petal' armchair for Molteni&C launched at Salone del Mobile in April. EK Residence in LA marries a Belgian aesthetic with West Coast modernism. Strong, monolithic forms at the Winery VV by Vinetiq, Belgium. Hospitality pavilion by Van Duysen at the heart of the Molteni&C HQ.



BELGIAN ARCHITECT and designer Vincent Van Duysen is not without complexity. At its core his personal style, honed over many years, has its anchor in warm minimalism occasionally edging towards Brutalism with its balance of raw with smooth, tactile and organic, contextual and calm. Clients understand his love of natural materials, the sensorial aspects of his work and how his close attention to how they live translates into a home, tailored just for them, that contains a certain monastic serenity and connection to nature. "I have a good sense and knowledge of people. That's my strength. Most architects are more mathematical and rational. I am more of an instinctive, intuitive person," he says, "but the client has to bring their personality to the table."

Locally he has been named as Belgian Designer of the Year and globally he seems to have a permanent spot on *Architectural Digest's* AD100 list of top talents. Self-described as tending to be introverted, he is also a brand with 427,000 Instagram followers who are on first-name terms with his adorable dachshunds, he had a hand with Axel Vervoordt and Claudio Silvestrin on interior selections in a home for Kim Kardashian and Kanye West and is creative director of Italian furniture brand Molteni&C.

A living exemplar of the word 'multidisciplinary' he is in Milan to front his new collections for Molteni&C and celebrate their 90th year of operation. "The collaboration works so well because Molteni&C is steeped in outstanding craftsmanship alongside the architectural heritage of Gio Ponti. Their style does not scream 'design' and has an understated elegance, just like my creations," he says. While product design forms part of their relationship he has designed a significant hospitality pavilion at their headquarters in Giussano, just north of Milan, home to the brand since 1934.

The structure, a reception area, restaurant and hospitality space, has his signature of timelessness and serenity with two large horizontal concrete elements, the floor and the ceiling, supported by the colonnade, leading to a glazed pavilion that is open to

outside views that engage the seasons. "I have designed a space where exterior and interior blend to create a complete experience," he says. "Light, air and sound flow through each room."

There is also enough latitude for his design for the landscape by Marco Bay, to create a haphazard, dynamic backdrop of 'dishevelled vegetation' as a foil to the precision of the furnishings – all his designs. This idea of a *gesamtkunstwerk* where a total holistic vision, inside and out, is delivered finds expression at the JNcQUOI Beach Club in Comporta, Portugal. "This approach ... is my modus operandi. It is not only the physical construction but creating spaces for people to live in surrounded by art, furniture and objects. All these elements are part of the art of living," he says.

His touch is evident in every facet of the club, from bike parking to the beach cabanas and meticulously designed, custom-crafted furniture. This is an example of orchestrating an entire experience so that through material and object selections, through design and curation, the ambience is unadulterated Van Duysen and as such delivers on his ideas around beauty. Recognising that it is not a word that often appears in the architectural lexicon he defends its importance. "Beauty can be anything – something that comes from nature, a beautiful conversation, or art that opens your mind and connects with your soul and makes you happy," he says.

He understands the emotional world of what a space (be it a home or hotel) can be and by tapping into something elemental in his clients he is able to bring that to the fore in the structure and interior. His EK Residence in Brentwood, West LA, for Californian lifestyle mogul Jenni Kayne brings a melding of his Belgian aesthetic with the mid-century modernist tradition of West Coast US. Built in slim-profile bricks the courtyard-centric design embraces lush vegetation with a fluid floorplan that aligns closely with family life. A separate home office in a taller volume is accessed via a tactile plaster and timber spiral staircase. "I always try to balance three things: the location with its characteristics, the vernacular elements and the contemporary. I am first and foremost a modernist so natural elements are juxtaposed to current building and construction elements and materials," he says.

Given that so much of Van Duysen's work derives from a deeply personal set of aesthetic values he has just published a book, *Vincent Van Duysen: Private* (see Library, p105), an exploration of his own homes which are ideas laboratories and a constant source of inspiration for him and now for us.

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PHOTOGRAPHY FRÉDÉRIC BLANCHON (JNcQUOI BEACH CLUB), STEPHEN K JOHNSON (EK RESIDENCE), PIET-ALBERT GOETHALS (WINERY), MAX ZAMBELLI (MOLTENI&C PAVILION)