

Il Sereno, Lake Como, Italy



The vertiginous topography of Lake Como, in the southern Italian Alps, is home to a new hotel. Perched on the lake's eastern shore, Il Sereno Lago di Como is a sister property to the Christian Liaigre-designed Le Sereno Saint-Barthélemy in the Caribbean.

This time, the cultured hand of Spanish architect Patricia Urquiola has been involved in every detail of the new property. The 'absolutely clean' architecture is a series of loggias topped by a flat garden roof, inspired by the modernist Casa del Fascio, designed by Italian architect Giuseppe Terragni, while the interiors have a subtle connection to the surroundings. 'What guests see from the view – the water, stone, greenery or boats – is reflected in the interiors of the hotel,' says Urquiola. 'I have tried to integrate the identity of the place in a contemporary way.'

This is evident in the use of local stone Ceppo di Gré and Pietra di Fossena, in the walnut used for rough-cut wall panels, and in the subtle palette of earthy greys and browns, accented with a few greens. Enhancing the link between indoors and out are architectural elements such as the black steel balustrade mesh, which is repeated in the interiors and in the silicone-jointed decking of the hotel's three Riva boats, made at the brand's boatyard on the neighbouring Lake Iseo. Furnishings, meanwhile, include select pieces from Urquiola's own portfolio of designs for Italian brands such as Cassina, Kettal, Molteni, B&B Italia and Moroso, which serve to expand the local connection. 'I am very proud to be using them,' says Urquiola.

Specially commissioned for the hotel are door handles by Olivari, Axor Hansgrohe taps, lighting by Flos and the 'Lariana' bathtub by Agape.

Guests arrive at a 20ft-tall entrance door through gardens planted by vertical garden inventor Patrick Blanc, who has also installed three works of art featuring thousands of plants. A walkway looks down on the lake-level restaurant, Ristorante Berton Al Lago, and the 18m infinity pool, which, set along part of the resort's 140m shoreline, drops directly into the lake and is complemented by a private beach. The restaurant is reached by descending a staircase of 'floating' walnut treads surrounded by a forest of copper-bronze metal rods. Milanese Michelin-starred chef Andrea Berton prepares a menu that offers rich local Lombardian produce along with wines from the Valtellina valley.

'There is no "wow" effect,' says Urquiola, who instead points to a more subtle emotional response. 'Guests should feel everything is in its place and there is nothing more than necessary.' Indeed, nothing is left to chance: the architect has even thought to design scarves, woven from locally spun silk, for the staff uniforms.