
WD "Architecture and Wellness"

Interview to Marco Vismara, architect – Studio D73

2021 May 11th

Architecture and Wellness are inseparable themes...

Proud to be Italian!

When I think about the different world's cultures, I can imagine our ancestors, laying on a velvet triclinium, discussing about philosophy, holding a glass of wine in their hands. I visualize them as passionate, lively, full of inventive ideas and style. I often talk about this with my family, empathising how lucky we are to have these characteristics of aesthetics and culture in our origins.

Every time I travel, or I simply observe a setting, I realize how that ancient culture has permeated inside me, making my decision making and judgement deeper, more aware and sensitive to the classical canons.

The sense of beauty made our history, and that beauty became the key for our choices and inspired and influenced our design, even more for the wellness part, for there is so much connected with it.

Beauty is giving us the sensation of feeling sureness and good, subconsciously, challenging us to strive and dare more.

Suppose you are going on a date: you leave your house wearing elegant clothes, perfumed and prepared, adorned in your favourite jewels and your watch on your wrist. Then you reach him/her, you smile, and the perfect inner image you have of yourself allows you to feel impeccably at ease.

The same thing happens during the design process, when we create our project, fitted perfectly to the client's desires: experiencing that environment he/she will feel at home, like when he/she wears his/her favourite apparel.

If we think about 'Hospitality', we can easily find a connection: when we get into a well-designed and thoughtfully considered setting, our behaviour changes, as does our attitude. An elegant and accurate setting makes the clients feeling good, at ease and relaxed with a sense of wellness typical of when you are on holiday.

We are emerging from difficult, challenging times for the Hospitality sector.

Did you have the feeling that the clients' requests or needs have changed?

Absolutely, the Hospitality sector felt the 'lockdown effect', but most of the structures have taken the chance to use that 'empty moment' to carry a strategic restructuring.

We work with many facilities that are brave and bold, so our job, simultaneously proceeded relentlessly. Certainly, it slowed down during the worst months, in March and April 2020, but it regained strength and a positive upsurge immediately afterwards.

The pandemic has been for us, a moment to reflect, re-think ourselves, reorganize and evaluate our society, as most of our clients did: those who made it, have focused on their strengths and weaknesses. They have analysed them in order to be ready for the time of reopening: it is like a car race, when the driver is in the box for the refuelling and he does not take off the helmet, but he keeps the concentration focused on himself in the future aim and vision, towards the residual part.

As in Eraclito's *Panta Rei* "Everything flows", the uncertain, unsettling situation did not frighten everyone: the changing became faster, the spaces have been reorganized, the need of having more flexible and adjustable spaces became significant.

We need hope and optimism, even when we are sailing in the middle of a storm!

Do you think that period we all lived in also influenced the needs and requests of the clients in the Hospitality sector?

Apart from the period I was mentioning before, it is difficult to generalize.

The global market changed, the pandemic made the economical differences more evident, and the world has been divided between those who have the chance to work remotely and the others, who need to be on-site to work.

Most of our clients travelled and they are still travelling or moving from place to place, choosing high-quality hospitality structures, and letting the sector having the opportunity to forth with the business.

For someone it could sound a bit cruel, but this factor allowed many people that work in the service sector to keep their job and to support their families.

'Happy islands' have emerged, intended as places or non-places where one feels more secure, free and protected by receiving quality services.

I believe it is very important to reflect on individual spaces and individual services right now: if the customers who continue to move are those who work online, we need to focus on the connectivity part of the accommodation facilities, on the design of rooms dedicated to connectivity and online meetings, and to provide exclusive and dedicated services.

I do not know if it happens to you too, but when I watch films in which the actors are not wearing masks or are crowded in the same space, I feel a strange sense of discomfort, the same I feel when I look at structures with huge meeting rooms.

The needs are changing, and the new measures become implemented in a sudden way. Therefore, it is essential to create flexible and modular structures, which respond quickly to the needs that arise from time to time.

Customers have certainly not lost the desire to travel or stay in a well-designed property, so I am sure that as the 'unpredictability factor' becomes less pressurizing, the properties will have a lot of bookings to manage.

You work in Italy and abroad too. Which differences do you think are the most common between your Italian clients and the rest of them?

If we look at the typical dishes of each country, we realize that some ingredients are common to all (such as garlic and potatoes), others are the 'background' (rice, bread), some elements are usual (chicken, cheese) and others are typically cultural (spices, aromas).

We must try to be like chefs, able to combine the main ingredients of Italian culture (that famous sense of beauty that comes from our origins, as I have mentioned before) and make it loved by the palate that receives it. Each culture has differences, habits and different needs, which we have now learned to know and deal with.

We always try not to generalize but, if we really need to find some characteristics, the Italian client is more involved, more immersed in the process, perhaps even excessively, and without differentiating the scale of priorities. The foreign client is an investor from different sectors who places trust in you and delegates for the best result. Normally he/she demands a lot in the beginning to be sure that everything is clear on both parts, which means a big effort for Studio D73 before starting the collaboration. After that initial stage, however, the foreign clients get involved only in macro decisions, as happens on a board of directors.

So, to summarise, perhaps delegation is the feature that most differentiates the two approaches.

In the world of the private client, of the house (single and / or residence) what changes do you think have emerged?

It is interesting to observe how history is recurring: from the countryside to the city, from the city to the countryside, from the large and isolated place (a private villa) to a protected and contained one.

We all experienced a time when it was not allowed to leave the private property and this factor brought out the need to have private outdoor spaces, with services for exclusive use.

Most of the villas we design have an exclusive spa, a cinema room, a gym, large outdoor spaces and, in the last year, customers have asked us to develop projects with big sizes in order also to 'self-isolate' in a better way, being able to live most of the time in their own space, with the perception of living all related services.

In the residential buildings, on the other hand, the sense of protection prevails, as the idea of feeling free, in a limited area; very often, in this case, our customers are groups of friends who decide to 'live together' in the same area.

However, the type of customers has also changed, the age groups have changed, and this goes beyond the experience of last year. They are customers often linked to the technology sector, who have always worked in 'virtual' spaces, so this fact radically changes the sense of living a geographical place.

I am the first to manage works and construction sites far from our head office, connecting every day with our different locations and I live this experience on myself. I do not have my own office intended as a 'chair and desk', but my office depends on where I am at that moment.

I personally have chosen green spaces so that there is no clear separation between inside and outside and I can see that I hold meetings with other Architects or Engineers connecting from totally different places.

This is the real keystone from here on: the approach of both professionals and companies must follow different times and ways, offering much more dynamic times (think of companies closed for lunch or for the month of August while working with abroad) and unstable and indefinite workplaces.

Marco Vismara

Marco Vismara is an enthusiast. A lover of experiences and sensations.

Passion, curiosity, personality and empathy are distinctive elements of every situation that he lives in private life and work.

In 2007 he founded with his best friend, Arch. Andrea Viganò, D73, a dynamic and lively architecture studio, which today operates in various parts of the world with the aim of offering its customers a unique, Italian, tailor-made experience.

One of his dreams is to race the '24 Hours of Le Mans' and cross an ocean by boat. Maybe it will be then that he will stop running in life, thus being able to find some peace.



Studio D73

Studio D73 is specialized in architectural and interior design projects in a worldwide dimension.

D73 deals with hotels, wellness centres, private SPA, villas and luxury residences, contract and supply, from the concept to the complete realization.

The company has been working for over ten years both in Italy and abroad, and counts, next to the Italian headquarter in Brescia, offices in Limassol, Tbilisi, Moscow and Kyiv. From their branches and main office, thanks to a very efficient team of professionals, Studio D73 can manage all the project phases.

Made in Italy, tailor-made design and a constant research for innovation are the milestones of Studio D73, which is able to deal with complex projects in different countries, providing high ability and extreme attention to details.

Arch. Marco Vismara & Arch. Andrea Viganò: first friends, then business partners.

The story of Arch. Marco Vismara & Arch. Andrea Viganò is an old one: it dates to 1979, when they first met in primary school. Both left-handed, they were immediately asked to be desk mate, to cooperate. They did much more than this, becoming first friends, then classmates until graduation and finally business partners.

The school years culminated at Politecnico di Milano, where they both got their degree in Architecture with a Technological specialization; their dissertation won the Camerini Prize for the Building Prefabrication. Following their graduation, they both undertook many different experiences in Italy and abroad. After a couple of years spent in an international Architecture firm in London, in 2007 they decided to found Studio D73 in Italy. At today, they run their own firm from the headquarters in Brescia and keep travelling among the others D73 offices in Cyprus, Georgia, Russia and Ukraine. Creative, curious globetrotters, passionate about life, art, architecture, design and sports: Arch. Vismara and Arch. Viganò promote human-to-human connections in their everyday job life because they believe clients deserve to live an enchanting custom-made experience.

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