

# European Spa

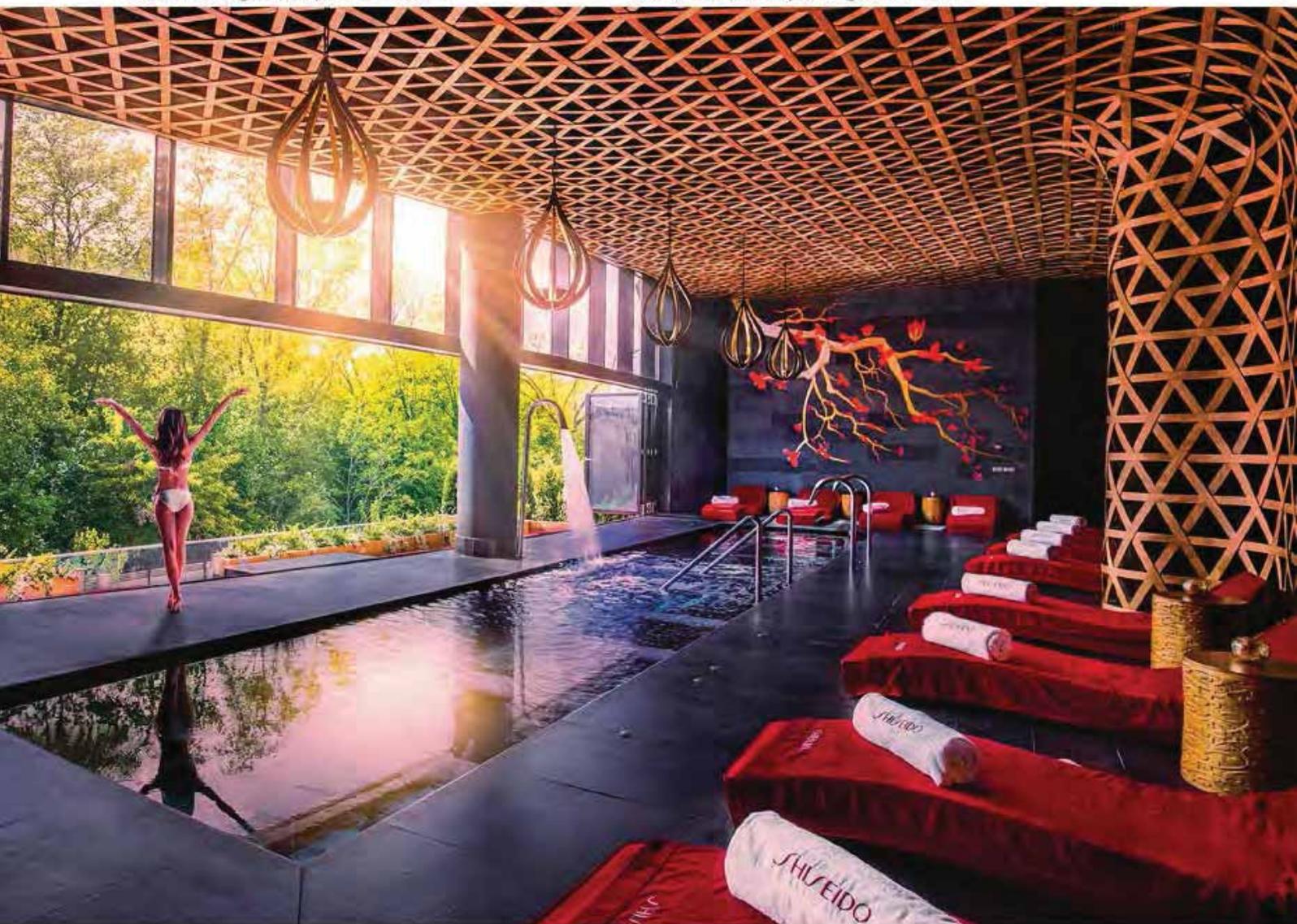
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**BEHIND THE BEAUTY**  
Design Insider explores the new Shiseido spa in Bucharest

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Thalgo celebrates 50 years of skincare secrets from the sea

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World Wellness Day at Turkey's Richmond Nua Wellness-Spa

**A TREE WITH ROOTS**  
The fruitful growth of Angsana and the Banyan Tree brand

# Design INSIDER

European Spa goes behind-the-scenes at three landmark spas to discover the inspiration behind their creations

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## Shiseido Spa at the Stejarii Country Club, Bucharest, Romania

For HBA Design London's dramatic interpretation of Japanese style, **Shoko Nishimura** takes elements of tradition and nature and imposes on them striking new forms to define Shiseido's Eastern European spa decor.



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## Thief Spa, Oslo, Norway

In a spa where the sea and Nordic light reign supreme, **Kristian Lars Ahimark** of Schmidt Hammer Lassen Architects creates a celebration of the nature-rugged beauty of the Norwegian landscape.



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## The Spa at Casale del Principe, Monreale, Sicily, Italy

With an emphasis on indigenous craftsmanship, **Alberto Apostoli** empathetically brings to life a contemporary and sophisticated design at a striking new spa located within the ancient Sicilian landscape.



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# Sicilian sensation

Celebrated wellness and spa designer Alberto Apostoli takes us on a personal tour of the new spa at Casale del Principe in Sicily

**W**hen the owners of Casale del Principe decided to create a spa and wellness centre, as well as seven, themed accommodation suites, they planned it in an area that was almost completely in ruins, but nonetheless steeped in a rich history.

The Rizzo family's farm was a lookout in the 16th century, before becoming a Jesuit convent two centuries later, and latterly, the residence was replaced by a fortified farmhouse.

Today, the 40-bedroom Casale del Principe agritourism farm is an important part of the Sicilian gastronomic route, well known for its organic products and particularly the production of a highly flavoured and scented olive oil.

To create a 700sqm spa in a location with such a strong identity, or *genius loci*, required the kind of holistic and empathetic approach for which Alberto Apostoli's projects are renowned.

"The spa looks similar to a late-Baroque chapel and I used a variety of design ideas that combine layout, material and sensory atmospheres in a relatively compact space," Apostoli says. "In every place, guests can find something different and unexpected.

"I'm very proud that high-level and technically advanced design was matched with small-scale local companies and craftsmen wherever possible."

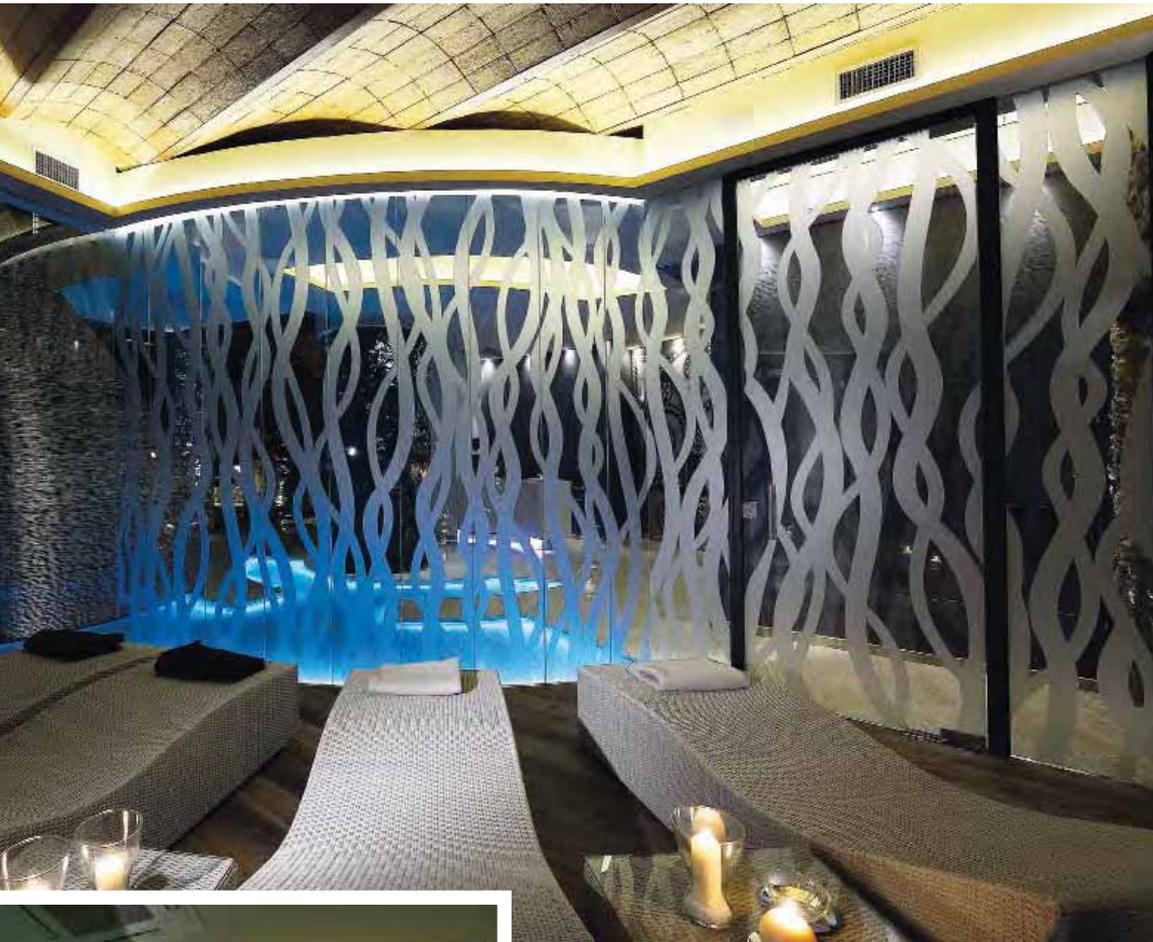
The boutique spa covers two floors and includes three treatment rooms, a sauna with outdoor views, a hammam divided into a calidarium and a tepidarium, as well as a shower walkway and a swimming pool.

The main entrance to the spa is characterised by two large window arches and a rose window built according to ancient local techniques. Elsewhere, the reception desk is crowned with a 10-metre long graphic that recreates the image of the Cathedral of Monreale along the corridor that leads to the heat experiences.

Wishing to avoid the creation of 'artificial' spaces, Apostoli combined Sicilian culture and indigenous craftsmanship to create a lively interior that showcases a range of authentic Italian materials such as cord grass, stone, wood, glass and mosaics.

"One of the spa's main attractions is the treatment cocoon, which is six metres high and appears to 'float' on the swimming pool," Apostoli describes. "It was built using a construction technique favoured by local craftsmen which involves the use of natural cord grass marsh wicker over a metal structure. The

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**Clockwise from far left:**  
 The reception area is intended to 'dematerialise' in contrast with the brick walls; the striking, triple-height stairway in burnt red metal; the relaxation room's screen printed glass wall and traditional, vaulted brick ceiling; the sauna looks out onto an emotional shower walkway; the reed cocoon in which guests can receive treatments



"This spa is a place devoid of intellectualism, in which matter and spirit are alike. It is intended to immerse guests in the idea that wellness should be a total experience to be lived and enjoyed"

**Alberto Apostoli**  
 Architect & spa designer





**Clockwise from left:** The basement swimming pool was hewn from solid rock; the 'Wood' spa suite; the steam bath glows with bright colours and textured finishes; the spa's colourful external terracing; the central plant column is a tribute to the lush Sicilian countryside



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scent of the 'straw', spread by this sculpture, also links back to the old farmhouse nearby."

**Built from solid rock**

Apostoli positively embraced the intricacy of his surroundings. "We built the swimming pool on the lower level in an underground structure by digging into bare rock," he says. "This was the same rock that became the subject of my architecture; it was used for decorative art such as the stylised floral elements that rise along the back wall of the spa then model the ceiling in the form of petals. The mosaic that covers the pool follows this upward movement, rising from the bottom of the water along the central column, which then becomes the trunk of a conceptual 'tree'."

For the outdoor areas, Apostoli created a series of terraces on different levels as well as nature trails so guests could discover beautiful Sicilian flowers, spices and fruits. A freshwater aquifer was installed under the trails to ensure that the surrounding biodiversity is lush and colourful.

The resulting experience is unique and striking. "In this spa, as a designer, I feel the veracity and physicality of the Mediterranean," says Apostoli. "This spa is a place devoid of intellectualism, in which matter and spirit are alike. It is intended to immerse guests in the idea that wellness should be a total experience to be lived and enjoyed." ●●●●●



**DESIGN SUMMARY**

**The Spa at Casale del Principe, Monreale, Sicily**

A boutique, rural spa that fuses hi-tech installations with the finest Mediterranean craftsmanship to provide an instinctive, natural experience in a truly unique location

[www.casaledelprincipe.it](http://www.casaledelprincipe.it)  
[www.albertopostoli.com](http://www.albertopostoli.com)