

## BLINK DESIGN GROUP STRIKES A CHORD WITH PIETRO CAMPANELLA

"In the years he has been with Denniston, Pietro worked closely with us on several Aman projects. His keen understanding of our requirements and his passion for good architecture are impressive".

Adrian Zecha, Founder of Amanresorts.

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**BANGKOK, THAILAND** - BLINK Design Group has appointed Pietro Campanella, one of hospitality design's most experienced and free-spirited figures, to buttress the foundation of its brilliant design promise while adding the maverick vision and non-conformist sensibilities of a former rock-and-roller to its formidable roster of talent.

Campanella, formerly from the acclaimed Denniston, joins BLINK as Group Head, bringing the flair, insight and sure hand of a master honed during a 20-year career in which he was involved with the standard-setting Aman Resorts as well as hotel operators GHM, brands like Rosewood and spas like ESPA.



RHYTHM BUILDING: Pietro Campanella, the new Group Head of BLINK Design Group, brings an individual flair to the job that is underpinned by 'getting into a groove'. For high resolution version, click [here](#).

The man who impressed Aman founder Adrian Zecha with his "passion for good architecture" also brings the irreverence, sense of theatre and power-chord-driven perspective of a rhythm guitarist, not to mention an enviable head of flowing rock star hair.

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"Architecture is rhythm," says Campanella, after a moment's thought. "And rock and roll is a kind of architecture. You create the foundations, understand the culture – you have to know your history and where you stand in the scheme of things – and then you can begin to build, improvise, and get creative.

"Whether it's a pencil or a guitar pick in your hand, you are establishing a rhythm and a flow, getting into a groove. A recurring motif in design is like a riff you can't get out of your head. Great design should grab you like a great song, insinuate itself into your soul, and make you want to find out more." As Paul Valéry muses in *Eupalinos ou l'Architecte*, "There are buildings that are mute, Phaedrus says, buildings that speak and, very rarely, buildings that sing", highlighting the affinity between building design and music that goes back a long time.

Great building design also has a narrative. "You are telling a story," Campanella says. "There is a plot, a main character and supporting characters, flashbacks and quotations. You might be designing a very contemporary project, like some of the work we are doing in China, but you will still have quotations and riffs picked out from the vernacular, from the history and culture of the place."

The globe-trotting native of Turin has worked throughout South East Asia, Mexico, the Caribbean and Australia, as well as in Italy earlier in his career, acquiring a deep understanding of luxury hotel, resort and real estate projects, regional business perspectives and local cultures, customs and histories. Hands-on and spontaneous, he is most comfortable picking up some tracing paper and sketching out his visions by hand.

Campanella has plunged into the new job at BLINK, which he said was the perfect match for his 'rock and roll' attitude and freewheeling break-the-rules approach. He is already taking an instrumental role in creating the Hilton Goa, which references everything from Portuguese forts to Goan villages, and breaking new ground with The Grove, a unique mixed-use hotel and retail complex in architecture's new frontier: Nairobi, Kenya, in Africa.

"It's tremendously exciting to be working in Africa. The Grove is a mixed-use project with a very ambitious timeline, and it's something that doesn't exist in Kenya. It's urban, a 100-key hotel, 50 apartments for rental, and an office tower plus a small commercial plaza, totalling 32,000 square metres.

"So it's a big thing for Nairobi, in the heart of its embassy row. We have created a very elegant, contemporary facade with a motif of simple lines in colours drawn from the local masks. The tribes use these masks like passports when they travel, serving as identification for your tribe and a means to tell your story. Being in the diplomatic district, we saw the parallel immediately. That's the benefit of doing deep research into the location's vernacular, which is the BLINK way."

Other stand-out designs facilitated by Campanella's contribution include the acclaimed Aman Palazzo Papadopoli in Venice; Amanyara in the Turks and Caicos Islands; The Nizuc in Cancun; Fuchun Resort in Fuyang, China, The Chedi-Serai in Muscat, Oman; Rosewood Beijing and Rosewood Phuket; One & Only Resort, Maldives; The Setai Miami Beach, and the recently opened Amanoi in Vietnam.

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"I've had a very fortunate career, getting the opportunity to work alongside Jean Michel Gathy on some exciting projects with Aman Resorts, I will always look back to those days with a sense of nostalgia, as they have been defining for my career. When I decided to move on, it was to seek out new challenges, so I am over the moon now to be working with BLINK.

"This is a world of ideas and possibilities. OK, so I have a wife and children and a nice life, but at heart I am still the rock and roller of my youth playing in bands in Italy, living up in the mountains and pulling trout from the streams, sleeping under the stars and skiing in the winter.

"Today, you have to pay a fortune for 'experiences' like that in the hotels and resorts we build. That's life. But at BLINK we are building them with a rock and roll spirit, not holding back, putting passion and ideas into our work, inspiring each other.

"At BLINK, everyone is a member of the band. There's no 'star' culture here. Everyone is a boss of what they do here, which inspires and fosters responsibility, and it also nurtures creativity. Mentoring and developing young talent will be a big part of what I bring to the table. BLINK is based on a philosophy of being open to instinct based on a deep understanding of what makes hotels tick, and channeling that towards one end: Brilliant design that works.

"I feel like I have found a true home here already. And you can say that I am very excited about what the future holds."

Campanella received his Master of Architecture from the Polytechnic of Turin and is a member of the Italian Architects Association. His career includes a 13-year stint as Senior Project Architect with Denniston International Architects & Planners, in Kuala Lumpur, and two years at Melbourne's BARstudio.

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**Notes to Editors:**

**Blink Design Group (BLINK)** has reinvented the traditional service model to offer clients an integrated stay from check-in to check-out. BLINK's end-to-end suite of services includes interior, building and brand design. Founded by Clint Nagata in 2006 and operating out of Bangkok, Singapore, New Delhi and Shanghai, the company designs luxury hotels, resorts, restaurants, clubs, spas, and residences for leading global brands. Believing each project is a platform to achieve something extraordinary, BLINK draws on the instincts and intelligence of its inspired team to create icons of design in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

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