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ON THE ROCKS

On the site of a former Salzburg brewery, Hariri & Hariri boldly builds on a modern notion

words | tamara warren

Set against the romantic backdrop of the Alpine Mountains and the storybook Salzach River, charming and pristine baroque architecture resonates through much of the Austrian city of Salzburg. Here, Mozart was born, *The Sound of Music*'s Von Trapps traipsed through the hills (and the eventual Hollywood movie was filmed). The annual Salzburg Music Festival draws tourists to the region in late summer. It is the quintessential European town with historic allure, but as the fourth largest Austrian city, also embodies the essence of cosmopolitan and contemporary Europe.

Fresh ground was broken last fall on the construction site of Sternbrauerei Salzburg, ushering in a new era of architecture for Salzburg. When the dust settles on the landscape of this former quarry (and brewery), and finishing touches are etched on the spacious, airy windows, these luxury condominiums will be at the helm of a development that intends to complement a fabled past with the promise of sleeker, bright future. While condominiums conjure up imagery of monolithic row houses or stark high rises, these buildings do not adhere to that formula. This living community space will include art studio lofts, public gardens and a promenade along the river illuminated by glass, stone and the cascade of natural sunlight. The Sternbrauerei developers seek to preserve the beauty of a historic city with a significant design contribution to the town.

When the New York-based architecture firm Hariri & Hariri received an e-mail with the invitation to enter the Sternbrauerei Salzburg design competition, they were unaware of being among a select group invited to compete for the contract. They were also unaware that they would embark on a development that would be their largest to date, winning the commission of the project to design an \$80 million complex.

"When we began the project, it was not just about doing housing or residential condominiums, it's what we can bring to the project, what can we learn from the city, and how can we engage the public," Gisele Hariri said. "Salzburg is a special, unique small place with very little new quality architecture. I want to make sure what we build here remains for future generations."

Iranian-born Gisele Hariri and her sister, Mojgan, opened Hariri & Hariri in 1986 in New York City, injecting a bright new talent with their approach to architecture. They've won a number of accolades in their field. *Interior Design Magazine* named them as part of the Design Hall of Fame in 2005, the American Academy of Arts and Letters presented them with the Academy Awards in Architecture, and they have been named among the World's 100 Top Designers and Architects by *Architectural Digest*. Their work appears in the National Building Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, Deutsches

Architekturmuseum and the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona. They received renown for the Sagaponac House developed by Coco Brown and during the unveiling of their *Rock Crystal* chandelier at Art Basel as designers for the Swarovski Crystal Palace Collection.

What stood out to the skilled sisters about the Salzburg initiative was the historical element of Salzburg that engulfs the Sternbrauerei grounds. "We have an amazing mountain on the edge of the site in the middle of the old city. There's a unique scale to the whole town," Hariri said. Structurally, the Hariris worked to create models with materials that meld with the existing materials and environment. "The little subtleties when you have something fabulously modern and how can you relate it back without copying was the challenge," Hariri said. They utilized natural elements already intact, centered around the lush landscape of the river and the quarried rock of the former site. "All the ground floor levels are open. You go underneath the building that's private to other parts in the town," said Hariri, explaining how they made the development sheltered but accessible, in parts, to the public.

The interiors of the condominiums use wood, fireplaces and embedded lighting to create an unobtrusive feeling. "The forms are dynamic, not superficial. We studied quarries and how one chisels rock and stone from mountain, and how you store them," Hariri said. They use stones, varieties of glass, metal and concrete. The light source emanates from the reflection of the mountainside. It was crucial that they build a structure that flattered the existing work, which meant no 70-story high rise. Instead, they paid more attention to archways that are natural to Salzburg's existing architecture.

Hariri estimates the development will be completed by 2010. "We have a very enthusiastic developer who wants quality work, who doesn't see rushing to get things under construction." In fact, the developer, Asset One Real Estate Development Corporation AG, has sent their entire team to New York for several excursions to discuss detailed aspects of progress.

As for the Hariri sisters' philosophy, Sternbrauerei exemplifies the spirit of what inspired them to become involved in architecture together—the joy of collaboration. "We work very closely with one another, and that's what makes it fun," Gisele Hariri said. "We work together so well that we become very complete. We bring equilibrium to a project."

In this fantastic complex that seems to almost hover, perched within a mountainside, that's a quality that should be of great use.

