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SAN RANIERI HOTEL - PISA, ITALY

SIMONE MICHELI,
BENIAMINO
CRISTOFANI AND
SALVATORE RE

Opened only this year, the 90-room San Ranieri Hotel is a hospitality showstopper. Architects Simone Micheli, Beniamino Cristofani and Salvatore Re formed a creative syndicate for this avant-garde building. Despite that, the hotel is surprisingly less desultory in design than one might expect, proving that these cooks do not spoil the broth. Given Pisa's rich and chequered history, the architects resisted the urge to construct what could have turned out to be an anachronistic building, choosing instead to make a statement, a bold one in the face of the 5,387sq m site's quiet residential surroundings. The shell, a stitched composition of lead translucent glass, features transparent sections for windows. These lateral and vertical blocks enhance the facade's volume, which engages the eye with cubic recesses and protrusions. This jazzy low-rise also turns heads at night thanks to its psychedelic LED-spurred transformation. The entire structure is set ablaze in vibrant, magnetic and careless, rivaling the theatrics of a casino resort. Bright and boisterous, this addition to the neighbourhood manages to amuse and mesmerise.

San Ranieri lends itself as a cybernetic beacon. Its markedly huffed interiors exude a slower and more contemplative tempo than the frisson projected from the facade. While some coloured light is imported for common areas, white dominates the ceiling, walls, flooring and furniture. The main hall features a milky sculptural wall in varnished plaster, its curvaceous ripples mimicking those of a thick velvet curtain, and indeed it functions as one, keeping the operational side of the enterprise free from public view. Along with the entry reception and lounge area, a restaurant and 'American' bar is housed on the ground floor. The eatery is simply furnished, with lightweight chairs and cafe-style tables that blend into the monochromatic décor. The ceiling is clad with opaque acrylic panels which hide a matrix of LED modules. Other amenities include a conference room and landscaped garden.

Guestrooms are accessed via either a steel-and-glass staircase or a pair of transparent lifts. Corridors are dark and dramatic. Their terminated walls of black-and-white photographs are a homage by one of the city's artists. Rooms are clean, sparse and imbued with cyber influence. All suites adopt polar palettes, either black furniture and white walls or white furniture and black walls. A sinuous and compact shelving, armoire and desk unit is combined with sectional sofas and backlit mirrors. In fact, the block-by-block interiors seem unconventionally rigid; nevertheless, they somehow resonate the contemporary feeling introduced with the exterior. Designed for the cosmopolitan itinerant, San Ranieri will entertain passersby while calming visitors with its tame yet chic interiors.



