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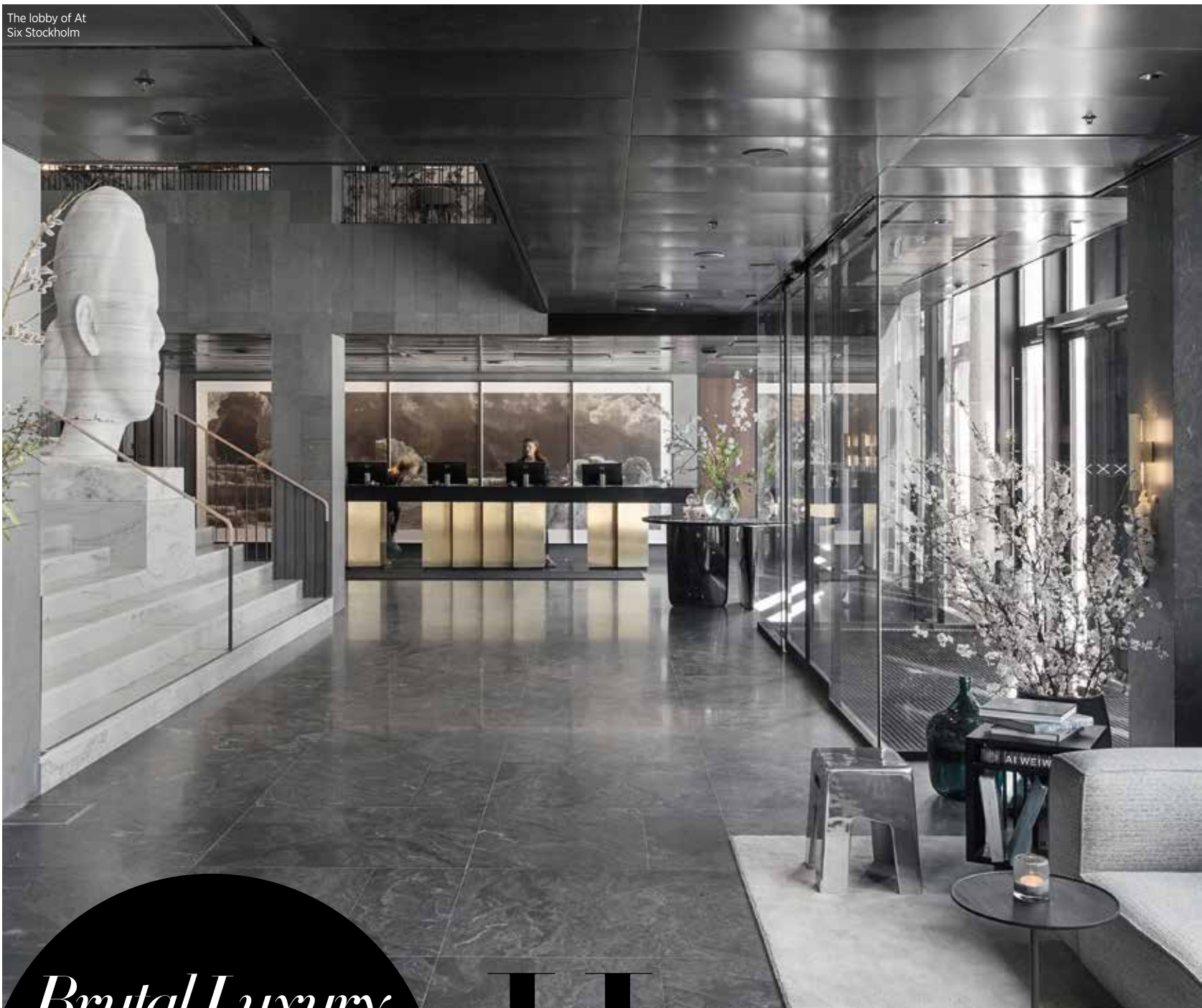
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HARPER'S BAZAAR ART **SUMMER 2017**

"Credibility takes courage."
-HENRI MATISSE

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The lobby of At Six Stockholm



Brutal Luxury

A brutalist tower is an unlikely location for a luxury hotel yet At Six, a new hotel in Stockholm, finds itself perfectly home, writes Anna Brady

Hotel art has long been a byword for gaudy cheap canvases to fill drab corridors. But the collection at Stockholm's new, ridiculously cool hotel At Six is an exception to the rule. Within this hotel in a 1970s brutalist tower block is a collection of contemporary art accumulated by its owner, Petter Stordalen of Nordic Hotels & Resorts, and curated by Sune Nordgren, formerly of the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art in the UK. Thoughtfully placed around the public spaces of the hotel are original pieces by Jaume Plensa, Olafur Eliasson, Julian Opie, Sol Le Witt, Tacita Dean, Spencer Finch, Richard Long, Marijke van Warmerdam and Swedish photographer Dawid, and within each of the 343 guest rooms are works by another Swedish artist, Kristina Matousch.

Set in the former head quarters of Swedbank, originally designed by Swedish architects Boijesen & Efervgren, the hotel was designed by London-based architecture practice Universal Design Studio and opened in April. It is one of four of buildings on Brunkebergstorg Square built during a government initiative that



Left: a seating area in the Presidential suite
 Below left: Carved marble freestanding
 Below right: a detail of a guest room



replaced much of the city centre's belle époque architecture with modern Brutalist buildings. However cool Brutalism may be among the purist design fraternity, it isn't the natural setting for the cosy trappings expected of a luxury hotel. So, Universal concentrated on softening the architecture, by using layers of natural textures, such as timber, sawn stone, polished granite and marble, with the industrial touch of blackened steel. A soft palette of warm greys is punctuated by the artworks and classic modern furniture editions by the likes of Arne Jacobsen, Le Corbusier, Patricia Uriqola, Charlotte Perriand, Borge Morgensen and Tobia Scarpa. All of this plays out across



10 storeys, up to the penthouse, and throughout the restaurant, two bars and Scandinavia's first 'slow listening lounge' (me neither...).

Nordgren was director of the Nation Museum in Oslo when he first met Stordalen, who asked him to work with him to re-define the concept of "Hotel Art". "I took it as a challenge," says Nordgren, "I realised I had worked in a more protected environment for museums and public art spaces, but curating for a hotel is working with an unprepared audience and (one has) to make art work to coincide with architecture and interior design." Stordalen already had a substantial and very personal collection, although it was embryonic and, says Nordgren, "his first task for me was to sharpen it and get rid of the scrap. Which I did. Before me there were other advisors, but none with my background and insight. Still, I learned what was close to Petter's own heart and I have always tried to refine these inclinations, and make it the main substance for his very personal and heartfelt collection of contemporary art."

The collection extends beyond At Six; there are some 600 works across over 20 of the group's art hotels, alongside those in the headquarters in Oslo and Stockholm and in Stordalen's private home. The collection is continually being added to, and Nordgren refers to it as a "multi-location Petter Stordalen Museum". With At Six, he worked closely with Universal Design Studio in deciding the curatorial approach. "Their design concept for the regeneration of the old, brutalist office building was most inspiring and made me

chose some, if not most, of the art works," he says, "Strong in expression, low in colour, honest materials and of the highest quality when it comes to the artists. Some of the artworks are by artists that are already represented in the collection and have become favourites."

It is about reaching out to new audiences, says Nordgren, "The guests have not booked their rooms or restaurants to look at art – that is a bonus. A positive experience amongst other pleasant experiences: the food, the service, the atmosphere. It also sets a standard for the hotel. You are met by a marble head by Jaume Plensa, and works by Tacita Dean and Richard Long already in the lobby, so you know you can expect something exceptional of the visit." The art is by a mix of international Modern stars and contemporary Scandinavian talent, and indeed so is the design. Alongside the classic Modern furniture mentioned above, Universal incorporated bespoke pieces by local makers, such as the custom lighting by Rubn in each room and the handmade glass pieces in public areas by glassmaker Carina Seth Anderson, and, in the bar an impressive communal table carved from a single Swedish Elm trunk by local artist Lies-Marie Hoffman.

As Nordgren says, enter past At Six's austere facade, and, even if you don't know your Le Witt from your Finch, let alone your Jacobsen from your Perriand, you immediately sense that this is not just another hotel. hotelsix.com