



## SPEND THE NIGHT

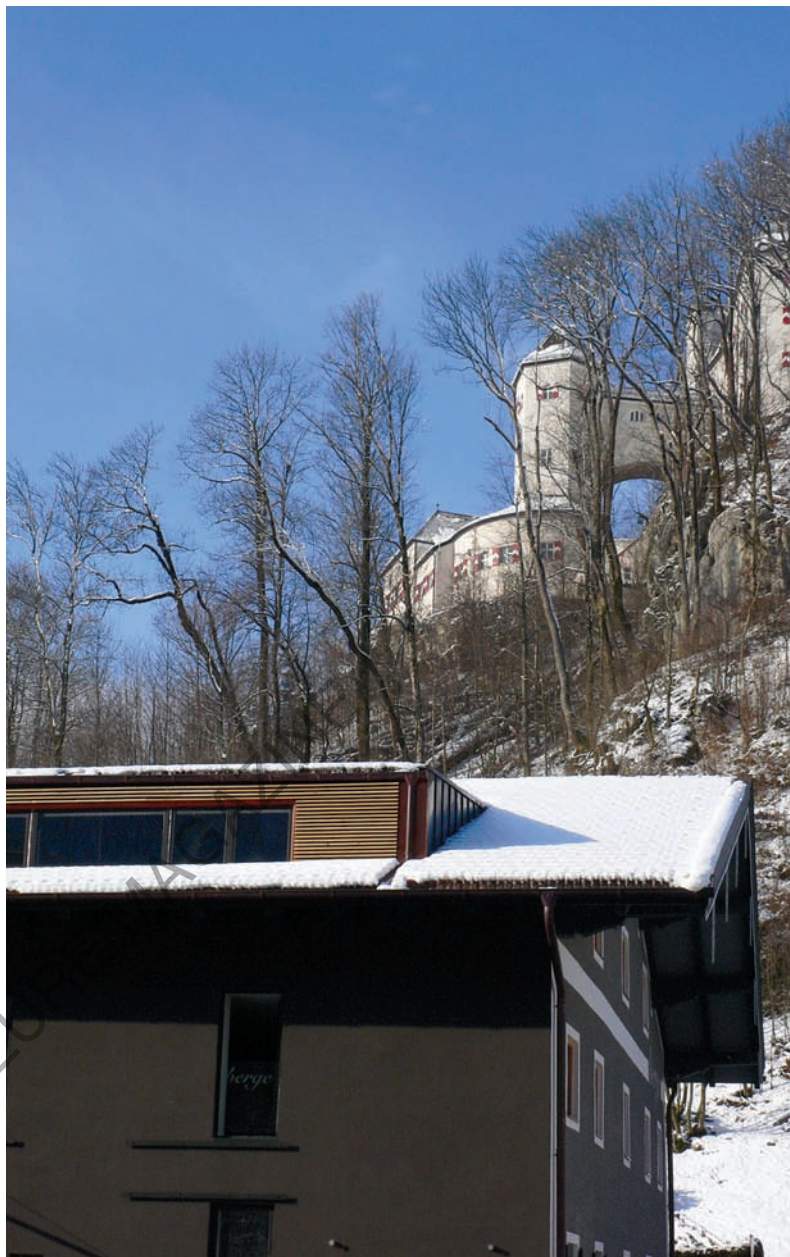
Nils Holger Moormann hadn't planned on opening the hostel Berge when he acquired a plot of Bavarian hillside in Aschau, Germany, in late 2005. But since a 337-year-old bakery building happened to come with the purchase, the designer and furniture maker elected to build a warehouse, which he urgently needed.

The town's mayor approved Moormann's proposal to connect a modern wood frame structure to its 1,100-square-metre predecessor, repurposing the artifact as a hostel; but a self-interested neighbour blocked the new construction. As a result, Moormann has only converted the bakery into the hostel. The original landmark is no longer recognizable: traces of its previous iterations as the Russian restaurant Petershof, a youth hostel and a royal bakery were expunged. Seven of 15 guest apartments have been completed in a gut renovation that could drag on – "We're still dreaming, and I think this will be a work-in-progress for many years," Moormann says – but it could be finished by fall.

Berge already shows off Moormann's unique design skills. Although works from his company's catalogue (such as the Kleiner Trommler stool, a 2002 design in which each of the seat's four sides produces a different percussive sound when tapped) are present, he says, "I don't want to have a showroom of Moormann furniture." The apartments are therefore largely exercises in custom built-ins, and their construction captures his furniture designs' two-dimensional line drawing quality. Finger holes replace mounted pulls on the cabinets, just like on the door fronts of his 2001 Egal shelving unit; and beds, treated as volumes with integrated stairs and storage, evoke his Walden garden shed from 2006. Moormann also notes that some Berge projects may find their way into his collection.

Despite the hostel's signature esthetic, its creator says a design hotel was out of the question. While any hotel would require more service employees than Moormann could afford or cared to manage, he also prefers a more bare-bones approach than the "design" moniker allows. Rather, he says, "I want to make a place where people will slow down and collect and exchange ideas, because there's not too much else around." In that spirit, creative backpackers will appreciate the TV-free rooms, well-stocked libraries, and 30-seat main chamber, which is perfectly suited to transform from kitchen to *Kunsthalle*.

DAVID SOKOL



**Above:** Offbeat German furniture maker Nils Holger Moormann purchased a piece of Bavarian land that included this 337-year-old former bakery. **Top left:** Moormann converted the structure into the Berge hostel. In the guest rooms, he created custom built-in bed and storage sets fitted with seemingly 2-D compartments. **Right:** Minimal spotlights illuminate the entranceway's arches.

