



# Urban Escape

# 02

## THE KEY PLAYERS

This second installment of our story continues with the introduction of the main characters who will bring to life the hotel elements of an urban regeneration project in central Stockholm. We will follow the development until it completes in 2017.

Words: Guy Dittrich



### THE OPERATOR

Catarina Molén-Runnäs, Chief Property Officer, Nordic Choice Hospitality Group and CEO, Nordic Property Management



### CONCEPT & BRAND DEVELOPMENT

Ulrika Kjellström Attar & Philippe Attar  
Co-Founders, Atmosfär by Attar

Responsible for running and developing the total property portfolio of Nordic Hotels & Resorts (NH&R) – part of Nordic Choice Hospitality Group – Molén-Runnäs coordinated the negotiations with landlord AMF Fastigheter that led to the signing of a 20-year lease for the two hotels that form part of the development. “The specific role was to manage the negotiations of developing a commercially viable hotel venture with AMF,” she explains. AMF were initially looking for three branded hotels. That only two – independently branded at that – have been decided upon illustrates the persuasiveness of the creative pitch.

So why were NH&R chosen? AMF clearly liked their track record and shared vision to invigorate the city. “We got both projects because we are able to meet AMF’s requirement to differentiate between different target audiences for each hotel,” explains Molén-Runnäs. Furthermore with two hotels in the same block, there were obvious economies. “We were also able to create synergies within the back of house functions such as shared kitchens and loading bays.”

Resources used to achieve this include the services of local architects Arkitekterna Krook & Tjäder, and brand agency Atmosfär by Attar. “We were fairly clear in what we wanted and Atmosfär helped with the visualisation of our ideas, bringing them to life,” she continues. “We had to really sell our idea into AMF as one that worked for both of us.”

Founded in 2012, Atmosfär by Attar is led by the husband-and-wife team of Ulrika Kjellström Attar, a project manager with experience in a variety of creative fields, and French-born, Philippe Attar, an art director formerly working with large consumer brands. Atmosfär deliver concept and brand development within the lifestyle, design and hospitality sectors.

“We had already been working with Nordic Property Management and Nordic Choice Hospitality Group on a number of concepts for new and existing properties, but nothing on this scale,” explains Kjellström Attar of the firm’s appointment.

Atmosfär’s initial role was to work out the type of hotels required to fit the location, a once beautiful but now largely forgotten square in the Norrmalm neighbourhood of the city. Kjellström’s local experience saw a market that, for all its diversity, was missing “a true contemporary luxury hotel (At Six) as well as a lifestyle hotel with a more exciting mid-market/premium value proposition (Hobo).” Working up these ideas lasted a year, before AMF were convinced and the lease was signed. Atmosfär then sent AMF and Nordic Choice Hotels on a “study trip” to London, Barcelona and Amsterdam out of which developed the design briefs. What were they looking for? “Firstly we wanted to bring something new to Stockholm,” she explains. “Then we wanted people who really understood and lived the luxury lifestyle products we are proposing.”



### THE DESIGNERS

Hannah Carter Owers  
Director, Universal Design Studio

“What excites us most about this assignment is the chance to be part of a bigger urban regeneration project,” explains Hannah Carter Owers, Co-Director of London-based Universal Design Studio (UDS), which won the opportunity to design the interiors and architecture of At Six, one of the two hotel projects on site. There is a parallel to the previous hotel experience of UDS, the much admired Ace Hotel in London’s Shoreditch. A relatively late arrival in its neighbourhood, Ace Hotel is now unequivocally a fundamental element of its resurgence.

“We want to give At Six an international perspective and still make it part of the everyday fabric of Stockholm.”

“We did a lot of research into the square and its Belle Époque origins that gave way to a Brutalist 1960s architecture,” Carter Owers continues. Whereas these concrete shells are seen to have “real attitude” in her home town of London, in the Swedish capital they resulted in the square becoming slightly toxic and resented by locals.

UDS is the interior design and architecture studio set up in 2001 to complement the industrial and product design work of Ed Barber and Jay Osgerby. It is a cross-cultural creative studio of around 45 people with a broad skill set and the ability to work across scale. Expect to see several bespoke Barber & Osgerby pieces in the hotel. These could be door handles or light switches – it’s yet to be disclosed. Together with their realised work at the Ace Hotel, this helped get them the job. “We are taking some of the energy of Ace, upscaling and adapting it for a wider market,” adds Carter Owers. “We want to give At Six an international perspective and still make it part of the everyday fabric of Stockholm.”



### THE DESIGNERS

Werner Aisslinger  
Founder, Studio Aisslinger

“There was a formal presentation day but I was confident of success because I felt that the client trusted us,” explains Werner Aisslinger of the pitch for the interior design of Hobo, the second hotel in the development. The fact that he sees his client as very open-minded coincides with the largely experimental nature of the work coming out of his eponymously named studio, established in 1993.

Studio Aisslinger, with a team of 12 in Berlin and a project office in Singapore, is involved in multiple activities that take a broad view of

“Scandinavia is more conservative and therefore needs slightly more elegance.”

product design, interiors and architecture. With work in the hospitality sector limited to the Loft Cube concept that pops up here and there around the globe, Hotel Daniel in Graz, Austria, and most recently the 25hours Hotel Bikini Berlin, they are still relatively new to designing new hospitality projects.

The conceptualisation of the design was led by a small team comprising Aisslinger, Tina Bunyaprasit and Monika Losos, who generated storyboard ideas of community, freedom and Seventies style.

“We see a Berlin point of view that respects Scandinavian light,” explains Aisslinger of the proposed interiors. “Something very urban but not as chaotic as Berlin. Scandinavia is more conservative and therefore needs slightly more elegance,” he continues. Aisslinger is mindful of the need to balance AMF’s pragmatic desire for efficiencies and the enthusiasm of Nordic Choice Hotels’ owner Petter Stordalen for his more radical ideas.