

# European Spa

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Celebrating sauna traditions at the Andrus Vital Spa

**DESIGN SHOWCASE**  
Inside three inspirational spas with their creators



# Holistic simplicity

Creating a fitting spa concept for the iconic Dolder Grand meant connecting the past with the future for **Sylvia Sepielli**

**W**ith more than two decades of experience in the spa and fitness industries, Sylvia Sepielli is widely recognised as a spa visionary and leader.

Having owned and operated fitness centres in both the US and Japan, Sepielli – who is also a certified holistic health practitioner, having studied Chinese and Japanese traditional medicines, including Shiatsu and acupuncture – formed SPAd (Sylvia Planning And design) in 1994. Based in Arizona, the company undertakes all phases of spa development and operation.

One of Sepielli's best-known European spa concepts was created for the Dolder Grand in Zürich. Following a four-year construction phase, the Dolder Grand returned to the luxury European hotel market in 2008, reopening with architecture from Foster + Partners, interior design by United Designers and a spa concept by Sepielli.

For Sepielli, the commission presented a unique opportunity to add something new to such an historic property, but she admits that it also demanded a whole new approach in order to meet the client's requirements. "It was a privilege and a challenge to develop a spa that



**"It was a privilege to develop a spa that would connect the traditions of the old Dolder Grand and progress into the future with the new"**

Sylvia Sepielli, SPAd







Clockwise from top: The Sunaboro enable guests to experience the healing warmth of Japanese pebble loungers; the Dolder Grand reopened after a four-year renovation in 2008; the hotel's Spa Suite uses a limited colour palette; the canyon pool features views of the surrounding countryside; the relaxation lounge is equipped with bespoke lighting





Right, from top: One of the treatment rooms that uses a palette of off-whites, cream and dark browns; the exterior pool boasts stunning views across the surrounding countryside; the juice bar features bright, oversized wild Swiss flowers to punctuate the otherwise pristine environment

would span the traditions of the historic old Dolder Grand, while progressing into the future with the new spa," she says.

"However, I needed to slow myself down in order to fully understand the Swiss process of development. They had their sights set on a facility that would last another 100 years, so no decision was made lightly. I had never worked with such quality before."

Materials and textures were key aspects of the spa's creation. "The building itself is very masculine," says Sepielli, "but the curves of the structure and the nuanced use of materials provide the spa design with a feminine balance.

"Some elements must be experienced in person – touched, even – to be appreciated," she insists. "For example, the stone that wraps the exterior base of the building moves down into the canyon of the spa – the deeper it goes, the smaller and smoother the blocks of stone become, providing a sensual transition."

The feelings a spa can invoke in its guests were a particular focus of Sepielli's work at the Dolder Grand, as she explains: "Whether planned by design or intuitively experienced, every spa creates feelings and emotions – we all have expectations and anxiety, especially when visiting any spa for the first time.

"Riding in the glass elevator down to the Dolder Grand Spa, the first feelings one experiences are curiosity and anticipation. The spa reception gives away few hints as to what awaits in the way of design or experience information.

"However, once guests have checked in and been escorted to the changing rooms, they witness a spectacular view of the canyon pool. Inevitably, a smile breaks out on their face – an expression of joy or awe. It's an amazing sight that, for me, never gets old."



## DESIGN SUMMARY

**The Dolder Grand Spa**  
Zürich, Switzerland

Covering 4,000sqm, the Dolder Grand Spa blends both European and Japanese influences to create a truly unique wellness experience aimed to enhance inner balance and peace of mind  
[www.thedoldergrand.com](http://www.thedoldergrand.com)

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