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MM:NT Berlin Lab is a testbed for tech-savvy hospitality

Designed by ACME and BWM, MM:NT (pronounced 'moment') will operate in an on-going beta mode, shaping and redefining what the hospitality offering will look like in the future.

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Billed as one of the most effortlessly creative cities in Europe, it's no surprise that a new type of experimental hospitality has found its home in Berlin's central Mitte district. Next to the lively cobbled streets of Hackescher Markt, known equally for its historic architecture and vibrant nightlife, the new MM:NT aparthotel is pitched as a 'laboratory' by Australian operator Adina and TFE Hotels; a way to test new ideas for the new values of future travellers. With the rise (and, perhaps, fall) of Airbnb, the concept aims to understand if guests would prefer to sacrifice the more conventional service-led hotel experience for the self-service, digital-led approach that Gen Z and Millennials are so accustomed to.

Developed with experiential design expert Philippa Wagner of PeoplePlacesSpaces and designed by ACME and BWM, MM:NT (pronounced 'moment') will operate in an on-going beta mode, continually gathering feedback from guests to shape and redefine what their hospitality offering will look like in the future. A web-based app runs the show – allowing guests to check in, check out, access smart storage lockers and shared amenities, and communicate with staff with a click of a button.



“The big idea was to create a new hospitality brand that responded to the emerging travel values of future travellers,” explains Wagner, “and one that could always evolve. It was also to push the boundaries of convention and use the opportunity to build something entirely from scratch that did not have to adhere to the ‘rules.’”

PeoplePlacesSpaces helped TFE Hotels define a future guest mindset, described as “Kindred Travellers,” who prefer unique experiences and are open to new ways of interacting with hospitality. The brand encourages guests to engage with similarly-minded local businesses for wellness activities and dining out, promoting a collaborative, sustainable travel model shaped by real-time guest feedback. Attempting to access a cutlery drawer using an app is a new experience even for this digital-savvy millennial traveller, and the concept does take a little getting used to – not quite the solo nature of an Airbnb nor the watchful service of a hotel – but one Wagner and TFE hope to understand and develop as they expand.

“We are also going back into future testing phases, changing the things we heard guests liked or didn’t like, or trying new things as people and the world change. We are defining the blueprint for the first MM:NT rollouts – but that doesn’t mean that that’s it. By its very virtue of being in Beta, the brand will continue to learn every time it opens a new location.”



A simple swipe of thumb and the door opens from the pavement straight to ‘The Hub’, a relaxed, communal lobby which the six rooms open on to. It’s a beautiful space: a muted palette of natural materials is complemented by warm lighting and a speckled blue dining-and-working table from Smile Plastics. Vintage rugs and furniture blend with modern pieces, and a pink-tiled counter offers self-serve coffee and sandwiches during the day and German beer and wine at night.

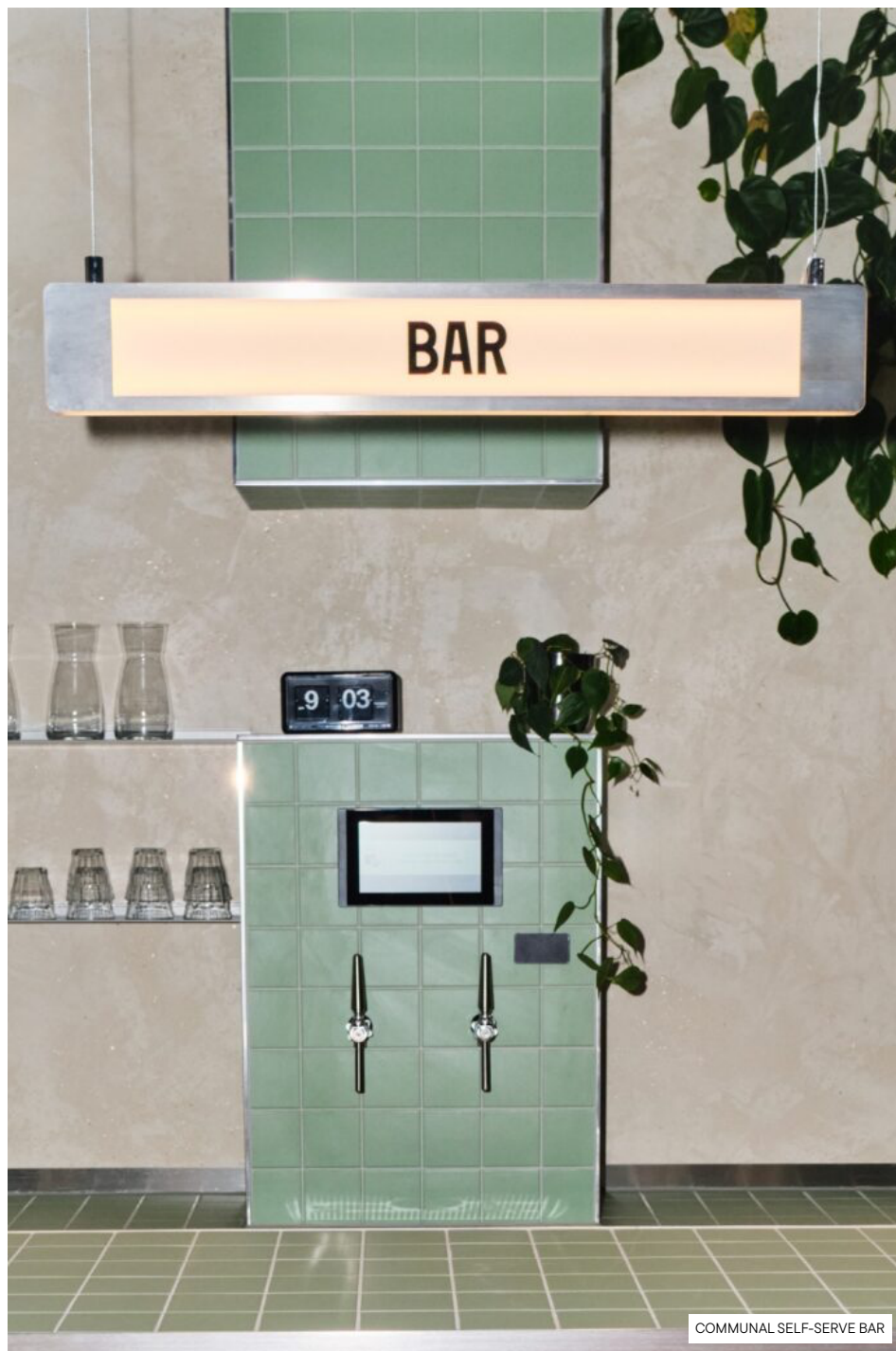
The rooms available are Little, Middle and Big, offering different amenities and price points. ACME led the design, crafting all of the shared spaces and four of the various-sized standalone bedrooms. In true experimental spirit, Austrian practice BWM took on Room 00:02 – a Middle room – to test a secondary approach to MM:NT’s design brief.

The Big and Middle rooms are more typical aparthotels, with space maximised through clever spatial interventions and bespoke joinery. In the more generous Big room, a kitchen and open-plan dining and living space makes room for up to four people – all wood and tiles, with recycled-wood terrazzo countertops from Foresso and Snøhetta chairs made from recycled fishing nets. This natural and sustainably-focused materiality continues through to the BWM-designed Middle room, with eco-friendly sage green tiles and green-stained-pine kitchenette. The room’s design has also been engineered to thoughtfully optimise space and give guests the flexibility to adapt the layout to their needs, with a modular approach featuring bespoke pull-out seating and foldable wall panels that double as desks.



The compact and windowless Little rooms – one just 11 sq m – were also designed by ACME, with large feature vanity space and luxurious rainfall shower. ACME utilised Häfele’s smart lighting which has three modes: vitality (morning and wakeup), social (day) and relax (night). Clutter is avoided, and a clever storage system blends seamlessly into the cosy wood-walled space.

“The early phase of the project was characterised by a real sense of freedom to rethink the travel and stay experience,” comments ACME’s Emma Buckley. “We discussed every part of a guest journey with a radical sense of ignorance, to not replicate rooms as they always have been, but to rethink every part and question what adds real value. Do we need windows? Do we need televisions? Do we need somewhere to cook? Do we need a longer table for a few people to work together? Are there new ways of thinking about sleeping and relaxing that produce new rooms and configurations unlike any we are seeing today?”



“Rich, shared spaces were made possible by re-thinking typical apartment hotel layouts,” continues ACME’s Lauren Franklin. “For example, instead of each guest room having its own small table and chair, we created compact bedrooms and a shared lounge, a social space for coworking and somewhere to enjoy a drink or bite to eat. [The challenge] was working with these small spaces, and creating rooms that didn’t feel cramped even though the area was limited.”

The modular design of the hotel has been created to work anywhere. ACME have applied the model to different test sites – redundant buildings which may otherwise have been demolished – including a 60s office building, a department store and an industrial site. The future of MM:NT is being written as we speak, Wagner notes, with big ambitions for TFE to roll the brand out across different locations – constantly learning and evolving from their guests. After all, an investment in knowledge pays the best interest.

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