

# GG



September  
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LIFESTYLE • PERSONALITIES • REAL ESTATE

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## AXEL VERVOORDT

The Unmistakable  
Style of the Legendary  
Belgian Designer

## RAMHOLZ

Spectacular and Pristine:  
One of Germany's  
Most Beautiful Castles

## RAVAGE

Black and White  
Two Dutch Designers &  
a Dream in Normandy

## SIEGER DESIGN

Christian & Michael  
Sieger at their  
Headquarters  
Harkotten Castle

CASTLES & MANSIONS ...

# We love Classic!

STATELY, ELEGANT & DISTINGUISHED IN BELGIUM, FRANCE AND GERMANY

# AT HOME

CHRISTIAN & MICHAEL SIEGER  
AXEL VERVOORDT  
AYMERIC & SONIA DE TRUCHIS  
RAVAGE – CLEMENS RAMECKERS  
& ARNOLD VAN GEUNS



## Their Home is their Castle

Sieger design is not for cautious types. When Christian and Michael Sieger get their hands on something like the Wiesmann Roadster MF3, the result is quite colorful. In contrast, their headquarters are in the all-white, baroque Harkotten castle near Münster, Germany. Trend scouts Ravage have fast-forwarded their castle into the 21st century in France, while art collector and legendary interior designer Axel Vervoordt works his magic in Belgium. To find out how, and what Count de Truchis has done to preserve his family estate in Burgundy – turn the page!



**A Designers' Residence**

Sieger Design is one of the first addresses for bathroom design. The company headquarters are located in the tranquil Münsterland region, housed in a German baroque moated castle, which the Sieger family initially used as their residence and office. In 2003 Christian and Michael Sieger converted the castle into their office – and what an office it is!

TEXT: Uta Abendroth PHOTOS: Mark Seelen PRODUCTION: Janine Weitenauer

Mix of eras: the stately stairwell is one of the most beautiful in Westphalia. The "Large Salon" fuses baroque and modern elements.



“German design is often too cerebral for me; emotions are important. Maybe we are the most Italian of the German design agencies.”

MICHAEL SIEGER



Sieger, the younger: Michael currently designs for companies such as Dornbracht, Arzberg and Duravit, and for his own Sieger brand.

“In the beginning nothing here was as we expected. Everything had to be refurbished – from the basement to the roof.”

CHRISTIAN SIEGER



Eclecticism wherever you look: in the conference room (large photo, right) the upholstered chairs, designed by Michael Sieger, are arranged around a marble table. The recesses in the walls, where ovens used to be, are today the perfect place for exotic sculptures. The well-preserved marble fireplaces in the “Large Salon” provide a kind of base for the baroque paintings. In the offices, located on the top floor and used less often for entertaining guests, things look a bit more pragmatic. However, they, too, feature furniture and accessories by design brands like Kartell and Knoll. The windowsills (lower right) are home to “Objects to a Muse,” designed by Michael Sieger and marketed under the “Sieger by Fürstenberg” label – just like the “My China!” porcelain range (left).





Sieger, the elder: Christian is in charge of the commercial side of the family business, its management and company strategy.

“We were very much raised to be open-minded. That is in large part thanks to our mother Fransje, who is Dutch by birth.”

CHRISTIAN SIEGER





“At some point, living and working under the same roof became unworkable. But Harkotten castle still feels very homey.”

CHRISTIAN SIEGER

Collector's joy: even the library, in which design books are piled high, features an object by Memphis: the "Super" lamp by Martine Bedin.

A modern design agency based in a baroque moated castle – it sounds contradictory at first, but is exceptionally appealing. This is because, on the one hand, Harkotten castle became the headquarters of an international company rather by accident and on the other, the boundaries between art, design and architecture are fluid, so bridging the gap between the different eras works extraordinarily well.

The company headquarters of Sieger Design in Sassenberg near Münster, Germany, form part of an old estate whose origins can be traced all the way back to the 14th century. Between 1297 and 1309, a late medieval twin castle and weir system was built here, and bequeathed by the knight Heinrich von Korff to his two sons. From 1754, the baroque Harkotten-Ketteler castle was constructed according to plans drawn up by master builder Johann Leonhard Mauritz Gröninger. And from 1804, architect Adolph von Vagedes constructed the neoclassical Harkotten-Korff castle. The two stately homes are located close to each other on the same property. The hunting lodge of the Barons von Ketteler is situated in a park, which measures roughly 10,000 square meters, and is surrounded by an extensive network of moats and ponds. Home to some of Westphalia's landed gentry well into the 20th century, the estate was turned into a nursing home after 1945. At the start of the 1970s, Luigi Colani rented the property as a base for his "design factory." But the designer was rarely there; it was vacant most of the time. In the late '80s, the Sieger family arrived and has stayed to this day.

Dieter Sieger made a name for himself as an architect in the 1960s. The purchase of a sailing boat led to his career as a ship designer, and eventually as a successful designer of sinks, bathtubs, and of bathroom fittings and furniture for brands such as Alape, Dornbracht and Duravit. Dieter Sieger had previously operated his business out of a one-family home in Münster, but in the mid-80s when even the garage was overflowing with designs, Sieger's "Modellbau & Co." had simply run out of space and a larger base was needed. Christian, the older of Sieger's two sons, remembers the search for a new home: "At first, my father had wanted to design a building himself, but with the demands on his time it would probably never have been completed. This is why my parents started looking for a spacious piece of real estate, which they wanted to redesign to their hearts content, and adapt to their needs. In 1985 they had looked at Harkotten castle, but had dismissed the idea, because the 2,000-square meter castle needed extensive renovations, and seemed too audacious a project to them."

For three years, the Siegers searched high and low in the region and even looked as far as the Dutch and Belgian borders – without success. Rather unexpectedly, Christian Sieger turned out to be the catalyst for a decision in favor of the property in Sassenberg: "I was actually on university break, in France. But my father needed my help, so I came back to Münster. There was a party in the stables at Harkotten castle, which I went to. At some point that evening, I was standing in the moonlight at this very entrance with the baron from next door. I found the building, which was more or less empty

all the time, simply stunning." In the light of day, the Sieger family decided to make Harkotten their home and office.

The baroque castle, a plastered brick building with two floors rising above a basement, is similar in style to numerous other moated castles in the Münsterland region. The front and garden façades both feature an avant-corps projecting from the modest main body of the building. Two flights of stairs, one on either side of the main entrance, lead up to the door. At the back of the building, conservation officials allowed the construction of a terrace, which has a great view of the unique garden. This was restored and modernized by Belgian landscape gardener Jacques Wirtz. Little by little, modern sculptures created by friends of the family – famous designers and architects like Ettore Sottsass, Andrea Branzi, Alessandro Mendini and Fabrizio Plessi – completed the look of the lawns. A fountain, which measures nine meters in diameter and is covered in thousands of little Bisazza mosaic stones, is the focal point of the garden and was designed personally by Dieter and Michael, the younger of the two Sieger brothers.



Ten years ago, Christian (left) and Michael Sieger took over the business founded by their father and expanded its design portfolio, adding – among others – the high-end "Sieger" brand.

In the building itself, extensive refurbishment was needed before it could be used in the way the Siegers had intended: "My father turned up here in January '88 with 60 or 70 craftsmen, and half a year later, we moved in," says Christian Sieger. "Of course, nothing was as we had expected. The floors either had to be removed, or the floorboards lifted up and the cavities underneath them cleaned out with a blower. The plumbing, the electrics, the heating and the thermal pane windows all had to be redone." When Dieter Sieger and his wife Fransje moved in, the knight's hall was turned into their living room, and their collection of Memphis furniture was arranged around the old marble fireplaces. Christian, who is in charge of the company's commercial and marketing activities, moved onto the first floor; Michael, who looks after the creative side of the business, moved onto the second floor, and later into the annexes.

While living and working under the same roof had initially proved practical, it became more and more difficult. Over time, the company expanded its portfolio of activities from product design to communication design, PR and marketing consulting. In the end, Christian and Michael Sieger took over the management of the company. The increasing number of employees, which currently stands at 40, led to several reorganizations of the castle's living and office space. At one point, it became evident that Harkotten was no longer fit to be both the Sieger's home and their company headquarters: "My parents moved out in 2003," says Christian Sieger. "That was also the time that my father decided to retire from the business. A few years later, my brother and I moved to Münster with our families." The castle continues to exude the charm of a very individual residence, and at the same time, is the perfect base for the two brothers' high-end brand. Introduced in 2005, its range comprises porcelain objects manufactured in partnership with the Fürstenberg company, crystalware produced in collaboration with Theresienthal, fashion, small leather goods, and – most recently – carpets marketed under the "Sieger by Kupferot" label. Next year, the family business will celebrate its 50th anniversary – and Harkotten castle is sure to provide a great setting for the festivities.