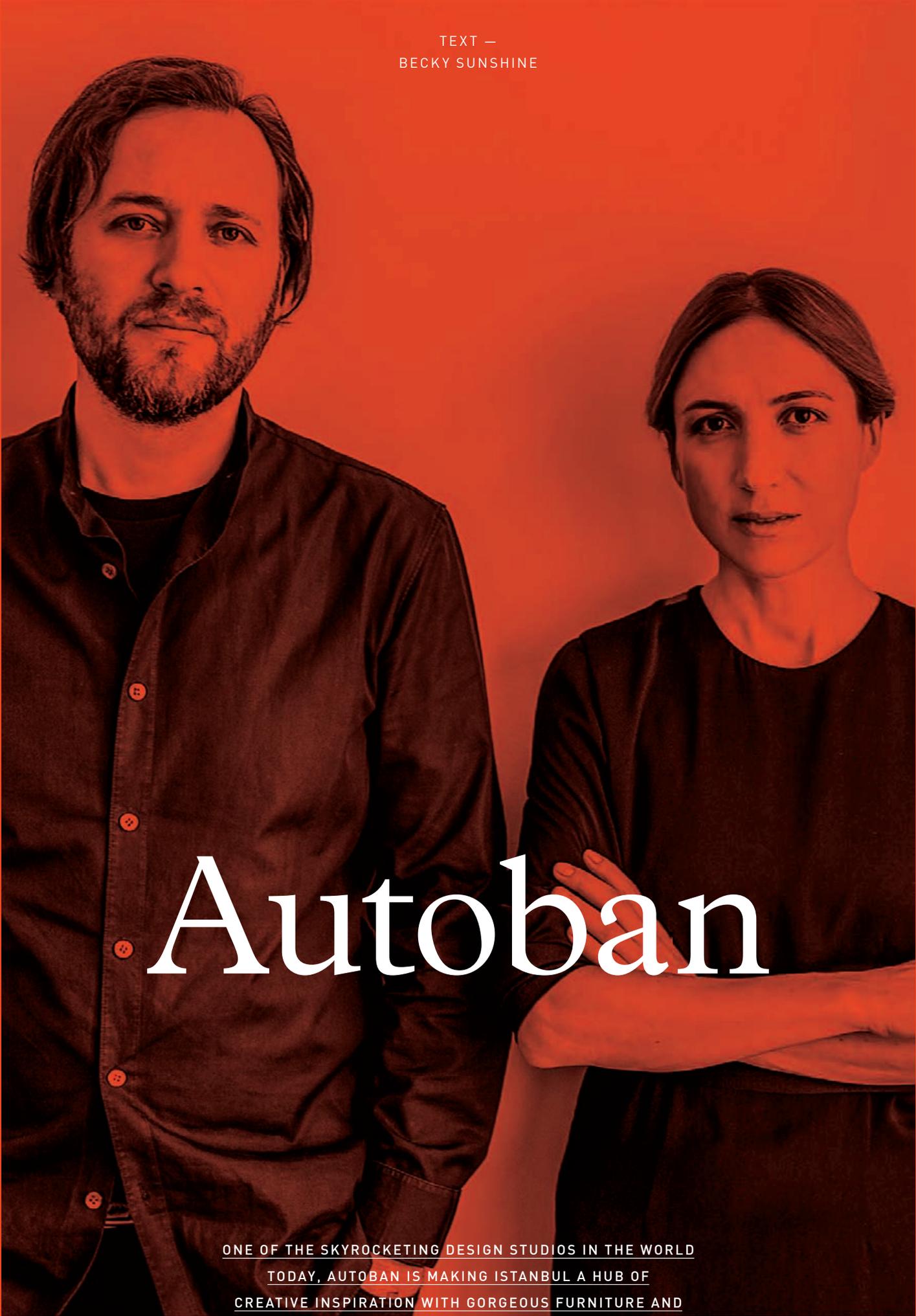


THE INFLUENCERS
— 2015

TEXT —
BECKY SUNSHINE



Autoban

ONE OF THE SKYROCKETING DESIGN STUDIOS IN THE WORLD
TODAY, AUTOBAN IS MAKING ISTANBUL A HUB OF
CREATIVE INSPIRATION WITH GORGEOUS FURNITURE AND
SPECTACULAR INTERIORS THAT ARE AT THE NEXUS BETWEEN
ASIA AND EUROPE, TRADITION AND MODERNITY.

“Form, function, experience, and their undeniable unity are the principals that accompany us in the creative process. In fact, experience is the foundation of the entire process, from start to finish.”

AUTOBAN

For the past few years a palpable creative energy has been emanating from Istanbul thanks in large part to the architectural and design practice, Autoban. Established in 2003 and helmed by founders Seyhan Özdemir and Sefer Çağlar, and more recently joined by partner Efe Aydar, the design studio has, in just a few short years, become a beacon of influence for both aspiring and established designers, and one of the most sought-after design studios worldwide.

Autoban’s process sounds deceptively simple: It aims to create interiors, architecture, and products that combine sophistication, wit, and rich materials with minimal forms. But the key to Autoban’s success seems to be its innate ability to harness the finest craft traditions of the East and blend them seamlessly with the modernity, technology, and esthetics of the West. The results are exciting, refined, and perfectly reflect that point of intersection between Asia and Europe that Istanbul so beautifully typifies. It’s no wonder that Autoban was named *Wallpaper** magazine’s Best Young Designers of 2004 and has since enjoyed a steady flow of high-profile awards.

“Through multiplicity in design, we offer singularity in experience,” the pair has said. “Form, function, experience, and their undeniable unity are the principals that accompany us in the creative process. In fact, experience is the foundation of the entire process, from start to finish. While we position ourselves as storytellers, we are basically creating spatial experiences using the necessary forms and functions, which we gather from our knowledge of architecture and our continuously evolving knowledge of production methods.”

Born and raised in Istanbul—where much of their work exists—Özdemir and Çağlar

have always viewed their surroundings as a constant source of inspiration. “The location of our first office was Galata, a historic neighborhood with a genuine Istanbul vibe. We are still pretty much around the same area and our unique location has enabled us to understand craftsmanship and local manufacturing techniques over time. It has made us accustomed to seeing the old mixing with the new, and to notice layers, which has in turn paved the way for us to develop new techniques and a contemporary approach to design.”

The pair insists that people are always at the forefront of their minds when they begin a project. “We believe an Autoban design should help them get where they need to go, do what they need to do. It should provide solitude or interaction, respite or stimulation, or all of these. Positively affecting the people who inhabit a space, visit it, or pass it by is our reason for doing what we do.”

With projects that span restaurants, retail spaces, offices, residential homes, airports, and hotels, as well as interiors and furniture, the common thread is a subtle cultural narrative. “There are cultural and regional differences that define the function of a space,” they note. “Our goal is always to tell the right story. We ask: Does it make the best possible use of its situation, its history, its future? Does it succeed within its environment, its neighborhood, its community? With input from our clients, we try to understand the culture of the space first and mix in necessary, meaningful details to bring out the best possible result. We enjoy encrypting these cultural codes, and filtering them to deliver contemporary design.”

Autoban’s impressive roster of hotels includes the magnificent House Hotel Nişantaşı, known for its warm, earthy

SIDE NOTES

NAMES *Seyhan Özdemir, Sefer Çağlar & Efe Aydar*

COMPANY NAME *Autoban*

COMPANY HEADQUARTERS *Istanbul*

NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN COMPANY *35*

WEBSITE *autoban212.com*

SIGNATURE PROJECTS *Nopa restaurant, Gaspar restaurant, in Istanbul; Heydar Aliyev International Airport Terminal, Baku; Witt Istanbul Hotel, House Hotel Nişantaşı, House Hotel Bosphorus, House Hotel Galatasaray, in Istanbul*

SIGNIFICANT AWARDS

2014 *Red Dot award for Heydar Aliyev International Airport*

2012 *Wallpaper* Design Awards*

2011 *Best Hotel in the World by Sunday Times Travel Magazine (House Hotel Nişantaşı, number 18 out of 100)*

2008 *Design Turkey Awards*

2005 *Blueprint Best Newcomer*

2004 *Wallpaper* Best Young Designers*



Autoban’s Reedy Bookcase in walnut. Opposite: Sefer Çağlar & Seyhan Özdemir.

palette as well as the designers' iconic Nest chairs manufactured by De La Espada, and The House Hotel Bosphorous, which overlooks the river and perfectly blends the grandeur of a historic building with signature contemporary, light touches.

But there's also a host of restaurants. Recent additions include Nopa, a new upscale space in the Nişantaşı district of Istanbul, which opened in June 2014. On the ground floor of a new apartment block, also designed by Autoban, this restaurant's focal point is a long, looping marble and wood-paneled bar, which leads to an outside dining area with a retractable roof, a waterfall, and a lush vertical garden. There's also Gaspar, a recently-opened restaurant from Özdemir's chef husband, Ferit Sarper, housed in a former printing shop and now adorned with wood panels that are bathed in warm, muted light. In addition, its first London restaurant, Frescobaldi, opened in late 2014, to great acclaim.

Autoban was awarded the prestigious Red Dot award in 2014 for its interior architecture at the newly built Heydar Aliyev International Airport Terminal for Azerbaijan Airlines—its largest commercial project to date. With a brief to create “warm hospitality,” it designed cocoon-like flexible spaces in wood that house a spa, luggage storage, cafes, bookstores, and a children's play area. Lighting too, which is usually stark and functional in airports, has been warmed up at Heydar Aliyev, while stone and textiles make the space inviting.

Though it is still a young design practice, Autoban has an exciting array of projects in the pipeline. In other words, though its influence in the design world is strong, it is only going to get stronger. —

1 Gaspar restaurant appeals with its multi-colored wooden wall panels and extravagant seating.

2 The compact, multi-level Poly Side Table, comes in American black walnut, American white oak, European Ash, and black painted steel.

3 Inspired by the historic Simon Kalfa building, The House Hotel Bosphorus was designed to create a comfortable, modern, and luxurious world with classical traces.

4 Awarded first place in the seating category at the 2009 EDIDA Awards, the Deco Sofa uses strong geometric forms and generous proportions to update the Art Deco look.

5 Awarded “Superior Design” by the Design Turkey Organization, the Nest Lounge chair presents a bold new take on seating.

6 Autoban's wooden cocoon-like flexible spaces at Heydar Aliyev International Airport Terminal house a spa, luggage storage, cafes, bookstores, and a children's play area.



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