

SOUTH TYROL

— *birthplace of the Wanderers*

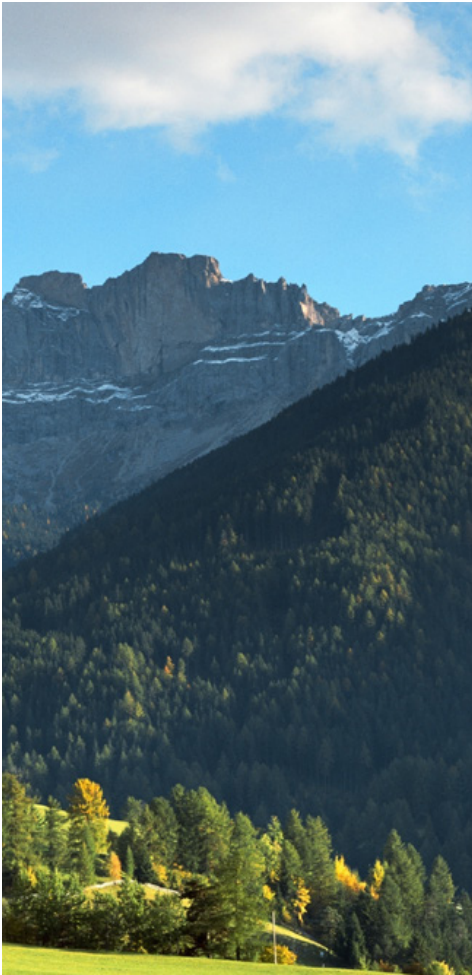
Words by Caoilfhionn Rose

Back in November we had the pleasure of visiting South Tyrol, an enclave of northern Italy nestled in the shadows of the majestic peaks of the Dolomites. It's a beautifully bucolic province situated on the Austrian border, about halfway between Verona and Innsbruck, lined with vineyards, medieval castles, churches, alpine grasslands, apple orchards, snow-capped mountains and ski-pistes. Any clued-in person will be aware that, as a general rule, Italian and German cultures do not mix. If anything, they couldn't be more paradoxical in economics, landscape, architecture, mannerisms, food and art. South Tyrol presents itself as the geographical embodiment of this paradox.

First, a little background for you. South Tyrol is an autonomous province that draws its charm from a fusion

of Austrian and Italian cultures. Once part of a wider Austro-Hungarian empire, it was commandeered by Italy in 1918. There are three languages spoken here; German (the main language), Italian and the local dialect, Ladin. Before our trip we had researched the area and read about the different languages spoken, but we weren't prepared for how much the Austrian culture infiltrated this Italian province. Despite Mussolini's fierce efforts to try and strip the Austrian culture from the area by forbidding residents from speaking German and enforcing Italian language and culture into daily activities, locals fought for their freedom and unique cultural identity. Many wish that South Tyrol was independent of Italy, and those natives we spent time with remarked that they felt neither German nor Italian, but South Tyrolean.

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Some might assume that the province would suffer from an infinite identity crisis with schools being divided according to mother tongue and language barriers causing integration issues, as well as tensions surrounding those who bear a strong sense of national identity and do not wish to be independent of Italy. Although this is the case in some areas of the province, South Tyrol seemed to us the perfect fusion of Italian romance and charm, Austrian strength and practicality.

Fortuitously, South Tyrol survived its parental tug of war, and although some parts of life here are unquestionably Germanic and others Italian, this idyllic province is a remarkably idiosyncratic part of Europe. It is a place of ceaseless cultural contrasts and crossroads, which over time have been able to nurture a blossoming economy, high standard of living





and boundless propensity for initiative.

When driving up the winding roads towards the mountains, one can't help but feel awash with creativity and imaginative ideas. There's something about the crisp, fresh air, unadulterated landscapes and poetic tune of another language floating into our ears that inspires us. The same goes for the South Tyrolean natives who have not allowed the imposing mountains that encircle the region to inhibit their creative senses. Alpine life isn't just days spent on the slopes and après-ski belly-warming boozy nights. On the contrary, it presents a number of challenges to mountain inhabitants, who must house the ability to adapt, use swift ingenuity when it comes to handling problems posed by the extreme conditions, and a strong creative spirit to maintain sanity amidst the harsh winters.

The creativity visible in South Tyrol's core art fields, as well as their cultural and creative sectors, expresses the very

sentiment of what it is to live in such an inimitable region. From their architecture to their food, their wine to their art, South Tyroleans show a rigorous spontaneity and an explorative vision that goes beyond the peaks of the Dolomites.

In fact, South Tyrol's current creative scene lives, breathes and inspires on more than five continents. Jasmine Deporta (photographer), Elisa Bergmann and Nadja Pugneth (fashion designers) are all exemplary creatives in their respective fields and soon came to the realisation that each was not the only South Tyrolean making waves in the artistic world. The trio wanted to bring their creativity home, to inspire others and give back to their region what it so fluidly gifted to them in abundance. They acted on this initiative to produce the 'Wanderer' project. Wanderer is founded on a passion for the arts, but also for *heimat*. *Heimat*,

pronounced [hai-mat], is a German word with no English equivalent - it denotes the relationship of a human being towards a certain spatial social unit forming a contrast to social alienation. Wanderer is a project centred on South Tyroleans who travel the world and spread their creative wings but also, as part of the Wanderer collective, gather in an exciting location in South Tyrol for one day to share their experiences, inspire those who follow and create a piece of *heimat*. The organisation is a network of more than 50 creative leaders in their individual field, making for an enthralling, innovative project. The founders hope that the Wanderer initiative is adopted, regionally, nationally and internationally. Experiencing the Wanderer initiative while visiting South Tyrol was more than just inspiring, instilling us with thoughts and ideas about our own lives and projects. The creativity seeping from the pores of the group's members was palpable,



leaving us with a hunger for more information from this vibrant collective. Before now the exclusive faction had only an aesthetically pleasing Tumblr to entice prying eyes, but in the wake of their relaunch, we wait with bated breath to see what the Wanderers have up their sleeves. Meet some of the Wanderers and other South Tyrolean creatives:

JASMINE DEPORTA — FOUNGING WANDERER

Jasmine is a photographer by trade, however her multidisciplinary mind tends to roam into other creative fields when liberated. Based in Bolzano, South Tyrol, Deporta's inspiration comes from a love of colour, dreams and youth. With an eclectic view of the world and a ferocious ability to express it, Deporta combines delicate and interpersonal structures with relatable circumstances and common spaces creating curious and alluring aesthetics. Her sure-fire eye for an abnormal fashion editorial, and the grainy

visuals that only film can capture, blur the lines between fashion photography and art.

STEFAN SIEGEL — FOUNDER AND CEO OF NOT JUST A LABEL

Stefan was a master of many tasks, leading successful careers in modelling, finance and economics, and fashion and advertising consultancy, before founding Not Just A Label. He grew up in an area responsible for over 40 per cent of Italy's high-end and luxury manufacturing, cementing his love for fashion. Believing in the creativity abilities of others and the respect needed in the artistic industries to promote aspiring artists, Stefan founded NJAL with his brother Daniel. NJAL is a pioneering global platform dedicated to emerging fashion designers and ranks among the most respected websites in the fashion industry. As the world's leading designer platform for showcasing and nurturing today's pioneers in contemporary fashion, it represents over 18,000 designers

from 100 countries. It is an infinitely expanding destination devoted to facilitating industry growth and has established itself as a distinctive creative hub that fosters innovation.

BRIGITTE MARCH NIEDERMAIR — PHOTOGRAPHER

A fascinating woman with effortless grandeur, Brigitte March Niedermair has been a photographer for over fifteen years, shooting for the likes of magazines giants *Harper's Bazaar* and *Wallpaper**. Niedermair's photographs express a continuous dialogue between a love of commercial fashion photography and a passion for fine art. The boundaries of both are continually pushed by this artistic alchemist whose love of analogue photography adds a plethora of character to her images.

A favourite of Carine Roitfeld, whose artistic direction seems to veer along the same path, Niedermair has an intrinsic

aptitude for producing images of ceremonious perfection

Her talent recently resulted in a harmonious collaboration with artist Lucy McRae and *Wallpaper** fashion director Isabelle Kountoure, where nature, art and fashion collided in an unexpected embrace.

The Wanderers fuel each others' ideas and initiatives, creating a melting pot for support in innovation. While in South Tyrol, they invited us to explore the many accomplishments of their creative homebodies.

MESSNER MOUNTAIN MUSEUM (MMM) CORONES

- KRONPLATZ/PLAN DE CORONES

It's no wonder that the star architect Zaha Hadid, who is famous for her powerful, curving forms and elongated structures that avoid right angles, found inspiration in the mountains of South Tyrol. Teaming up with Reinhold Messner, the famous mountaineer, adventurer and explorer who is renowned for making the first ascent of Mount Everest without supplemental oxygen, the duo created the MMM Corones.

Embedded within the peak of Mount Kronplatz, the museum is devoted to Alpinism's supreme discipline. Since 2003, Messner has been working on a project developing mountaineering museums, successfully opening in five different locations and uniting stories around the growth, culture, discipline and history of mountain climbing. Surrounded by the alpine peaks of the Zillertal, Ortler and Dolomite, MMM Corones is the sixth and final museum in Messner's collection.

Hadid's distinctive architectural style is unmistakable in MMM. The museum is characterised by the use of concrete as the dominant construction material, along with

