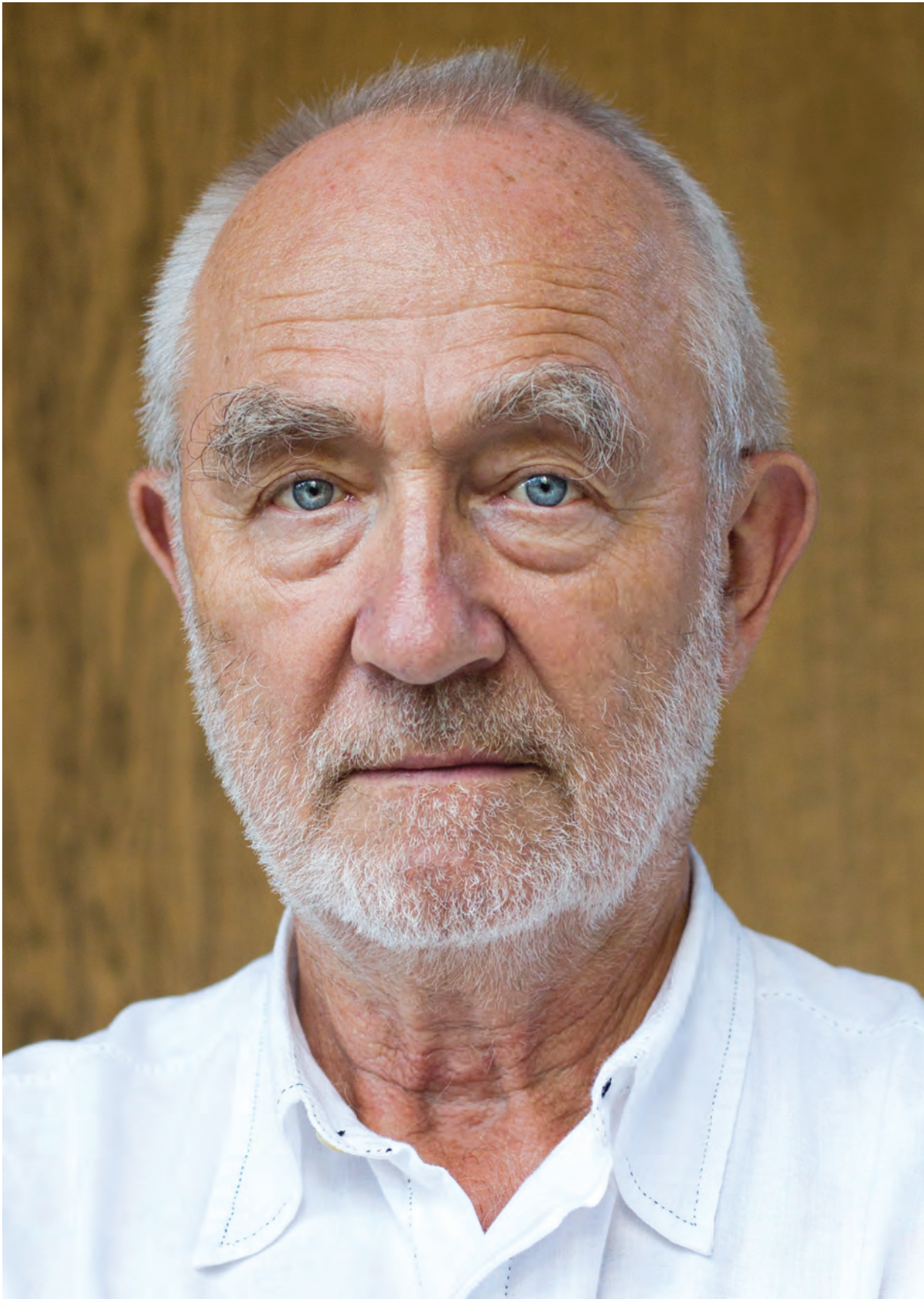


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A stylish new café opens for Parisians cultivating a gluten-free lifestyle.

BY SARAH KHAN

It's not often that a restaurant regular gets tasked with revamping the interiors for one of his go-to spots. But for Mathieu Lehanneur, going from diner to designer at Paris's gluten-free Noglu was a natural turn. "My daughter is gluten intolerant, so we started to be clients at the very first Noglu in Paris," Lehanneur recalls. "I met the owner, Frédérique Jules, and we became friends."

The successful bistro-bakery already had a branch in the French capital and one in New York, and Lehanneur—who counts Nike, Veuve Clicquot, and Audemars-Piguet among his clients—was brought in to work on two outposts in the city's Third and Seventh Arrondissements. But any patrons expecting a crunchy, homey café will find

themselves surprised by the look and feel he conceptualized: Sleek, sexy, and minimalist, it's a contemporary take on the classic *salon du thé*. The nature of the food also influenced the design scheme. "I wanted to bring this idea of prehistoric people and living in caves, when we were hunters and primitive farmers," he says. "For me this new approach in food is the link to our very far away past."

To evoke that ethos, Lehanneur went for an organic aesthetic that seamlessly blends the masculine and the feminine. "It's feminine in a lot of details and has a kind of sweetness in terms of colors and mood, but there's a more masculine, primitive approach—it's like a boudoir and a cave," he says. The boudoir/cave concept came to life with a nebulous,

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undulating archway lined in brushed brass that leads to a backroom lair, walls daubed in white and pale pink with cloudlike lighting fixtures. The front of the restaurant features plush gray banquettes and a terrazzo bar. The result is an airy space that is equal parts spare and refined.

Jules is thrilled with the end result, and reports a good review from his model customer—Lehanneur's daughter, a fan of the Noglu burger. "She has to really take care of what she eats, so when you can combine a traditional type of food such as a hamburger with no gluten, and make it very tasty, it's the best gift we can offer," Jules says. That mentality might seem sacrilegious in Paris, the mecca of confections and baguettes, but the restaurateur doesn't see it that way. "Of course it's a restaurant where there is no gluten, but it's not a punishment—in terms of taste and quality, it's amazing."

