

Editor's Letter | May/June 2011



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By Richard David Story
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The new look of *Departures*.

It really begins with the logo—“it” being the redesign of *Departures*, debuting this issue. During my 11 years as editor in chief, we’ve tweaked bits here and there, but we never really tampered with the logo. This month we present the name *Din* in a bold new typeface—gone is the classic serif font and, in its place, one called *Neutra*. Creative Director Adam Bookbinder, the master behind the design, describes the new look as “a cleaner, bolder, more modern treatment but with a slightly retro feel.” To be sure! The typeface was, in fact, named after the Viennese-born architect Richard Neutra, who moved to America in 1923 and is considered the genius of California midcentury modernism. But it’s not just the logo that’s changed. On the following pages you will, we hope, not only see but feel the changes as you move through the magazine—from the reinvented front-of-book sections, like *StyleEtc.*, *CultureIndex* and *Home+Design*, to a more contemporary look and an even smarter read.

Last week, two friends, both of them hoteliers from Sicily, were in town, and I asked them to end their Manhattan visit over lunch on Saturday. I promised an Italian restaurant that, despite the fact it wasn’t uptown and didn’t have starched white tablecloths or Christofle silver, was Italian cooking at its best. After a week of Jean-Georges-ing and Daniel Boulud-ing, a little home cooking, I knew, was just what these two guys would be in the mood for. Luca Finardi is a Florentine whom I had met years ago, when he ran the front desk at the Savoy on the Piazza della Repubblica, before becoming general manager at the Villa San Michele in Fiesole. He and his family moved last spring to Sicily, where he recently oversaw the restoration of the Grand Hotel Timeo in Taormina. His colleague Giovanni Nastasi, a Sicilian by birth, is now at the Hotel Villa Sant’Andrea, also in Taormina and also part of the Orient-Express group of hotels. Saturday came and *Il Posto Accanto* was every bit as good as I had promised, its doors open to a warm early spring afternoon on Second Street between Avenues A and B. First came the special Negroni Sbagliato cocktails, made with Prosecco, *not* gin as is the custom; later the pastas, the foccacia, the cheeses, the fish; then owner/cook/Mother Superior Beatrice Tosti, a true Roman. Sound familiar? Probably so, as *Departures* devoted eight pages to this extraordinary little East Village *enoteca* in the [September 2009 issue](#). In those pre-Great Recession days, the place was jammed with New Yorkers and out-of-towners alike. Things these days are quieter, the buzz is over; the front-page reviews are saved for the big, showy, expensive places, and even the young and the curious are migrating to, yes, the newer and trendier.

My friends were confused: They had been overjoyed by the handmade fettuccine with shiitake mushrooms and grape tomatoes, the three-year-old chunks of Parmigiano-Reggiano drizzled with chestnut honey, the poached eggs with steamed asparagus. Why, they wanted to know, as regulars to New York every few months, had they never heard of this little gem, why wasn’t it in the guidebooks, underground or otherwise? Beatrice, who had no idea I would be writing about her and *Il Posto* again, told us how times are tough not only for her but for other similarly beloved neighborhood trattorias, bistros and burger joints. “It’s really hard right now,” she said of the place that she and her husband, Julio Pena, built from scratch more than ten years ago, not to make a fortune but to do what she wanted to do for people who cared. “It breaks your heart!”

This month, as *Departures* celebrates a new logo, a new look and a bit of a new feel, I was reminded of just how important it is to keep the DNA intact, and it isn’t always to promote the biggest, newest or blingiest, but to uncover the best, wherever that may be and at whatever the price—as well as the extraordinary people behind...Living the Right Life.

Il Posto Accanto is at 190 E. 2nd St., New York City; 212-228-3562; ilpostoaccanto.com.

* The time has come, my friends: on Twitter, follow me [@MrDepartures](https://twitter.com/MrDepartures)

The Short List

Adam Bookbinder, the Creative Director of *Departures* and the man behind its bold, stylish “new” look.

For those who haven’t noticed, Bleecker Street is no longer what it used to be thanks to **Brunello Cucinelli** et al, who’ve brought uptown chic to our favorite little downtown Manhattan boulevard.

There is no greater testament—emotional or architectural—to travel and travelers than the Tata family’s post-11/26 restoration of the **Taj Mahal Palace** in Mumbai.

If you have one night in Shanghai, don’t miss “the rib”—yes, “the rib”—and the shrimp in a jar at **Mr. and Mrs. Bund**.