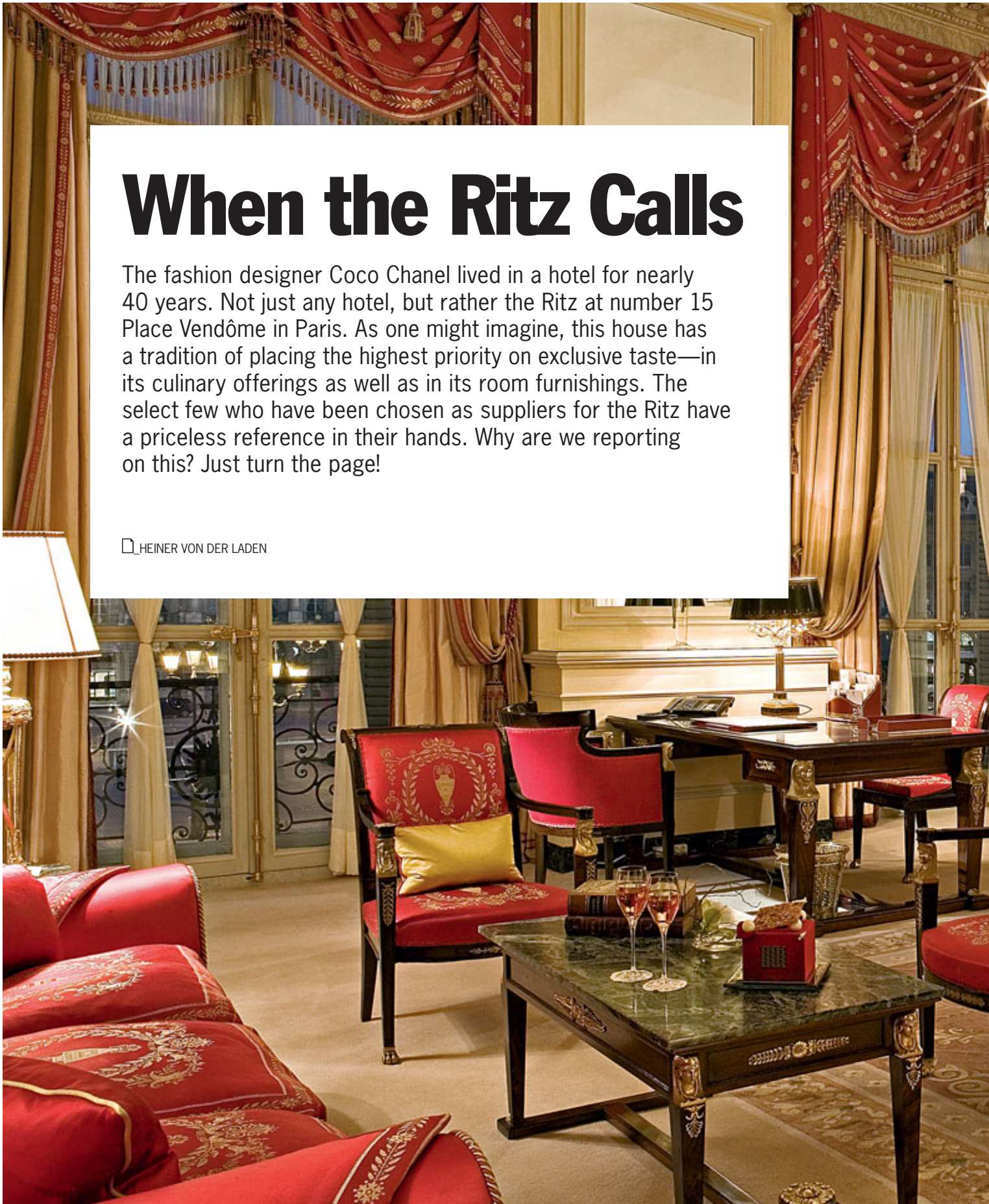


# When the Ritz Calls

The fashion designer Coco Chanel lived in a hotel for nearly 40 years. Not just any hotel, but rather the Ritz at number 15 Place Vendôme in Paris. As one might imagine, this house has a tradition of placing the highest priority on exclusive taste—in its culinary offerings as well as in its room furnishings. The select few who have been chosen as suppliers for the Ritz have a priceless reference in their hands. Why are we reporting on this? Just turn the page!

□ HEINER VON DER LADEN







PHOTOS\_POGGENPOHL\_PORSCHES DESIGN\_HOTEL\_RITZ



## Bold encounter in Paris: Glass and aluminum meet period furniture

**W**hat does the Ritz luxury hotel in Paris have in common with Porsche and the master carpenter Friedemir Poggenpohl from Bielefeld? The answer: an elegant built-in kitchen in a suite at the high-class French domicile. The Ritz, which seeks the finest interiors, selected a luxury kitchen made of glass and aluminum from the Poggenpohl range. The P'7340 model is the result of a joint project by Poggenpohl and Porsche Design. The product is a completely new interpretation of a kitchen, in absolutely purist form.

It is no coincidence that Poggenpohl makes the Porsche kitchen. The two companies are an ideal match. Like the sports car manufacturer, Poggenpohl has the ability to think afresh time and time again. This capacity runs like a common thread throughout its history. Nearly 120 years ago, Poggenpohl established itself as the first German kitchen brand, and today it is present in more than 70 different countries, including the United Kingdom, the USA, Eastern Europe, Russia, China, and India. Its export quota exceeds 70 percent.

The brand, which is named after the founder Friedemir Poggenpohl (born in 1859), is inextricably linked with the history of built-in kitchens. Poggenpohl has become a synonym for individual and exclusive kitchens that are known for absolute quality down to the last detail. "We want to make the kitchen better"—this motto from the founder is every bit as valid today. The company settled in the German town of Herford back in 1897, where all of its kitchens are still developed and produced.



*This suite at the Ritz Hotel in Paris, with its dominant red sofa, is furnished in classical style. But for the kitchen, the hotel's directors selected a modern design, top-notch functions, and—of course—the finest materials*

Elmar Duffner (50), the managing director of Poggenpohl Möbelwerke GmbH, views the contract with the Ritz as a confirmation of his strategy. The company's focus, after all, is to further develop the individuality of its products on a continuous basis. A qualified engineer and wood technology expert, Duffner works together with architects to seek sophisticated solutions. "Poggenpohl thinks in terms of spaces rather than cabinets," he says, and has engaged not just one subsidiary of the Stuttgart-based sports car manufacturer—Porsche Design—but also a second, namely Porsche Consulting. The consulting contract addresses design matters as well, albeit in production. Its raison d'être was to make production processes consider-

ably leaner, with lower inventory levels, higher productivity, and 30 percent shorter throughput times per kitchen.

It quickly turned out that "thinking in cabinets" is not a viable future model for a factory, either. Tall and base cabinets used to be assembled on two separate production lines. This made it difficult to manufacture a complete kitchen in a truly synchronized manner. Today, Poggenpohl thinks exclusively in terms of entire kitchens—just as customers do when placing their orders and anticipating punctual delivery. And that is why instead of the previous two assembly lines measuring a total of 175 meters in length, there is now just one—and it is a mere 45 meters long.

As the basis for optimizing its operations, the kitchen manufacturer uses the Kaizen work philosophy, or "change for the better." The Herford site calls the program KaiPo, which is short for "Kaizen at Poggenpohl." The road to a lean furniture factory began in September of 2006 with a pilot workshop directed by an experienced team from Porsche Consulting. Shortly thereafter, the company held a concept workshop together with the consultants, at which they developed a new factory layout and a new production system. Only eight months later, the company's own KaiPo organization was launched, starting with one employee each from production, quality assurance, and logistics/IT. "We wanted to get away from the traditional notion that high inventory levels are needed to ensure a high degree of deliverability," says Duffner. Instead, the boss opted for short throughput times enabling rapid response and optimum customer orientation. →



This kitchen from Porsche Design at the Ritz Hotel in Paris is based on an aluminum frame that allows individualized design



At the Poggenpohl kitchen factory, the only materials kept in stock are those needed immediately for production. According to the KaiPo rules (see diagram), anything else would be a meaningless waste of money and space







The black countertop made of satin glass presents an exciting contrast to the fronts made of brushed pine, whose structure is reminiscent of driftwood

It's a tough job to achieve short throughput times in production. To do so, those parts of the process chain that do not add value have to be consistently reduced. A critical eye is cast on all inventory stock, on the amount of space needed, on transport and waiting times, and on unnecessary overproduction as well as on avoidable errors and repairs. For the Porsche consultants, these are classic items on the checklist of "pure waste". By converting to a just-in-time production system, Poggenpohl succeeded in focusing on adding value. The aim was to provide only the right component of the right quality (zero errors) at the right time and in the right amount for the moment at the precisely determined assembly location on the production line. This meant that the necessary materials had to move in a continuous flow and in accordance with a precisely defined takt.

In order for such a comprehensive change in production to work, every employee has to be brought on board. Using teams of five to eight people, Poggenpohl put the process optimization ideas that were developed at the workshop

into practice. These teams included production staff as well as colleagues from support areas (quality assurance, time management, logistics, employee organization).

Led by a KaiPo trainer, each team contributed its specialized knowledge, generated ideas, worked out approaches for solutions, and then put measures into practice that had proven themselves in simulations beforehand. Many different areas were optimized. As much attention was devoted to the order-picking processes for kitchen fronts at the incoming goods and storage areas as to preassembling the fronts, drawers and pull-outs, or providing the shelves. The results are impressive: In many areas, throughput times were cut in half, space requirements were dramatically reduced, and travel paths were shortened by as much as 80 percent.

The conventional approach to material availability, which often entails undefined quantities of circulating goods or occupied space, was completely eliminated. Instead, production is now

supplied by a "supermarket" with an associated order-picking department. Everything needed immediately is located right at hand in defined places with clear labeling. The suppliers have to do their part as well, of course. In particular, the large number of small components that are needed for making kitchens now go into a multiple container system in the factory. "This innovation eliminates 15 different handling steps from the ordering process to material availability," says Duffner, who incidentally also managed to cut the monetary value of production inventory levels by 77 percent.

Wherever the boss looks, he finds ways to save that do not cause any hardship. "It's conceivable that we could set up a vendor-managed inventory on the 3,800 square meters made available by our optimization," he notes, "or in other words, establish a more direct connection between our suppliers and the production processes." Maybe the cleared space will trigger even more new ideas. After all, Friedemir Poggenpohl always wanted to keep making his kitchens even better. ←