

COCKTAILS WITH DROR

An intimate tête-à-tête series inviting prominent cultural figures to divulge their secrets.



We catch up with Tel Aviv-born, New York-based designer Dror Benshetrit on the heels of his latest win: an approved master plan for Galataport, a nearly mile-long public park expected to enliven Istanbul's coastline.

Favorite cocktail: What's your poison?

Maker's Mark, mostly. About a year ago, I hosted a very expensive whisky tasting at home. And it confirmed that I prefer Makers Mark 46. I don't know why, but I feel better with it than many of the more expensive, sophisticated whiskies. It doesn't have a lingering aftertaste.

If a drink reflected your personality, what would be in it?

I like a certain level of control. I prefer taste that I can easily fragment into components. It's okay to be complex, as long as it's identifiable. I typically stick with wine or whiskey because I like to know exactly what I'm drinking.

What's your biggest vice?

When I have a vision projecting clearly in my head, I want to see it happen the next day. I suppose it's impatience. But I've become more aware of that recently, and am trying to gain more appreciation for process. Other than that, I never regret smoking or drinking. I like both. And actually, I'm very in control.

What was your best-ever night out?

One of my most memorable nights was during the Queen's Day festival in Amsterdam, where you basically drink beer and party for forty-eight hours straight. I was with a great group of friends. We surfed from one place to another. The dialogue and exchange we had could never have happened unless we had that type of duration—and that amount of alcohol. [Laughs] There was no agenda. No time constraints. Nothing to hold us back.

What do you do to escape?

That's easy. I go to my country house in Connecticut, where there are two types of weekends: those with just my wife and kids, or those with friends. It's the place I park my sanity. Here in the city, we're having a drink today. It's capped with X amount of hours that we allow ourselves to spend together, but the nice thing about spending a weekend is that the conversation continues on and on. There's something so special about spending time in places unbound by agendas.

What's your favorite bar in the world?

I used to live around the corner from Hudson Bar & Books [in the West Village], which was pretty much my living room. It's very old-school, with leather banquettes and candlelit cocktail tables—and you can smoke cigars in there.

What books are on your bedside table right now?

Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor Frankl. Every few years, I read something that relates to the holocaust. But this one is different. It's about his survival strategy while being held in a concentration camp. It's also very much about how humans propel themselves through extreme challenges. I'm also an Ayn Rand freak. I love her novel *We the Living*, and *The Fountainhead* is a masterpiece. I don't always agree with her philosophy, but she's fascinating. When I read her writing, I can hear the noise of the pen scratching the paper. It's such an incredible ability to be able to express yourself like that.

What words would you want to see written on your tombstone?

The first thing that comes to mind is my dear inspiration, Buckminster Fuller [the 20th-century American architect and engineer]. On his tombstone, it says "Call Me Trim Tab." In one sense, a trim tab is a small propeller at the bottom of a massive ship. It's tiny, but it has the ability to move a monster seacraft. It's a little arrogant of him, but I love it. He's one of my biggest heroes, because he devoted his life to a mission higher than himself.

People compare my work to his. For me, that's more meaningful than ever because I'm starting to realize that my highest purpose is to improve people's well-being. At some point, I think Fuller must have said the same thing.

THE BAR This interview, conducted by editor-in-chief Jennifer Parker, took place at the The Bar Room on the ground floor of the Beekman hotel in New York City. El Diablo, a tequila-based cocktail served on ice with lime, ginger, and Cassis was the drink of choice. 123 Nassau Street, thompsonhotels.com