

Anouk

Amastan Paris

Words: Harry McKinley

“Every hotel on this planet will be a home away from home, but we try to actually make one.” So says Zied Sanhaji, the founder of Amastan Paris, a boutique hotel in the city’s 8th arrondissement.

It’s a part of the French capital one doesn’t immediately associate with notions of ‘cool’. Unlike the east of the city where novel concepts are de rigueur and the local residents are the usual salad of urban creative types, the 8th has a reputation amongst Parisians as a traditional, even dormant, neighbourhood populated by classic landmarks, pricey bistros and where torrents of tourists regularly stream down the main boulevards, cameras in hand. It is why – sandwiched as it is amongst upscale art galleries, embassies and just around the corner from the likes of Le Bristol – Amastan stands apart, not just in concept and design, but in attitude.

“I didn’t think of our audience as being segmented by very old school demographics,” says Sanhaji. “I’m more interested in psychographics than demographics, as I think it’s much more relevant to how we consume today. So



Photography: Adrien Durand



Amastan is for the people that have the means of spending considerably more than what our room costs, but just do not want to have that cliché luxury experience anymore. The sophisticated traveller has known the boutique hotel since the late 90s. They have known the big hotel groups trying to catch up with that wagon ten years later. They're not looking for a cookie cutter lifestyle anymore, they're seeking authentic experiences in smaller spaces. We're no longer in a dynamic where we want five restaurants designed by Starck. Perhaps it's a niche, but people want to discover those little hotels that can provide super tailored and personal service. It's essentially back to basics."

At Amastan a bijou lobby area, devoid of clutter and with crisp white walls, leads into the hotel's only F&B space. It's only public space aside from the aforementioned lobby for that matter.

A long, relatively narrow stretch, it houses carefully curated pockets of seating and, at one end, a communal table in hombre marble, bar and doors onto a courtyard garden. The visual and feel is modern, with vaguely Deco influences in the lines of some of the furnishings. There are also nods to the traditionally French with dyed Versailles parquet, a statement decorative tapestry and, in the garden, an informal air reminiscent of a Parisian home. There's also undeniably a sense of the global nomad, in the clusters of collected objects dotted around and in

the library wall that speaks to a resident of international tastes.

Evoking an air of homeliness was a key aspect of the design – by Juan Pablo Naranjo and Jean Christophe Orthlieb of NOCC – and, without being too blatant, each area of the space signifies a different 'room': living room at the front with comfortable lounge seating; dining room at the back with a social table around which groups can gather to eat and drink; and the outdoor space which is intentionally not over-manicured. "It's really the house of a young Parisian guy," says Sanhaji. "Perhaps someone who is a little bit tired of travelling and wants to welcome his friends and share his living space. So you have these assortments of vases, books, plants and marbles. They're on display in a way that feels completely natural and not staged as though in a gallery. I think if we had been too particular, it would feel pretentious."

"Overall we didn't want it to be too designed," continues Sanhaji. "So it isn't just a beautiful picture, guests can impose their habits upon it and if someone wants to drag a chair over from one area to another, they do. The design allows us to customise the interaction with the guest to a level that is personal, and so there is a feedback loop between the service and the environment."

Particularly deft is the way in which the environment evolves throughout the day, often a challenge in comparatively compact spaces.

In the morning the bar counter plays host to a wholesome breakfast offer of local cheeses, fresh breads, granola and healthy juices. By lunchtime and into evening the menu focuses instead on small plates that pull together elements of Mediterranean, Middle Eastern and European cuisine. There are brunch classics such as smashed avocado with poached egg, topped with a trail of za'atar; beetroot with crumbled cheese and flat breads; and a salad of charred salmon with mango.

The food menu, like the dining space, is small but considered. Ultimately the space functions as a bar with a high quality food offering as opposed to a restaurant, something Sanhaji describes as being driven by "both an economic rationale and client satisfaction." Tableware channels minimalist modernity with plates by Piet Boon for Serax and cutlery from Cutipol.

At night a selection of craft cocktails are served and it is then that the space takes on a new attitude: the door to the lobby is closed and curtains at the front of the space are parted to reveal an entrance that leads directly onto the street.

Now taking on the identity of Anouk, neon lights spring into life, music plays and the service style evolves with staff dressed in relaxed uniforms. "It has to be a rupture, but an easily accepted one," says Sanhaji. "Parisians don't typically go to hotel bars on the weekends, or at night during the week, and a lot of the traditional hotels in Paris tend to be pretty introverted. But in the evening, looking in at Anouk, it's just a bar."

Ultimately Amastan Paris is not intended to be the launch of a new hotel brand that can potentially be expanded into other cities worldwide. Despite the trials faced by developing a multifunctional F&B destination within a small space, however, Sanhaji is adamant that the concept and approach is part of the brand's DNA. "We will always stay within small-capacity hotels, as that's just what I think people need. It means we can't always do too much, but it means we can keep it fairly simple and work with the best across the board."

www.amastanparis.com

IN A BITE Owner: Amastan Paris • Interior Design: NOCC • Architecture: SLA • Covers: 30 inside, 20 garden • Tableware: Piet Boon for Serax • Cutlery: Cutipol
Glassware: Schott Zwiesel, RCR Crystal • Menu Design: Campbell-Rey