

VOGUE

TRAVEL

This New Boutique Hotel in Paris Is Already a Design Crowd Favorite

BY JOE BRUND
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From the moment I stepped through the chocolate-brown exterior of the Hôtel Massé in the 9th arrondissement of Paris back in October, a deep feeling of ease descended. Perhaps it was the entrance, scented with a clean, woody fragrance, or perhaps it was the people in excellent outfits sitting and reading under warm lighting in the minimal yet cozy lobby. It can be disarming when a space feels “designed for you,” as so many millennial-aimed businesses and restaurants are—devoid of personality, but spot on for your personal algorithm. But the Massé is not that. You can immediately sense that someone thoughtful and with good taste is in charge. And then, you can relax.



Photo: Cobey Arner



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Located south of Pigalle, among the vintage boutiques and bobo *traiteurs* of the 9th arrondissement, the hotel is the first offering from brother-sister duo Eole and Corto Peyron. Housed in a classic Haussmannian 19th-century building, it's a sanctuary of art, vintage furniture, and charm. It also happens to be the first hotel designed by architecture duo Juliette Gasparetto and Julie Parenti, who met while working at Festen, the firm responsible for Hôtel Balzac and Château Voltaire. Gasparetto Parenti focused on a warm color palette rendered in soft textures: beige shaggy carpets, wooden-clad ceilings, '70s vintage furniture, and mirrored side tables. The result is something cool without hammering you over the head with said coolness; unintimidating, but fabulous.



Photo: Cobey Arner



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You can chalk that partly up to the fact that the hotel is very much a family affair. Though Corto, who has long worked in hospitality, spearheaded the project, his sister Eole, who usually works in development, supervised the design. Their father—a professional windsurfer, the first to cross the Atlantic Ocean—helps with the business side. Paintings incorporating subtle nods to their family’s history (a motif of their family crest, a windsurfer, and a Pernod-Ricard bottle, due to their family’s hand in inventing the famous French spirit) are hung throughout the hotel.



Photo: Cobey Arner



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Many hotels claim to feel like a home away from home, but Massé actually feels like it. After a breezy check-in process, my still-bedraggled self—I'd just flown overnight from New York to meet a friend in crisis—was offered a cup of lavender tea from Comptoir des Hemispheres, and a slice of chocolate cake made by the hotel's electrician's wife. I then tucked myself into my beautiful cocoon of a room, with walls clad in okoumé wood and plush carpeting in a soft, jewel-toned green. Everything felt so soothing that I accidentally took a two-hour nap with my jeans on.



Photo: Cobey Arner



Photo: Cobey Arner

At Massé, each of the 40 rooms has its own character. Some feature velvet window seats, plush banquettes, Juliet balconies, and little desks; my bathroom had a beautiful oversized tub with wood-clad walls and a warm yellow light positioned to illuminate my soak just the right amount. (In fact, the all-important—and oft-overlooked—lighting design in all of the rooms is incredibly well considered, with Rudolph Steiner lamps and soft fabric fixtures, supplemented with bedside reading lights.) Even the hotel uniforms— shawl collar blazers “inspired by the jackets worn by waiters in French Navy restaurants,” and made by Lemaire alums Studio de Lostanges—were so beautiful that I wondered if I shouldn’t get one myself. (And am I allowed to note the hotel manager was *Emily in Paris*-love-interest-level-handsome?)



During his training at more traditional hotels, Corto kept track of the standard hospitality practices he would change when he opened his own. The feeling that hotels had *rules* was the main thing he wanted to do away with. Massé should feel infinitely more relaxed. Late checkout? No problem. Late sleeper? That's okay—you can have breakfast whenever. And you *will* want to have breakfast. Everything is sourced from the local neighborhood, with the bulk of it coming from the Rue de Martyrs just around the corner, which is famous for its small shops and artisan bakeries. (The pastries are from Le Pain Retrouvé, which is especially handy as it allows you to skip the massive queue they always seem to have outside.)



Photo: Cobey Arner



Photo: Cobey Arner

As for the art? Scattered around the property, you'll find Eole's flea market finds sitting alongside works by artists Eduardo Lalane and Héloïse Rival, as well as the lobby's striking centerpiece: an abstract geometric painting by artist Christian Rosa, perhaps most famous for his legal scuffle with mentor Raymond Pettibon over counterfeit paintings. The Peyrons commissioned the painting from Rosa while the hotel was still under construction, and the artist stayed in the hotel for an extended residency to make his work. Like the Massé, the painting is colorful without being cloying, minimalist but not boring, and shows the particular hand of its maker.

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