

VOGUE AUSTRALIA LIVING

PARISIAN SPIRIT

A FINE ART WATCHES AND JEWELLERY

By FREYA HERRING Photographed by LUDOVIC BALAY

A RETURN



TO PARADISE

Designed by STUDIO HADDOU DUFOURCQ, the new HOTEL LILOU revives the *splendour* of 19th-century hospitality and the *golden age* of travel in Hyères.



This page in the Hotel Lilou restaurant in Hyères, **chairs** by Rainer Daumiller for Gubi; **banquette** upholstered in Élitis fabric; **tables** from Azur Confort; **tableware** from Gien. *Opposite page* in another view of the restaurant, **curtains** in Casamance fabric. *Details, last pages.*



This page in the bar, custom poplar burl bar; curtains in Casamance fabric.
Opposite page Florent Dufourcq and Kim Haddou.



There's a town in the south of France that you may not have heard of. But once upon a time, for aristocratic revellers preparing for the Grand Tour, the coming-of-age adventure they'd spend the rest of their lives expounding on, Hyères must have felt like standing on the precipice of a cliff. "At the beginning of the last century, the railway came from Paris and ended in Hyères, and then maybe 30 years later it continued to Cannes and Nice," says Florent Dufourcq of interior design firm Studio Haddou Dufourcq. "Hyères was once a very important part of travelling," says his partner Kim Haddou. "People went to Hyères to take a boat to travel for the Grand Tour."

It was this historical detail that Haddou and Dufourcq used as inspiration for their redesign of Hotel Lilou. Built in 1890 and originally called the Hôtel des Étrangers, the building was acquired a few years ago by businessman and restaurateur David Pirone who was raised nearby and set about its restoration. It's a makeover that might well mark the revival of this once glorious tourist metropolis, where everyone from Queen Victoria to Man Ray holidayed amongst its extravagant villas and tropical plant life; a place the writer Edith Wharton described as "Hyères so gold, so full of flowers". Until things took a turn. "We have lots of nice buildings and hotels, but during the last century they all closed — they are now retirement buildings or apartments," explains Dufourcq. This hotel, however, has always been thus. "It was not the most beautiful or the biggest hotel, but it is the only one that survived," reveals Haddou. "When we discovered this, it was pretty moving; pretty emotional for us," adds Dufourcq.

Haddou and Dufourcq have honoured this era of travel not with ostentation, but with subtlety and delicacy. Elements of the hotel feel almost tropical — befitting the town's nickname, Hyères-les-Palmiers (palm trees) — but with a chic, refined edge that is headily French. Of the 37 guest rooms, the 'Moorish' suites are most inspired by travel through Morocco and Tunisia, but their design does not slip into parody. "This is not copy and paste," says Dufourcq. As most rooms face south, the designers wanted to highlight that gold Côte d'Azur light, and so they have pale finishes and huge mirrors that celebrate, >





This page in the Moorish suite, **Grace chair** by Tove Kindt-Larsen for Gubi and **9602 floor lamp** by Paavo Tynell for Gubi, enquiries to Cult; custom poplar burl **tables** by Studio Haddou Dufoucq; **wall lamps** from Turco Staff; **rug** by Giancarlo Valle for Nordic Knots; **floor** in varnished cork.
Opposite page in the library, **chairs** by Rainer Daumiller for Gubi; **table** from Azur Confort; **tableware** from Gien; **wallpaper** from Casamance; **rug** by Giancarlo Valle for Nordic Knots.



< rather than shy away from, its intensity. The mirroring also creates a cinematic sensation in the spaces — “You can see yourself in the décor, like you are in a movie,” says Haddou. The scalloped arches are perhaps their most markedly Moorish element, quietly recalling the Islamic architectural trope with minimal detail. “The biggest part of our job here is just to suggest things and make it evocative to people; to help them relate to a souvenir or to a memory, or memories of travel,” says Dufourcq. “It’s not a Moorish palace. It’s suggested, but not with many details. It’s impactful in a soft way.”

Elsewhere in the hotel, little nods have been given to the history of travel, and of this town. Poplar burl features on much of the bespoke furniture in dedication to the interiors of the Orient Express, probably the most aspirational form of travel in the late 19th century, when the hotel first opened its doors. Trellises in the restaurant echo the location’s previous incarnation. “Louis XIV was a big fan of orange trees, and the trees that went to the Versailles orangerie were initially grown in the land where this hotel is built,” says Dufourcq. “That’s why we designed the trellis and winter garden inside the restaurant, as well as four rooms with this type of décor.”

A lot of the furnishings were designed bespoke by Haddou and Dufourcq for this project, such as the lobby’s elegant poplar burl desk and curvaceous, Deco-like chairs. The custom bar feels almost filmic — you can imagine a young starlet perched in silks, sipping martinis as she waits for her date. Bespoke is paired with vintage, including Mathieu Matégot’s 1950s fringed Tropique dining chairs in the pergola, Rainer Daumiller’s toy-like, self-titled 1970s armchairs in the restaurant, and Gabriella Crespi’s 1970s Bohemian 72 sofas in the salon, the cushions deftly cupped with banded rattan bases.

This blend of styles creates an agelessness at Lilou. “We wanted to make something timeless by using soft colours and mixing époques — styles, materials and furniture from different times — to make a kind of blur,” says Haddou. “So that people don’t know if the hotel is from 2024 or 1980 or 1920. You don’t really know where you are, or at what time, so you can imagine a lot of things — that’s what I like.” ■ lilouhotel.fr haddou-dufourcq.com

This page in a Straw room, Gubi pouffe, enquiries to Cult; Dou table lamp from Ferm Living; wallpaper from Casamance; wall lamp from Turco Staff; rug by Giancarlo Valle for Nordic Knots. *Opposite page* in a Trellis room, wall lamp from Turco Staff.



This page in the Moorish room, Grace **chair** by Tove Kindt-Larsen for Gubi, and Gubi **pouffe**, enquiries to Cult; custom poplar burl and stainless-steel **table** by Studio Haddou Dufourcq; vintage **vase**; Dou **table lamps** from Ferm Living; **wall lamps** from Turco Staff; **rug** by Giancarlo Valle for Nordic Knots; **floor** in varnished cork. *Details, last pages.*

