

# AD/Tastemakers

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## CREATIVE *evolution*

*Aline Asmar d'Amman, the Lebanese architect behind the elegant renovation of the Hôtel de Crillon in Paris, is building bridges between cultures through architecture and design*

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*Aline Asmar d'Amman  
and her team refreshed  
the hotel's historic salons*





Some people have the ability to immediately put you at ease, thanks to their welcoming nature. Aline Asmar d'Amman is one of those people. When we meet on a grey Paris morning, the grand décor of her atelier in the historic heart of Saint-Germain-des-Prés contrasts with the low-key lady herself.

Humble yet outstandingly talented, d'Amman has never clamoured for the spotlight, but her most recent project has attracted a lot of attention. For the past four years, d'Amman has skilfully orchestrated the renovation of one of Paris's most prestigious palaces, Hôtel de Crillon, located on the majestic Place de la Concorde.

After being acquired by a member of the Saudi royal family in 2010, the 18th century property underwent a complete transformation and d'Amman was charged with preserving its rich legacy while injecting contemporary touches. The finished interiors artfully blend old and new – gilded mouldings with clean lines, precious antiques with contemporary art – creating a luxurious, timeless atmosphere.

"My three main missions [while working on this project] were the artistic direction, the decoration of some spaces in the hotel and inviting a lot of talented craftspeople to participate in this project," says d'Amman. "I also very much wanted to highlight the importance of the role of women in society, and honour the strong personality of Marie-Antoinette through the decor."

The Lebanon-born architect has become adept at balancing respect for tradition with resolutely forward-looking design, which she credits, in part, to her childhood. Growing up in turbulent 1970s Beirut, d'Amman developed an interest in literature and art thanks to her Francophile mother. Seeing the destruction caused by the civil war forged a desire in the young d'Amman to help rebuild her country by becoming an architect.

"I've always had a deep belief in the power of beauty to elevate the soul," she says. "Architecture and design have the ability to transform the world we live in and provoke memories of places and times gone by."

After studying architecture at the Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts (ALBA) and working with architect Ziad Akl and later with Jean-Michel Wilmotte in Paris, she founded her own practice in 2011, Culture in Architecture, with offices in Beirut and Paris. Among the firm's current projects are a boutique hotel in London and private residences for clients in Saudi Arabia, Switzerland and France.





*Karl Lagerfeld, who d'Amman chose because of his broad knowledge of 18th century art and architecture, reimaged two of the hotel's suites*



When it came to the enormous undertaking of renovating the Crillon, instead of solely working with her team – who refreshed the hotel's historic salons and designed three suites – d'Amman called upon four other designers to reimagine specific spaces, most notably the fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld.

D'Amman had never met Lagerfeld – whom she chose because of his broad knowledge of 18th century art and architecture – so convincing him to design two suites required a dash of audacity. “I needed to find a way to catch his attention, so I decided to do something that was really true to me, something authentic,” she says. “I wrote a handwritten letter to him and delivered it in person to his Paris boutique.”

Twenty-four hours later, d'Amman received a call from Lagerfeld himself. “He told me he found my approach elegant and original, as no one sends handwritten letters any more,” she recalls.

D'Amman is also making connections on the other side of the Mediterranean; proud of her heritage and passionate about promoting new talents, she was one of the committee members for the first edition of the Beirut Design Fair, which took place in September. “The local design scene is very dynamic and a lot of young designers are working on contemporary reinterpretations of traditional savoir-faire,” says d'Amman. “Coming from the Middle East, I feel it is my duty to showcase the potential of creativity, and to create links between countries.”

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