

QUATRO

Client:

Hotel des Academies et des Arts

Source:

CNN Traveller

Date:

March/April 2008

MARCH-APRIL 2008

CNN Traveller

TRAVEL THE WORLD WITH CNN

**ONE STEP
AT A TIME**
ON THE PILGRIM
TRAIL IN JAPAN

**KEEP IT IN
THE FAMILY**
EASTERN EUROPE'S
ARISTOCRATS RETURN

**SONG
LINES**
DREAMS AND REALITY
IN ABORIGINAL LAND

LONG HAUL
RIDING THE RAILS
ACROSS MAURITANIA

صافي لاندمارك هوتل و سويتس
SAFI LANDMARK HOTEL & SUITES

Safi Airways



ARTISTIC LICENCE



In Paris, **Dan Hayes** discovers how a traditional Left Bank hotel has been transformed through sensitive modern design and dramatic artworks

Montparnasse is the Paris of films and postcards, a place of wide boulevards, café terraces and ornate balconies, with more artistic heritage than you could shake a paintbrush at.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries this area within the 6th arrondissement was the stamping ground of Edgar Degas, Edouard Manet and Emile Zola, among others, while less-renowned artists flocked here hoping to make a name for themselves.

That artistic heritage persists to this day and has recently been added to with the opening of one of the city's more innovative and charming boutique hotels.

The aptly named Hotel des Academies et des Arts sits opposite the Atelier de la Grande Chaumière, the art school where Paul Gauguin was a pupil. Opened in March 2007 after a one-year, €1.5m (\$2.2m) transformation, the hotel is the brainchild of Laurent and Charlotte Inchauspé, a former film industry executive and TV journalist respectively.

The pair had searched for some time for a hotel before they discovered this building on a quiet street near the bustling Boulevard Raspail. 'The building had been a hotel for 150 years and the owners were in their eighties,' says 38-year-old Laurent. 'There was hardly a speck of dust in the place, but the last time it had been

renovated was in the 1920s. Madame had been in charge of finances and she hadn't wanted to borrow money to modernise, so things had pretty much stayed the same for decades.'

It was Charlotte who took control of the design elements of the hotel, selecting colours, fabrics and fittings. She also provided the idea of involving artist Jérôme Mesnager, whose signature white body shapes are a feature of both the hotel's interior and exterior. 'She went to an exhibition of Mesnager's work when she was 10 and fell in love with it,' says Laurent. 'When we bought the hotel she said she couldn't imagine involving any other artist. But she was still too awestruck from that early experience to telephone him, so I ended up doing that. Thankfully, he was very enthusiastic about the idea.'

One of Mesnager's white creations, set against a bright red background, adorns the front of the hotel and each of its 20 rooms have their own individual figure. The motif has been taken up by the hotel's other featured artist, Sophie de Watrigant, whose own white, sculpted figures – a tribute to Mesnager – clamber up ladders in the comfortable and intimate library, the lounge and adjacent to the main staircase.

Each guest room has a different character and all are named after artistic genres

or figures with a link to the area, each also – intentionally or not – seems to be developing a gender. The Comedienne, for example, is defining itself as a feminine room, a tribute to the actresses of the Montparnasse district with bright red headboards making reference to theatre décor and costumes. The Man Ray – of course – provides an altogether more masculine experience, decked out in white, black and grey it harks back to the glory days of monochrome.

Rooms may not be the largest at between 13sq m and 15sq m, but they are larger than the Parisian average of 12sq m, and if you are staying in this part of the city there is so much to see and do that to spend too long in even a beautifully appointed room seems like something of a waste.

'We have a fantastic location,' says Laurent, 'people like the fact that we're close to the touristic area of St Germain des Prés, but we're not actually in St Germain des Prés so it is a bit more relaxed. And we are only two minutes' walk from the metro that links direct to Gare du Nord and Eurostar to the UK.'

Hotel des Academies et des Arts
Rue de la Grande Chaumière
Tel: (+33) 1 43 26 66 44
Metro: Vavin
www.hoteldesacademies.com