

September 14, 2020
Mansion Global

MANSION GLOBAL

Designer of the Waldorf Astoria Towers on Paying Homage to an Iconic Property—And Giving it an Update

Jean-Louis Deniot on making dreams come true

By Lucy Cohen Blatter
Impressions: 1,900,000



Mr. Deniot and his design works at the Waldorf Astoria in New York City. Composite: NOE & ASSOCIATES / THE BOUNDARY; Courtesy of Jean-Louis Deniot

Paris-based Jean-Louis Deniot is designing the interiors for the condominiums and amenities at the Waldorf Astoria New York. The project offers buyers the first opportunity in nearly 100 years to buy a residence at the legendary hotel.

Mr. Deniot, 46, has paid great attention to the hotel's original Art Deco design, making sure each residence is both aesthetically pleasing and practical, handpicking every fixture and finish, and creating many custom items specifically for The Towers of the Waldorf Astoria. Custom cabinets, vanities, light fixtures, and mosaics honor the building's history.

September 14, 2020

Mansion Global

After establishing his firm in 2000, Mr. Deniot's work has expanded across six continents, with his portfolio encompassing opulent homes, boutique hotels, yachts, and residential interiors and amenities at new development properties.

In addition to the residences, the Towers will have 50,000 square feet of private residential amenities, ranging from health and wellness to entertaining and business spaces, all designed by Mr. Deniot. New amenity spaces will include the Starlight Pool, a 25-meter private swimming pool with a skylight in the space of the original Starlight Roof, a Winter Garden bar and lounge, a Grand Salon for entertaining, and the Presidential Library, a nod to the presidential history of the hotel, where every president from Hoover to Obama has stayed.

We caught up with Mr. Deniot to discuss the challenges of designing for such an iconic property, the focus Covid-19 has put on interiors, and more.

Mansion Global: What is it like to design for a property as iconic as the Waldorf Astoria?

Jean-Louis Deniot: What makes it interesting about working on such an iconic historical institution is that you need to be infused by its history and DNA, and yet come up with a completely different recipe assemblage to create great energy.

We cannot simply recreate the past, but we can envision how we will enjoy the Waldorf Astoria in the future. What I have conveyed is a sense of theatricality, fantasy, and surrealism, because, in my mind, these elements are what the Waldorf is about.

MG: What kind of look were you trying to achieve?

JLD: I took inspiration greatly from the exterior of the Waldorf Astoria, created in the 1930s, and greatly inspired by European style and standards so that it is almost Art Deco, yet also echoes Louis XVI style. The Waldorf Astoria was extremely French, to the extent that they installed French chandeliers, French deco and so on, but there was a paradox within this inspiration; the Louis XVI period was set in the 1770s, 250 years before the construction of the Waldorf Astoria began.

I acknowledge that French style represents grandeur, aristocratic refinement and style, but in my mind, it didn't make sense, so rather, my point of inspiration was the idea to complement the building and its epoque instead.

September 14, 2020

Mansion Global

This period of time saw industry booming—which is what we are going through with technology these days—so I focused more on the Waldorf Astoria as it is, in New York, a place for New Yorkers, where every nationality is welcome.

My work is past, present and future, timeless. If you stand there and look at the amenities, you may find it hard to place exactly at which moment in time you are. That is what I enjoy the most.

MG: How do you cater those condos to suit the tastes of prospective buyers? How do you imagine what they'll want?

JLD: When I imagined the life inside the Waldorf Astoria, I wanted each owner in their private space to have a perfect canvas to work with.

I never wished to use any pastiche of the Art Deco era, I didn't want a copy or pastiche; I wish to assure a fresh historical take and design, specific custom-made architectural profiles, and silhouettes, moldings, proportions that remind us, that tease, play and pay homage to Art Deco. The outcome is therefore something that fuses classical with contemporary, injected with a great dose of life and energy.

MG: Do you expect design tastes to change a lot as a result of Covid-19?

JLD: Yes, I do. People are now more focused on their direct environment, their private world, their home. They will be selecting purchases based on craftsmanship, quality, lifestyle and longevity.

MG: Is there anything being quarantined has made you notice more?

JLD: You get to appreciate what you accumulated or collected until now, and it makes you more appreciative and selective of your own extra needs for the future.

MG: How do you define luxury in real estate and in design?

JLD: All the skylights so I can follow the sun during the day, and the moon and stars at night.

September 14, 2020

Mansion Global

MG: What's your favorite part of your home?

JLD: It is when the exceptional becomes extremely natural, almost invisible, defusing chic and style effortlessly.

MG: How would you describe your personal dream property?

JLD: Dreams are made to be executed and performed. What happens in your dreams is always achievable as it all comes from you. I had a dream of a glass atelier hanging on a cliff over the ocean, and this is now actually happening. Let's make all dreams happen.

<https://www.mansionglobal.com/articles/designer-of-the-waldorf-astoria-towers-on-paying-homage-to-an-iconic-property-and-giving-it-an-update-219427>