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DEPARTURES

BEHIND THE SCENES OF BRUNO AVEILLAN'S NEW WALDORF ASTORIA NEW YORK FILM

THE DREAMLIKE FILM MAKES THE REOPENING OF THE FAMED HOTEL
AND RESIDENCES EVEN MORE ALLURING.

By **Jordi Lippe-McGraw**

Impressions: **450,000k**



The Waldorf Astoria New York is one of the most anticipated openings in the hospitality industry. The residential portion—The Towers—will feature an incredible art collection and luxury game room while the hotel's ballroom is being restored to its 1931 grandeur. It seemed only fitting to create a film to highlight the legendary landmarked building with so many magical elements to highlight. Enter master filmmaker Bruno Aveillan, the visionary and much-awarded director of brand films for some of the world's top fashion and travel names, including Chanel, Cartier, Louis Vuitton, and Lanvin, and more. Along with branding and creative agency Noë & Associates, he created a dreamlike film meant to evoke the weightlessness of a luxurious life at The Towers of the Waldorf Astoria. Think a driver

floating out of his Bentley convertible into a dramatic double-height porte-cochere and a woman is suspended in midair in the steam room within the extensive resident's spa). Here Bruno shares with Departures why he brought his artistry into the real estate sphere for the first time.



Why get involved in luxury real estate now?

What particularly inspired me about this project was that it was not simply about real estate but involved a mythical name that evokes a legendary past and an exceptional *savoir-faire*. When you think about it, there are few names in the luxury hotel range which have succeeded in attaining the same degree of notoriety, to the point that their name becomes not only a synonym for "luxury" but also an intrinsic element of the historical and cultural heritage of a city and a country. In Paris, it's the Ritz. In New York, it's the Waldorf.

Within the world of luxury, the Waldorf is a member of a very exclusive club. They have belonged to it for over a century, and we know they will still exist in 100 years because besides remaining loyal to their culture and their history, they know how to renew themselves and project themselves in the future. So, it's at that level that, as a creative, the opportunity for me is to be able to work on projects which perpetuate the myth while at the same time allowing me to bring a modern and creative vision to the name.



What attracted you to this project?

Naturally, it was above all the mythical—even mythological—dimension of the Waldorf Astoria. A small anecdote I recall, a long time ago, on my first visit to New York, an agent made an appointment to meet in the Waldorf bar. I was highly impressed by the place. I had a deep sensation of being in the real heart of New York, the New York I had dreamed about. I could not help imagining the many celebrities who had been here, from Charlie Chaplin to Marilyn Monroe, Ella Fitzgerald, or the Dalai Lama. A compendium of twentieth-century history. And I remember saying to myself: I'd really love to shoot a film here. Some years later, my secret wish came true. But what also attracted me to the project was the challenge of projecting this monument of the past, with all the prestige associated with it, into the world of today and tomorrow.

How do you convey the Waldorf's rich history with its modern offering?

You intuitively feel Waldorf's history when you are in this place, even when the renovation work is going on. But I absolutely wanted to avoid offering a vision entirely oriented towards the history, which could risk freezing the Palace in its past, however prestigious. The New Waldorf should not be treated as a "Museum" but as a vibrant location, full of life, in the heart of the City. The film is sprinkled with details hinting at the history, which may sometimes pass unnoticed by the viewers the first time, but have a sense when you know the rich and sometimes slightly crazy history of the Waldorf.

Firstly, the very concept of flying and levitation refers to Nina Saemundsson's *Spirit of Achievement*, the winged female art deco sculpture standing at the Waldorf entrance and welcoming every visitor since the hotel's opening in 1931. (By the way, the film ends on this iconic figure.) And the song, *Fly Me to the Moon*, which not only translates and accompanies

wonderfully the concept and the universe of the film but also refers to two immense artists who were among the legendary residents of the Waldorf: Frank Sinatra, who made it famous and Ella Fitzgerald who interprets this version.

Also, the rose with which the couple interpreted by actress Inna Zobova and actor Jean François Poirié have fun is a wink to the iconic and eternal huge bouquet of flowers that is traditionally always at the entrance of the hotel.



What was your favorite part of the project?

Every moment I spent inside the Waldorf, particularly when I was preparing and making preliminary photos, were rare and privileged moments for me. I was able to absorb the extraordinary atmosphere of the place better. At present, the hotel is still undergoing renovation work. However, I found this transitory moment, in which the old is still visible, and the new story is beginning to form to be absolutely magnificent and inspiring.

It was an enriching experience, both artistically and emotionally, and I brought back some amazing photos. It is essential to safeguard the traces of the history of such a place, and its transformation is an integral part of that history.

<https://www.departures.com/art-culture/film/behind-scenes-bruno-aveillans-new-waldorf-astoria-new-york-film>