

Hôtel Le Belleval: Paris, France

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Hôtel Le Bellevil, built circa 1870, retains its typically Haussmannien style with stone façade, framed windows and balconies. Lobby with seating unit. Below the glass "bubble" chandelier by Gallotti&Radice is a four-part, 1870s couch found at a flea market and reupholstered in leather.

On the outside, Hôtel Le Bellevil, in Paris's eighth arrondissement, appears to be a typical construction of the sort commissioned by Emperor Napoléon III as part of his urban-renewal program directed by Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann between 1853 and 1870. With a stone façade, iron balconies and rich window frames, if it were not for the traffic outside, guests might easily imagine themselves in that era.

Open the front door of Le Belleval, however, and the calendar pages leap forward 150 years. Designed by French architect/interior designer Jean-Philippe Nuel, known worldwide for his 4- and 5-star hotels, Le Belleval, "combines references and trends to create a contemporary communal space as opposed to a frozen backdrop," as he puts it. *The corner of the lobby with 2 chairs at left are illustrative of the hotel's*



design. Generations apart, yet complementary, one chair is a classic fauteuil, the other, contemporary. Bar Below a traditional ceiling dating from the 1800s, the bar features a one-of-a-kind mosaic artwork. While created using traditional methods, the unusual layout gives it a modern edge.

Nuel explains that contrary to buildings where inside and outside are "homogenous," he consciously made them different here, pointing out such interior details – in both public spaces and guestrooms – as the anthracite-stained raw wood, printed wallpaper, furniture styles from both 19th and 21st centuries and boldly patterned rugs that create a relaxed look, "a unique and vibrant harmony."

Combining these modern treatments with the original columns, ceilings imbued with sublime moldings and walls renovated following the Haussmannien model, he says, "For me, it's the opposite of a stereotypical approach without soul."

Built about 1870, and named for a famous botanist, also the personal physician of Henri IV and Louis XIII, Pierre Richer de Belleval, the hotel is now airily furnished with pieces accentuating the sleek lines favored by today's crop of French, Italian, Croatian and Danish master craftsmen. The look is simple and easygoing, designed as much, Nuel says, for Parisians as for visitors from abroad.





Anthracite-painted doors lead into the hotel's restaurant, known for its fresh, organic cuisine. Opening onto the street, the restaurant's furniture exudes a relaxed mood to coincide with today's lifestyle. Area rugs dot the cement floor.

Key to Nuel's design is the mélange of textures. In addition to area rugs scattered upon cement floors, and a variety of upholstery fabrics – from leather to rattan – are the customized mosaic pieces created by renowned mosaicist Delphine Messmer and frescoes by artist Gola Hundun.

A short walk to such landmarks as the Louvre, Champs-Élysées and Sacré-Coeur, as well as favored shopping, Le Belleval offers 52 guest rooms, a fitness center in what looks like an ancient wine cave, garden, bar and restaurant.

Like Paris itself, Hôtel Le Belleval offers two versions of itself, yesterday and today, under one roof.

All photography by Nicolas Mathéus.