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AN INTERVIEW WITH ANNE DERASSE AND
MARTINA NIEVERGELT CONDUCTED BY LISE COIRIER

Le Berger (Brussels, 1935) and Le Crazy Horse (Paris, 1951) have been revamped by two designers hailing from Zurich and Brussels, who, inspired by the history of these legendary places, have pulled off a creative tour de force. Excerpts from a conversation with both women.

1. Hotel Le Berger, Brussels
2. Hotel Le Berger, Brussels
3. Hotel Le Berger, Brussels
4. New lounge in Le Crazy Horse, Paris



Martina Nievergelt / © M-F. PLISSART



Anne Derasse

— *tl.mag*: Whether we're talking about Le Berger, a former rendezvous hotel or Le Crazy Horse, the most prominent cabaret in Paris that this year celebrates its 60th anniversary, desire is back in the headlines, confronting hidden pleasures and defying the cliché of 'brothels.'

MARTINA NIEVERGELT : What touched me most at the Berger, is the history of the building and what we know about what went on behind closed doors. I reinterpreted the rooms drawing from my own sensibility. This temple of desire embraces a past that is full of authenticity and mystery.
ANNE DERASSE: I had never set foot in Le Crazy before! To begin with I attended a show...and was stunned by the beauty of the spectacle, aesthetically erotic without being vulgar, a tribute to the beauty of women whose naked bodies were adorned in light. There is also the association of sensuality/discipline: behind each visual theme lies the precision and impressive work of the choreographer, the dancers and technicians who seemingly go unnoticed.

— *tl.mag*: How did you express the artistic creativity in these two places marked by time?

A.D.: I couldn't revolutionize the myth surrounding Le Crazy Horse. I had to work around it, stay humble: my clients were desperate to keep the image and the spirit of the place, which is appreciated all over the world, while offering something a little different and more appealing. The challenge was to increase the capacity of the room without moving the walls (we're in the basement of some very chic buildings on Avenue George V). Exit the chairs and folding seats which were replaced by small personalised alcoves. We kept the signature Crazy red colour; the carpets created by Alain Bernardin, hospitality and reception areas. There's a certain paradox here: it's a place to see and be seen but the new decor had to blend into the existing decor, to appear as if it had always existed. Furthermore, time wasn't on our side, the work was carried out in record time. Just for the anecdote, the decorators were still at work during the rehearsals for the summer season...do you think that they could concentrate on what they were doing?

M.N.: Le Berger has 50 rooms, 10 on each floor. I imagined a repeat of ten different rooms on each floor. For each of the series, I went from moodboard to drawings when designing the spaces. The combination of materials was essential: from the period vinyl or relief wallpaper mixed with mirror mosaics, to the velvet trims and wood panelling. I redesigned the bathrooms that match the rest of the room perfectly, and kept most of the original wooden furniture and features. I introduced some ideas that I recycled and also created some lights for the restaurant inspired by the Belgian designer Jules Wabbes.

— *tl.mag*: How do you think these temples of desire are perceived by those people that frequent them? And what do you make of them?

A.D.: Again, this is a mythical place that has seen all of Paris and countless celebrities from around the world pass through its doors and the spectacle is also in the hall. Object of everyone's fantasies, the dancer remains inaccessible despite their proximity with the audience.

M.N.: Le Berger is, in my opinion, an attractive proposition for couples who appreciate the world of 1930s cinema and are looking for something special with a timeless character...

www.lebergerhotel.be, www.lecrazyhorseparis.com

to read:

Le Berger, souvenirs d'une maison de rendez-vous, the fruits of a complicity between the photographer Marie-Françoise Plissart and Isabelle Léonard, a design enthusiast who saved Le Berger from demolition.
Crazy Inside by Antoine Poupel, ed. Chêne.

to see: The film 'Crazy Horse' by Frédéric Wiseman -

After the revue 'Désir' created by Philippe Decouffé & Ali Mahdavi, Christian Louboutin lights up the stage of Le Crazy by introducing his famous red soles that embrace feminine beauty into the dance routine...