

OLYMPOS NAOUSSA,

The rebirth of a legend, by Fabienne Spahn.



The iconic Olympos Naoussa restaurant has been the heart of Thessaloniki's jet set for decades, it was the favorite haunt of celebrities and politicians such as Greek prime ministers George Papandreou or Constantin Karamanlis, but also Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and many more, until it closed in the mid-1990s.

TOR HOTEL one of the most established groups in Greece since 1925 has partnered with an investment fund GRIVALIA HOSPITALITY to revive the legend of this historic place associated with the creation of a luxury hotel with 60 rooms with a high level service: ON RESIDENCE and a TIGER LOOP bar.

With a luxurious design that connects the past with the present, the property that houses the ON RESIDENCE was based on the plans of the famous Greek Jewish architect Jacques Mosse and was built in 1926. It is a typical example of Thessaloniki's eclecticism during the interwar period, with elements reminiscent of the Belle Époque and neoclassicism. The building's significant and delicate past essentially provided the guidelines for its restoration process, completed by architects Diversity Group and Dimitris Thomopoulos who collaborated on the project. The preservation of the facade and decorative elements of the building was completed according to the instructions of the Ministry of Culture. The architects took particular care not only to bring out all the features that made the building unique, but also to combine them carefully with contemporary elements, always guided by the objective of achieving harmonious coexistence. Award-winning architects Nikiforidis and Cuomo took charge of the design of the common areas, while the office of Nikos Fletoridis was responsible for the architectural study. The interior design was carried out by the French decorator Fabienne Spahn, who wanted to give a renewed classic art deco style to the project, enriching it with a discreet luxury that matched the character of the building.



"On my first visit to the site, I felt like I was in the home of 'Sleeping Beauty'," Spahn said. fully respecting the architectural heritage of the building was a great challenge. It reminds me of the wonderful brasseries of Paris with their neoclassical charm."





The important gastronomic heritage of Olympus Naoussa and its influence on the culinary culture of Thessaloniki have been the guiding principles of the hotel's main restaurant. The clean interiors are a perfect blend of decorative elements from the past and European bistros, juxtaposing them with a modern and urban aesthetic. In addition to the refined ambience inside the restaurant, the visitor is invited to discover a hidden courtyard, a rare oasis of relaxation in the bustling city center of Thessaloniki. The restaurant is run by Executive Chef Dimitris Tassioulas, the main representative of a very dynamic new generation of chefs from northern Greece, with important and award-winning projects, such as Sebrico and Thria, whose Sunday Trip magazine received the title Destination Gourmande in 2019.



The F&B offer is completed by Tiger Loop, a cozy cocktail bar with art deco elements. Here, black, gold and deep red dominate; space is full of movement and energy. The menu is designed by award-winning bartender and entrepreneur Achilleas Plakidas. Known for creating popular spots such as Gorilla and Mahalo, he is called upon here to give a cosmopolitan touch to the drinks menu.

Interview Fabienne Spahn :

Q : Having a brief look at your resume, I saw that you had several projects in Greece. Had any of your projects such an historic value as Olympus Naoussa ? What was the biggest challenge that you faced ?

There are places that vibrate with their history, Olympos Naoussa is one of them. I will not forget the feeling I had when I first entered the restaurant. I heard the echo of the merry dinners of the past. The walls spoke to me ! When you enter such a building you must have in mind the word "respect", you must approach such a project with humility. The challenge is to revive the glorious past while integrating the attributes of the present.

Q : How did you manage to connect the past with the present/future ? What items remain the same and which of them are totally new ? Can you share some highlights of the project ?

My goal was to wake up the sleeping beauty, very gently, as if the establishment had continued its evolution without interruption so that all the layout appears as obvious, very naturally. This also represents a challenge but above all a subtle work.

No decoration is fixed and over time, Olympos Naoussa would have evolved. We simply skipped a few steps to make it a place of today while respecting the past.

Particular attention has been paid to the lighting with the choice of light fixtures in the art deco style revisited with mouth-blown glass in order to diffuse a "vintage" lighting.

The choices of modern fabrics, for example for the benches, echo the design of historic cement tiles of the flooring through patterns and colors.

We can find the traditional woodwork (boiseries) and bistro chairs from Thonet with the canage that have taken place in the restaurant in an updated version. The addition of impressive mirrors or the use of braided chairs and pedestal tables in the garden recall the style of Parisian brasseries.

The bar is a bit of the cheeky child of the project, it allows itself some liberties in the installation of the lights and the fresco created by 2 French artists, it has anyway a cosy vintage style.

For the guestrooms, the classical rooms from the listed part of the building combine old style elements like romantic wallpaper to remind the damas style with more modern items like furniture, fixtures and fabrics.

The tremendous work of restoring the stuccoes gives an obvious charm to these rooms.

The higher you go up the floors, the more the style becomes contemporary while keeping chic and refinement.

The goal was not to reproduce a copy of the past decoration, but to keep the codes.

Q : Could you please describe the philosophy of interior design ? What are the main characteristics ? What was your main goal ?

Interior design is not creating a beautiful image, it's a process of making life easy and smooth through beauty. The functionality is the first question to consider, then comes the beauty. Equally essential is the notion of harmony and balance in volumes and colors. It is not a juxtaposition of old or modern elements but a global vision that makes the place. Of course, every small details matter because they are part of this notion of harmony. We don't want to grasp the look, we want it to bathe in the decor. This is the vision that I applied to this project. My goal was to make an attractive place where you can feel the charm of the past and the comfort of the present.

Q : How much did the restaurant influence the decoration of the hotel ?

In consistency with the historical restaurant, two codes have been defined which punctuate the decoration of the hotel : the vertical lines and the gold color. The lines are those of the lined glass that were on the restaurant doors and the partitions, the gold color was the one of the brass of the light fixtures and the frames of the interior doors. The vertical lines are found on the new facade of the hotel, in the bathrooms of the guestrooms, wall lamps, doors, and on the wallpapers. The brass/bronze material on all the lighting fixtures.

There is also the characteristic green color of the ceiling which has been declined in the lobby associated with dark blue. The other colors used echo the colors of the cement tiles on the floor, mainly on fabrics and curtains.

Q : Could you please give more information about the selected chairs/tables of the restaurant and the garden?

It was important to choose furniture from historical companies with a culture of craftsmanship. I will quote Wiener GTV Design, this company was created in 1819 by Michael Thonet and developed the technique of curved beech wood and caning to create the bisrot chair n°14 sold all over the world. This company has been able to develop its know-how to meet contemporary requirements and aesthetics. Thus was born the BodyStuhl chair with a caned backrest chosen for the restaurant.

The same goes for Maison Drucker, created in 1885, and well known for its rattan chairs covered with a braided jacquard that dot the terraces of Parisian bistros and around the world. It is labeled in

France "Entreprise du Patrimoine Vivant", for the recognition of its exceptional historical know-how, this distinction is awarded by the Ministry of Economy and Finance.

Q : What about the lights at the restaurant and the bar?

Finding the right lights is a big sourcing job that I do throughout the year. The offer is very wide and only a few brands offer the guarantee of quality and know-how.

For the restaurant I tried to reproduce the atmosphere of Olympos Naoussa in a style that could be described as "neo-art deco". If the trend today is brass and glass globes, I wanted to go further in the process of quality and know-how. My choice fell on Magic Circus Editions, a French lighting brand that creates and produces spectacular lighting. Creations that draw on the aesthetics of the 1920s/30s. Entering this world is a bit like diving into the atmosphere of Wes Anderson's Grand Budapest Hotel: a world of style, elegance, fantasy, where eras mingle... Like a jewel, each light is shaped by hand. The glass is mouth-blown, the metal finishes are made to measure in a workshop with ancestral know-how

For the bar, the Calypso pendant lamps are inspired by the 1940s, the graphic design of the atypical hat-shaped lampshades, and the system of hanging by a brass ring on a thick silk cord make them out of the ordinary, impressive and exceptional pieces.

These are luminaires designed to have a presence whether they are off or on with sober lines, decorative references that make them familiar, a sometimes oversized size for a breathtaking effect and a real modernity.

Q : Can you elaborate on the textiles that you used on the furniture?

I work with the major fabric editors in Paris: Elitis, La Maison Pierre Frey, Rubelli, etc... and I was accompanied on this point by Marina Sfakianaki and her office in Athens with whom we share this passion for beauty and matter. My favorite is the Elitis Effigie fabric, a graphic jacquard, which dresses restaurant benches. It could have been created just for the project as it corresponds to the desired atmosphere.

*Q : Could you please describe the furniture that were selected for the rooms?
The different types and the atmosphere that you would like to achieve?*

For the rooms in the listed part of the hotel, I didn't want to overload the space in order to let the architectural decor express itself, extended by a pretty, very classic wallpaper. The furniture has been chosen in a bias that is both modern and timeless. There is no search for a particular style, but rather a general harmony that makes each of the elements respond to and complete each other. The cupboards were designed by the architects, the dressing tables and the headboards by me. They were made in Greece.

The suites are furnished in a contemporary way, but with attention to detail such as the velvet studding of the sofas, the lacquered coffee tables edged in bronze. There are also the famous armchairs designed by Gio Ponti in 1953. This armchair has undergone many technical

developments, also called "love chair", it won the prestigious Wallpaper Design Awards in 2016 and has become a Molteni&C icon.

It was essential to have a very calm and relaxing atmosphere in order to bathe in the extraordinary view of the sea enjoyed by the rooms. This proximity gives the impression of being out of time, of floating on the water...

In the rooms on the upper floors, the same aesthetic is retained, but the atmosphere is different in the more sustained and warmer colors, with touches of blue for the rooms overlooking the garden and pink for the rooms overlooking the sea.

Q : What is your favorite piece and why?

I have a real crush on the "Dew" sconces in the hallways. The blowing of the glass applied in several layers gives the impression of a source of water more than a drop of dew. There is only one wall lamp per corridor, I wanted it unique because it is like a jewel both pure and breathtaking. The glass is blown in the Czech Republic....

As you can see the selection is very eclectic and suppliers come from all over Europe. This makes the atmosphere unique.

www.fabiennespahn.com

info@fabiennespahn.com

tel 00 33 6 10 90 74 93