

CULTURE22H AGO

# Aline Asmar d’Amman Captivated Visitors with her Exhibition: “Love, Women and the Sea”

by JEANNINE YAZBECK



Aline Asmar d’Amman in The Writing Room. Under the skilful fingers of the exceptional craftsmen at Maison Lemarié, the walls are adorned with pleats and words, as if tattooed with powerful texts. Exceptional screens designed by Aline Asmar d’Amman in collaboration with Maisons Lemarié and Lognon, and crafted with the help of Atelier Louis Del Boca. Loan from Valentina Cameranesi for the glass work. Collaboration with Atelier François Pouenat, Maison Lemarié and Lognon to create the Ribbons metal desk inspired by Maria Pergay’s iconic Ruban pouffe and designed by Aline Asmar from Amman. Office chair by Andrée Putman, 1986 borrowed from the Mobilier National. Photo: Jérémy Zaessinger

Aline Asmar d’Amman’s “*Love, Women, and the Sea*” exhibition unfolded at the 7th International Interior Design Festival – d’Amman acted as guest of honor and president of the jury – in Toulon like the pages of a book, revealing alcoves brimming with beauty and stories to be read. Housed in Toulon, which completes its centenary this year, the interior design narrative draws direct inspiration from details related to the stunning modernist architecture, the brutalism of Robert Mallet-Stevens, the bold vision of its illustrious owners, and the presence of artists and notable personalities who lived there or responded to decorative art commissions.

In a sensory enchantment, the décor also draws inspiration from novels and writings captured from a feminine perspective. The dreamlike ambiance questions the relationship with narrative objects through conversations and memories. The creative genius of d’Amman has staged words and textures to create an experience that is not just a space, but an open book, a *carte blanche* which the architect aimed to imbue with personal memories of her childhood in her home country, Lebanon, as well as the enduring promise of books as shields and gateways to dreams.



Aline Asmar d’Amman wearing a unique hand-embroidered work garment by Maison Rabih Kayrouz. Photo: Jérémy Zaessinger

Embodied by the feelings of freedom and sensuality summoned by the waves of the Mediterranean, the exhibition metamorphosizes into a surreal journey as the *seven* distinct spaces succeed one another, animated and evocative, as if caught in a web of dreams.

The artistic curation of the exhibition is entrusted to Docent and its founder Hélène Nguyen-Ban. It fosters an unprecedented dialogue between interior architecture and artistic creation, surpassing conventional boundaries and surpassing expectations. Docent’s curatorial choices adorn each exhibition space, crafting an enchanting journey steeped in dreams and mythologies.

“I hope that visitors will wander with curiosity and surprise through the day and night spaces, from the Entrance of Tales to the Conversation Salon” says d’Amman before adding, “The journey is a meeting with oneself, where the reflections in the mirrors are present. It is also a path towards others.”



The Entrance of Tales, adorned with Jean Veber and Paul Foliot armchairs borrowed from the Mobilier National and upholstered with stones, invites the language of fables and legends. The suspended luminaire, designed by Aline Asmar d’Amman in collaboration with Maisons Lemarié and Lognon, reaches for the sky with its distinctive allure. It bestows a dreamlike dimension upon the space blended with elegance, a common denominator of high craftsmanship and singular interiors. On the walls, a series of pencil drawings by Vidya Gastaldon evoke the “oceanic feeling.” Photo: Jérémy Zaessinger

A dedicated sanctuary inspired by female authors, the Writing Room, not only sets the tone for the night-time spaces but also emerges as one of the most interesting moments in this voyage through “*Love, Women, and the Sea*”. It is here that you will encounter the words of women; from Nadia Tuéni to Lidia Yuknavitch, Marguerite Duras and Leïla Slimani, from Judith Housez to Virginia Woolf, Etel Adnan, and Virginie Despentes. The walls are adorned with pleats and words, as if tattooed with powerful texts, paying tribute to cult women writers. Commenting on this room d’Amman says, “One must listen to the rustling of fabrics frozen in the material of the walls, decipher the silk calligraphy brushed by the Maisons Lemarié and Lognon workshops, reread certain female authors who inspire me and sometimes obsess me to the point of erecting walls for them or dedicating them this unique space.” She adds, “The power of women with the evocative force of a poetic space-time is a program to which I intend to dedicate myself for a long time”.





The Conversation Salon. A series of "Georgia" armchairs in faded colours, celestial blue, and flesh pink, infiltrate the space. Soft shell side table by Aline Asmar from Amman and wall lamps designed in collaboration with Maison Lemarié and the Lognon workshops, based at 19M. The Conversation Salon revolves around two lateral libraries split with treacherous shelves: a wave slices through the walls to accommodate Etel Adnan's "Leporellos". Photo: Jérémy Zaessinger

The collaboration with Maisons Lemarié and Lognon, CHANEL Fashion Métiers d'art, 19M in the Writing Room is of particular interest. *Screens designed by Aline Asmar D'Amman in collaboration with Maisons Lemarié and Logon, CHANEL Fashion Métiers d'art, 19M developed by Atelier Del Boca in resin plaster* response to the imaginative decor of the writing desk. The savoir-faire of Maisons Lemarié and Lognon is not limited to this space alone, other spaces in the exhibition are also exalted by their creations. The ceiling suspension in the Entrance of Tales unfolds like rays of sunlight, speckled with luminous gold and silver. A high-fashion reinterpretation of a dome-shaped suspension, it bestows modernity upon the room, adding a dreamlike couture atmosphere in the fairy tale entrance. While in the day area, curtains that are reminiscent of couture dress the windows with unparalleled allure and elegance. "During my visit Maisons Lemarié and Lognon's ateliers, I was dazzled by the beauty of the archives and the artisan's delicate gestures mastering exclusive skills to create unique tools and cardboards used by the finest fashion houses in the world. There is nothing more fascinating than the connections between fashion and high decoration," says d'Amman.

Under the power of words and culture, the journey continues from space to space unfolding a new page in the d'Amman creative tome. The Conversation Salon revolves around two lateral libraries split with treacherous shelves: a wave tears through the walls to accommodate Etel Adnan's "Leporellos", a poetess of absence and exile. "Etel Adnan's "Leporellos" precious presence in the conversation salon's library is a wild dream come true. Her works evoke vast sentiments for the sea and special reminiscence of my homeland, Lebanon."



The Salon des bains is dedicated to Venus. Overly enlarged moulds of chalky seashells are grafted onto a structure of mirrors and stairs. Facing "JeanJoel", a polished stainless-steel fractal object with visible welds, designed by Aline Asmar d'Amman as a nod to the Martel brothers' polyhedral mirror commissioned by Charles de Noailles and developed with Atelier François Pouenat. Photo: Jérémy Zaessinger

Elsewhere, inspired by *La Méditerranée, mer de nos langues*, an exploration by Louis-Jean Calvet of the languages that were spoken and are still spoken on its shores, d'Amman has envisioned the "Miroir des Cultures". Based on this profound study ten languages were chosen to reveal the secrets of unique and evocative words and illustrate a state of mind impossible to translate, a joyful patchwork of our united differences. Scattered pages adorned with couture alphabets, dyed raffia and sequins by Maison Lesage dominate this space to sketch an abstract and illuminated fresco.



Aline Asmar d'Amman under the « Mobile des Métiers ». A suspended object with eight tentacular branches, a giant dream catcher, it balances itself around its hemp and hammered metal stems, unveiling at each end the exquisite creations of Chanel's Fashion Métiers d'art, 19M. Behind her the Shuo Hsao's contemporary screen, 'Five Things and the Guardian', illustrated with modern allegories in a suave twist. Collaboration with Docent to curate contemporary artworks for 'L'Amour, la Mer, les Femmes'. D'Amman sits on mattresses covered in satin and velvet from Maison Pierre Frey. Photo: Jérémy Zaessinger

The avant-garde French creative Jean Cocteau is amongst the various artists inspired by the Villa Noailles, a reflection of the influence held by this French house and its rich history of art patronage. Now, d'Amman draws upon this legacy as a quote from Cocteau, "I don't know what this object is or how it presents itself, but I love that it exists and makes me dream", ignited the vision for the spectacular "Mobile des Métiers". A suspended object with eight tentacular branches, a giant dream catcher, it balances itself around its hemp and hammered metal stems, unveiling at each end the exquisite creations of CHANEL's Fashion Métiers d'art, 19M. This exclusive object *designed by Aline Asmar D'Amman is developed in collaboration* with Atelier François Pouenat. A gateway to dreams, it hovers above a brutalist bookshelf traversed by onyx shelves with evanescent nuances.

Selected and cherished books are embedded in a concrete to give birth to a series of sculptural furniture pieces made of "literary concrete". Specifically designed for this exhibition, these pieces crystallize the concept of culture as an essential framework. "Cutting, piercing, arranging the titles by subjective affinities, pouring concrete in a box to freeze this very vision of a shore where they drifted, colliding together like the remains of a dream, felt like a delirium and a liberation," comments d'Amman.

One of these concrete titles is the late Karl Lagerfeld's book on the Villa Noailles, a nod towards d'Amman's relationship with the legendary designer whom she counts as one of her mentors. Visitors will have the envious opportunity to immerse themselves deeper into this connection through *Architecture*, an art collection of functional sculptures designed by Karl Lagerfeld, developed in collaboration with Aline Asmar d'Amman for Carpenters Workshop Gallery. The exhibition which was first revealed at Carpenters Workshop Gallery in Paris, in November 2018, now finds its way to Ancien Evêché de Toulon on a special request from D'Amman. "*Architectures* is inspired by Antiquity, referred to as the origin of beauty, culture and modernity by the designer. The pieces evoke a contemporary architectural landscape with Greek origins which will be set in dialog with Karl's photography of Villa Noailles."

"I wish to share my passion for the culture of the Mediterranean basin and its eroded shores. My total fascination with high craft artistry and the prodigious power of artisans' gestures, shifting between the realms of architecture, design, fashion, and high decoration," she concludes.



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