

# Bal Harbour

M A G A Z I N E

THE HOLIDAY  
ISSUE

W I N T E R 2 0 2 4





Inside Le19M's le Petit Salon, the reception room chairs were inspired by Georgia O'Keeffe paintings, while the tables mix raw and refined materials—a trademark shared by both Aline Asmar d'Amman and Chanel.



# KINDRED spirits



Aline Asmar d'Amman stands before a desk she designed in homage to the pleating technique by Maison Lemarié's Lognon workshop, which also has an atelier at Le19M.

With her design for le Petit Salon at Chanel's specialty workshops, **Aline Asmar d'Amman** connects with the spirit of Coco Chanel through time and space.

BY JORGE S. ARANGO



# If

architect Aline Asmar d'Amman and Coco Chanel had lived during the same era, they would surely have been the best of friends. The Lebanese-born, Paris-based architect and founder of Culture in Architecture designed le Petit Salon at Le19M, a building by architect Rudy Ricciotti at the edge of Aubervilliers in Paris, which houses some 700 artisans responsible for the savoir-faire for which the House of Chanel is so esteemed. Pleaters, embroiderers, beaders, feather appliers, fabric flower makers—these are the people responsible for every detail on a Chanel creation.

The fashion house began buying these specialty workshops, called *Métiers d'art*, in 1984, but they were scattered around the city. This building centralizes them under one roof, something especially convenient for the cross-pollination that goes into Chanel's annual *Métiers d'art* collection, which is intended to showcase the talents and details of these ateliers. (It should be noted that not all the *Métiers d'art* in the building work exclusively for Chanel, but are also engaged by other couture houses.)

“The intersection of the worlds of fashion and decoration is palpable and induces a desire for creative exploration that broadens horizons.”

—ALINE ASMAR D'AMMAN

For d'Amman, the commission for le Petit Salon, which is intended for private functions, was a dream come true. On a recent day, d'Amman was wearing a vintage black-sequined Karl Lagerfeld jacket for our Zoom interview. It glistened and flashed as she gesticulated, leaned forward into her computer, or pivoted on her chair to reference a book on the jam-packed bookshelves behind her.

“I love to quote Coco Chanel,” d'Amman says of the legendary couturier of casual chic, who died in 1971 at the age of 87. “She paved the way for women, living her life as she solely intended, daring, free, and ahead of her time, mastering her destiny and her business. I just came across this the other day: ‘People have always wanted to put me in cages: cages with cushions stuffed with promises, gilded cages, cages that I’ve touched looking away from. I never wanted any other than the one I would build myself.’ ”

In a sense, le Petit Salon at Le19M is a cage of which Chanel would have approved. It is inspired by the exquisite craftsmanship that transpires under its roof every day in hundreds of ways, but it is solely the vision of one woman who, like Coco

Chanel herself, is flawlessly refined and self-possessed. Le Petit Salon is decorated with d'Amman's own furniture designs, as well as with unique elements that refer to the various maisons housed in the building.

For example, pleats are everywhere—in a Soleil d'or light fixture, in the sculptural form of a bespoke desk, in wall panels—all of them tributes to the Lognon workshop at Maison Lemarié, one of the ateliers in the building. Lognon itself was founded in 1853 by Émilie Lognon, who used her irons to curl fabric. Today, Ateliers Lognon employs cardboard molds to create pleats according to the same methods established at the workshop by Gérard Lognon, the founder's great-grandson, in 1945.

Yet to achieve the folded metal pleating of the Dark Ribbons desk, which is meant to recall a bow tie, d'Amman commissioned the famed 130-year-old French metal smithery Atelier François Pouenat. Similarly, the resin plaster screens that envelop the desk could not be fully executed by the Lognon artisans, so d'Amman enlisted the help of Atelier Del Boca, which has specialized since the 1920s in plaster work, ▶

The designer at work with one of her collaborators.

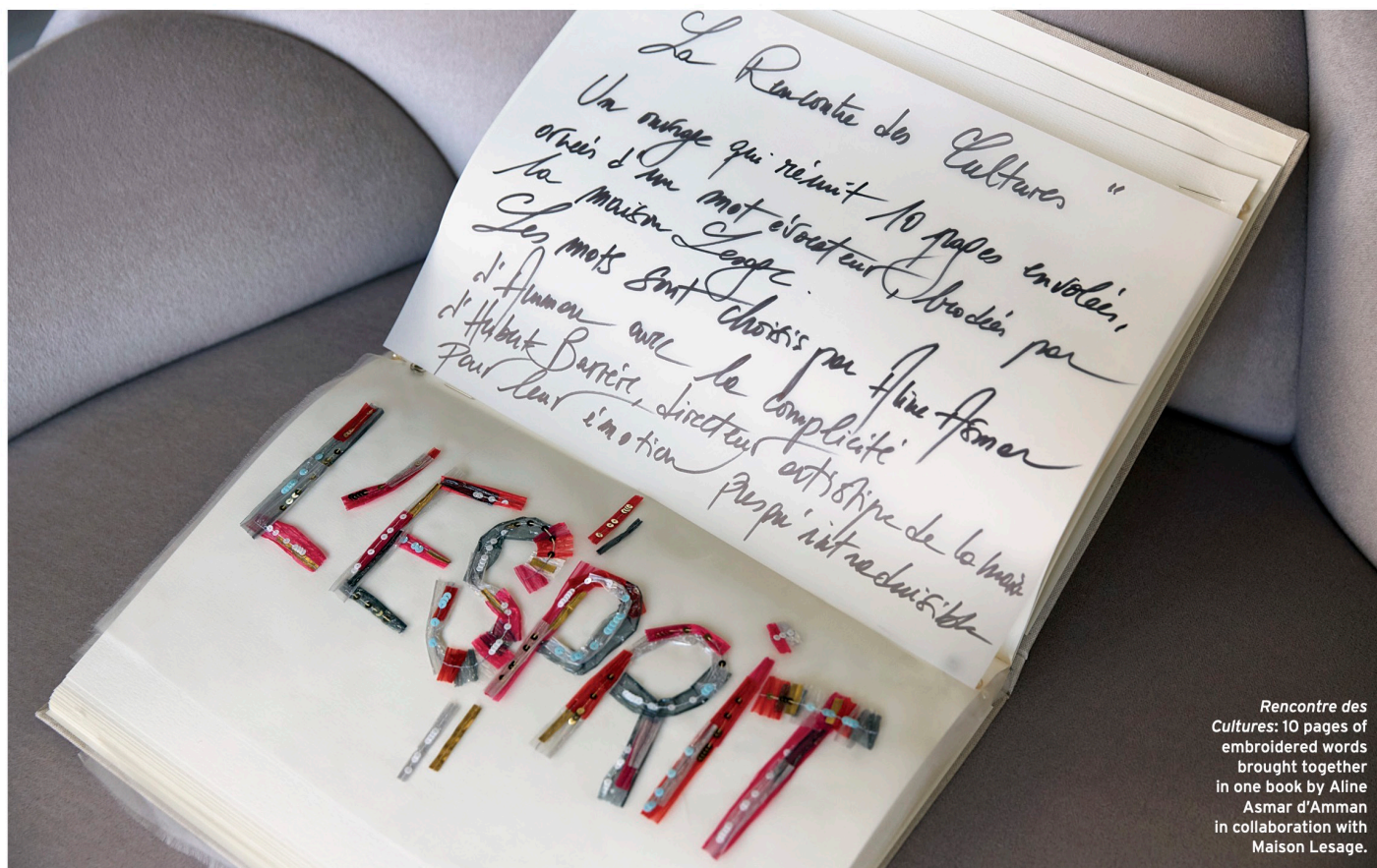
**OPPOSITE PAGE**  
*Le Mobilé des Métiers* by d'Amman is a collaboration with famed metalsmith François Pouenat and displays the various couture capabilities now housed under one roof at architect Rudy Ricciotti's building, Le19M in Paris.











*Rencontre des Cultures*: 10 pages of embroidered words brought together in one book by Aline Asmar d'Amman in collaboration with Maison Lesage.

“There is always this dialogue between precious and raw. It contributes to each’s poetic materiality, and it is what makes it modern.”

decorative painting, traditional masonry, and façade restoration.

“The intersection of the worlds of fashion and decoration is palpable and induces a desire for creative exploration that broadens horizons,” says d’Amman. “The delicate creations of Maison Lemarié and its Lognon workshop have always fascinated me. I was dazzled by the beauty of the cardboard looms I discovered during my visit to their 19M workshops.” Referring to the Soleil d’or pleated light fixture, she explains, “It’s a story that starts at the ateliers, continues at my desk studying proportions and designs, [then] collaborates equally with master makers of some of the finest Entreprises du Patrimoine Vivant (EPV), a French label for craftsmen of decorative works.”

This represents an evolution from fashion-based inspiration to light fixture, observes d’Amman. “To transfer this savoir-faire to architecture is the beginning of another level of conversation,” she says, explaining that a similar light fixture is now going into the lady’s boudoir

of a private client’s house; also, the pleating showcased in some of the wall panels at le Petit Salon will become cladding for the pool.

The architect grew up in war-torn Lebanon in the 1980s. But amid the bombs, fear, and destruction, d’Amman says she had two refuges: fashion and literature. “We were lucky because we were able to escape,” she says, recalling that her mother would wear beautiful outfits—some by Chanel—and walk around in them for a couple hours before the government-installed curfews. “It was an act of rebellion and resistance,” declares d’Amman. “She would wear it for two hours of grace before reality would return. The act of beauty is inspiring. It is an act of grace and elevation. Whether you are in a country torn by war or not, the sense of healing fashion can instill in you allows you to embrace another reality.”

As for literature, she remembers that, when things got scary, “I would hide under a table and open a book, and suddenly there was silence.” This inspiration from the written word translates to le Petit Salon in several ways.

Between the white plaster resin-pleated panels surrounding the desk, for instance, are other panels displaying writing that she describes as “obsessive texts” by beloved writers such as Marguerite Duras, Lidia Yuknavitch, and Virginia Woolf.

The desk and these “graffiti” murals are in the reading room of le Petit Salon. But in the entry to the space, we find raw concrete structures made in collaboration with Laboratorio Morsetto in Vicenza. Thanks to slits in them that accommodate books, they become sculptural “bookshelves” she calls *béton littéraire* (literary concrete).

“There is always this dialogue between the precious and the raw,” she explains. “It gives each its own integral value. It contributes to each’s poetic materiality, and it is what makes it modern.” This juxtaposition of materials and textures, d’Amman believes, is completely synchronous with Chanel’s sense of style. “She presented an infinite possibility of combinations. There’s no frame, no cage. You can take the codes and reinvent them endlessly.”





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP  
*béton littéraire*, a bookshelf  
and a pair of columns by  
d'Amman, in collaboration  
with the Laboratorio  
Morsetto; studies  
in pleating; a detail of *Le  
Mobile des Métiers*.

Her relationship with Chanel began in Paris when she received a commission to redecorate the Grands Appartements of the 18th-century Hôtel de Crillon. She knew she wanted to collaborate with Lagerfeld, legendary then-head of Chanel and at the peak of his career. So, she wrote him a note in longhand and gave it to a receptionist to deliver to him. "It was like throwing a bottle into the sea," she laughs. Lagerfeld was so charmed by this old-fashioned gesture of communication that he agreed to meet with her. The duo eventually redesigned the Grands Appartements in 2017 and, in 2018, went on to collaborate on a collection of furniture for the international collectible design and dealers Carpenters Workshop Gallery. Lagerfeld died two years later.

As for d'Amman, she continues to design homes for many eminent private clients, as well as more public commissions such as Le Jules Verne, the two-Michelin-starred restaurant on the second floor of the Eiffel Tower. "My practice of architecture and design," she says, "is driven by the absolute conviction that beauty can change the world."

