

Hotel Lutetia



Poliform

Hotel

WILMOTTE & ASSOCIÉS ARCHITECTS

Lutetia





YEAR
2018

LOCATION
Paris, France

ARCHITECT
Jean-Michel Wilmotte

PROJECT
Hotel Lutetia

DESCRIPTION

With over a century of history and a peculiar architecture halfway through Art Nouveau and Art Deco, Hotel Lutetia is an icon of the Parisian rive gauche. It is the only luxury grand hotel on the Left Bank. A four-year renovation project has brought its original charm up to date.









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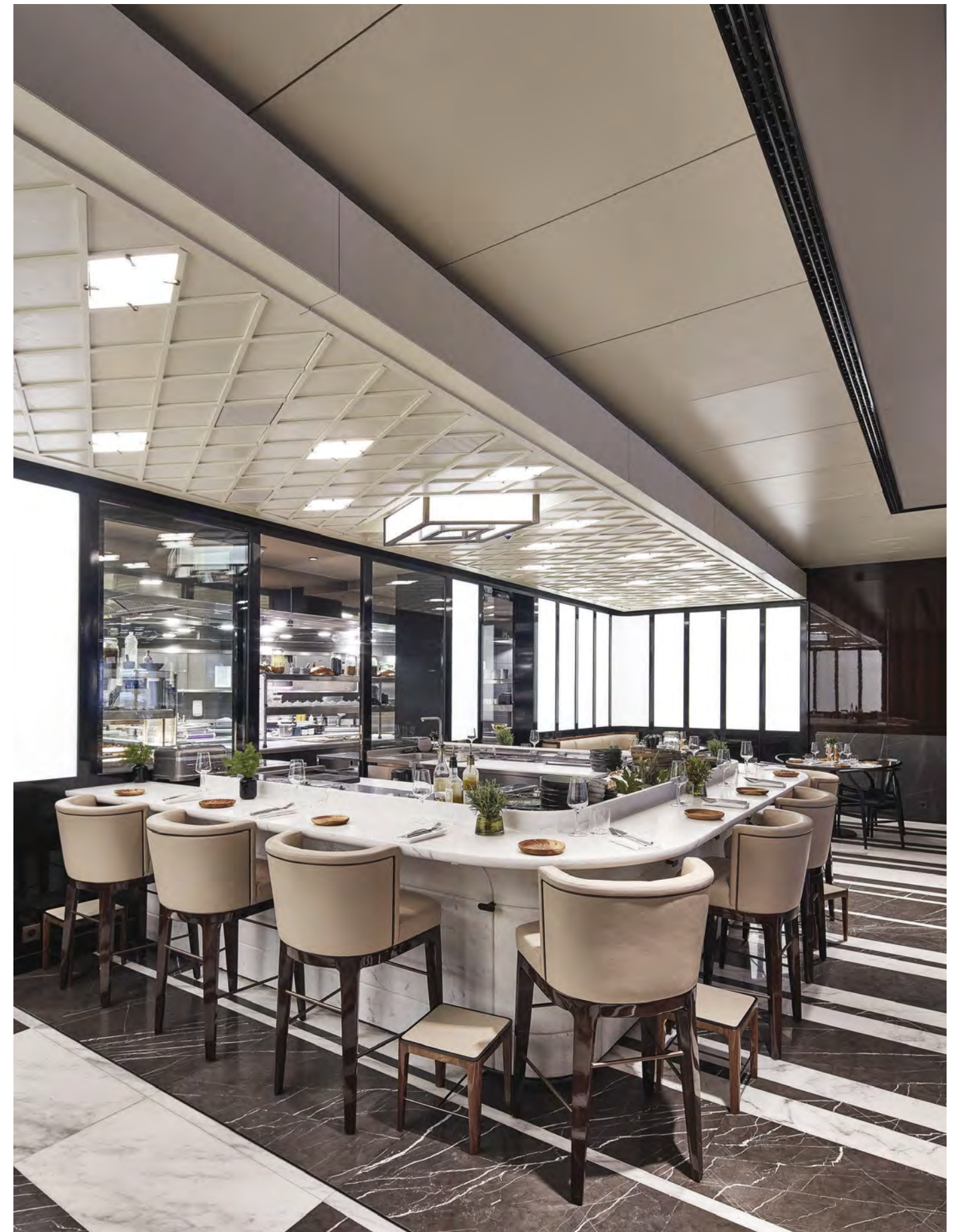






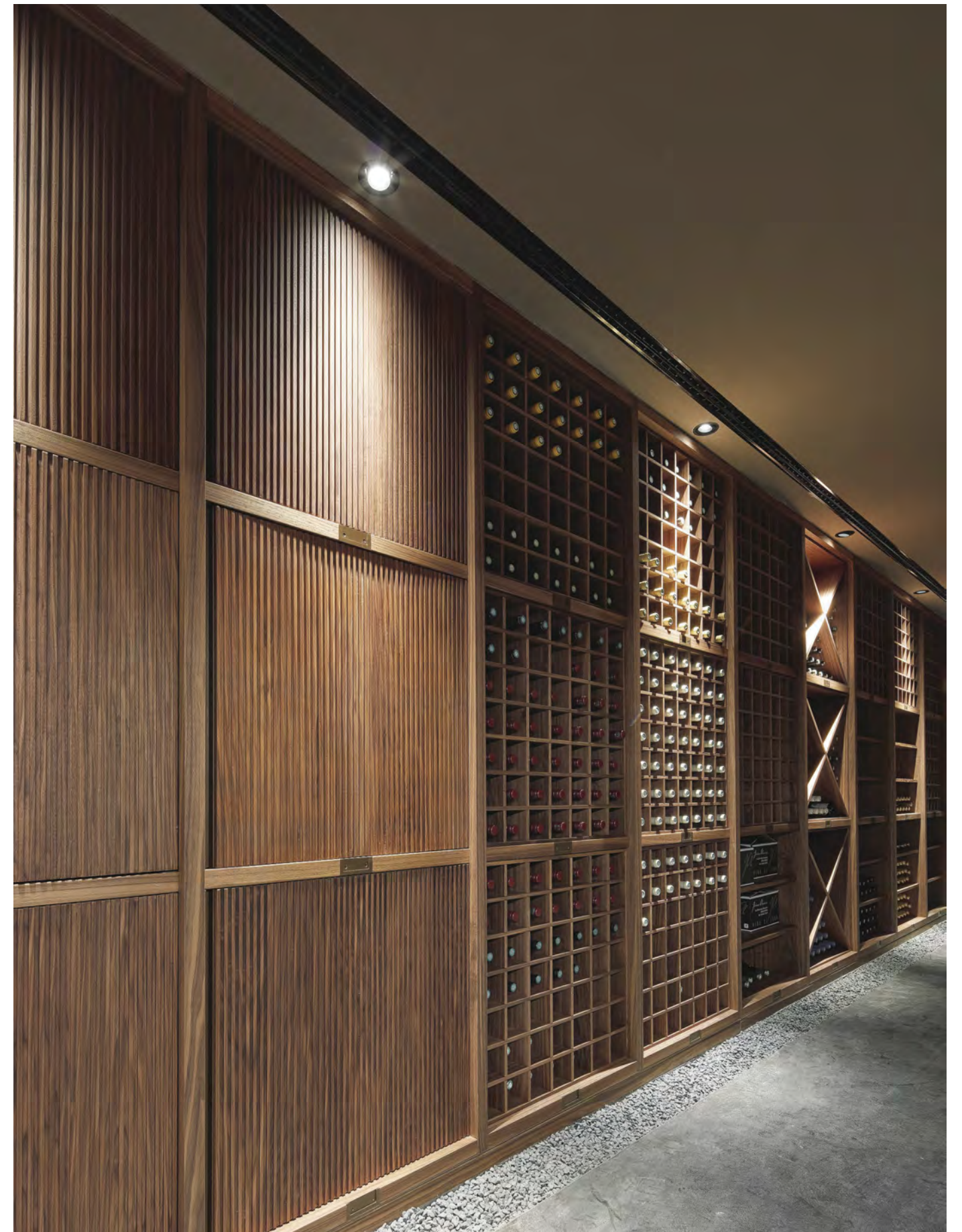








“We designed things that were very difficult to produce and Poliform Contract always found the right solution”.



















Jean-Michel Wilmotte is one of the top 100 architects in the world. After graduating at the École Camondo in Paris, he created his own firm in 1975 and achieved recognition as an influential interior designer after working for the Louvre, where he designed the temporary exhibition spaces, bookshop, and restaurants beneath the Ieoh Ming Pei pyramid.

Though he is fond of designing museums and cultural spaces, as well as refurbishing architectural heritage, throughout his career Jean-Michel Wilmotte has branched out from furniture and industrial design to large-scale projects like the Greater Moscow. Lightness and transparency are key concepts of his design, together with the ability to find a balance between past and present, the environment and contemporary needs. Among his latest projects are the Allianz Riviera Stadium in Nice, the Russian Orthodox Spiritual and Cultural Center in Paris, the Ferrari Sporting Management Center in Maranello and the refurbishment of the Halle Freyssinet into the Station F start-up campus in Paris, together with the renovation of Hotel Lutetia – which is the topic of this conversation.

Far from a simple makeover, his work on the hotel achieved the delicate task of breathing new life into the building while respecting its roots and identity, which were so precisely narrated in the novel *Lutetia* by French writer Pierre Assouline.

What is it that you find most fascinating about Hotel Lutetia?

Everything is fascinating, from the building's dimensions to its exceptional location, on the rive gauche, or its monumental façade, which opens up on Rue de Sèvres, Boulevard Raspail and Place Alphonse Deville: it's incredible to have such a building on the Left Bank.

It's also interesting that this hotel was imagined by the former owner of Le Bon Marché, Madame Boucicaut. When she opened her department store she said: "I would like the clients to stay longer in Paris to buy in my department store: I should build a hotel". Unfortunately, she never had the chance to see it because she died before it opened.

Last but not least, a very fascinating aspect is art. The hotel was built in 1910, a period when art and architecture were transitioning from Art Nouveau to Art Deco.

The façade has windows and balusters decorated with impressive angels, trellises and grapes, while the walls of the ground floor feature high quality frescoes, friezes and bas-reliefs.

What is the main concept behind the new Hotel Lutetia?

Our goal was to recreate the atmosphere of the original Lutetia for today's requirements. We didn't want to do a pastiche, nor a copy of what the Lutetia was before: it was more about our interpretation. Our challenge was to create a dialogue between the existing building and the refurbishment we had in mind, balancing contemporary elements with classical ones and cleaning up everything that was out of memory.

How did you transform a hotel from the 1910s into a hotel for 2019?

We realized almost immediately that the existing building already contained the vocabulary for the new building. Therefore, we borrowed some details and developed them. For instance, the overlapping circles that were featured on the tympanum of the main building were replicated on the floor of the bathrooms. We also completely remodelled the layout by creating larger rooms and reducing their number: all the bathrooms now have a window and are lit by natural light. We took all the partitions out because of their bad quality, upgrading the hotel's acoustics, electricity, air conditioning, etc. And finally, we added a 17-meters-long swimming pool and a SPA.

How did you redesign the ground floor?

One of the most important things we created on the ground floor is the patio. What was previously a windowless salon, with a low ceiling and heavy curtains, is now an open-air garden that brings daylight everywhere! Further, there is an axis that didn't exist before: now, from the Orangerie you can see the entrance on Boulevard Raspail.

Then we completely reorganized the spaces. Salon Saint-Germain was too small to host a bar, so we decided to move the bar on the Boulevard Raspail side, while Café Saint-Germain is now a restaurant with a new skylight by contemporary artist Fabrice Hyber, that brings happiness in with its colours. The library, Salon Ernest – which is an engaging room for book lovers – also opens onto the garden.

How has the past remained visible?

I must say that when we arrived we couldn't see any original decor or furniture, which had totally disappeared during the successive refurbishments in the 1960s, 1980s and 1990s. We only chose to maintain the sculptures of Cesar and Hiquily. I would rather say that we uncovered the past, that is now visible again. Under layers of paint, we came across original frescoes that we brought back to life.

What was Poliform's contribution to the overall project?

Poliform Contract was contracted for the public areas. It made the Conciergerie, the lobby, the entire jazz bar – with the counter-top in curved bronzed mirror, the "lustre" and the furnishings, the salon Saint-Germain, the Orangerie, the library, the Brasserie, the bathrooms and all the details of the ground floor.

We designed things that were very difficult to produce and it always found the appropriate solution. The piece I am most proud of is the masterful "lustre" (19,5 meters long !) of Bar Joséphine, made by Poliform. It is particularly interesting as it reflects the space, the frescoes and the light, and constitutes an extraordinary contemporary object on the ceiling.

How do you imagine life in this new hotel?

Life at the Lutetia is a unique experience. Let yourself be guided to your room, eat in Saint-Germain, relax on the patio or, if it's cold outside, near the chimneys in the library.

Smoke a cigar, then go down to relax in the SPA or in the swimming pool before having dinner and listening to jazz in the bar or joining a party in Salon Cristal.

The Lutetia is really the best place to live the Left Bank way of life.

Poliform Spa

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