

surface



SPRING PREVIEW

A NEW YEAR IN DESIGN

*From Alice Aycock to Z Zegna,
Creative Talents Signal a Season of Change*

A Date With History

A RICH PAST INFORMS A PLAYFUL FRENCH OASIS BY—WHO ELSE?—*JAIME HAYON.*

A resolutely contemporary restaurant cocooned within a historic building—and the first interior in Paris by Spanish designer Jaime Hayon—Le Sergent Recruteur is the result of a close collaboration with chef Antonin Bonnet and owner Cedric Naudon, a design-centric gourmand and self-styled “editor of places.” Hayon designed the eatery to showcase Bonnet’s culinary style, while responding to the constraints of its setting: a 17th-century building on Ile Saint-Louis, the island in the center of the city that is perceived as both very Parisian and very touristy.

Like Bonnet’s cuisine, which is based around simple preparations that highlight quality produce, Hayon’s design makes the most of its ingredients: oak and walnut, stone and marble, brass, and ceramics—“materials that have been used for centuries and that show craftsmanship well,” Hayon says. It also pays tribute to the history of the restaurant, which has gone by the same name since the Napoleonic era. (It’s named after the army officer in charge of conscripting unknowing recruits.) “I was inspired by masks and elements of the Middle Ages to create special items on the walls, like ceramic warriors, masks, and mirrors, and the use of stone and other noble materials that have been part of history for a long time,” he says. A medieval knight motif recurs throughout: in mirrors; woven into napkins; illustrated as a sword-wielding figure on a wall behind the ham slicer; echoed in the brass crosses, recalling a blazon, set into the tables; and in the honeycomb-patterned door separating bar from restaurant (a nod to chain mail).

There are plenty of Hayon flourishes, too—quirky ceramic vases, varied textures, impressive attention to details—but they remain unfussy. “For me, the most important of all was to create an atmosphere of elegance, but at the same time not be overwhelming,” Hayon says, adding that his hope is for visitors to “love the space and then forget about it completely and concentrate on the beautiful food in front of their eyes.”—*NATASHA EDWARDS*



PHOTOS: KUNDERBIE