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Mob House

SAINT OUEN

Cyril Aouizerate, Michel Reybier and Philippe Starck join forces for a new style of hotel designed to cater to the nomadic workforce.

Words: Catherine Martin
Photography: © Gregoire Gardette

When Cyril Aouizerate spoke to Sleeper about the launch of Mob Hotels back in 2018, he revealed that the guiding principle behind the new venture was social ecology. Not interested in pipeline or profit targets, his vision was to foster connections between people and their environment, taking into account the climate and social concerns. Four years on from that interview, the world has changed significantly, yet Aouizerate's ethos is more relevant than ever.

The 'movement' – as it's referred to – was built from a pioneering vegan restaurant in Brooklyn, which also served as a hybrid cultural space and organic veg cooperative and quickly became a meeting point for the borough's activist scene. Aouizerate had exited the Mama Shelter brand he created with Serge Trigano and Philippe Starck, and was looking to take a human-centric approach to hospitality, so together with long-time collaborator Michel Reybier, he developed the Mob movement and opened hotels in Paris and Lyon, each a response

to the societal, geographic and economic trends of the neighbourhood in which they sit. Now, the entrepreneurial team have once again been influenced by society, tapping in to the current shift in the way we live to create a new style of hotel – one that primarily caters to the nomadic workforce.

"Mob House is designed to be a place of production where people drop-in, work, hold meetings and meet new people," explains Aouizerate of the property, which has landed in the Paris suburb of Saint Ouen, just a few steps from the original Mob Hotel. "It is particularly appealing to nomadic workers because of its 3-in-1 rooms," he continues, referring to the larger guestrooms that incorporate sleeping quarters, office space and a separate area to host meetings. Depending on their work habits, guests can choose from a range of rooms and facilities. For those who enjoy the buzz of co-working, there's a 21m² bedroom-only option. The 40m² business room comes with the addition of a living room-style office and



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meeting room for up to six people, while the duplex separates out the sleeping and working components.

For the design, Aouizerate rekindled his partnership with Philippe Starck, entrusting him with bringing his vision to life in line with the brand ethos. There's a focus on natural materials with terracotta, concrete and clay accompanied by plenty of timber, though Mob is careful as to the claims it makes when it comes to sustainability and the environment; its furniture for example isn't necessarily eco, but made by craftspeople who support their local ecosystems – another example of that human-centric approach. "We took a lot of care when thinking out all the details for the rooms; it wasn't done with a decorative approach but based on what was essential," explains Aouizerate, adding that some selections were made owing to their positive impact on wellbeing. "Our reptilian brain reacts to natural materials directly sourced from the earth and a feeling of calm then envelops us, so we used a straw and clay slip for the walls. It is an excellent thermal regulator, has a low carbon impact and doesn't release any volatile organic compounds."

Interiors also feature solid oak flooring and Beaujolais ceramics, which Aouizerate describes as "magnificently imperfect" since they are artisanal. Some materials seek to address the problem of over-consumption, having been given a second lease of life rather than being thrown away, while others celebrate skilled crafts or come from small independent businesses. "We want to work with people who stand for the same values and appreciate expertise, who are actively preserving local know-how," Aouizerate confirms. "Mob House involved a tremendous amount of craftsmanship, from the bar, which was hand-forged, to the rooms with their huge wooden trunks." The socially- and ecologically-minded sourcing extends to operations too; in the kitchen, chefs get their ingredients from small organic producers, while the housekeeping team use cleaning products that are certified as organic.

With the hotel designed around the needs of workers,

much of the public space is given over to this, with a series of zones each catering to a different style of working. At the heart of the property is the 'incubator table', occupied by entrepreneurs from the local community. "Mob House unites the skills of 20 nomadic workers by offering them a seat in-residence over the year; it is a place for production, intellectual stimulation and the sharing of knowledge," Aouizerate explains. "Next we have the reception, where there are sofas and coffee tables for business meetings as well as the 'conspirators table', where a dozen people can meet, discuss and take action. Last but not least, the work boutique is a homage to nomadic professions, from architects, creatives and writers to those in the digital sphere."

But it's not all about work, there's the crucial element of work-life balance too. "While work acts as a backdrop, just as social ecology is the keystone of the Mob movement, Mob House embodies a new vision of the hotel industry," Aouizerate confirms. "People work there, they sleep there and they eat there, it's all about reconciliation between our professional and private life." As such there's an organic brasserie, a gym and swimming pool as well as a spacious 2,000m² landscaped garden, where even the most industrious can lose an afternoon.

Though the concept is dedicated to providing nomads with an inspiring place to work, rest and play, Aouizerate believes that the real value of what Mob House offers can be summed up by the provision of time and space. This extends from the guest experience and changing perception of luxury, to his own role as a self-professed artisan hotelier. "If you think about the very definition of being an artisan, then you're thinking of something independent and crafted uniquely. Mob is not a chain and doesn't mass produce any of its creations, we always start our projects from a blank slate, taking the time to understand the urban, social and cultural environment we are going to be part of," he concludes. "True luxury, in an age where everyone wants everything delivered to their door in one click, is taking your time."