

SILVER AND GOLD: Playing up metallic finishes and Art Deco details, Paris' Senderens restaurant received a glowing update; (opposite) the custom-made Baccarat LED lights on Dacryl bring continuity to the landmark space



Just Say Noé

NOÉ DUCHAFOUR-LAWRENCE

Transforming the burden of history into ingenious acts of interpretation, Néonata pays homage to the past by giving it a bright future
By Amy Serafin

PHOTOS: R. FRANKENBERG



Only 33, Noé Duchaufour-Lawrance has established himself as the go-to guy for history-steeped projects that are in dire need of a 21st century booster shot. His knack for weaving a contemporary layer into legendary styles, structures and identities has earned him an expanding roster of impressive clients, and a wide range of furniture and interior projects, including new lounges for Air France.

Duchaufour's boyish good looks are impossible to hide even behind his funky silver-framed glasses. Seated in the boardroom of his Paris-based company, Néonata, the young Frenchman claims he originally set out to be a metal sculptor – following in the footsteps of his



MAMMA MAYA: Influenced by Duchaufour's travels to the East, the Maya Bar in Monte Carlo is organized around the central dividing screen-wall and punctuated by Japanese rock garden-looking ottomans and mirrored metal Chinese lanterns



TRAVEL LOG: (Clockwise from left) Ceccotti's Manta line takes flight with the fluidity of Scrivania (desk) and Poltrona (chair); and a winged Credenza; Air France's business lounge gets the royal treatment at Tokyo's Narita Airport; a portrait of the designer in Paris' Senderens restaurant; Brasserie S n quier sees red in Saint Tropez; poured concrete meets the Gilded Age at Tokyo's 3rd Culture shoe store



PHOTOS: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) RICARDO BIANCHI (CECCOTTI); RENAUD CALLEBAUT (S NEQUIER); YOSHINORI TONARI (3RD CULTURE); (OPPOSITE PAGE AND PORTRAIT) ROBERTO FRANKENBERG

"I don't get caught up in history because it often bogs you down"

artist father. And these artistic roots continue to shine through: Duchaufour makes his models by hand, which he finds especially helpful when searching for a point of inspiration. He owes much of his creative audacity to his refusal to view the past as inviolable and sacred; his creative process is largely instinctive. "I go to a place and let it talk to me, to understand the ambiance and what I want to express," he says. "I don't get caught up in history because it often bogs you down."

In 2005, the French chef Alain Senderens turned to Duchaufour when he decided to redo his eponymous Parisian Michelin three-star restaurant in a looser, more modern style. When the designer first surveyed the landmark Art Nouveau space, he was immediately struck by its sensuality and curves, but then realized there were two stories here: one architectural and the other culinary. He set out to translate this relationship

into what he calls an "iridescent architecture," a nod to Senderens' emphasis on fine wines. He added bronze detailing to original 1910 boiseries to complement numerous elements: metallic faux-leather chairs, butterfly-engraved Corian tables that are lit from within, an undulating ceiling in a stretched fabric and acrylic Baccarat lighting that changes colors. The result is bold, yet surprisingly harmonious.

This is the second time the youthful Duchaufour has put his signature stamp on Art Nouveau. Just prior to Senderens, he created Manta, a furniture collection for the Italian company Ceccotti that flaunts sinuous nautical forms influenced by the Belle Epoque and his childhood on the Brittany coast. A year earlier, he used a Baroque feel when working with Zanotta to design a sawed-off commode in lacquered wood. "It was a mental exercise, finding my place in the history of French

furniture," he explains. "I basically took an ax to my grandmother's table," he jokes. But his latest commission was a different type of exegesis altogether, focused not on a movement or interior, but a corporate brand. Asked to design business lounges for Air France, beginning with locations in Tokyo and Johannesburg, Duchaufour admits he struggled at first, realizing that few things possess less historical context or architectural inspiration than an airport. "This was content without context: how could I express the identity of a company through architecture?" he says. "It had to be recognizably Air France, but in a style that's mine." He searched for motifs and points of reference in the airline's long history, iconography and brand identity before honing in on the red dash of the logo, a color that symbolizes both elegance and hospitality. He brings the scarlet shape to life in the form of a welcome desk and red carpet, and continues the theme throughout the space. It's his way of letting visitors know they'll be looked after everywhere they go. The result is sophisticated, modern and intelligent – yet another example that Duchaufour's ability to reinterpret design history is also helping him to become a significant part of it. ▶