

Orient Express to launch 2nd hotel in Venice

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Slated to open in 2024, Orient Express, part of the Accor group, has signed a partnership agreement with Italian hospitality group Arsenale S.p.A to open the second Orient Express hotel in Italy at the historic Palazzo Doná Giovannelli in Venice.

Leading the design project, architect and interior designer Aline Asmar d'Amman and her studio Culture in Architecture, whose impressive client list includes Hôtel de Crillon in Paris, will furnish and revamp the 45-room space.

Venice, once the gateway to Constantinople and a mythical stop on the legendary Orient Express train – that opened its doors in 1919 with the completion of the Simplon tunnel linking Switzerland to Italy – will be the home of the second Orient Express hotel.

Located just ten minutes from Venice's Santa Lucia train station, next to the Cannaregio shopping district, and rooted in the origins of the City of the Doges, the Palazzo Doná Giovannelli is a treasured palace built in 1400 by architect Filippo

Calendario, known for Venice's famed Doge's Palace.

Former home of the Duke of Urbino, a patron of the arts, it has already been renovated twice, notably in 1800 by architect Gian Battista Meduna. At one time a pinacothèque which housed the painting *La Tempesta* by Giorgione, it was successively owned by the Doná and Giovannelli families.

Paying homage to the heritage of Venice, inspired by all of the cultures and eras that are forever a part of its history, the Orient Express Venice Hotel will feature 45 rooms and suites, which all boast views across the gardens and canal of the city.

Not only beautiful, the property aims to be accessible – as soon as the hotel opens, passengers on the Orient Express La Dolce Vita train will be able to disembark directly at the Venice Santa Lucia Station and reach the Orient Express Venice Hotel by foot or by boat.

“Orient Express Venice embodies a unique encounter between two icons: the legendary luxury brand and the Palazzo Doná Giovannelli. An architectural feat at the crossroads of cultures, a link between the East and the West, the landmark building is anchored in eternity and ready to come back to life with a theatrical and contemporary art of living, steeped in infinite elegance” commented Aline Asmar d’Amman.

Born in Lebanon, Aline Asmar d’Amman, via her studio Culture in Architecture, creates projects where past and future are connected, where culture symbolizes a bridge between continents. Convinced that beauty adds to, in her words, “the poetic soul of the world”, she has designed the interior architecture of numerous private residences and has taken on the art direction of luxury hotels and emblematic restaurants.

She has also collaborated with Karl Lagerfeld on the making of prestigious decorations and a collection of objects and furniture in marble. Last April, she unveiled the architectural scenography of the Lebanese Pavilion at the Venice Biennale of Art.

From the main entrance and its garden, which can be reached from the train station along the Strada Nova, or from the neo-Gothic and multi-layered facades that can be visited from the Rio de Noal by boat, Palazzo Doná Giovannelli is filled with beauty and grandeur.

The property will plunge guests into an ageless romanticism, where the heritage of the stone seems to be frozen in time whispering layers of stories to be revealed. From the marble carved entrance, the plastered walls in faded lost colours to the masterful octagonal staircase of neo-Gothic style designed by the architect Meduna, artistry and a feeling of eternity collide. On its vaulted ceilings, the domes call for light and theatricality.

The prestigious rooms are decorated with patterns, mosaics, stucco, paintings, frescoes tinted with forgotten colours and wonderful cherubs. A mystery to all, the walls abound in enigmas never meant to be solved.

Stephen Alden, CEO Raffles and Orient Express, Accor commented: “The arrival of

Orient Express in Venice resonates naturally with the brand's history. It marks a return to the roots of a legend that finds its ultimate expression in the Palazzo Doná Giovannelli. Inspired by her multicultural background, passion for Venice and unique poetic language, Aline Asmar d'Amman will sublimate the design of one of the most charismatic palaces in the world."□

Paolo Barletta, CEO of Arsenale S.p.A added: "The strategic union between Venice and the new Orient Express Hotel represents another significant step in the objective that Arsenale is pursuing thanks to the partnership with Orient Express, namely the relaunch of luxury tourism that highlights the unprecedented artistic and cultural heritage of our Italian peninsula.

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