

Restaurant Melba: Appareil awakens the senses through refined, Art Deco inspired architecture.

Chefs Alexandra Roy, Charles Provencher-Proulx, Guillaume Saint-Pierre have joined together to open Melba; a new restaurant in the Saint-Sauveur district of Quebec City. Wanting the decor to reflect their rich and subtle cuisine, they entrusted the project to Appareil Architecture.

This is not the first collaboration between Guillaume St-Pierre and Appareil Architecture, who designed restaurant Battuto for the chef in 2017. "It's interesting to meet again and see how we have each evolved. Appareil's experience helped create something unique. Melba's design is magnificent, I wouldn't change a thing," shares St-Pierre.

Melba's monochrome façade exhibits simplicity and refinement in this working-class neighborhood, which is in the process of a gentle transformation itself. Special attention was paid to the exterior lighting of the restaurant, since it operates exclusively in the low-light of the evenings. The façade is illuminated by a series of globes, making the restaurant visible from a distance on both its cross streets, Saint-Vallier and Renaud, as well as the adjacent park.

Art Deco: Revisited

As you enter the restaurant, its austere exterior melts away to reveal a combination of warm, gourmet colours and thin, straight lines that recall the brittle edges of Melba toast. "We were inspired by the yellow and plum colour palette of the old French bistros. We also envisioned an Art Deco-inspired space," explains Kim Pariseau, architect and founder of Appareil Architecture.

Melba's central island features a porcelain body with pronounced burgundy veins, as well as copper-colored edges and legs, contributing to the luxurious character of the restaurant's Art Deco inspiration. The ornamentation nevertheless remains focused and contemporary, with rich forms, repetitive lines on the moldings, curved benches and layered chandeliers. The richness of the design is expressed through the veining of the ash used for the walls, the semi-octagonal shape of the central island, the shine of the porcelain, the angled niche of the bar. This beauty extends beyond mere sight, proving equally delightful to the touch by offering textured leather and velvet seats, and smooth, soft ceramic accents. Appareil Architecture creates a comforting atmosphere where the surrounding materials contribute to the experience.

Criterium's graphic design, Studio Botte's and Jacques et Anna's lighting fixtures that emphasize curves, as well as the stools and round tables soften the straight lines of the space and its furniture. The interior design harmonizes with the restaurant's signature dishes, which offer a delicate and elegant cuisine.

A Small Space with Multiple Atmospheres

Appareil created the restaurant within the space's existing structure, allowing it to naturally delineate four different sections: an area of classic tables, a bar, a central island, and a long bench which hosts five tables, including two large round ones.

"We wanted round tables; for us, this represents the spirit of sharing. We get many requests from customers who want to sit at the round tables or the central island. The island is really the main attraction of the space" says Alexandra Roy, chef and co-owner of Melba.

This central island overlooks the rest of the restaurant, creating a very festive atmosphere. With its integrated wine bath, it offers the ideal place for aperitifs, practically stealing the show from the bar.

The kitchen, conceived by the Appareil team as an extension of the dining room, blends into the space while standing out with its façade of wood and frosted glass. A wide, central opening in the wall frames the cooks, allowing them to be in visual contact with their guests while maintaining a form of intimacy. The wooden materiality of the ash used for the structure contributes to the lively character of the restaurant, its warmth balancing the coldness of the metal used in the kitchen.

This small, 36-seat restaurant shines due to the softness of its materials, its pleasant comfort, and the spaciousness of its different sections. With Melba, Appareil Architecture offers a warm and refined experience, balancing between French inspirations and Quebec flavors.

APPAREIL Architecture would like to thank its collaborators on this project:

Contractor: Groupe Habitat

Woodwork: Mobili

Lighting: Studio Botté and Jacques & Anna

Graphic Design: Criterium

Photography: Félix Michaud

About APPAREIL Architecture

APPAREIL Architecture is a Montreal-based firm whose mission is to design high quality, bespoke residential and commercial environments that are unique for their residents. Our clean and contemporary signature is greatly inspired by our Nordic roots, and our projects bear witness to our desire to find balance between tradition and modernity. To improve its sustainable development practice, the firm has obtained an ECO-RESPONSIBLE certification issued by Ecocert and participates in several mentoring programs such as Women4Climate as well as Montreal's Parcours Développement Durable.

Our work has been recognized and rewarded throughout the years. Among several distinctions, APPAREIL Architecture received the OAQ's "Relève en Architecture 2020" award and the "Public's Choice" award at the AZ AWARDS 2020, for the Le Dernier Petit Cochon project at the Reford Gardens. The firm was a double-laureate at the "Grands Prix du Design" awards in 2019 for the Pastel Rita project and the Floe chair. The firm was also the recipient of Canadian Interior's "Best of Canada" prize in 2017 for the Hoogan & Beaufort restaurant and was nominated for the "Emerging Talent" award by Canadian Architect in 2016.

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