

# Wallpaper\*

DECEMBER 2018

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## Checking In

THIS PAGE, THE RECEPTION AREA IS DOMINATED BY A 1960S METAL CHIMNEY, ATTRIBUTED TO ITALIAN ARCHITECT ICO PARISI. ALSO ON DISPLAY ARE A 1900 FINNISH JUGENDSTIL THRONE (FAR LEFT) AND A PAIR OF MARBLE SIDE TABLES DESIGNED BY CO-OWNER VICTOR BORGES AND CRAFTED BY LOCAL ARTIST FRANCESCO PLUMA

OPPOSITE, IN THE 'MOON CUBE' GUEST ROOM IS A DAY BED IN THE ANTHROPOSOPHICAL STYLE, BY HEINRICH ECKINGER, C.1940; WALL LIGHTS BY PAUL-LOUIS BRINDEAU DE JARNY, C.1910; AN OIL PAINTING BY EJNAR NIELSEN, C.1927; AND A PAINTED IRON SCULPTURE BY RUI CHAFES, *NÃO ME LEMBRO DO TEU ROSTO*, 2004

**P**ortugal's rural Alentejo region, best known for its wide plains punctuated with whitewashed medieval hilltop towns and olive groves, is now home to a unique, art-filled boutique hotel, *Dá Licença*.

It comes courtesy of Victor Borges and Franck Laigneau, who met 12 years ago in Paris, where Borges worked as director of textiles and silk at Hermès, and Laigneau as a gallerist. The pair came across the site, a cluster of 19th-century former agricultural buildings, while searching for a holiday home in Borges' native Portugal. Arriving as the fierce Alentejano sun set on the surrounding cork, fig and olive trees, they fell in love with the place. No matter that it was too big for a simple private retreat; the couple decided to up sticks, abandoning their Parisian existence in order to bring the buildings back to life.

Once the farm of nuns from a nearby convent and later used by an olive oil cooperative, the buildings were transformed and extended by local architects Procalle. The main house now contains three guest rooms, while the nearby outbuildings have been turned

into five spacious suites, two of them with private pools. A series of terraces and two further swimming pools complete the project, and offer prime spots for stargazing in the dark Alentejo night.

Borges and Laigneau designed the interiors themselves, complementing the dark granite floors with limewashed walls and hand-carved basins made of the local pale pink marble. Laigneau's extensive collection of art and furniture, mostly drawn from the Scandinavian Jugendstil and Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophic movements, is dotted throughout the hotel and showcased in the former olive mill, which is set to open as a restaurant in spring next year. The eclectic selection includes pieces such as an antique Norwegian wooden cupboard sculpted in bas-relief by Lars Kinsarvik, a metal sculpture by contemporary Portuguese artist Rui Chafes, and a Steiner-influenced table by Hans Itel. ★  
*Dá Licença, Outeiro das Freiras, Santo Estêvão, Estremoz, Portugal, tel: 351.962 950 540, dalicenca.pt. Rates: from €270 per night*

# Barn again

In rural Alentejo, a former farm turns boutique art retreat

PHOTOGRAPHY: FRANCISCO NOGUEIRA WRITER: MARY LUSSIANA