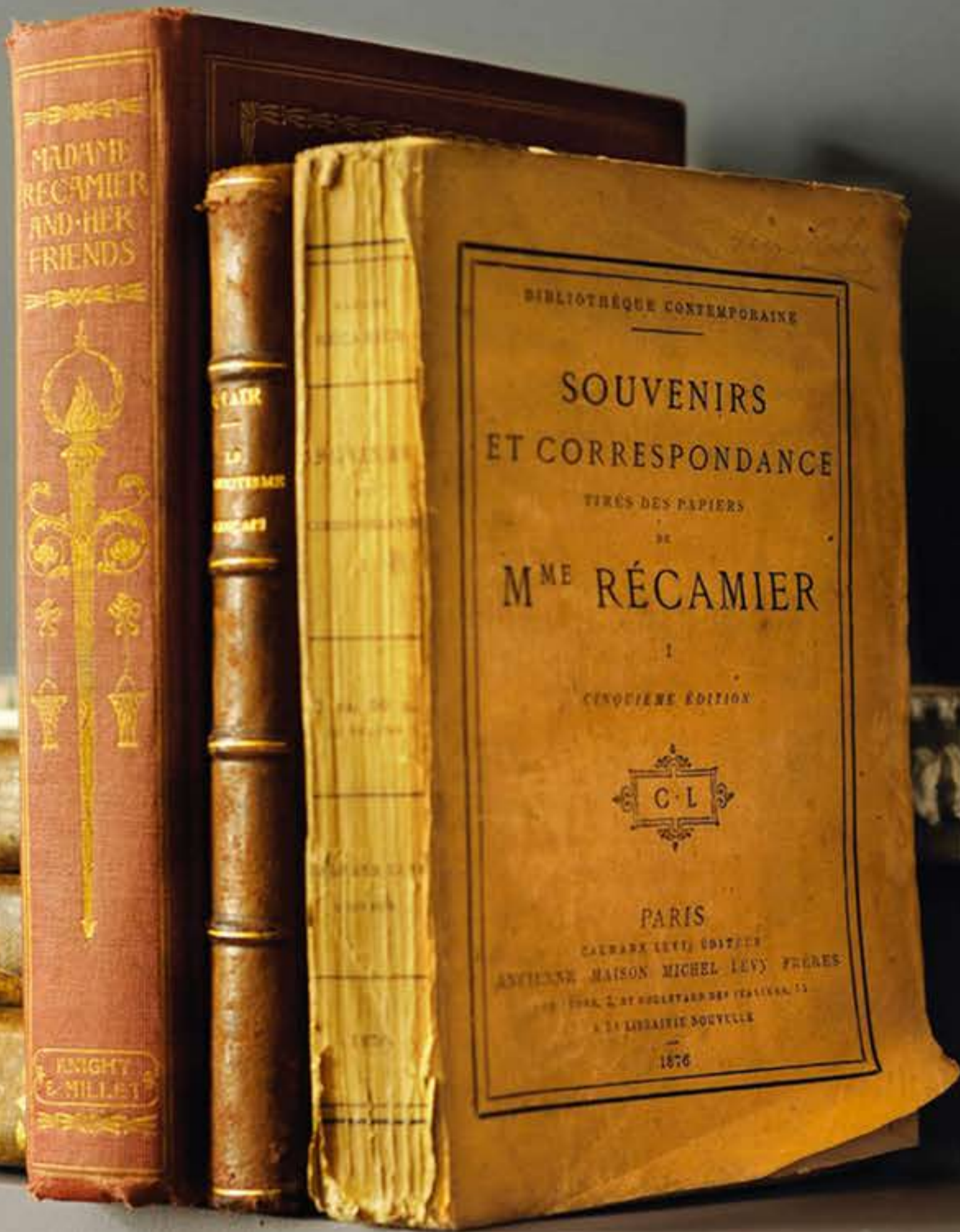


# interiors

MAGAZINE







## ROMANTIC LIAISONS

DESIGNER: ANNE GELBARD

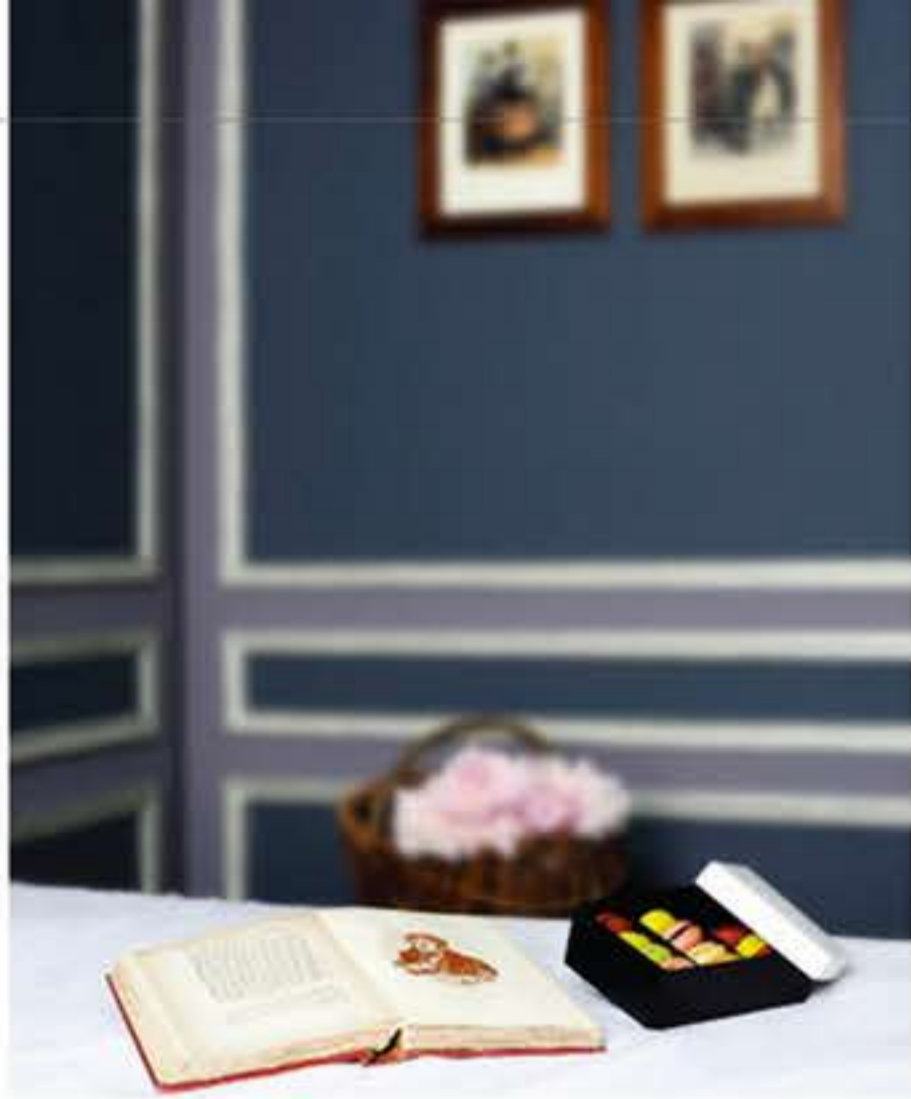
TEXT: ABIGAIL R. ESMAN

PHOTOGRAPHY: JÉRÔME D'ALMEIDA









*Legend, loveliness, luxury,  
laughter, l'amour:*

Together, they embody all that was the life and spirit of the incomparable Juliette Récamier. A heroine of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Récamier was known for her extraordinary beauty, romantic liaisons and the literary salon over which she presided as a generous and beloved hostess—at least until being exiled from Paris by Napoleon I. Now, she has been memorialized in Paris's newest hotel, La Belle Juliette, created by haute couture fabric designer and fashion consultant Anne Gelbard.

Inspired by Madame Juliette's courage, intellect, and extraordinary beauty, Gelbard has lent her talents to fashioning a world that at once embraces *l'esprit de Juliette* within what Gelbard herself describes as "a space that must stand the test of time, an interior to be lived in." Each floor of the hotel marks "a strong element" from Juliette's life," Gelbard explains, and relates in one way or another, either "to key people—like Madame de Staël, her best friend and mentor, or Chateaubriand, the great love of her life—or snapshots from her life, like Italy, or the literary salons, the 'causeries' (where people met to talk) that were very much in vogue at the time. Juliette's was the most frequented and lively." To bring Juliette's passion and daring to life, Gelbard mixed lush meadow-green velvets, dramatic slate gray or powder-blue walls, and fabulously flirtatious and risqué, lipstick reds throughout the hotel.



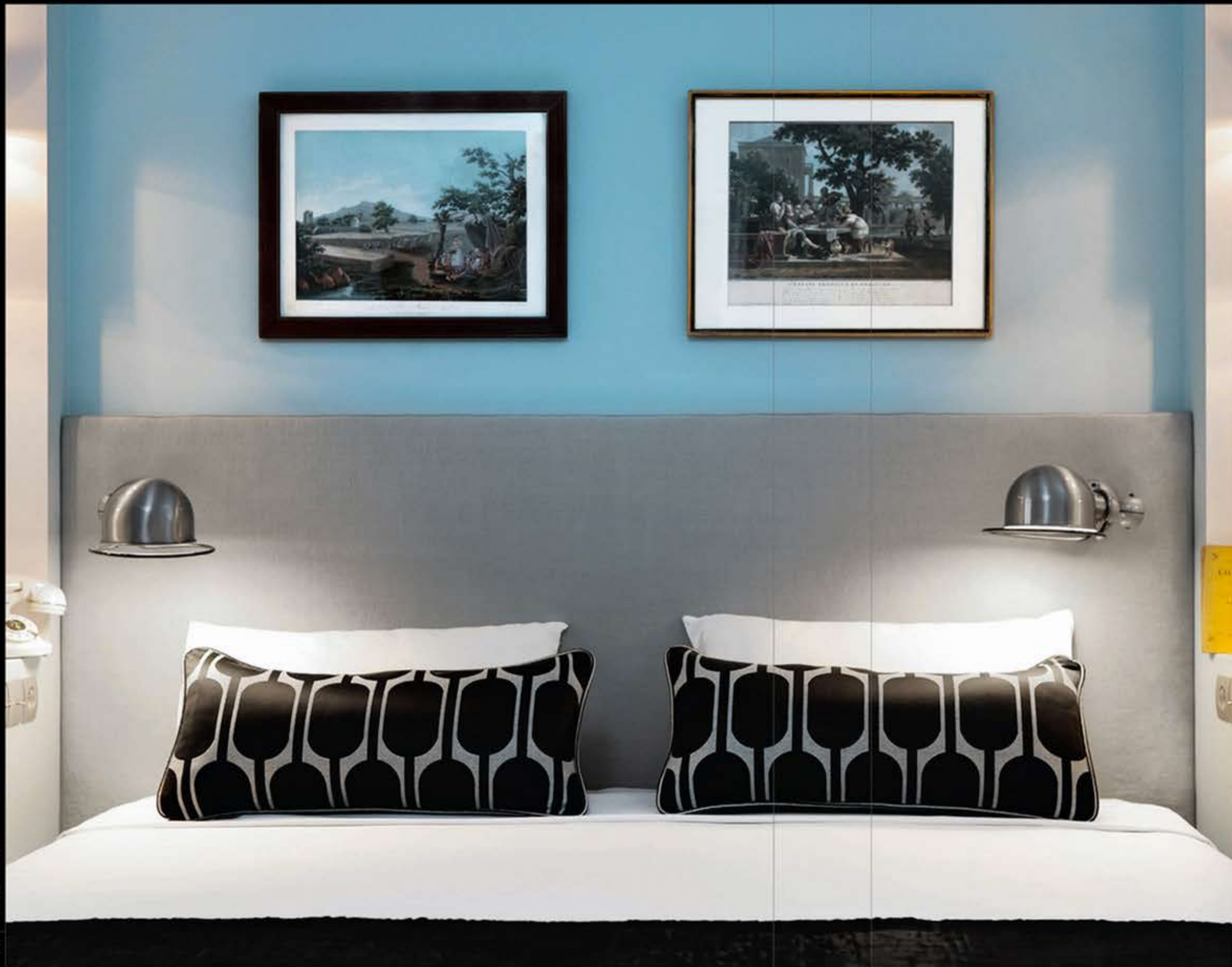




*Récamier was a famous trendsetter*

Gelbard observes, "so it seemed logical to me—obvious, even—not to betray Juliette, to introduce key pieces of contemporary design. I'm not here to copy the style of an era, but to understand a character." Hence Gelbard melded Récamier's 19<sup>th</sup> century style with modern and contemporary design, combining older treasures (such as a set of Biedermeier chairs) found while scouring Belgian antique shops, with newer furnishings by Saarinen, Arik Levy and others. To these, she added specially commissioned murals (one of which she created herself) and photographs by young photographers such as Elene Usdin that reflect Récamier's life. Paints, fabrics and other details were then also custom created and produced by Anne Gelbard for the project.





*The designer is, in fact,  
particularly celebrated*

for her stunning fabric designs, into which she integrates exotic feathers or silver, copper, or gold leaf. These exquisite textiles, created through a unique procedure that has become her signature, have made her a favorite of fashion leaders such as Emanuel Ungaro, Chanel, Christian Lacroix, and others. (She also produced the dress Helen Mirren once wore for the Oscars, and Sharon Stone is said to be a fan.) Recently, she has expanded her reach, moving into the realm of home design with collections of linens, wallpapers and pillows that glow with oxidized leaves of gold and other precious metals. The oxidation, she has said, creates beautiful nuances in the design.





*“Coming from the world of fashion and haute couture,”*

she says of her newer venture, “a special harmony, a resonance of colors and materials, is especially important to me.” In creating her interiors, she says, she also seeks “the surprise given by the subtle mix of contemporary and antique,” along, always, with a touch of humor—“without which, life would be completely dull.” In fact, she adds, “I hate anything serious, boring, pedantic or fake. I like poetry, the imaginary.” But in Anne Gelbard’s own work, the poetry is not fantasy, but real ■ *Hotel La Belle Juliette* 92 Rue du Cherche Midi, Paris 33 | 42 22 97 40 [labellejuliette.com](http://labellejuliette.com)

