

# ELLE DECORATION®

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SAINT JAMES  
PARIS



**Impérial.** Napoleon III style, in an off-the-wall Bambi Sloan version, for the main lounge at the Saint-James Hotel. The decor's centrepiece is a 14-metre high « chandelier chaos »! In the middle stands a « sociable sofa » in pure Napoleon III style upholstered in red velvet (Lelièvre). It is surrounded by « crapaud » armchairs (Henryot & Cie), two of which are covered in panther velvet (Edmond Petit). To the left, two small seats bargained from Les Puces flea market were refurbished in multicoloured stripes (Dedar). The columns have been sheathed in « literary marble », bookbinding-like wallpaper especially produced for the Saint James Hotel.



**Black & white.** The 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, with its passageways and arches highlighted in black, is « ultra-graphical ». The floor is covered with carpeting printed with cabochon shapes (on sale soon), one of Bambi's creations. The timeless opera seat (Henryot & Cie) echoes the doors lacquered in lovely English red.

SAINT JAMES PARIS

## A crazy chic state of mind

Some new setting for the Saint James hotel and private club!  
The venerable Parisian institution is getting a makeover at the hands of Bambi Sloan. This interior decorator unlike any other is revisiting Napoleon III style with a healthy dose of British humour, and she recounts many curious tales featuring ghosts from "My Fair Lady", Jean Cocteau and Madeleine Castaing.  
Welcome to a most special venue!

PRODUCED BY CATHERINE SCOTTO TEXT BY PHILIPPE TRÉTIACK PHOTOS BY ANTOINE BARALHE



**A flight of stairs**  
The wallpaper, a Maitena Barret creation, is a nod to the first hot-air balloons which once upon a time rose up from the park of Château Saint James.

**Designer Bambi Sloan** assuredly couldn't be said to have cold feet. She makes a habit of shaking up tradition with talent, humour and fantasy.

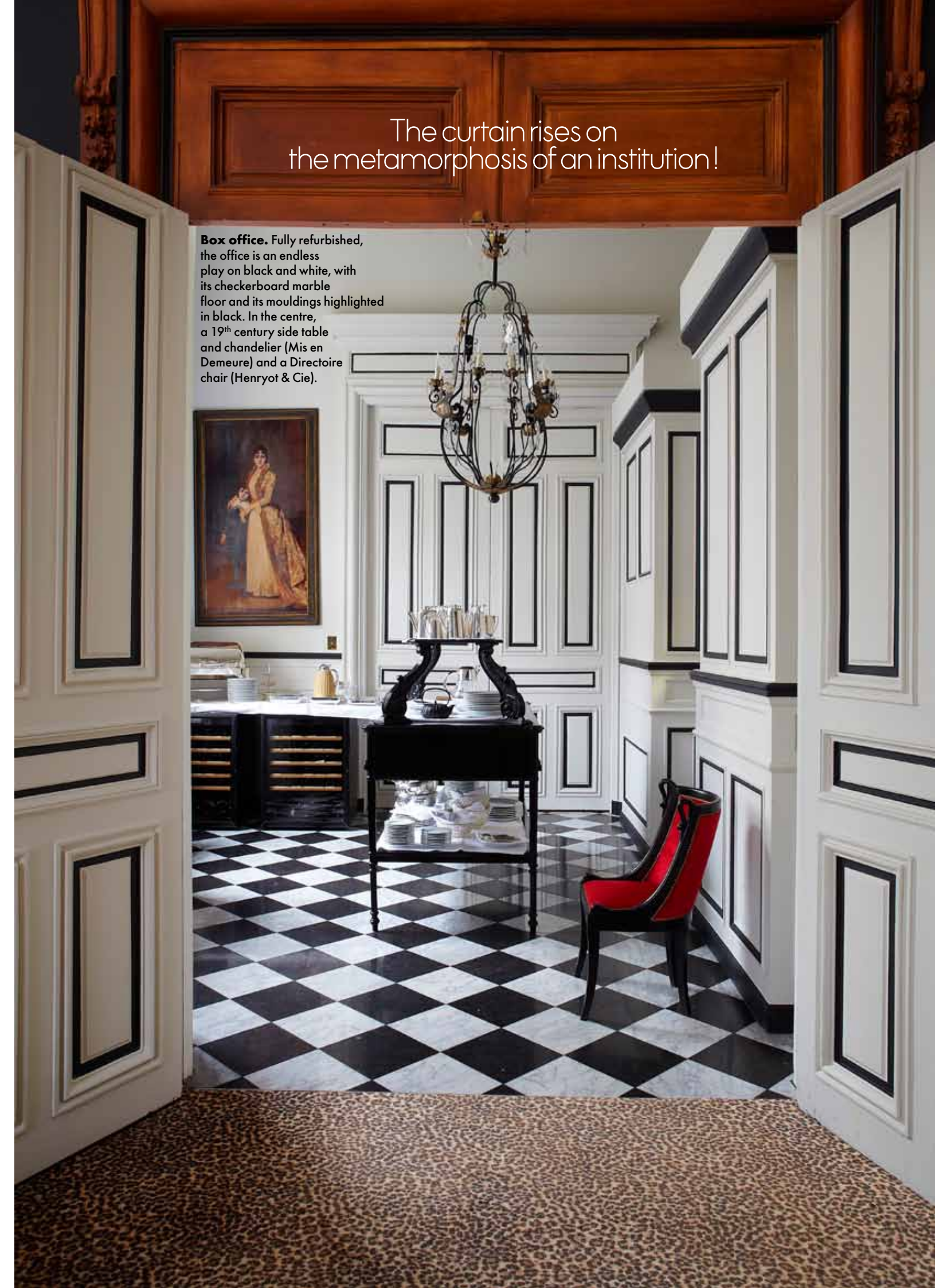
The fact that interior designer Bambi Sloan has taken the trouble to wear a black necktie for our meeting shows to what degree she believes in proper etiquette. Inside the elegant surroundings of a gentleman's library, where the word « private club » still evokes the scent of leather and Havana cigar smoke, she had resolved to put on an androgynous suit. A superb initiative ! Shaking up tradition requires great tact and subtlety, and make no mistake the Saint James is an institution, operating under the baton of Yves Monnin. With its five thousand square metres, fifty guest rooms, lounges, library, restaurant, spa by Gemology, venerable gardens and its history, the Saint James hotel has what it takes to raise fear among the boldest ! A private mansion, formerly the Thiers Foundation inaugurated as a tribute to the President by his widow, it had been ageing gently, comfortably ensconced within its last facelift performed by Andrée Putman.

**But now here it is, ever so sprightly and somewhat cheeky, repainted from floor to ceiling, bedecked in wacky Napoleon III finery where velvet, draperies, gold and cashmere blend into a most intense pop-art vortex.** Bambi Sloan has succeeded in skilfully shaking it all up without upsetting it with the help of the architect Antoine Delaire.

Despite her unbelievable first name, her projects are steeped in reality. Her father William Sloan-Bill to his friends - was an agent working for New York photographers and artists. So, as a child, Bambi was thrown into a maelstrom of great talent. « Richard Avedon was a frequent visitor to our home. When I later escaped to Paris, my father advised me to go and see another Bill, aka William Klein. » She was 13 when her father encouraged her to give her bedroom a complete makeover. « We were in the middle of the hippy era. I went out and grabbed furniture that was left out in the street and painted it in fluorescent colours. On the ceiling I painted a sky

dripping with stars and I had tons of flowers coming out of the brick walls. » Then came endless return trips between New York and Paris. Bambi would be a graphic artist one day, a ballerina the next, working in an advertising agency or as a fashion press attaché, selling jeans on the Champs-Élysées and studying at the Ecole des Arts Décoratifs and the Ecole des Beaux Arts... After completing a few ephemeral interior design projects, including the award-winning Jura whisky lodge, she was commissioned to design two restaurants, including the highly exclusive Derrière Restaurant. It was then that she came to the attention of the Bertrand family, owners of the Saint James hotel. « As it was, I couldn't believe people were actually paying me for doing what I love, so you can imagine that this kind of meeting was just... I thought he had chosen to meet at the Saint James hotel for practical reasons, you know, like an easy exit from the ring road or something. » Not so... This was indeed a bona fide working meeting, and as they parted, she was commissioned to renovate the entire hotel. That was, in this day and age, truly a gamble, for **Bambi works in the old school fashion. She draws, she sketches, she cuts, she carves, she glues... If you're looking for a Powerpoint presentation, better look elsewhere. Her head quarters in the hotel's garden suite are bursting with colour charts, braids, reclaimed chairs and all kinds of odds and ends.**

Drawing on her days as a translator on the mythical « Avengers » series, Bambi has sprinkled the Saint James with a refreshing touch of English humour. As a result, the venue's long-time chic has been somewhat shifted. The cloud of mystery that has always haunted the corridors still hangs over the carpets, but that mist is now buffed in purple hues and pop-art splendour. Since the budget was not expandable, she went for the creative solutions. She had originally planned on a prohibitively expensive combination of ▶



The curtain rises on the metamorphosis of an institution !

**Box office.** Fully refurbished, the office is an endless play on black and white, with its checkerboard marble floor and its mouldings highlighted in black. In the centre, a 19<sup>th</sup> century side table and chandelier (Mis en Demeure) and a Directoire chair (Henryot & Cie).



**The Club spirit**  
Panther carpeting designed by Bambi : a bold choice for the bar, which happens to be the Club's manly sanctum. The listed library has remained untouched, but the furniture has been completely changed. Coffee table by Jean Dange (Astatides).



**Cosy corner.** In the dining room, black is de rigueur on the walls and seats, upholstered in velvet (Nobilis) and trimmings (Houlès). Bambi commissioned copies of major classic 19<sup>th</sup> century paintings from Italy. Heavy curtains lined with trimmings (Houlès). Small black pedestal table (Mis en Demeure).

Traditional trimmings and panther print rattling the Second Empire



**Bath Lounge.** English bath is concealed by moiré curtains (Lelièvre). The walls are covered in grey metro tiling. The floor has cement squares featuring 19<sup>th</sup> century patterns.



**Wildcat style.** In the Last Queen of Scotland's bedroom, lined with panther patterns (Pierre Frey), there are three drawings bargained from Brussels. The desk is the copy of an 18<sup>th</sup> century piece.

herringbone parquet and Burgundy stone. So, as a solution, she picked up a pen and designed carpeting that looks every bit like it. She has even been bold enough to put panther carpeting in the 'great library'. «Yet the result is sober. And why is that? Because a panther print always works when it contains at least five colours.» Well, there are colours everywhere, yet it begins with black and white like on the elegant balusters in the lobby's great staircase. «At first, I had coloured everything in watercolours, and then one night, I remembered that scene in «My Fair Lady» where all the women wearing Cecil Beaton creations could be seen at the Ascot Races in their white dresses, waists accentuated by black belts. And suddenly, I saw the great staircase in the lobby painted in black and white.»

Elsewhere, the towering columns in the hallways are covered in old school book binding paper Bambi calls «Literary Marble». One Montgolfier balloon pattern depicting extremely serious, restless monkeys comes straight from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and acts as a tribute to the walled gardens which once hosted the first-ever hot-air balloons. The guest rooms are bursting with exotic, faraway, cultural and urban references. «Every room bears a number, but to me, they first have names», she explains. «I have christened them all. This here is La Petite Madeleine (The Little Madeleine), a reference to my idol Madeleine Castaing.» Guest rooms celebrating Paris rooftops have names like La Grise (The Grey One) and La Grise Bis (The Other Grey One). Further along, you

have La Dernière Reine d'Ecosse (The Last Queen of Scotland), complete with tartans and walls draped in skins, antique chests, mirror-lined shutters, a bathroom raised as if on a theatre stage and faux-parquet carpeting. Elegant too is the John Steed room, complete with a hung broly and bowler hats reminiscent of Magritte. Throughout it all every detail has been considered- the curtains, the tiebacks, the light switches decorated in old wallpaper picked up at the Flea Market.

**The main lounge, facing the entrance, is capped with an avalanche of chandeliers which Bambi calls her «chaos of lights». It is as if it is raining ceremonial necklaces and cascading crystals** whose reflections play an iridescent ballet upon the Empire green fabric covering the wing chairs. The hall ways are hung with copies of 19<sup>th</sup> century Masters. Looming amidst the powdery glow of the floors curving towards the void around the sumptuous staircase, one senses something of a shudder, like the breath of «Beauty and The Beast», the work by Cocteau which has earned Bambi's unconditional loyalty. Playing the main character in her own décor, she twirls around, inebriated by such eclecticism. «Actually,» she says, «I'm pretty close to Brigitte Fontaine; the dragonfly look would suit me perfectly.» Elytrons for the elite to coin a phrase... The Saint James is ready for take off.

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**John Steed's den**

Strictly a male décor for this highly "Avengers-inspired" room, where the walls are lined with genuine shirt cotton... An Italian bed (Terra di Siena) and taffeta curtains (Designers Guild). The floor is covered with faux parquet carpeting designed by Bambi.



In every guest room at the Saint James, utterly British references and decors, including the humour!



**The scent of Madeleine**

In this room, Bambi Sloan pays tribute to her idol, designer Madeleine Castaing. "Polka" matt turquoise walls (Mise en Teinte). Silk curtains (Dedar) hemmed with a "Lola Montès" braid ("Madeleine Castaing")



Room 406: a tribute to designer Madeleine Castaing

**Black and turquoise, a stunning duet.** Before a black wall adorned with a bargained Napoleon III tabletop, stands a sofa matching the curtains (Dedar). The "Lola Montès" frieze (Edmond Petit) runs all around the room. The coffee table comes from Les Puces flea market at Saint-Ouen. Crockery (Wedgwood) and teapot (Ladurée).