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Cyril Aouizerate
MOB



The vast library at MOB Hotel Lyon Confluence in France



The common spaces in MOB Hotel Paris Les Puces are characterized by vibrant artwork

For philosopher-turned-hotelier Cyril Aouizerate, a chance meeting with French billionaire and real estate developer Alain Taravella changed his life. Working as Taravella's right hand over the course of five years, he not only learned how to develop urban projects, but how to inject spaces with a distinct worldliness. Enter Mama Shelter, the boutique budget brand Aouizerate founded alongside the Trigano family in 2007. At the time, it changed the industry with its affordable yet design-driven interiors.

MOB Hotels is Mama Shelter 2.0, mixing the budget-friendly brand's aesthetic with Aouizerate's avant-garde sensibility. An amalgamation of a traditional hotel and community hub, his first 92-room property opened in 2017 next to the Marché aux Puces flea market in Paris, followed by a Lyon location the same year (designed in collaboration with Philippe Starck).

Aouizerate describes the concept as both radical and subversive, challenging the norm with large common spaces that act as a salon of sorts meant to engage creative and socially aware thinkers. "We are first and foremost cultural actors," he says. "My role is to create the conditions for a theater of life in our hotels."

In the Paris location, for example, Aouizerate collaborated with fair-trade fashion school Casa 93—fashion designer Jean-Paul Gaultier and Adidas have also collaborated on projects with the school—which trains young people from underprivileged neighborhoods. Now in its second year, it exemplifies the French hotelier's goal to create a product that is a "genuine catalyst for progress rather than a marketing ploy," he says.

MOB's inaugural U.S. hotel will land in Washington, DC in 2020, followed by another in Los Angeles in 2022. For now, two new concepts are in the works: the mixed-use, extended stay MOB House, opening next year in Paris with a design from Starck, and the resort-style Villa MOB, all with the same welcoming and open-minded approach at their core. "For those who struggle to express an often iconoclastic vision of life," he says, "MOB serves as a sanctuary and a place of expression."