

Modernist and Neo-Baroque styles coexist at the Grán Meliá Colón Hotel in Seville

By THAT Agency

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Seville, Spain (March 26, 2009) – Sol Meliá reopens Gran Meliá Colón, its most accomplished renovation achievement to date, which respects the hotel's previous bullfighting connexion and combines it with Spanish style and avant-garde flair. The new design of the hotel is based on the 'timeless' theme that Álvaro Sans has imprinted on the Premium brand of the Sol Meliá Group in his more recent projects, including the Gran Meliá Palacio de Isora, the Gran Meliá Shanghai, the Paradisus Punta Cana Reserve in the Dominican Republic and his work on the Gran Meliá Crete.

The Colón was built in 1929, making this year its 80th anniversary. The renovation respects the structure and façade of the building, a prime example of the neo-Baroque architecture of Seville and a coveted item on the list of the city's architectural treasures.

In the words of Sol Meliá's prestigious architect: "The project was redesigned down to the last detail. All parts of the building were changed to make the hotel more functional, better lit, more luxurious and more profitable. The building was opened onto the street to give a new lease of life to its famous restaurant, El Burladero, giving it pride of place and direct physical contact with the hotel itself. The lobby was opened up to connect directly with all the adjacent spaces: reception, lobby bar, restaurant, Red Level, smoking room, etc., creating a unique ensemble that gives a much more potent sensation of luxury."

Sans also notes that the building now has a large number of convention rooms. He also removed some 30 of the original rooms in order to ensure that all rooms were five-star level and increase the number of Suites and Junior Suites. The central patio was designed to house a massive luminous sculpture that fulfils the twin function of attracting admiring attention while providing rooms with a greater degree of privacy. The architect adds that the corridors of the Gran Meliá Colón are unique and that, on the top floor, all the terraces were used to create suites with their own private pools, together with a spa offering spectacular views of the city and a terrace solarium with its own mini swimming pool.

The superb design of the Gran Meliá Colón is the outcome of successful cooperation among superb professionals. Chus Manzanares, one of the members of the team, comments: "We knew this was a much-loved hotel in Seville, which was what made the opportunity to completely renovate it such an exciting challenge, to find precisely the right balance between past, present and future." Adds Chus: "We did a meticulous study of the key components of the hotel and developed what we trust will prove a perfect combination of styles."

Urbane is the term that best describes it, juxtaposing urbanity with an emotive activity for which the hotel is world famous: bullfighting. The design of the gastrobar Burladero, Tapas & Tintos by Dani García, which opens to mark the 50th anniversary of the original Burladero restaurant, is inspired by bullfighting burladeros, the strong boards bullfighters dodge behind where the bull can't get them.

As the hotel to see – and be seen in – the Colón was long the favoured haunt of the matadors, not only the man Hemingway lauded, Belmonte, but all the great names, Manolete, Curro Jiménez, El Cordobés ... the list is a long one. Actors also patronised the hotel; among others, among them Ava Gardner, Peter O'Toole,

and Catherine Deneuve. Hemingway himself stayed there repeatedly in the post-war period.

The sparks thrown out by this confrontation of brain and brawn has led to another interesting design feature of the hotel. All the doors of the hotel have been designed as frames in which are placed excellent renderings of Spanish seventeenth-century art. With well-placed lighting and Sans' corridors, the designers have made each floor a lazy gallery of some of the greatest paintings in the world making you, the guest, a connoisseur. The first floor is dedicated to Zurbarán, then, going up, Juan de Valdés, Murillo, the Seville School as a whole, Velázquez and, on the top floor, Goya.

The ground floor has an a la carte buffet near the lobby, offering a Spanish and international menu and becoming, after breakfast, an a la carte restaurant called The Majestic, in honour of the hotel's original name in 1929. For light fare, El Tendido, a bar situated on the ground floor, is an enticing option serving snacks and international cocktails; and for the cigar enthusiast, Tauromaquia is an ideal place to enjoy an excellent Havana in ideal surroundings.

About Sol Meliá

Founded in 1956 in Palma de Mallorca (Spain), Sol Meliá is the largest resort hotel chain in the world and market leader in Spain in both business and leisure travel. The company currently provides more than 300 hotels in 30 countries on four continents, and employs 37.000 people under its Gran Meliá, ME by Meliá, Paradisus, Meliá, Ininside, Tryp, Sol and Sol Meliá Vacation Club brands. www.solmelia.com

About Gran Meliá

Gran Melia Hotels and Resorts is the premier collection of Sol Melia Worldwide and represents the company's more than 50 years of understanding and firm principles. Architecturally significant, this portfolio of first-class hotels and resorts is designed to completely engage the multi-cultured expert traveller.

About Álvaro Sans

Álvaro Sans is a highly respected Spanish architect who specialises in hostelry development and in providing the guidelines and basic architectural project design for resorts, hotels and residential urbanisation. In the course of his long career he has built up a close working relationship with Sol Meliá in numerous projects in different parts of the world, all having a common denominator: his respect for the surroundings and local culture. Winner of innumerable prizes, Sans' designs are universally recognised for the way they build on his ecological awareness to adapt to the location: both to its primary building materials, to ensure they harmonise with the surroundings; and to the local culture, working closely with local artists and borrowing freely from existing architecture to ensure that the new addition complements, not competes with, its neighbouring artefacts.

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