

The Art Gate

LISBON

Part hotel, part art gallery, Lisbon's newest resident makes for an immersive dining experience.

Words: Joel Porter • Photography: © Luis Ferraz

A beautiful 1950s building in the Chiado neighbourhood of Lisbon is now home to The Art Gate, one of the city's newest and most unique hotels. Occupying the first floor, which was formerly a family's private residence, The Art Gate (or TAG as it's commonly referred to) is equal parts hotel, gallery space and restaurant, each with its own identity but all working in harmony to create an entirely new experience.

The project is the brainchild of Diogo Figueiredo, a 31-year-old native of Viseu in central Portugal. Given its former life as a family home, The Art Gate unsurprisingly retains a residential feel, more akin to a friend's luxury apartment than a hotel. The space has been totally reimagined however, and now features five guest suites, a kitchen and chef's counter, a small dining room and the gallery space. It would have made a huge apartment, but as a hotel it all feels very small and intimate.

Lisbon's Atelier Catarina led the interior design for The Art Gate, overseen by Figueiredo himself. "The majority of the items in the hotel were designed to be unique, to fit the space and made in Portugal," explains Figueiredo. "These choices reflect The Art Gate's concern at involving the community, providing a platform for small and talented Portuguese businesses, be it in the area of textiles, ceramics or art."

The Art Gate's gallery also aims to support local artists through a series of pop-up exhibitions overseen by two of Lisbon's foremost curators. Despite the coronavirus





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crisis, TAG staged three exhibitions in 2020, with the programme continuing to evolve every three months.

A similar revolving concept of different pop-ups featuring chefs from around the world was originally the idea behind TAG's restaurant, simply known as The Restaurant. The first was an international pop-up called 'We Are Ona', which ran from January until March 2020, working with local Lisbon chefs to create 'a love letter to Portuguese cuisine'.

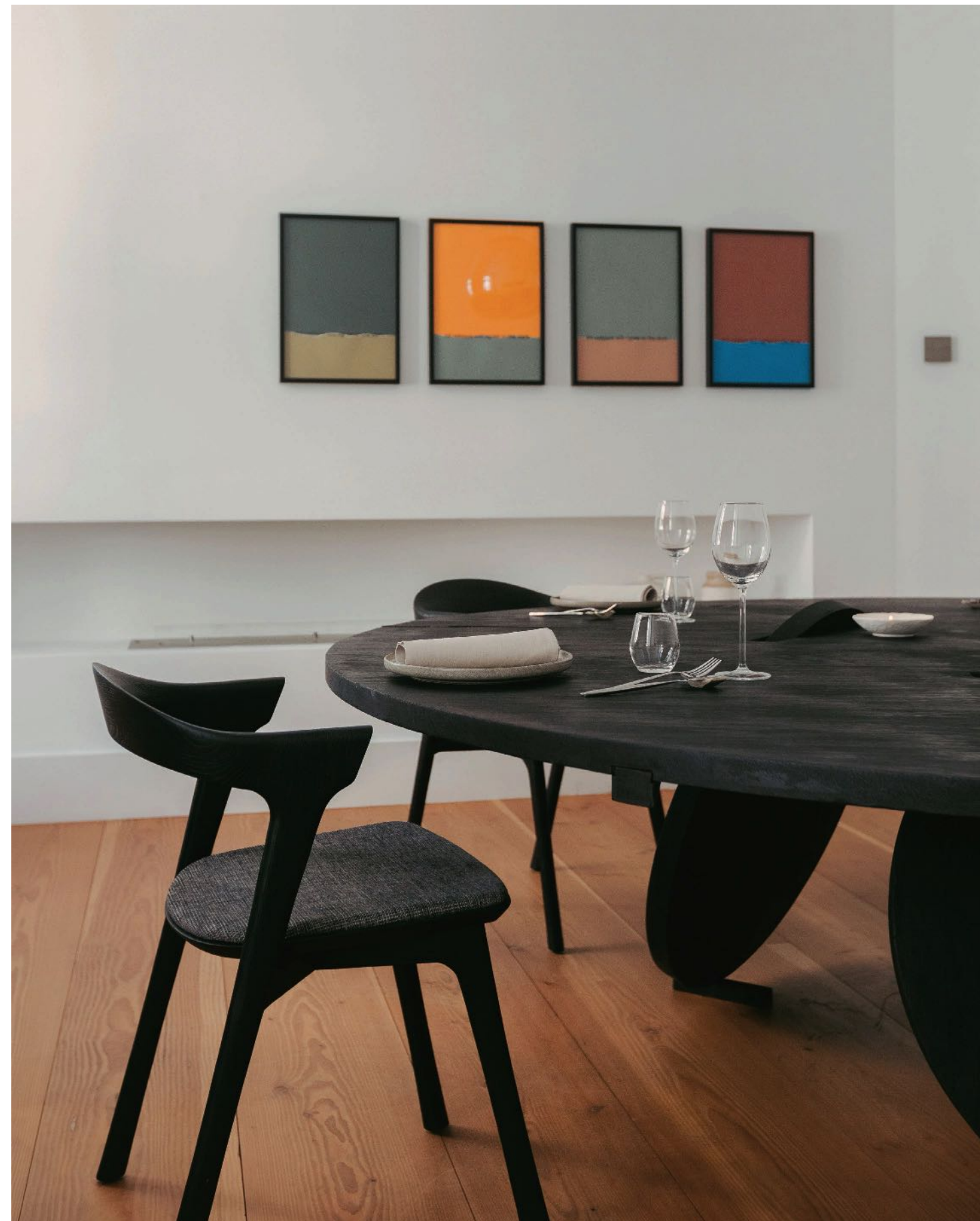
Next up was chef Hugo Candeias, recently back in his native Lisbon after several years working abroad. Candeias' pop-up was scheduled to open on 14th March but just a day before, everything was cancelled, Lisbon went into lockdown, and The Art Gate did not open again until the beginning of June. This, combined with Candeias's desire to stay in Lisbon and commit himself to the project, led to a readjustment of the concept, with the chef now leading The Restaurant on a permanent basis. "For me it is a homecoming," says Candeias. "After almost 10 years away it was the right time to stop and explore a different way to see the gastronomic world, through my eyes only."

Having worked for four years with Albert Adria at his

Mexican restaurant Hoja Santa in Barcelona, Candeias landed on a new concept for The Restaurant, fusing his knowledge of Mexican cuisine with his Portuguese heritage. "I had this idea to create a concept between Portuguese techniques, products and recipes, and Mexican flavours. I thought it was a nice idea, as there is nothing like this in Portugal."

Dishes on the creative multi-course tasting menu include a Mexican-style aguachile, similar to ceviche but rendered bright green with chilli and coriander, and here served with local Portuguese clams; fresh crab served on a thin circle of crunchy corn toast; monkfish served with a Portuguese pine nut sauce that's been spiked with Mexican chilli; and tender roasted suckling pig with crisp pig's ear, a dish that is in fact popular in both Portugal and Mexico.

For Candeias, this dialogue between two cultures creates something entirely new. "It gives something different to Portuguese cuisine. We can add chillies to a traditional sauce and it gives something completely different – it's not Mexican and it's not Portuguese. This is the thing that makes me feel that it's a fantastic concept to build on."





There's a choice of two drinks pairings to go with Candeias' menu: one, a regular wine selection featuring wines from all over Portugal, and the other a more unusual non-alcoholic tea pairing. Like wine, different teas have a variety of aromas, acidity, tannins, and textures, making it an ideal drink to pair with food. Those on offer at The Restaurant include everything from a Houjicha toasted tea, which is popular in Macao, to a Puerh Chinese tea that has been fermented for five years, giving it a rich, earth-like flavour.

Guests at The Restaurant can choose from the dining room which can seat up to 12 around one round table (currently bookable by only one group with current restrictions) or take one of the four seats at the chef's counter in the kitchen. It is here that a real connection between Candeias and the guests can be fostered, with a true interaction and participation in the meal. Diners are even encouraged to choose the soundtrack, picking records from the shelves to spin on the turntable. In keeping with the

rest of the hotel, the feeling is similar to being in someone's home, albeit one with a very well equipped kitchen.

The intimate nature of The Restaurant, and the creativity at the heart of both the food and drink offering, sets it well apart from the usual idea of a hotel restaurant and from Lisbon's restaurant scene in general, which tends to veer towards the very traditional. This is starting to change, however, says Candeias: "There are so many people that have been abroad and are coming back to Portugal with very strong, new ideas, so it is shaking up the very traditional restaurant scene we have here."

Although TAG will no longer host a revolving kitchen pop-up, Candeias still plans to change the menu every few months. The concept of Portuguese and Mexican fusion will form the foundation of each new menu, but the dishes will be entirely changed so that regular guests will be able to come and have a new experience and share in the evolution of this bold new concept for Lisbon.



IN A BITE

Owner: Diogo Figueiredo
 Architecture: Costa Lopes
 Interior Design: Atelier Catarina
 Head Chef: Hugo Candeias
 F&B Manager: Tiago Alves
 Head Bartender: João Silva
 Head Sommelier: Pedro Martin
 Head Waiter: Nicoleta Robu
 Dinnerware: Studio Neves
 Glassware: Riedel
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