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## The Other House

LONDON

Billed as the first of its kind, a new residents' club opens in South Kensington, where interiors by Bergman Design House are a kaleidoscope of colour and pattern.

Words: Catherine Martin  
Photography: © Jack Hardy

**N**amed after the expression used by second home owners to refer to their weekend bolthole, The Other House is making its mark as a new style of accommodation in the city. But don't be fooled by the moniker. This is no home from home, it's better.

Positioned somewhere between a hotel, a serviced apartment and a private members' club, the venture is the brainchild of Naomi Heaton, an entrepreneur with a wealth of experience in the property sector. Having founded London Central Portfolio back in 1990, Heaton has witnessed first-hand the changing priorities of out-of-town real estate investors, and felt there was a gap in the market for a product that could serve both visitors and locals, day guests and overnighters. And so The Other House was born. "The concept brings together the best of residential living – in terms of placemaking, locality and experience – with the services of a hotel and ambiance of a club," she reveals, adding that it's a place to call home, whatever the length of stay, be it a day, a month or a year.

The property occupies a row of Victorian townhouses that span a city block previously known as Harrington Hall. Given its former use as a hotel, a simple refurbishment could have sufficed, but Heaton's vision required more. "We don't have conventional hotel rooms, we offer club flats with a living room, bedroom and kitchen," she explains. "To achieve this, we had to completely reconfigure the floorplan; the layout is very different to what it was before."

Indeed, where most hotel rooms are entered directly into the sleeping quarters, rooms at The Other House open into the living space, much like at home. Taking the private residence approach a step further, every club flat has its own address, with the corridors on each floor named in honour of a local character. There's even Amazon collection lockers on site and a dedicated street entrance for grocery and take-out deliveries.

From the outset, the development has been shaped through a residential lens rather than a typical hotel scheme; in fact, Heaton doesn't



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refer to it as a hotel at all, opting instead for the term ‘residents’ club’. But despite the ‘place to call home’ ethos, the interior design scheme is – for most – nothing like home; whimsical, fantastical and flamboyant, it’s a bold departure from the restrained neutral aesthetic often seen in long-stay apartments. “We wanted to create an experience through the décor,” says Heaton, noting that there’s nothing else like it in the area. To bring her vision to life, she turned to Bergman Design House, a London-based studio founded by Marie Soliman and Albin Berglund, whose portfolio spans luxury residential and superyachts as well as hospitality.

“We knew that this was Naomi’s first hotel and it would be challenging as the first in a brand, but we pitched and won it,” begins Soliman. “When we first met with Naomi, we had an idea of how the property would function in terms of the club flats, but we didn’t expect the brief we got; she didn’t want it to feel like a typical hotel, she wanted the unexpected.”

Soliman worked closely with Heaton on every aspect of the scheme, from defining the overarching concept to selecting the fabrics, fixtures and finishes. And though the designer is perhaps more accustomed to limitless budgets with her high-net-worth clients, she’s adept at spending effectively too. “I think what Naomi liked about our proposal was that we understood the budget – where to spend the money and how to make an impact through colour, texture and pattern,” she explains.

And colour, texture and pattern are delivered in droves. In the club flats, ranging in size from 23m<sup>2</sup> to 61m<sup>2</sup>, the palette comprises deeply saturated hues

of teal, racing green and oxblood red, layered with sumptuous velvets, British tweed and wool. Every room is different, either by layout, colour scheme or upholstery – out of the 200 keys, there’s barely a single room alike. Some are open-plan with an ornate screen separating the bedroom and lounge, others feature a separate living room, ideal for entertaining guests. There’s adjoining rooms for families or groups, and a one-offs that span two floors or occupy the turrets.

In the public areas, the design ramps up a notch. On arrival, guests are greeted not by a row of formal check-in desks, but a lounge that immediately sets the tone. Cosy armchairs upholstered in a rich medley of colour and pattern are accessorised with plump cushions, often in contrasting shades or with flora and fauna motifs. Coffee tables are topped with weighty tomes and quirky ornaments. A 9.5m lighting installation by Cox London forms a leafy canopy overhead, and floor lamps make a statement thanks to their tassels and fringing. Standing proud by the lifts, a statement peacock chair has been a hit on Instagram, and even the public bathrooms are worth a visit for their exotic wallcoverings and distinctive faucets.

On the ground floor, Heaton has been savvy in the selection of F&B facilities, opting for an all-day street café rather than an à la carte restaurant, knowing that overnight guests will either head out or make use of their kitchenette. For the interiors of The Other Kitchen, Soliman has taken inspiration from nearby Gloucester Road tube station, selecting glossy metro-style tiling to accompany checkerboard flooring and loose furniture featuring bronze accents. The venue, open until 6pm, is intentionally flexible meaning it



Bergman Design House has made impact through colour, texture and pattern, complemented by an upcycled art collection that has been enhanced to reflect the property's eccentricity

can be reconfigured for pop-up restaurants, supper clubs or parties, as demonstrated at the hotel's grand opening last October, which saw performers in body paint seemingly emerge from the ruffled-silk wallcoverings and a guest appearance from the West End cast of *The Lion King*, who sang and dance their way through the hotel.

The bar meanwhile is a venue that doesn't take itself too seriously. Named *The Owl & Monkey* – carrying the tagline 'wise as an owl, curious as a monkey' – interiors transport guests to another world. Soliman has had fun in the contrasting animal prints and exotic wallcoverings, which depict the title characters frolicking in the jungle. A touch of glamour comes courtesy of the cut-bronze mirrored wall panels and Palm chandeliers in antique gold leaf, the latter by Chelsom, who have supplied much of the lighting throughout, including an elliptical ribbed-glass design that casts dazzling rays across the wall. There's wit and whimsy at every turn; from the graphics on the menu to

the design of the crockery, it's a visual identity that is carried through with confidence.

With the ground-floor public spaces open to all, it's the private club that is proving a key differentiator. Accessible only to overnight guests and a handful of members, the basement-level space is home to a spacious lounge, screening room, vitality pool and gym. There's also a meditation hub that hosts sound baths, shamanic healing and chakra cleansing – the brand focus being primarily on spiritual and inner wellbeing. The spa lounge, known as *Hogsmire*, is a light-filled space beneath a glass atrium, where scalloped flooring, potted trees and an installation of flying birds take centre stage. The *Keeping Room* in the vaults meanwhile takes on more of a gentleman's club feel, with subdued lighting, cosy armchairs and an open fire. With cubby holes and communal areas, the set-up is equally suited to working as it is to dining or socialising, feeding in to *The Other House* philosophy that encourages guests to make the space their own.



Enabling guests to make their own choices extends to the technology and sustainability approach too. Booking, check-in and ordering food can be done by the app or through a House Jack – the hotel’s name for the jack-of-all-trades front-of-house team – depending on personal preference. And elements of the sustainability policy are optional too. A planet-friendly Housekeeping Lite service is included in the nightly rate but chargeable extras such as daily laundering of bed linen and towels are only on request. Energy usage can also be tracked via the app, with guests making their own choice as to whether they alter their behaviour accordingly.

There’s been no compromise on sustainable practices in the design-and-build however, so much so that the property is expected to achieve BREEAM Excellent status. Soliman has been steadfast in her commitment to materials, dedicating time to research the lifecycle of fabrics and finishes. Every tile can be recycled for example, while stone is composite and

leather is vegan. Fabrics and wallcoverings are primarily sourced from nearby showrooms in Chelsea Harbour and on King’s Road. Furniture and lighting is made in the UK, in some cases by small-scale artisans such as River Bespoke. Even the art is upcycled, having been saved from landfill after going unsold at auction. The 18<sup>th</sup> century oil paintings in varying styles remain in their timeworn frames, with Soliman adding her own flourishes to reflect the property’s eccentricity and sense of humour, giving them a second life.

The project is one that both Soliman and Heaton speak of passionately, having pulled out all the stops to ensure the debut doesn’t go unnoticed. The kaleidoscope of colour and pattern might not be to everyone’s taste, but for Heaton, that’s exactly the point. Plans are afoot for four to five clubs across London, each with its own style direction according to the personality of the neighbourhood, meaning guests can simply pick and choose whichever ‘other house’ they prefer.



#### EXPRESS CHECK-OUT

**CEO:** Naomi Heaton  
**Investor:** London Central Portfolio, APG  
**Architecture:** Falconer Chester Hall  
**Interior Design:** Bergman Design House  
**Art Consultant:** Melinda Ashton Turner  
**Lighting Design:** Into Lighting  
**Main Contractor:** Red Construction Group  
**Project Manager:** Emmaus Consulting  
[www.otherhouse.com](http://www.otherhouse.com)