



Original BTC Blossom Portable Light

Original BTC has unveiled its first portable cordless light. Named Blossom, the product unites traditional craftsmanship with the latest LED technology. The purposely petite design is inspired by the plum blossom, a beloved flower in China. Its fluted bone china shade echoes the outline of the flower's delicate petals and is topped by a satin brass detail. Developed with functionality and flexibility in mind, Blossom easily travels from the dining table to the garden, lounge to the hallway, enhancing the atmosphere in a range of environments. Three brightness levels offer a choice of illumination, from a soft, warm glow to sufficient light to dine or entertain in the evening. Charged via USB-C, Blossom has a seven-hour run-time on full brightness, extending to an impressive 20 hours on the lowest setting. The solid and robust powder-coated stem, whose metal base comes in three colours, can either sit comfortably in the hand or on a chosen fixed surface.

www.originalbtc.com

Chelsom Custom Ceiling Lighting

Chelsom's custom ceiling range enables clients to personalise the brand's original concepts to suit a diverse range of interiors. Each series is built around a core design proposal, with clients then given the option to customise features such as finish, size and scale. A number of decorative accessories can also be added to the pieces where desired. Products can be specified and purchased as shown in the Chelsom catalogue and on the website using the product references provided, then customise as desired. For personalisation options, clients can contact Chelsom's customer service team.

www.chelsom.co.uk



Raffles at The OWO

LONDON

A landmark project in a landmark building; the owner, operator, architect and design team tell all about a legend in the making.

Words: Catherine Martin • Photography: © John Athimaritis (unless otherwise stated)

With its pink alabaster balustrades, richly veined marble and wraparound colonnaded gallery, the sweeping staircase at The Old War Office on London's Whitehall is quite the picture. Awe-inspiring, majestic and monumental are just some of the phrases that have been used to describe the scene after the doors reopened. It was here, standing on this very spot, that the Hinduja Group fell in love with the character of the building and eyed an opportunity to create their legacy; it was here that Accor found a natural fit for its ultra-luxury Raffles brand; and it was here that every newly-appointed architect, interior designer, contractor and consultant came face-to-face with the mammoth task ahead – transforming a Grade II*-listed landmark into a luxury hotel.

Of course, the building's story goes way back. Commissioned in the 1890s as the administrative headquarters for the British Army, the new War Office – as it was then known – was designed by architect William Young. The first bricks were laid in 1899 and it officially opened in 1906, becoming one of the city's finest examples of Edwardian Baroque architecture. In the decades since, the building has played a significant role in British history. It was a vital linchpin in the business of war and conflict; the nation's most important leaders and statesmen held office here, from Lord Kitchener and TE Lawrence to Richard Haldane and Winston Churchill; and heroes of the Secret Service – who inspired Ian Fleming to write his James Bond novels – walked its halls. A tour with Communications Director Fiona Harris reveals all manner of facts, figures and anecdotes, ranging from the number of bricks used in the original build (25

million) and the total length of the corridors (2.5 miles), to the secrets of Churchill's favourite spy (Christine Granville) and appearances on the big screen (Octopussy, Licence to Kill and Spectre).

RESPECTING THE PAST

The present-day story begins with the Hinduja Group, a Mumbai-based conglomerate with interests in banking, energy, technology and media. Inspired by the successful renovation of a row of Georgian townhouses to become their London home, the Hinduja family were on the lookout for a greater challenge. "Spearheaded by my father-in-law, GP Hinduja, and his brother SP, the search for a heritage property began in 2014," explains Shalini Hinduja, who has been instrumental in the development of the project. The search didn't take long, and later that year, the MoD announced the sale of the Old War Office to Hinduja Group as part of a cost-saving drive that involved the disposal of underutilised assets. The keys were handed over in 2016 under a 250-year lease, and then the hard work really began.

"Our goal was to breathe new life into the building in a way that not only respects its past, but also enriches the present and future of those who experience it," Shalini continues. "The first step was to understand more about the location, the London landscape and the building's fabric, investigating what could be done within the constraints of its Grade II*-listed status. My role involved overseeing various facets of the project, ensuring that our vision for this landmark building was brought to life with the utmost respect for its historical significance."





with the project result, which was nearly complete when he passed last August.”

Speaking before his passing, Despont described the property as “monumental” and “history-defining”, stating: “The OWO will offer guests unique access to a part of history; at every turn there is a story to discover and that’s what makes it so enticing. I consider it my mission to preserve and enhance its rich DNA, drawing inspiration from the building’s classic Edwardian architecture, as well as the legendary leaders and stately rooms that are an integral part of its past.”

The interior design scheme is befitting of the majestic building, and showcases past and present in equal measure, an aesthetic best showcased in the heritage suites, where restored fireplaces and historic panelling sit alongside contemporary interventions. “We created bespoke soft furnishings including carpets, fabrics and wallcoverings, as well as custom-built furniture and lighting, which give a modern edge whilst designed to be reminiscent

of the past,” commented Despont, referencing the likes of the red curtains in the corridors, inspired by the uniforms worn by the Horse Guards just across the street.

Original features that have been retained, and in some cases restored by specialist craftspeople, include stone fireplaces, mosaic floors and oak panelling, as well as ornate plasterwork and smaller details such as the brass push-plates on doors. New interventions are sensitive to the fabric of the building, such as the carpets that take inspiration from the historic grilles, or the solid brass chandeliers in the Haldane Suite, a Dernier & Hamlyn recreation based on those seen in archive photography.

Lighting plays a key role throughout the hotel, with fittings selected for their materiality, or commissioned bespoke to harmonise with the scheme: Northern Lights crafted pieces in wood and brass paired with porcelain and off-white fabric; Chelsom supplied lighting for the guestrooms; and fluted glass wall lights by Hector Finch feature in the bathrooms.

On a larger scale, Idogi created the crystal chandelier that presides over the grand staircase, while Lasvit developed a site-specific installation in honour of the nation’s war heroes; entitled Poppies, the sculptural artwork captures the essence and profound importance of its namesake, with individually-cut glass petals cascading down from above.

In all, it’s thought that over 450 companies supplied product to the development, from fabrics and floorcoverings to furniture and sanitaryware, the latter including brands such as Waterworks, THG Paris and Dornbracht. That’s in addition to the veneer specialists, stonemasons, decorative plaster artisans and many, many more craftspeople that have been part of the project.

The hotel also showcases works from a wide range of artists in a collection curated by Artiq. “The brief was to curate a thoughtful selection of pieces that celebrate the legacy of the property, touching on stories of important people and events that took place here or occurred during

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