

— CHELSOM —



Bespoke lighting by Chelsom

Floor lamp from Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park, London
Designer: Joyce Wang Studio

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Hotel Indigo – Victoria Station

MANCHESTER

Hotel Indigo brings its neighbourhood-conscious offer to Manchester, where a design drawing from the city's industrial past eschews cliché for a detailed scheme of contrasts between old and new.

Words: Kristofer Thomas | Photography: © Evoke Pictures

It might not have reached the promised land of Northern Powerhouse status, but whilst London has found itself gripped by the uncertainty of Brexit's many textures, Manchester has blossomed. Seeing the largest increase of bar and restaurant openings in the country through 2018, hoarding the lion's share of the football prestige, and claiming a major stake in Britain's media economy with acquisitions of the BBC's Salford outpost and production/education mega-hub MediaCity, recent history has certainly given credence to the local mantra that things are done differently here.

As such, Manchester has become an increasingly attractive prospect for hotel groups, especially those who recognise the value of the city's established cultural capital alongside its rising business and leisure sector. Whilst many visiting will stop by for work in the city's burgeoning shared office community, others will be drawn by its distinctive culture, or an interest in the extensive industrial heritage. Weave the two together, and you might just be on to something.

No stranger to placing sensitive properties within distinctive locales, IHG's boutique sub-brand Hotel Indigo predominantly seeks to integrate itself where culturally aware tourists and business guests

overlap, with Hotel Indigo Manchester – Victoria Station strategically placed by the titular transport hub as a base from which all of the city's functions are a stone's throw.

"When we began the process it was more of a case of what we shouldn't include than what we should" explains Henry Reeve, Director of Interior Design, IHG. "Manchester has a lot of clichés around it, so we wanted to avoid that as much as possible – things like the bee are everywhere, and while it is an icon it can become a little overused."

Set within a contrasting pair of buildings – one a former tea warehouse, the other a newbuild circular tower – the project interprets Mancunian past and present for subtly themed interiors that never stray into patronising cultural aping.

Rather, the brand's reading is one more informed by the city's industrial heritage than it is the oversaturated touchstones of the ubiquitous bee, the nostalgic slogans of a bygone rave era and other hollow cultural gleanings that have driven the city's visual language as of late. With this in mind, Reeve and lead designers 3D Reid have focused their efforts on channelling the three guiding forces of press,



Above: A circular ground floor bar traces the shape of the newbuild tower, wherein the hotel's contemporary leanings are at their most explicit

Arkwright and tea, respectively referencing the nearby Printworks and Manchester's history as a printing hub through the 20th century; industrial era entrepreneur Richard Arkwright and his cotton mills; and the former life of the building as a tea packing plant.

"We have the themes, but tried to avoid being too obvious," Reeve adds. "For guests who love detail there's so much to see, but it had to be woven in without being too explicitly theme-oriented; it was more about taking inspiration from these elements and interpreting them through a Hotel Indigo lens."

Whilst these themes are most prominent within guestrooms, their presence trickles down throughout the hotel, not least in the five-storey atrium at its core, which houses a lighting installation constructed from iron pulleys, rope, and bespoke tea baskets doubling as shades. Surrounded by exposed brick and pipework from the heritage portion of the hotel, the design here sets the spiritual tone for the wider scheme, whilst the openness of the atrium goes on to inform much of the ground floor, rearranged with great effort to accommodate three F&B outlets in M Café, the Mamucium restaurant, and a circular bar space curving with the shape of the tower.

"We like to approach Hotel Indigo F&B spaces as venues appealing to locals first, and being situated on quite a busy crossroads and tramline meant that we had people passing at multiple angles," Reeve explains. "Because of this, we decided that the core of the building

should be for the stairwell, atrium and lifts, whilst the bar, restaurant and café would wrap around. In this sense, the hotel element is almost secondary, whilst the F&B – especially the café, which is set behind quite a striking façade in the old portion – is the initial draw."

Serving up a menu of Manchester classics with a twist – think deconstructed Lancashire hotpot, Cheshire beef hash and Manchester tart – Mamucium, named for the early Roman fort a district over in Castlefield, channels the fusion of local charm and refined quality present throughout, whilst a popular afternoon tea service at M Café sees the northern lifeblood make a prominent literal appearance as well as metaphorical one.

Upstairs, tea is suitably established as inspiration for the heritage portion's guestrooms, occupying the former tea plant's maze of corridors. Channelled through the tones of china white and blue, carried across both ephemera and fixtures including fabric patterns and bathroom tiles hand-painted with scenes of the city, the theme's most overt moment comes in the shape of a TL Contracts-sourced 3D feature artwork above beds with cups arranged within a frame.

Elsewhere, within the press category – housed along with Arkwright rooms in the circular tower – beds with bright leather headboards are flanked by lamps stacked on a stem of local literature, with these bespoke pieces in turn placed upon side tables that take on the profile of printers once opened. Likewise, Arkwright rooms





Left: TL Contracts sourced the Loom-inspired artwork hanging above Arkwright room headboards – along with the rest of the project's art – while rich cotton covers nod to the local entrepreneur's cotton mill empire

incorporate loom-inspired art alongside rich, raw cotton covers on the bed in a nod to the entrepreneur's cotton milling empire. But whilst these elements look decidedly to the past, contemporary lighting by Chelsom and loose furnishings by Furniture Fusion add a touch of decidedly modern elegance.

"It was an industrial powerhouse in its day, so we used lots of rich fabrics and velvets in these rooms," Reeve explains. "The lounge chair in the corner of each was designed with a fanned-out, wheel spoke design recalling the shapes of the Spinning Jenny and the era's weaving machinery."

By taking inspiration from Manchester's less-touted cultural currency, Hotel Indigo Manchester – Victoria Station eschews clichéd cultural readings for a scheme with veritable roots in Manchester's past and present, figuratively and physically.

This formula is one serving the brand well, and with further UK openings set for Bath and Stratford this year – the latter within another unusual setting, in the form of a 16th-century structure butted up against a 1960s effort – the brand is building an English portfolio that impressively showcases what are now perhaps the overlooked histories of the country's most densely historical settings.

EXPRESS CHECK-OUT: 187 guestrooms | 1 restaurant, 1 café | 1 bar | Private meeting room | Gym | www.manchestervictoria.hotelindigo.com

Owner: UBH Manchester | **Investor:** CBRE | **Developer:** BH Group | **Operator:** Interstate Hotels & Resorts under IHG's Hotel Indigo | **Architecture and Interior Design:** 3D Reid
Main Contractor: Bowmer + Kirkland | **Project Manager:** Gleeds

CHELSOM
Lunar

Marking the latest addition to Chelsom's Edition 26 collection, the Art Deco-inspired Lunar lamps feature heavy stone bases and backplates that sit within curved metal surrounds finished with glass globes secured by threaded metal rings. Available as part of a wider series of coordinated wall and floor lights, the lamps are offered in finish options of brushed brass with natural stone and opal glass, as well as satin black with grey stone and smoke glass.

www.chelsom.co.uk



MARSET
LaFlaca

The LaFlaca floor lamp from Marset features a large profile that can act as a room divider, creating a partition of decorative light. Available in three sizes with different geometric shapes – a vertical rectangle, a horizontal rectangle and a square – the lamp's metal structure lends its form to a wrinkle-free fabric, which envelops the frame. Inside, the LED light is provided by an alluring sphere only visible when the fixture is turned on.

www.marset.com

ALMA LIGHT
Tribeca

Designed by Jordi Llopis for Alma Light, the Tribeca collection comprises six models: a pendant with one shade, two overlapping shades or a linear ceiling plate and four shades, as well as a table lamp and two floor lamps – both also available with one or two overlapping shades. Inspired by Art Deco styles, the light fittings are crafted from alabaster and textured black iron, while the floor and table versions are equipped with intensity dimmers.

www.almalight.com

