



Devonshire Club

LONDON

In collaboration with SUSD and March & White, Brian Clivaz opens his new private members' club with rooms in London's East End.

Words: Catherine Martin | Photography: Courtesy of Devonshire Club

At the height of their popularity, private members' clubs occupied London's West End in their hundreds, providing a sanctuary for the upper class gentleman.

Such establishments fell out of favour in the 20th century, but recent years have seen the emergence of a new breed of club. Commanding fees in excess of £1,200 per year, the likes of The Groucho Club, Soho House and The Hospital Club have proved there's renewed appetite for members-only facilities.

The latest addition to this growing sector is Devonshire Club, headed up by CEO Brian Clivaz, a well-known figure on London's

hospitality circuit. Clivaz has been responsible for a number of the city's establishments; he was the Founding Director of Home House, an exclusive club occupying a terrace of Georgian townhouses in Portman Square, and later became Managing Director of The Arts Club, overseeing its transformation and 2011 relaunch. And in 2013, he joined forces with Laurence Isaacson to acquire L'Escargot, London's oldest French restaurant with associated members' club.

For his new venture – named after the square on which it sits – Clivaz called on the cream of his former allies to bring the concept to life. F&B Director Simon Whitley was previously a chef at Home



Above: March & White has selected a variety of designs from Nattier's archives and reworked them as upholstery, soft furnishings, drapery, rugs, and even laser-cut into stone to add detail to the bar

House; Executive Chef Oliver Lesnik has come from L'Escargot; while interior designers March & White also devised the interior scheme at The Arts Club. Completing the line-up is Peter 'Harry' Harris of real estate consultancy SUSD. Harris co-founded the club with Clivaz, providing architectural and project management services, working closely with March & White on interiors.

Close to Liverpool Street, the club occupies a listed 19th century Regency warehouse and adjacent office building, sensitively linked on the second floor via a glazed footbridge. Given that there was little more than a non-descript shell to work with, the team has done a sterling job in introducing features that feel as if they have always been part of the fabric of the building. Decorative ceiling coffers, panelled walls and stained glass windows by Harry Cardross make appearances in the public spaces, while timber flooring is by Hakwood. The Netherlands-based manufacturer has supplied the floorcoverings throughout in a variety of treatments, colours and styles, from herringbone to basket weave and chevron, which also serve to distinguish one space from the next.

Careful planning of the ground floor has resulted in a logical series of public spaces that flow into one another, each with its own distinct

identity and unique features. "The arrival sequence and movement through the bar and brasserie and on to the garden room is something that we wanted to recapture here," explains James White, co-founder of March & White, comparing it to the studio's successful scheme at The Arts Club.

From check-in – conducted under a bespoke Murano glass chandelier by Seguso – heavy timber doors lead to the Champagne Bar. Less of an exclusive den reserved only for special occasions, it's a popular spot for morning coffee, business meetings and, as the light fades, a glass of fizz from the Gushourne Estate, makers of England's finest sparkling wines. The difficulty in finding a seat at 2.30pm on a Tuesday afternoon is testament to the bar's success as an all-day space whose ambience changes throughout the course of the day.

Continuing through the ground floor is the Brasserie, a 110-seat restaurant serving up a menu described as 'St-James'-meets-Saint-Tropez'. Seasonal dishes include British favourites alongside specialities from the Côte d'Azur, as well as an array of shellfish, ceviche, sashimi and caviar from the seafood bar.

The garden room – a beautiful sun-drenched conservatory – follows, characterised by growing palms and flora-inspired





Above: The 68 guestrooms feature Hypnos beds and upholstery from Declar and Designers Guild

upholstery. The space opens onto an exterior terrace to provide a moment of tranquility in the city.

The public spaces continue on the first floor, where the Causerie, Library Bar and Cocktail Bar offer different experiences yet again. "Each space needed to have its own personality," White explains. "The woods get slightly warmer as you move upstairs, and that's how we wanted it to feel, like a progression as you walk through."

What is common to all spaces is the mid-century modern feel, the starting point for the interior design scheme. This is demonstrated by the 1950s- and 1960s-inspired furniture custom-made by British master craftsmen, and further emphasised by a bespoke kinetic mobile in the Causerie.

Where the project really comes to life is through its use of colour and pattern in the soft furnishings. Eschewing the typical gentlemen's club aesthetic, the all-male design team decided the property needed a feminine touch. "We had the architectural layer with the Villa Necchi-inspired panelling and structured ceilings, and then the mid-century modern furniture," continues White. "But we needed something extra to make the scheme pop."

A chance meeting with designer Cristina Azario presented such an opportunity. As well as running her own studio, Azario is the creative force behind Nattier, a luxury brand that created and produced couture fabrics in the 1960s. Founded by her parents, the textile house worked with Chanel, Dior and Valentino and is now being reinvented for a new generation. Looking to Nattier's archives, March & White selected a variety of designs that have been reworked as upholstery, soft furnishings, drapery, rugs, and even laser-cut into stone to add detail to the bar.

The designs can also be seen in the 68 guestrooms, for which club members have priority booking. Rooms come in a variety of sizes and design schemes, each finished to a high standard, with premium beds from Hypnos' Lansdowne collection, sumptuous drapery supplied by Designers Guild and large flatscreens with Apple TV.

"For us, the big challenge was to bring the level of bespoke design that you see here to a commercial project," concludes White, whose previous projects have been predominantly for private residential clients. "At Devonshire Club, almost every finish and surface is bespoke. It involves a lot of time and effort, but is what sets it apart."

EXPRESS CHECKOUT: 68 guestrooms | 1 restaurant | 3 bars | Private events spaces | Gym; 4 treatment rooms | www.devonshire.club
Developer / Architecture: SUSD | Interior Design: March & White | Main Contractor: ISG | FF&E: Benjamin West