



The Laslett

LONDON

Designers Waldo Works have combined contemporary British furniture with curios and curated finds for a new boutique hotel in Notting Hill.

Words: Matt Turner | Photography: Courtesy of The Laslett

Nothing captures the bohemian, multicultural make-up of Notting Hill from the 1960s through the 1980s better than its carnival. It was originally created in 1966, through the combination of an existing Caribbean music festival and a hippie street party. Two of the key instigators were Rhaun Laslett, organiser of the Notting Hall Fayre (as the hippie event was known), and Trinidadian musician Russell Henderson, who laid the path for the modern day event's centrepiece procession when his steel band went walkabout from the children's centre that was the original home of the Caribbean festival.

Now, the creators of Notting Hill's newest boutique hotel have named their property after Laslett, and its bar / restaurant after Henderson. Opened in August 2015, The Laslett is a new hotel by Living Rooms, a company founded by Tracy Lowy in 1993 when she identified a need for an alternative to traditional hotels in London. Her original serviced residential apartments, Fountains and No. 5 Maddox, were an innovative and immediate hit. Further properties followed at Europa House Apartments in Little Venice, and Welbeck Street in Marylebone.

This latest venture, described as "more home than hotel," takes

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Above: The Henderson Bar & Coffee shop is named after Trinidadian musician Russ Henderson, an influential figure in the creation of the Notting Hill Carnival
Opposite: Guestrooms feature classic BA chairs by Race Furniture

inspiration from Notting Hill's vibrant cultural heritage. Set across five handsome Victorian mansions on Pembridge Gardens, the hotel's exterior has little more than a discreet logo to distinguish it from the multi-million pound residences which surround it. Inside, its 51 guestrooms have a similarly domestic feel to the others in the Living Rooms portfolio.

Designers Waldo Works have combined modern British furniture designs with quirky, vintage finds that look like they could have been purchased at nearby Portobello Road Market. For inspiration, they plundered the archive of influential style magazine The Face, which documented the multicultural identity of 1980s Notting Hill. There is a curated selection of second-hand books for bedtime reading, cosy blankets, and curiosities from local antiques dealers. A well thought out selection of photographs and artworks sits behind the bedhead in each room.

A muted, monochrome palette is popped with strong colour accents. Smart metro-tiled bathrooms are stocked with full-sized Neal's Yard Remedies products. Pinch supplied bespoke benches at the end of beds, bedside tables and sofas in the lobby, whilst classic BA dining chairs and original Carnegie chairs from Race Furniture feature in the guestrooms. Joinery, including the smoked eucalyptus headboards and Living Rooms' signature 'Big Bar' cupboard, is handmade by London workshop Opus Magnum.

Lighting designer Simon Day of Nocturne Workshop has created a bespoke lighting collection for the hotel, named 'Gil' after singer Gil Scott Heron (all of Day's products are named after different singers). Nocturne designed and built wall lights, desk lamps and bedside lamps with a built-in table, featuring a spun aluminium shade with powder-coated steel frames. Pixellated merino wool blanket designs from Zuzunaga feature in all bedrooms, alongside cushions by Eleanor Pritchard and Vanderhurd.

"With over 22,000ft² of space to redesign and renovate, this two-year project looks to celebrate and re-explore the characterful and cultural heritage of the area," say Waldo Works. "We were briefed to create spaces that felt like staying in a friend's townhouse. We combined modern British furniture and Portobello finds, placing them in modern rooms of restored stucco elegance. A lobby, library, shop and restaurant / bar form the public spaces, with an 11-metre-long concrete bar providing service across them all."

The ground floor public areas are designed more as neighbourhood hangout than hotel lobby. Again there is a carefully considered selection of books. A David Bowie biography was on display on Sleeper's visit, not long after the singer's death. Books on British artists such as David Hockney and Barbara Hepworth are more permanent fixtures.

The Henderson Bar & Coffee Shop serves dishes supplied by

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Left: A vintage drinks trolley sits beneath a Penguin Books print by Harland Miller in the ground floor library area

celebrated local restaurateur Sally Clarke, and is overseen by Tangerine Dream, long term partners of Living Rooms who also run the café at Chelsea Physic Garden. A small retail area, also on the ground floor, showcases collaborations with local designers and artists, such as scented candles, butter-soft leather bags and shoes from Newbark, clothes and jewellery from Les Glorieuses and vintage-inspired stockings from Mrs Miller.

Artworks throughout the hotel include pieces by Barry Kamen, the celebrated youth culture photographer whose work defined style magazines such as The Face, i-D and Arena in the 1980s. Other pieces are from the archive of punk historian Toby Mott. Vibrant illustrations by 1960s icon and BIBA founder Barbara Hulanicki, and a Penguin Books print by Harland Miller, adorn the walls of the ground floor library.

Many of the antique curiosities displayed in perspex cases above the bedheads are from Les Couilles des Chiens – an eclectic interiors store on nearby Golborne Road, which is becoming a destination in its own right with the opening of new restaurants and bars and the reinvention of its famous Coronet Cinema as the Print Room.

Such developments show how dramatically Notting Hill has changed since the early days of its carnival. The Laslett is well placed to capitalise on its continuing gentrification.

EXPRESS CHECKOUT: 51 guestrooms | 1 restaurant | 1 bar | www.living-rooms.co.uk/hotel/the-laslett
Owner / Operator: Living Rooms | Interior Design: Waldo Works | Lighting Design: Nocturne Workshop

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