



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: a guest bathroom at The Beekman typifies Martin Brudnizki's design ethos. The colours of a table lamp in one of the suites are complemented by Reed Anderson's Hangman (2012) artwork. The Queen Anne-style exterior remains unchanged. A premium 28-square-metre king suite. Before the renovation, the hotel's atrium was sorely neglected.



Lost & found

Designer Martin Brudnizki gets his hands on one of New York's forgotten landmarks and turns it into The Beekman, the newest jewel in the city's crown.



ifteen years after the September 11 attacks that nearly brought the city to its knees, Lower Manhattan continues to be revitalised. The gloriously resurrected One World Trade Center stands proud, home to the offices of publishers Condé Nast and the recently unveiled Westfield retail centre, with its enormous, dove-white 'Oculus' structure designed by Spanish structural engineer and architect Santiago Calatrava.

Where Fulton Street meets the East River, overlooking the Brooklyn Bridge and bordered by the historic South Street Seaport, you'll find Beekman Street — a rather unassuming slice of the financial district. Blink and you might miss it, but on the corner of Nassau Street, amid white-collar workers picking up lunch before returning to the office and tourists meandering towards the 9/11 Memorial's twin reflecting pools, sits The Beekman hotel, a red brick and Dorchester stone building that is one of the city's last great architectural treasures. »

PHOTOGRAPHERS: RICHARD FARNES, BJORN WALLANDER, TIM WILLIAMS

CONCIERGE



« Built in 1881, The Beekman, née Temple Court, once hosted the debut New York production of *Hamlet* and was home to Clinton Hall, where Ralph Waldo Emerson, Mark Twain and Edgar Allan Poe lectured at the Mercantile Library Association.

“We wanted to achieve an interior that reflects the history and sense of intrigue of the original building, but reinvent it,” says Martin Brudnizki, the Swedish designer charged with bringing it back to life. “We restored the original detailing but included furniture and accessories that would work for the modern day. The finished look is that of a traveller’s home filled with *objets d’art* and curiosities relating to The Beekman’s history.”

 Brudnizki was born into impeccable interiors. “My mother was a stylist and our home was beautifully accessorised,” he says. The designer left for the UK in 1990 to study interior architecture at the American University of London. His design for classic London restaurant Scott’s in 2006 put him on the map as a pioneer of elegant yet unstuffy spaces and saw him work on luxe establishments including Miami’s Soho Beach House, The Ivy in London, Cecconi’s in West Hollywood and Matsuhisa in St Moritz.

Meanwhile, his firm MBDS expanded, with offices in London and New York. “My father was a civil engineer and I was surrounded by architectural drawings,” he says. “The combination of his functionality and my mother’s aesthetics laid the foundations for my interest in design.”

Another influential figure is Erik Gunnar Asplund, the Swedish architect who designed the Stockholm Public Library in the 1920s. “His ability to translate a sense of history and belonging into something ready for modern consumption captured my imagination,” Brudnizki says. The designer nailed this mandate with his interiors for The Beekman. The 287-room Thompson Hotels property includes a nine-storey Victorian atrium capped with a pyramidal skylight. “The atrium has beautiful decorative detailing in the form of dragons, flowers and sunbursts,” he says. “The skylight bathes the building in light, and we had to make the most of this.”



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *The reception area is sumptuous yet inviting. Aged oak floors and sweeping city views are a feature of the suites. Designer Martin Brudnizki. The atrium in its refurbished glory. Spacious double queen suite.*



In the honeycomb-tiled lobby, 1920s antiques mix with mid-century pieces and surprisingly earthy touches: low-perched velvet slipper chairs; a wooden chandelier; gilt twig-framed dining chairs; a reception desk draped with kilims. The sensuous concierge area features a pink velvet sofa and gold-mirrored side tables, while the work of artists specially commissioned for a 60-plus-piece collection in homage to Allan Poe is dotted throughout.

The bedrooms feel lived-in while embracing the Edwardian era’s grandeur, with walnut furniture, tactile leather, velvet, silk and marble bathrooms. “It’s all in the details,” says Brudnizki. “For instance, the in-room minibar consists of an antique table with a silver tray stocked full of liquor bottles, which adds to the residential feel. However, open up the table and the fridge is inside.”

Brudnizki’s hand extends to what is sure to become Manhattan’s dining hotspot, with The Beekman hosting both Tom Colicchio’s Fowler & Wells and Keith McNally’s Augustine. Beneath the atrium, The Bar Room also acts as the hotel lounge.

“It’s rare to have so many historic details still intact,” he says. “From the Victorian corncicing to the Gothic atrium balustrades, the details are meticulous. When I first saw the building, I was overwhelmed by the history hidden behind years of neglect. I felt this deep-rooted narrative had to be revealed for a new generation to enjoy.” *VL*

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