

WORDS BY KAREN GLASER PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF PROJECT ORANGE

# CHISWICK MORAN LONDON



Interior designers Project Orange have bought a splash of Sixties California to the London suburb of Chiswick with their scheme for Irish operators Moran Hotels' latest opening.

**W**4 is an unlikely setting for tropical palms and a sweeping LA-style portecochere, but both are on resplendent display outside number 626 Chiswick High Road. Step inside the former office block and the visual chicanery continues: New England timber boarding, mid-century furniture and a retro plexi-glass chandelier. It's all very groovy, but what has it got to do with the M4 flyover which this Fifties building overlooks?

"West Coast, west London!" beams Christopher Ash, co-director of designers Project Orange, which has just completed the 120-bedroom Chiswick Moran hotel. "This is a contemporary evocation of 60s California – a response to the building's mid-century provenance and a link between this happening part of London and the glamour of LA." The £12 million fit-out is also an answer the client's brief for a hotel that challenges the Moran Group's

hitherto slightly conservative brand. With two hotels in Ireland and another in Chiswick, the company is a seasoned operator, but in design terms the Chiswick Moran, a mere 20-minute train ride from both central London and Heathrow, is a first for the family firm. That said, with its elliptical 50s carpet, tangerine and lime bathrooms and general not-obviously-tasteful vibe, this seven-floor fit-out would, frankly, be a first for most hotel groups. "You'll

find no corporate walnut here," says Ash. "We've gone for a zesty, aggressive informality. When people enter the hotel, we want them to feel slightly taken aback." The Irish firm's accountant was certainly taken aback by the scheme. When he first saw the practice's sketches, he was so startled he said "effing hell non-stop for several minutes", recalls Ash. Meanwhile, his boss, company director Tom Moran, liked the scheme, but was concerned

it would not work beyond the 25-40 demographic. So he asked the architect to complete two sample rooms and then got a bunch of his friends, aged between 50 and 70, over from the Emerald Isle to take a look. Their verdict was a unanimous "effing deadly" – the ultimate Hibernian accolade, says Ash. They were particularly taken with the bar, a sophisticated room with a centrepiece 15-metre counter of marble and burnt orange leather. Before becoming hoteliers, the Moran family ran pubs in Ireland so it had strong views on what makes a good watering hotel. "They wanted a destination bar for people living and

working in the area," says Ash. "And they didn't want anything remotely 'chichi'." The Globe Bar, named after the huge shimmering globe that hangs between the bar and double-height lobby, answers that brief nicely. With its palette of stained oak boarding, polished black glass and subtly retro furniture in black, ochre and orange it's a relaxing space in which to sip a West Coast cocktail or swig an Irish stout. The bar also works as overspill space for the rather tight adjacent lobby – home to the aforementioned retro chandelier, plus some mid-century armchairs by Walter Knoll and several contemporary Mooi pieces. The lobby

floor is laid with randomly cut heavily-veined marble. It looks good but it could, thinks Ash, look even better: Project Orange's first choice was terrazzo inlaid with metal strips and green glass, but Mr Moran put paid to that idea after he saw miles of the stuff covering the floors of Luton airport. Too low-rent, he said. On the other side of the lobby is the hotel's library, a rather grandiose term for a lap-top point. With its desert-suggestive Aloe Vera plants atop a funky metal screen, it's a convenient spot to check your emails and flick through the complementary FT and Independent newspapers (the Irish version, of course).

But the best bit of the ground floor is the restaurant Napa (geddit?), a lovely zesty mix of cool marble, ebony laminate, and crisp green leather. Like the bar, the restaurant is also designed to pull in outside punters as well as the weekday business folk and weekend families who typically pay from £99 and £145 a night respectively to stay at the hotel. If looks matter, the restaurant will surely triumph: a stroll down Chiswick High Street suggests that aesthetically at least, Napa is in a different league to the other restaurants in this corner of west London. And you can be sure no other eatery in the vicinity has witty British Airways cabin shots from the 1950s



ABOVE: Bathrooms have large walk-in showers in tangerine orange, slate grey or bright lime. RIGHT Bedroom furniture is by Pedley

gracing its walls.

The most eye-catching thing in Napa, however, is the screen of rotating plexiglass ellipses and polished stainless steel which divides the restaurant from the tucked-away bar. It is dazzling in every sense.

The bolthole bar is a bit of a gem, too. With its fractured, smoky mirrors, cowhide upholstery and original 50s carpet it has a definite nightclub vibe. The morning after, the bar becomes the perfect breakfast venue, particularly for the singleton hotel guest. Before breakfast you will, of course, have spent the night in a wonderful Chiswick Moran bedroom: either a deluxe, an executive, a junior

suite or, if you have been very lucky,

the penthouse suite on the seventh

floor. The structural bay of this former office block – the bones of which were kept for economic reasons, apart from the entrance which was remoc<sup>ated</sup>

by Capital Architecture – means the bedrooms are a little wider than most hotels'. In addition, each bedroom has a fully glazed wall which the beds face. These window walls are dressed with graphic Marimekko curtains and voiles, colour-washed according to the bedrooms' Californian-inspired themes of surf, turf and desert: a narrative device that translates into turquoise, orange and bright green.

The Belakos carpet is shagpile, the



upholstery Designer's Guild and retro cream vinyl, and the bespoke furniture by Pedley is made of faux ebony veneer and mirror. The furniture language is blocky torso on spindly metal legs.

The bathrooms, most of which have large walk-in showers, express the surf, turf and desert motif with gusto – they are tangerine-orange, bright lime and slate grey. Project Orange wanted sanitaryware in the same colours, but the client put his foot down. A viridescent loo was, he said, a turf-themed step too far.

He is, however, keeping an open mind about the colour scheme of the Chiswick Moran stage two – a new

conference block to the rear of the hotel which Project Orange will be fitting out some time soon.

#### EXPRESS CHECKOUT

CHISWICK MORAN HOTEL  
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116 bedrooms  
Napa  
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Library, Meeting Rooms