



M by Montcalm

LONDON

The latest addition to Shoreditch's booming hotel scene is a striking architectural intervention on City Road, inspired by 'Op-Artist' Bridget Riley.

Words: Matt Turner | Photography: © David Churchill

Shoreditch's hotel scene is booming. Since the arrival of The Hoxton, and the conversion of the Crowne Plaza to the much-fêted Ace Hotel, plans have been unveiled for additional properties from the likes of Nobu, Gansevoort, CitizenM and Art'otel. The latest arrival to the area opened in late 2015, just a stone's throw from Silicon Roundabout, the heartland of London's new tech scene. M by Montcalm is a strikingly modern intervention, its sharp triangular form originally conceived by Squire & Partners, and delivered by executive architects 5plus and SGP Contracts, who completed the project under a full design-and-build contract.

According to Squire & Partners, the site – opposite Moorfields Eye Hospital on City Road – provided inspiration for a striking façade which expresses the idea of the optical and the visual: “Responding to the Moorfields Eye Hospital opposite, and taking inspiration from the 1980's artworks of Bridget Riley, the façade is expressed as a triple-glazed skin enlivened with differing patterns of transparency, opacity and solidity to convey diagonal slopes breaking across an underlying vertical structure.”

Riley's 1993 work 'Nataraja', a dazzling multi-coloured slice of

Op-Art which now resides in the Tate's permanent collection, was a particularly strong influence on the external appearance of the 18-storey building.

“Manipulation and modulation of light, both internally and externally, give the façade richness and an ever-changing face on this prominent site, as well as assisting solar performance to create a sustainable development,” say Squire & Partners. “The conjunction of the vertical and the diagonal create a visual effect of depth and movement, and express the activities taking place within the building. At the upper levels, the façade openings become larger to express the more social uses and exploit the panoramic views. At ground and lower ground floors, the building's skin ‘lifts’ on the diagonal to reveal the hotel lobby, public bar and restaurant, all clearly visible from the street.”

The building has an assertive, sharp-elbowed presence on the street which is not to all tastes – it was nominated for a Carbuncle Cup, the award annually given to the worst new building in the UK, though the prize eventually went to Rafael Viñoly's Walkie Talkie at 20 Fenchurch Street.







Above: Bathrooms have been fitted with Vitra M-Line basins and WCs by German design studio NOA, with fixtures by Hansgrohe

Befitting its location in East London's Tech City start-up hub, this is a hotel where technology takes centerstage. The building's design gave numerous technical challenges to the contractors, requiring SGP to provide and implement innovative solutions. Technology also plays a key role in the hotel's 269 guestrooms, where tablet devices control light, sound, temperature, aroma and room service.

Such touches may place M by Montcalm firmly in the present, but the hotel also looks to the history of the surrounding area with the menu in Tonic & Remedy cocktail bar, created by restaurant operators Searcys, which pays homage to the apothecary trade that existed in this part of London in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Traversing the ground and mezzanine floors, Tonic & Remedy features brightly coloured leather upholstery, wall art inspired by the exterior of the building, and a sculptural lightfitting of interlinking loops above reception.

The top-floor restaurant, Urban Coterie, has been created by Searcys in collaboration with celebrated chef Anthony Demetre (founder of Arbutus Soho), and designed by London-based Tonik

Associates. The designers have taken their cue from the building's architecture. Tones and colours reference the sky and the warmth of a setting sun, while traditional materials such as brass, timber, bianco marble and leather soften the edges of this angular building. A private dining room seats 12 and has blow-out glass for secrecy or inclusion, whilst a hole in the wall allows diners a glimpse into the kitchen next door.

Searcys are no strangers to the London skyline, having operated the event spaces atop the Gherkin since opening. Here, the Sky Bar, overlooking the London skyline, offers variations on classic cocktails influenced by the British landscape, and a wine list of small boutique growers and biodynamic bottles.

The operators of the M by Montcalm clearly hope to tap into the surrounding business community with a private members club also due to open on the 16th floor later this year, and extensive conference and meeting facilities with the capacity for a 200-person reception elsewhere in the hotel. There is also an underground spa, complete with gold-tiled swimming pool, steam room and sauna.

EXPRESS CHECKOUT: 269 guestrooms | 2 restaurants | 2 bars and lounges | 6 meeting rooms | Spa, swimming pool, gym | www.mbymontcalm.co.uk
Owner / Operator: The Montcalm – Luxury Hotels London | **Architecture:** Squire & Partners (concept architect); Splus Architects (executive architect); SGP Contracts (design and build) | **Interior Design:** Splus Architects; Tonik Associates (restaurant) | **M&E Consultant:** KUT