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CROSBY STREET Hotel

JAMES DYSON Does It Again

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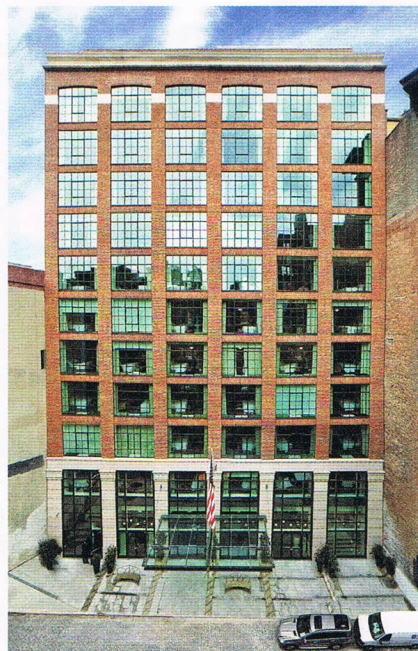
NEIGHBOR

by
Kate Bolick

A new hotel in SoHo exudes a homey British feel while paying proper deference to the often contentious surrounding community.

LOBBY and TEXTURES

Top and left: The Crosby Street Hotel co-owner and interior designer Kit Kemp's aesthetic might be described as *Mary Poppins* gone *Umbrellas of Cherbourg*—an eccentric layering of colors, patterns, and textures that magically falls together into a harmonious whole. On the ground floor, soaring white walls and pale-gray German-oak floors (used throughout the building) create a neutral backdrop for an impressive collection of contemporary art mingled with one-of-a-kind furnishings, such as a Swedish antique sofa covered in vintage linen mailbags and a curvy side chair upholstered in Peruvian blankets. Right: The hotel's architect, Paul Taylor, wanted a formal facade that would broadcast "public building" while still fitting in with the neighbors. The rusticated base is made of real, hand-tooled limestone. The 100 casement windows make the cityscape a prominent feature of each room and treat passers-by to the spectacle of hotel life.



When the Crosby Street Hotel finally opened its doors in October, even SoHo natives could be excused for walking past without quite noticing. The first Stateside offering from the British husband-and-wife team Tim and Kit Kemp co-owners of London's Firdale Hotels, the 11-story building clocks in at a robust 85,000 square feet, but its placement—the facade sits back a respectful 27 feet from the curb—emanates a polite restraint not usually associated with large brick-and-glass structures.

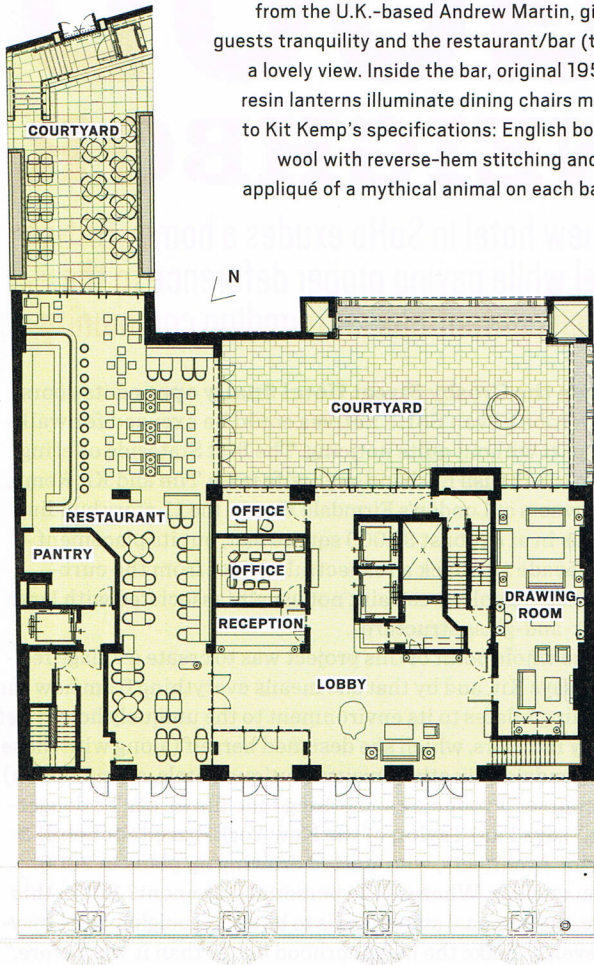
"The whole point of this project was to create a village feeling," says Kit, and by that she means everything from how the building relates to its environment to the uniquely homey yet lively interiors, which she designed herself (along with those of Firdale's six other luxury boutique hotels, all in London). Of course, "Producing something that 'fits in' can be dangerous," says Paul Taylor, of the New York-based Stonehill & Taylor Architects, who started drawing up plans in 2006. "You wonder, Where is the personal statement? But in this case, the personal statement is to be a good neighbor and may be even to make the neighborhood better than it was before."

Being a good neighbor is a particularly tricky feat in SoHo. The Crosby Street Hotel falls just outside the historic district



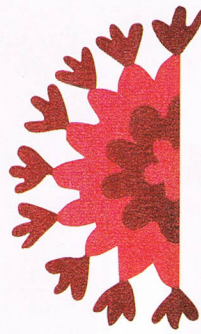
RESTAURANT, BAR, and GARDEN

The interior sculpture garden (right), with cedar cladding by the rooftop-garden specialists Goode Green and a petrified tree from the U.K.-based Andrew Martin, gives guests tranquility and the restaurant/bar (top) a lovely view. Inside the bar, original 1950s resin lanterns illuminate dining chairs made to Kit Kemp's specifications: English boiled wool with reverse-hem stitching and an appliqué of a mythical animal on each back.





Drawing, courtesy Stonehill & Taylor Architects



When the SoHo Alliance expressed concern that two planned outdoor spaces would keep residents up at night, the Kemps refashioned an interior courtyard as a sculpture garden.



THEATER and DRAWING ROOM

The hotel's communal spaces include a 99-seat cinema (top) offering private and public screenings, and a snug drawing room (below) enveloped in rose-linen walls. The floral linen curtains lend delicacy to the floor-to-ceiling window, even though they're so densely lined that they effectively block the light.

and its myriad regulations—the boundary runs right down the center of Crosby Street itself—but there were still plenty of commercial-zoning issues to navigate, not to mention the impressively organized fury that is the SoHo Alliance, a community group. In this respect, the Kemps were particularly fortunate to have fallen in with Taylor. He has run his own firm out of an office just down the block since 1982, and he has a great appreciation for the area, as well as a network of neighborhood contacts.

As a result, rather than merely paying lip service to the community's needs, the Crosby team actually took them into account. When the SoHo Alliance expressed concern that the planned outdoor spaces would keep residents up at night with raucous parties, the Kemps offered to refashion an interior courtyard as a sculpture garden available only to guests, open only until 11 p.m., and to turn a rooftop terrace into a wildflower meadow. They also added another outdoor courtyard and a rooftop vegetable patch for the kitchen. Now the hotel had been a decrepit lot full of rusting parking towers in an urban paradise seeking LEED Gold certification. In its first newsletter, the SoHo Alliance concluded a dispatch with the unreasonable demands of developers with a flattering reference to the hotel, calling the Kemps "a reasonable developer who will listen to the community's concerns," and thanking them whom the organization was "pleased to work."

The design process adhered to a similarly cooperative approach with architect and decorator engaged in an ongoing conversation





ONE-BEDROOM SUITES

During the building process, Kit traveled around the world and stored her treasures—such as the antique dining table and white-painted ironwork chandelier seen in this 1,000-square-foot suite—in two warehouses in Jamaica, Queens. The combination of old and new pieces and ample textured materials create an exceptionally cozy feel. Upholstered walls are a Kit specialty; here, she used burgundy linen.

WILDFLOWER MEADOW

Hotel guests are granted their own slice of English countryside, albeit one made of plants indigenous to the New York region. The rooftop-garden specialists Chris and Lisa Goode, of Goode Green, sold the Kemps on their wares by inviting them to their SoHo loft to experience their own gardens.



about what best suited the needs of the hotel. Together, they dreamed up a constellation of interlocking areas ranging from cozy to buoyant. These are spaces with a mature sense of fun, meant to delight and soothe. “If you’re traveling and you get homesick, or feel a bit lonely or down, you want an atmosphere that makes you feel happier,” Kit says. “Often color and texture can do that.”

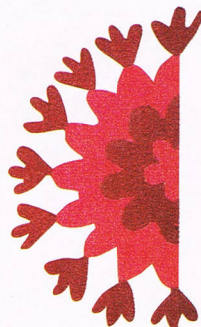
This simple thread—an abiding faith in the importance of context—pervades the Crosby Street Hotel, from the building’s environmental sensitivity right on down to the vase of fresh flowers in each suite. “So many new hotels adhere to a formula that the excitement of travel is lost,” Kit says. “We are trying to bring back individuality.”

SINGLE UNITS and BATHROOMS

Top and right: Every Firmdale room is unique, yet all have the same signature touches: a dressmaker’s mannequin in the corner (“People toss their clothes on it or pin their brooches,” Kit laughs); a bespoke metal ball lamp on the desk; and an upholstered headboard for reading in bed. Far right: Credit Steve Jobs for the stones on the bathroom floor: they’re the same as those in the Apple Store in Midtown Manhattan.



Simon Brown



Kit Kemp's aesthetic might be described as Mary Poppins gone Umbrellas of Cherbourg—an eccentric layering of colors, patterns, and textures that magically falls together into a harmonious whole.

