



ARCHITECTURE

The Whiteley in London gets a fresh start with a design-led luxury transformation

The Whiteley is a historic London department store reborn as a mixed-use space comprising luxury apartments and a Six Senses hotel and spa. Step into the first show apartment, by Kelly Behun



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The Whiteley in west London comprises 139 residences, including this show apartment by the New York-based designer Kelly Behun. On the dining table are vessels by Gaetano Pesce and the Campana brothers, while the lounge area features 'Lek' swivel chairs by Christophe Delcourt; a custom coffee table and sofa by Kelly Behun Studio; and specially commissioned artwork by Kathleen Mullaniff and 'Torchière' sconces by Chris Wolston. In the kitchen are handcarved stools from Bali and a custom wicker pendant (Image credit: Photography Paul Raeside; Art direction Michael Reynolds)

'A nice apartment on its own doesn't cut it anymore,' says [London](#)-based property developer Alex Michelin. 'The consumer is so savvy now with social media; everyone sees everything. Property is less location-specific, more lifestyle-driven. You have to place-make, create an environment that says to people: 'This is how I want to live my life.'

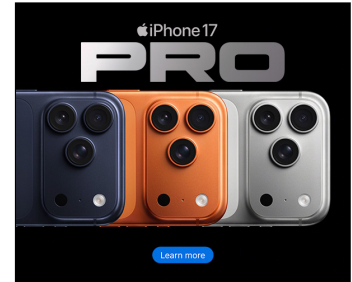


Developers Alex Michelin and Marcus Meijer, standing in front of a piece by Jadé Fadojutimi, *Untitled* (2022)

(Image credit: Joakim Blockstrom)

The Whiteley: leading a Queensway regeneration

This year, Michelin and his firm friend and like-minded developer Marcus Meijer unveil The Whiteley, where the lucky few will certainly want to live their lives. Founded by draper William Whiteley in 1911, Whiteleys was an opulent emporium that rivalled Selfridges and Liberty. Its majestic internal staircase was modelled on [Milan](#)'s La Scala, and its slogan 'everything from a pin to an elephant' drew shoppers from all over London. But it failed to keep up with its competitors, and when Michelin and Meijer bought it in 2013, Whiteleys was a tired mall of broken escalators and now-defunct chain stores.





The entrance hall, with *Gem 20* and *Gem 21* by Makiko Harris; 'C147' candleholder by Lynn Chadwick; 'Echelon' chandelier by Hinkley Lighting; and 'After Postmodern' chair by Tom Dixon. In the study are *Za* by Ramón Enrich and a vase by Tessa Wolfe Murray

(Image credit: Photography Paul Raeside; Art direction Michael Reynolds)

Since then, chilly winds have blown across London, bringing Brexit, lockdowns and a cost of living crisis. But the forward-thinking pair have weathered the storms and created leading communal and residential spaces that people love – think Borough Yards and Twenty Grosvenor Square by Finchatton (the development company Michelin co-founded 22 years ago before setting up his new venture, Valouran, in 2023 with Matthew Robertson).



The dining area, with an artwork by Kelly Behun Studio and Sarah Oliphant; a custom table by Benoit Viaene; 'Paulo' chairs by Studio Van den Akker in 'Vitali Midas' fabric by Pierre Frey; 'Lanterna' lamps by Dimore Studio; a custom console by Kelly Behun Studio; and vessels by the Campana brothers and Gaetano Pesce

(Image credit: Photography Paul Raeside; Art direction Michael Reynolds)

The Whiteley has 139 private apartments (studios cost £1.4m, penthouses upwards of £40m) and London's first Six Senses hotel, with 110 rooms, 14 serviced apartments and a spa, gym, indoor pool, and padel and tennis courts. The ground floor will host 20 new retailers and restaurants. Instead of the bland high street staples of the past, it will feature Japanese patisseries and art galleries.





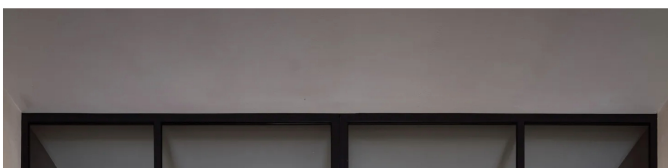
One of the guest bedrooms, with 'Sylvan' wallpaper in Penumbra, designed by Kelly Behun Studio for Calico Wallpaper, and a custom rug by Kelly Behun and The Rug Company. The 'Plant Pod 2' pot is by James Shaw and the 'Memory No. 1' stool by Jie Wu from Gallery Fumi
(Image credit: Photography Paul Raeside; Art direction Michael Reynolds)

This carefully curated blend is based on a deep understanding of the demographic and its aspirations, and it is what keeps Meijer and Michelin ahead of their rivals. 'Bayswater is not like Mayfair, where it's all about how much gold is on the chandelier,' says Michelin. 'It's artists, musicians, creative people who want to do yoga, go kite surfing and live a healthy and happy family life.'



The main bathroom, with a 'Silhouette' vase by Thierry Cheyrou from SCP; a vintage Bamileke pedestal stool from Design Mix Gallery; and an 'Alpaca' rug by The Rug Company
(Image credit: Photography Paul Raeside; Art direction Michael Reynolds)

Foster + Partners won the competition to renovate the Grade II-listed landmark. 'We wanted to keep it British, and Norman had the most deliverable, most efficient design,' says Meijer, who has worked in real estate investment for almost 30 years. He currently heads up London-based Mark and is working with Italian architect Renzo Piano on a new waterfront district in Monaco.





The entrance hall, with an 'Yves' pendant by the Urban Electric Company; 'Altar' dining table by Agnes Studio; 'C147' candleholder by Lynn Chadwick; a vintage rug; and *Composition 100B* by Daniel Copitch (Image credit: Photography Paul Raeside; Art direction Michael Reynolds)

The architects' eco credentials were also a draw. There's no plastic in the building, all water is recycled, the roof is fitted with photovoltaic panels, and biophilic design features throughout. Sustainability is paramount. Michelin says: 'When I started out 21 years ago, no one asked about sustainability. Now, every conversation is about how green a scheme is.'

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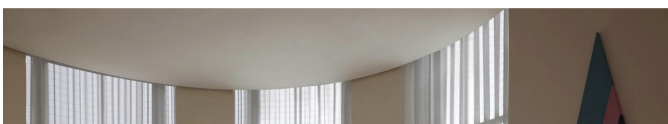
US designer Kelly Behun
(Image credit: Photography Paul Raeside; Art direction Michael Reynolds)

Meanwhile, The Whiteley may be a quintessentially British building, created by a leading British architect, but the interiors of the first show apartment have a definite transatlantic twist, thanks to US designer [Kelly Behun](#). Having run her studio in [New York](#) for more than two decades, Behun is well versed in cultivating the sort of SoHo penthouses and Fifth Avenue apartments that will appeal to The Whiteley residents.



In the kitchen, hand-carved stools from Bali; a vase from Pottery Barn; custom wicker pendant fixture by Kelly Behun Studio; a 'Leaf' bowl by [Kelly Behun for L'Objet](#) (left of sink); *La Femmes Cercle Sculpture*, by Heidi Lanino (top shelf, far right)
(Image credit: Photography Paul Raeside; Art direction Michael Reynolds)

With pastel hues, bespoke rugs and specially commissioned artworks, the three-bedroom, £12.5m apartment reflects a certain energy that feels fresh in this old-school part of London. The interiors are colourful (but not too colourful), quirky (but not too quirky) and sumptuous, always sumptuous.





'Air of Minitore' lounge chairs by Pierre Augustin Rose, for The Invisible Collection; custom onyx and oak coffee tables by Marbera and Kelly Behun Studio; 'Repose' sofa by Adam Court; commissioned pair of 'Torchiere' sconces, by Chris Wolston; 'Charm' table by Kelly Behun Studio; *Obviously* (commission) rhombus by William Finlayson; 'Sunray Gold' area rug by Mary Katrantzou for The Rug Company; 'Anemone Vase Low' by Alexander Lamont. side table from Anne Jacquemin Sablon Gallery; bronze sculpture by Voukenas Petrifies from Gallery Fumi

(Image credit: Photography Paul Raeside; Art direction Michael Reynolds)

'The interiors are inspired by the building's illustrious past, as well as its surroundings,' says Behun. 'The Whiteley's proximity to Hyde Park played a key role in the overall colour palette.' She selected a mix of rich golds, lush greens and dusky roses, and incorporated many handmade and bespoke pieces, as well as her latest collaborations with the likes of The Invisible Collection.



In a guest bedroom, *Naken on the Lawn* by Sara Dare; 'Tiptoe' lamp by Kelly Behun Studio for Hudson Valley Lighting Group; throw blanket by Wayne Tate for The Invisible Collection; velvet ikat pillows from Etsy; terracotta pot by Lydia Hardwick from Alexander Lamont; custom upholstered headboard and bed frame by Kelly Behun Studio

(Image credit: Photography Paul Raeside; Art direction Michael Reynolds)

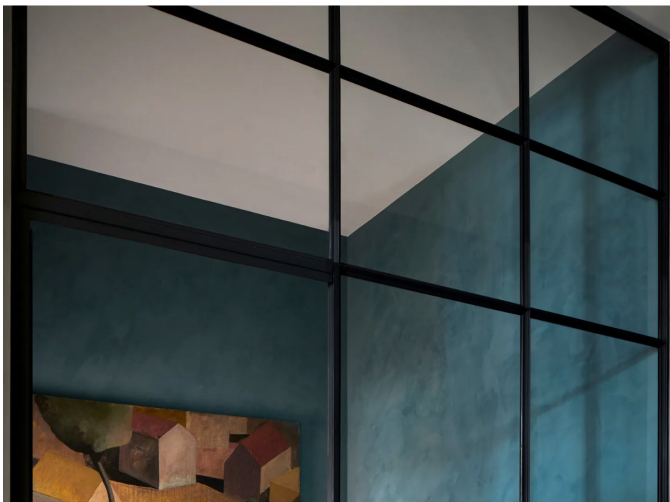
Artworks, such as a pastoral-themed mural by Behun's studio and Brooklyn-based scenic backdrop painter Sarah Oliphant, evoke a connection to the outdoors. For Michelin and Meijer, Behun was an obvious choice. 'The sheer grandeur and history of The Whiteley make it unique,' says Meijer. 'We had to appoint a designer who celebrated that

and Kelly's designs are always mindful of a building's setting, views and context.' The apartment is bathed in natural light, which streams in through huge heritage windows, and its soaring ceilings create a grandeur rarely found in the heart of the city.



In the same bedroom, *Take me to the bridge* by Sara Dare; *Necklace* (hanging) by Delphine Grandvaux; 'Giraffe' chair by Juliana Lima Vasconcellos; Moroccan rug by Soufiane Zarib; table lamp by Ceramicah; 'Leaf' platter by Kelly Behun Studio for L'Objet
(Image credit: Photography Paul Raeside; Art direction Michael Reynolds)

What do the pair say to the naysayers who cry that London doesn't need any more luxury developments? Michelin says, 'London has always had luxury housing – as have all great cities of the world. This is part of what makes these places so fantastic because the wealth drives so much investment into arts and culture.' He adds that, post-Brexit, 'London is a difficult place to do large-scale projects, which is why The Whiteley is so popular. We should be actively encouraging this kind of investment – most cities in the world are desperate to take London's crown.'



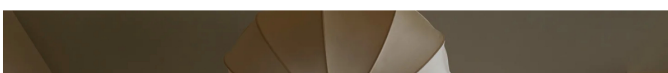


The study, with Za by Ramón Enrich; vintage stained glass lamp from Ground One Six Gallery; 'After Post Modern' chair by Tom Dixon; antique Chinese deco rug; 'Murray' vase by Tessa Wolfe
(Image credit: Photography Paul Raeside; Art direction Michael Reynolds)

A year before opening, 60 per cent of the apartments in The Whiteley had been sold, mainly to downsizers from Notting Hill, Kensington and Bayswater eager to swap their seven-storey houses for lateral living. And its popularity is not just down to a sensitive renovation; the landmark building is the cornerstone of a £3bn regeneration of Queensway. With exciting new shops and restaurants, public art projects, wider pavements, single-lane traffic and new gates into Hyde Park coming soon, Queensway is set to become a destination once more. William Whiteley would surely be proud.



The kitchen sitting area, with 'Lek' swivel lounge chairs by Christophe Delcourt from The Future Perfect in Corn (Fishmans Fabric Grizzly Mohair Spring Blossom); custom sofa by Kelly Behun Studio; custom mosaic dining table by Kelly Behun Studio; 'Touch' trays by SCP; pair of 'Minitore' lounge chairs by Pierre Augustin Rose for The Invisible Collection; commissioned pair of 'Torchiere' sconces by Chris Wolston; Moroccan rug by Soufiane Zarib
(Image credit: Photography Paul Raeside; Art direction Michael Reynolds)





The primary bedroom, with custom gold leaf panels, custom silk pendant fixture, custom oak night stands, custom upholstered headboard and bed frame all by Kelly Behun Studio; bronze and alabaster sconces by Allied Maker; 'Willow' throw pillow by Kevin O'Brien; vase by Billy Adams from Contemporary Ceramics; silk hand loomed rug by The Rug Company
(Image credit: Photography Paul Raeside; Art direction Michael Reynolds)

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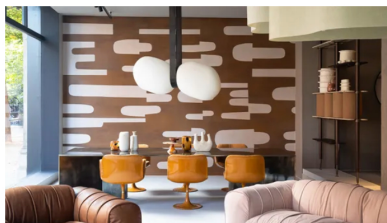
Emma O'Kelly

Emma O'Kelly is a freelance journalist and author based in London. Her books include *Sauna: The Power of Deep Heat* and she is currently working on a UK guide to wild saunas, due to be published in 2025.

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