

BOOKS, FOOD, HOTELS, ENTERTAINING

# LIVING

## The INN CROWD

**RITA KONIG** BRINGS  
BRITISH CHARM TO THE  
DECOR OF HOLLYWOOD'S  
HOTTEST NEW HOTEL.

BY SHEILA MARIKAR  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY TREVOR TONDRO

**F**ROM THE OUTSIDE, NO. 850, a new 23-room hotel in West Hollywood, looks quaint, clean, and Victorian via Cape Cod. The hotel's facade dates back to 1918; in its past life, the edifice was divided into bungalows that housed the workers who were building a railroad between Hollywood and Santa Monica. When the bungalows went on the market in 2013, Jeff Klein, the hotelier famous for the sleek Sunset Tower Hotel nearby, seemed an unlikely buyer—the decaying assemblage of buildings bore little resemblance to his fashionable landmark a few blocks east. But he had a ▶

British interior designer Rita Konig at the No. 850 hotel in West Hollywood.

# LIVING ED DESIGN HOTELS

vision, and he hired architect Marc Appleton, known for his restorations of properties such as Santa Barbara's San Ysidro Ranch, to turn the bungalows into an in-the-know hideaway. "The big guys are getting beat up by Airbnb because they don't understand how to create personal experiences," Klein says. "I asked myself, How would I want a neighborhood hotel to feel? I wanted to make something unique and special that reflects the environment, that's singular, that's authentic. When something becomes corporatized, it loses its soul."

Once Klein got Appleton on board (not an easy feat: "I initially saw it as a can of worms," Appleton says), he started soliciting recommendations for interior designers. Former *Vanity Fair* editor Graydon Carter told him about Rita Konig, the London-based interior decorator who used to hang the Christmas decorations at the Waverly Inn, in New York City, which Carter co-owns. While Klein strove for historic authenticity out front, inside he wanted to mix design periods and styles, and Konig's pitch book, Klein says, "blew me away." The decorator was guided by her affinity for Southern California's sun and color palette—fuchsia bougainvillea, whitewashed walls, cobalt skies—as well as her hatred of cookie-cutter hospitality rooms. Italian brass lamps and crystal sconces shaped like pinwheels create cocoons of warm, yellow light against cane-covered walls, "so the rooms look honeyish, rather than that gray, beige, dark color you so often find in hotels," she says.

Every room in No. 850 is different. There is a sunny corner suite featuring a patio furnished with cream-colored sun beds by the Danish brand Liggestolen. A 200-square-foot carriage room with shelves holding hardcover classics feels just like a cool dorm room. Echoing motifs tie the place together: Klein was so enamored of the handmade marbled lampshades that Konig commissioned, he had matching stationery made up for the guest rooms.

Konig plumbed antiques stores in London and L.A. for accents like a marble console and vintage photographs of

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**LEFT:** A Raymond Savignac poster above the lobby's moss velvet sectional. **ABOVE:** Konig and hotelier Jeff Klein. **BELOW:** A sunny guest room with adjoining patio.



flowers. She was jazzed to find a pair of burnished ceramic palm tree lamps at an antiques fair, then happened by a shop selling them straight from the factory. "So we bought 50 and put them in every room," she says.

Konig also found other options for singular furnishings, like the custom-made moss velvet sectional that wraps around the lobby. A weathered cognac leather armchair brings a hint of brooding to the communal living room that is otherwise boisterous with its mint-green walls and slipper chairs covered in a pattern of fat pink flowers by the fashion designer Sonia Rykiel. For inspiration, she looked to diverse sources: shopkeeper John Derian's all-white living room in Manhattan's East Village; Bunny Mellon's Antigua home decorated with Billy Baldwin; and her friend Charlotte Scott's rambling, enchanting "non-hotel" Trasierra in Spain. She also subverted all of the tropes that bug her about tower-height hotels. "You know with hotel elevators, the doors open and you're like, 'What floor is this?'" she says. "I can never remember what floor I'm on. So I did every hallway in a different color," picking sky blue for the bottom level and a rich burgundy for the uppermost, fourth floor.

There's a rooftop terrace with hazy views of downtown Los Angeles and a garden of cacti and succulents curated by local landscape designer Lisa Zeder. Apart from its preserved historic facade, No. 850 now looks very little like the decrepit, worse-for-wear bungalows that once stood in its stead—all thanks to the coming together of Klein's A-team. "It was hard not to have my imagination captured by this place," Konig says. "It's worth the effort." ■



The hotel's communal living room.