

SAVOY

M A G A Z I N E

Celebrity

NICOLA ADAMS

Witness the rise and rise of
the female boxing champion

Art

KASPAR'S CURIOSITY

Meet The Savoy's 14th guest
in the Seafood Bar and Grill

Homes

UNREAL ESTATES

Where to get your hands on
that ideal overseas property

Culture

BAROQUE BLOODLINE

Go Beyond Caravaggio at the
National Gallery exhibition

Photography

CITYSCAPE SNAPSHOTS

Sneak a peek through a top
London photographer's lens

Interiors

DECO BY DESIGN

Pierre-Yves Rochon on the
hotel's show-stopping look

Fashion

TAILOR-MADE TEA

How couturier Suzie Turner brought cake to the catwalk





ROYAL SUITE

anne(s)

PHOTOGRAPHY BY NIALL CLUTTON



THE DEVIL IN THE DETAILS

When The Savoy officially closed its doors in 2007 for an extensive renovation, there was only one man who the hotel could count on to revive its overall look and feel. In an exclusive interview, interior designer Pierre-Yves Rochon reveals how he added his own twist to the national treasure

If walls could talk, The Savoy's would certainly have a story or two to tell. Glamorous movie stars, world-famous artists, revered literary figures and fabulous fashion icons have all been guests at some point throughout its 127-year history – a history that, today, can be seen in each and every room, thanks to celebrated, award-winning French interior designer, Pierre-Yves Rochon.

As principal and global design director of the eponymous PYR firm, Rochon was brought in for the hotel's £220million, three-year restoration from 2007 to 2010, but has been overseeing projects for some of the most notable hospitality brands since 1979. During that time, he's breathed new life into luxury spaces the world over, spearheading compositions based on location, culture and history.

"I've always loved films, and used to think I would be a director," he says. "But I found I was more inspired by hospitality – the spirit of travel, the different cultures, and the charm of a welcoming arrival experience after a long journey. The hotels we work on at PYR are like designing permanent movie sets; they're high drama, impactful, and always set the scene for social engagements. The devil is always in the details."

Indeed, despite his initial infatuation with the set design aspect of film, Rochon ultimately attended École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts et Arts Appliqués in Paris, where he focused on interiors. Beginning his career in the corporate sector, he was soon drawn to hospitality, securing one of his first major hotel commissions at the Four Seasons George V in Paris, which he still works on even now.

This love of classic French ideals has endured over the years, and is evident across Rochon's portfolio. From further properties in Florence, London and Geneva, to Chicago, Vienna and Monte Carlo, he fuses traditional and modern materials, textures and furniture to create new concepts that are at once sophisticated, engaging and soothing – and The Savoy was no exception.

"The hotel's iconic status is something that cannot be imitated by any other hotel in London," he continues. "That's why I was quite surprised when I first saw the property, because it was in such a state of extreme disrepair. But I was drawn to it because I knew it would require extraordinary effort to resuscitate, and that the transformation would be nothing less than dramatic. 🎨"



SAVOY SUITE
SITTING ROOM



SAVOY SUITE
BATHROOM



ROYAL SUITE
BEDROOM



ROYAL SUITE
LIVING ROOM

“To be entrusted with this project was an honour. However, we were certainly under heavy public scrutiny, particularly as a French company working on such an important British icon. Thankfully, we all had a common goal to create a place that was full of history, yet very modern in its luxury experience; a place that would go beyond its former glory.”

To accomplish such a feat, the original Art Deco and Edwardian aesthetic was authentically expressed in the refurbishment, while no two of the 267 guestrooms’ unique appearances were kept alike. Elegant colour harmonies of cream and light green now unite the lounge, Savoy Tea shop and winter garden with the historic River Room, American Bar and sleek black and gold Beaufort Bar.

Immediately noticing that the lobby felt like a ‘hectic train terminal’, Rochon made the big decision to move the reception and cashier stations to their own quiet area – an idea that he admits is as contemporary as it is unusual, but one that he insists works well for the hotel nonetheless, offering a peaceful and relaxing check-in and check-out process for visitors.

“We study culture, history, architecture and geography as a starting point of every project we work on”

At the same time, some of the major historical pieces in the lobby were kept and restored, such as the glass-domed revolving doors, which had welcomed so many celebrities and historic figures in their time. Elsewhere, the layouts of the guestrooms were modernised and reconfigured to make the most of the windows, enjoying the spectacular views of the Thames.

“The first key to luxury design is having the right layout and a comfortable flow, before you start adding furniture, colour and materials,” Rochon explains. “Proportion, scale and symmetry are concepts from European classicism that have been applied throughout The Savoy to create the timeless ambiance you sense today.

“The two specific styles reflect the Edwardian period of when the hotel was first built, and the Art Deco period from Paris, which heavily influenced it in the 1920s and ‘30s. In France, and in Europe in general, there’s a great deal of history, and I think people tend to have a deeper appreciation for authenticity and craftsmanship because of that. Over a thousand craftsman can be credited to the detailed restoration at The Savoy.”

In order to achieve his vision, Rochon used stone, wood and period colourations for the Edwardian and Art Deco schemes, with more mahogany in the former and maple in the latter. Two recent highlights that utilise both to full effect include the open, light-filled Royal Suite revamp, as well as the brand new Savoy Suite, for which Rochon teamed up with ReardonSmith Architects.

The Royal Suite was remodelled to enhance the heart of the space and encourage harmonious flow between rooms, which reflect a comfortable, less formal, but just as luxurious experience. The Savoy Suite’s Edwardian influences, meanwhile, were combined with a bolder, contrasting cinnamon tone, providing a warmth that complements its use of wood, and accommodates a 21st-century clientele.

“The two new suites were a delight to work on, each with its own distinct personality,” reflects Rochon. “The Savoy Suite is more contemporary, done in rich creams with red accents. It has a very dynamic feel, with a private, seasonally revolving collection of modern artwork. The Royal Suite is more classical, done in ivory and shimmering gold, with a glamorous black and gold bar, reminiscent of the Beaufort Bar. 🍸”



“Both suites used to be more compartmentalised and closed off from room to room, but we joined spaces to create a more open layout, which has become much more popular in modern years. It’s always fun to reconfigure rooms and furniture to see what adds the most energy, and to anticipate how a guest will actually move, sit and set down their cocktail. I’ll still walk through occasionally and find myself readjusting furniture and accessories – design is never done!”

Among the main challenges Rochon came up against was ensuring a seamless flow from one room to the next, so that guests’ time at The Savoy continued to remain as relaxed and enjoyable as possible. Fortunately, the building’s structural skeleton had already laid much of the groundwork, allowing an effortless stream of continuity to resonate through the halls.

“It can certainly be a challenge to make all the functional spaces feel interesting, unique and not repetitive, but still cohesive,” Rochon admits. “The navigation and flow throughout The Savoy is very natural, with an efficient space plan that allows for a comfortable circulation experience.

“I think having this foundation helps when we want to apply different styles and themes throughout the hotel. We’re purposeful in applying common materials or colours that echo across both Edwardian and Art Deco areas, such as the classic, polished black and white marble you see in the lobby, outside the tea and chocolate shop, and in the guestroom bathrooms.”

As for Rochon’s personal favourites, the Beaufort Bar is undoubtedly towards the top of his list. Designed for an evening crowd, the space was renowned for its cabaret and burlesque performances in wartime – a talking point that Rochon capitalised on no end, placing the cocktail bar on the stage as ‘the star of the show’, and displaying dark silhouettes of legs in its backlight to capture the magic.

“When you transition from the lightness and charm of the Thames Foyer into the darker, more intimate spaces of the Beaufort Bar, the effect is dramatic,” he considers. “The simple combination of black and gold, when applied in particular textures, patterns and layers, along with the Art Deco furniture, creates high-impact glamour.

“There’s a very seductive atmosphere here, as if you’ve disappeared deep into a place of intrigue and exclusivity. As with all of our designs, the intent is to choreograph specific

types of environments that pull you out of your normal routine, and set the stage for creating new and memorable moments.”

Similarly, a grand sense of occasion permeates through much of Rochon’s work elsewhere. In the Thames Foyer, the timeless tradition of afternoon tea became the focal point of the room, which was designed entirely around the popular event, including a wrought-iron winter garden gazebo to help make its scale more personal.

“We study culture, history, architecture and geography as a starting point of every project we work on,” reveals Rochon. “That’s why each project is a learning experience, and no two projects are ever the same. The Thames Foyer was a space that spoke to me in particular because it was located in the heart of the hotel, and felt like it needed to be celebrated as such.

“I knew afternoon tea was a very special tradition in London, so had many discussions about how to create the most authentic English tea experience possible. When you’re sitting comfortably, with natural light filtering in from the glass dome, and live music playing softly as your tea is being poured in front of you, it’s a completely enchanting experience.”

A sentiment that rings true not only for the Thames Foyer, but for the hotel in its entirety. Whether it’s the sumptuous suites, beautiful bars or dazzling dining spaces, visitors can see Rochon’s personal touch around every corner. And although he continues to work in a wide range of styles, from classical to ultramodern, he’ll always instil a sense of timelessness in every nook and cranny.

“The Savoy feels like it exists at the intersection of a bygone era and today,” he concludes. “Things change very quickly these days; we’re now in the age of self-driving cars, selfie sticks and Snapchats. I like to think that the basic elements of luxury don’t change so much – things like comfort, elegance and craftsmanship.

“It’s an honour to continue to help the hotel evolve through the years, and to be a protector of its heritage and spirit. We’d love to keep working on The Savoy for as long as we can, and to continue delighting guests every time they step foot here.”



