

Hollie Bowden channels the ambience of dimly lit gentlemen's clubs for London office



Ali Morris | 8 June 2021 | 4 comments

London's gentlemen's clubs informed the rich material palette of dark stained oak, aged leather and natural textiles in this London office interior by Hollie Bowden.

Spread across two floors of a stately Georgian townhouse in the centre of Marylebone, the office features a subtle blend of textures, classic furniture design and bespoke furniture.

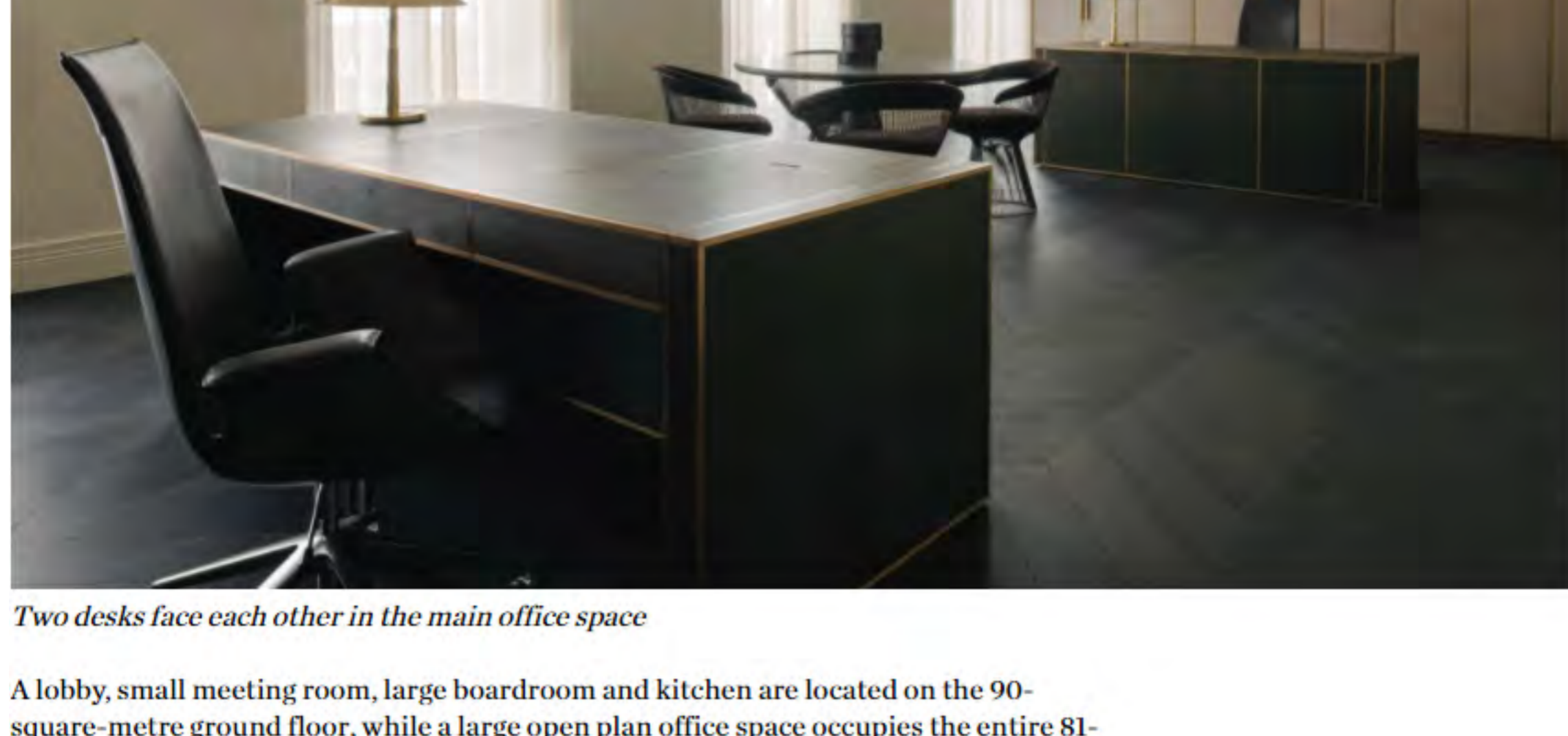
It includes horsehair covered cabinets, a leather and brass inlay desk and a freestanding leather bar with a brass interior.



Above: honed grey marble was used to form the lobby floor and desk. Top: bespoke horsehair-panelled doors conceal a wall of storage

British designer Bowden, who describes herself as a "minimal maximalist", was asked by the client to create a muted, calm and luxurious space to house its London headquarters.

The client, German real estate company Schönhaus, required its London headquarters to be extremely practical, providing settings for employees to meet and work, as well as an office for two people with a space for entertaining.



Two desks face each other in the main office space

A lobby, small meeting room, large boardroom and kitchen are located on the 90-square-metre ground floor, while a large open plan office space occupies the entire 81-square-metre first floor.

"We placed a lot of emphasis on enhancing the functional side of the office with some special antiques and design classics – like the Gino Sarfatti 1082 lamp, and the Jacques Adnet coat rack – but the brief was largely open in terms of the aesthetic and how we executed the practicalities of an office," she told Dezeen.



A pair of Swedish modernist lamps from the 1930s stand on the two desks

The building's historical interior detailing and original arrangement of rooms had been stripped out over the years during successive renovations.

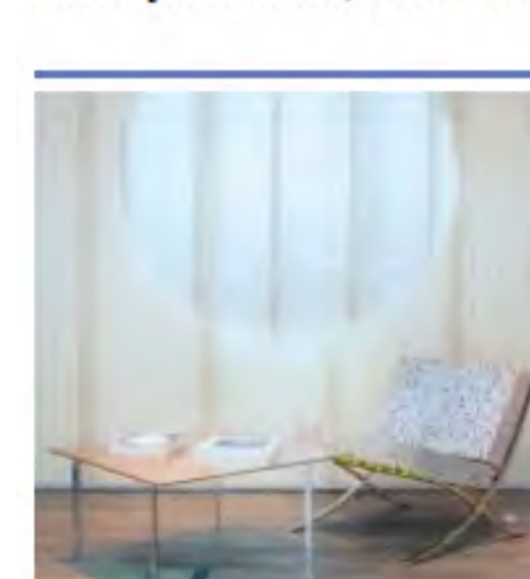
As a result, the ceilings were lower than a typical Georgian townhouse, providing a place for the refreshed mechanical and electrics.



Reflective metals such as brass create the impression of being in a gentlemen's club

"It provided us with carte blanche to shape the interiors," Bowden told Dezeen.

"Because the original mouldings and cornices had been removed we decided to detail the space using a minimal language. Some key parts of the building couldn't be altered namely the stairs, due to heritage restrictions."



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The material palette – which includes dark stained oak, dull and reflective metals such as antique brass, aged leather and natural textiles – was informed by the aesthetic of London's gentlemen's clubs.

"The ambience in these clubs is also rather dimly lit and the colour palette is generally muted with flashes of colour," Bowden said. "The treatment we gave this palette was the minimal detailing, which gave it a freshness and contemporary edge."



A chandelier in the boardroom resembles five juggling diablos in mid-air

For example, the format of the Hungarian point parquet on the first floor was enlarged to make it more modern, while the overall ambience of the first floor was inspired by the sparse arrangements of the French modernist designer Jean Michel Frank.

Honed grey marble was used on the ground floor to create a gentle glow. "It sits lightly in the space, and its exceptional fine detailing makes it feel seamless and calm," said Bowden.



Stained oak panelling features throughout the interior

"The ambience of the spaces is quite masculine, so introducing lighter textures, like the sheer linen curtains and the soft tufted wool rug, brought an airiness to the rooms," she continued.

"It was also important to reuse elements of the palette in interesting ways and make liaisons with it throughout, like the leather-wrapped pendant light by Apparatus in the ground floor meeting room."



Lighter elements such as this white armchair balance out the masculinity of the space

The lighting throughout was intended to give each area a domestic feel in contrast to the glaring, even light typically associated with commercial offices.

"The pendant lights in each space provided moments of sculptural lightness and release, in contrast to the more solid volumes of the furniture," Bowden explained.

"We tend to always think about the relationship between objects in any space as the interplay of sculptural qualities, but lighting is an element we look to, to provide the perfect foil for the dominant materials and volumes in the space."

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Photography is by Genevieve Lutkin.

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