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ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN AT WORK

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Rising star  
**YINKA ILORI**  
swings into **LDF**  
with a playground  
in a business  
hotel

**100% DESIGN  
PREVIEW**  
Where to go  
and what to see

**SIX AND  
THE CITY**  
Inside Stockholm's  
luxury At Six hotel

**HAUTE  
COUTURE**  
Grimshaw's HQ for  
Yoox Net-a-Porter

WORK  
& REST  
PLAY

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**PROJECT TYPE**  
HOTEL

## Brutalist beauty

*Universal Design Studio softens one of Stockholm's brutalist buildings to create a contemporary luxury hotel*



**n** The dining room and grand marble staircase

**O**nOffice was first introduced to the At Six hotel on the Stockholm Furniture Fair press trip in February; even in its construction stages, it was clear that this was a highly ambitious project. Petter Stordalen of Nordic Hotels & Resorts had enlisted London-based practice Universal Design Studio

(UDS) to take up the challenge of creating this hotel in Stockholm's brutalist Brunkebergstorg Square – the hotel's location at number 6 gives it its name. The brief was to not only redefine the contemporary luxury hotel within such a muscular building but to house one of Europe's most impressive contemporary hotel art collections.

"The building, a brutalist high-rise structure, was originally designed in the 1970s by Swedish architect Boijesen & Efvergren and with our design we tried to humanise the imposing architecture, while also making its unique qualities part of the project," says UDS co-director Hannah Carter Owers. "We wanted to create a hotel experience that ☺



feels unique, distinct and memorable but also at ease in the building and in Stockholm.”

UDS provided a complete interior renovation and new entrance facade, working to reinterpret the brutalist aesthetic of the building and the setting of the square. The work with the square forms part of a wider regeneration programme, hoping to restore the area to its historic role as a vibrant, social hub as it was in the late 19th century.

“Working within a period building we felt it important to establish an interior that felt authentic in character and permanent. The ‘grand hotel redefined for modern day life’ was a theme running throughout the design process... It’s a contemporary space, with an international outlook, and therefore we strongly felt that elements of the interior needed to draw their cues from the building and square,” Carter Owers reflects.

The material palette selected enabled the designers to humanise and soften the space. While UDS sought to celebrate the history of the site, it was also essential to bring a sense of luxury and fashion to the hotel and the combinations of rich, natural finished materials move away from the unforgiving characteristics of brutalism.

“Our starting point for the lobby, restaurant and bar interior architecture was the stone cladding on one of the other buildings in the square (Peter Celsing’s Riksbank building),” she says. “The aim was to reinterpret the brutalist aesthetic of the building and the immediate architectural landscape



Works by artists such as Richard Long are on display

Harsh edges are softened by rich, natural materials

The building was designed by Boijesen & Efvargren in 1977

*“The aim was to reinterpret the brutalist aesthetic of the building in a way that felt relevant, comfortable and contemporary”*



of Brunkebergstorg Square in a way that felt relevant, comfortable and contemporary.”

At the heart of the hotel, UDS placed “the new white granite grand staircase that acts as circulation and stage, drawing people up to the restaurant and lounges” Sawn stone, blackened steel, fine timber and polished granite also give a sense of warmth and permanence to the space and are contrasted with the soft furnishings selected.

The architects opted for various 20th century furniture pieces, including re-editions of classic ☺



*“Even the smallest standard rooms have clear hallway, sleeping and living zones”*

▣ Timber panelling adds luxury to a standard room

▣ Mar Whispering by Jaume Plensa on the marble stair



▣ A carved marble freestanding bath in the Presidential Suite

Scandinavian pieces. The aesthetic contrast plays out across the public floors and into guest rooms. UDS created three newly built top floors and the ten-floor hotel now holds 343 guest rooms, a 100-cover restaurant, two bars, a wellness centre and a 200sq m event, meeting and flexible workspace. On top of this, At Six is home to Scandinavia's first slow listening music lounge.

In guest rooms, custom furniture and bespoke lighting are juxtaposed with timber wall panels and marble credenzas that run the length of each room. UDS wanted “every room to feel like a suite so even the smallest standard rooms all have clear hallway, sleeping and living zones”.

The hotel is brought to life by the wonderful array of bespoke detail, international and local design that was brought to the space. Noteworthy highlights include custom lighting by Rubn in each room, handmade glass pieces in the public areas by local glassmaker Carina Seth Andersson, a Swedish leather handrail hand-wrapped by a local saddlemaker for the lobby's grand staircase and the wine bar's communal table, carved from a single Swedish elm trunk by local artist Lies-Marie Hoffman.



The hotel is also a backdrop for original artwork, curated by a former international museum director. “We worked closely with respected curator Sune Nordgren to create spaces that would allow the showcase of world-class contemporary art. Therefore, we needed to design a hotel that could accommodate both the spectacle of the art while not alienating the needs of the guests,” explains Carter Owers.

The hotel's attention-grabbing signature piece Mar Whispering, a

2.5m high marble head by Catalan artist Jaume Plensa, surveys the hotel lobby, while the restaurant's open kitchen is framed by a 6m long work by British artist Richard Long.

“There is a sense of romance about the place,” concludes Carter Owers. “Whether it's the sweeping staircase, the art, the long views or the luxurious rooms through detail, material and furniture that subtly reference a point in time last century while feeling contemporary.” ▣