

THE MAYFAIR

APRIL 2013 • ISSUE 019 • £4.00

MAGAZINE



BEST OF BRITISH

Fly the flag this month as we bring you everything that makes Britain great, including The Beatles, Monty Python, David Bowie, The Olivier Awards and McLaren. Plus, join us in celebrating a fabulous 50 years of Annabel's

Move over Candy brothers, March & White is the new name in luxury architecture and interior design.

As they prepare to take on their fourth royal residence, we meet the men behind the brand to discuss the new super-wealthy, nail-polish colour charts and why British design is at the top of its game

WORDS: ELLE BLAKEMAN

James White and Elliot March are annoyingly discreet. We are sitting in Little House, Mayfair and despite gaining their fourth royal residence commission, both remain pretty tight-lipped on the details. Sadly it's tea time, not cocktail hour, so I doubt this will change.

'With the Arabic community we need to be super-confidential, so it's more word of mouth. They don't really want us talking about their private spaces,' says White.

It's been just three years since the pair launched March & White, both leaving high-profile architecture design firms to set up on their own, yet the list of luxury projects they have worked on is an impressive one: The Arts Club, LIMA, townhouses in Mayfair, beach houses in the Middle East, and now, another royal residence somewhere – I can't even get that out of them – in the Middle East.

'We just think of it as a really, really vast residence,' says White, explaining why they are not overwhelmed with the scale and status of their current challenge. The building in question is going to be the second largest residence in the world, so 'vast' maybe be underplaying it.

As with our own royals, the time is coming for the next generation to take centre stage, and like every parent-child dynamic, the younger ones want to make their own way.

'The younger royals don't want what their parents had,' says March. 'They are lot a more travelled and many have been educated in the UK or the US and they are used to staying in the best hotels. As a result they feel at home with contemporary looks, so that is how they see their interiors.'

Moving away from the traditional, both designers understand what the new generation of homeowners are looking for.

'A lot of these families own hotels around the world now, so it's intrinsically linked. They'll say "Have you seen this hotel suite" or "That place in New York" and then poor James and I have to go and see these amazing places!' says March. It's a tough life.

However neither are looking to simply recreate a hotel space. 'You've got to try and bring that "hotel look" with a little bit more luxury. Everything has to be a little bit more tailored, more homely. You need to bring in features that relate to the individual client.' →

IMAGE
BRACKENBURY
HOUSE

The march of change



→ Oddly, the process seems similar whether it's a regal Middle Eastern residence or a mews in Belgravia, it's all about getting into the client's head. 'You really need to get to know your client – what they like, don't like, what they do; basically we need to know how they live,' says March.

This level of involvement is where March & White is breathing fresh air into an industry that had previously decided that luxury taste was all largely the same: gold-leaf bathrooms, mahogany furniture, tables the size of tennis courts; but today's super-wealth is not so easily categorised.

'Some of our competitors are a lot more focused on development, and that kind of generates a style,' says March. 'Whereas we are really dealing with clients all the way through. And they really have their own opinions about what they want, their favourite colours, materials – that all comes in and influences how it looks.'

He recounts a time when a female client pulled out all of her favourite nail polishes to use as a colour chart. 'I thought that was amazing,' says March. 'It was very personal, and showed us what she likes, so we were able to say, "Ok, let's use this as a starting point".'

There seems to be a trend in property for bringing together architecture and design. 'Combining the two disciplines to create a kind of holistic product works intrinsically well. A lot of the time, the whole design and space will be compromised when a client brings in an architect and separate interior designer,' say White.

'British design is still at the top of its game,' says March. 'The level of education, the amount of resources and design projects that we naturally have in London and Europe – it's the best place to be for a design firm.'

Their next project is one that visibly excites them both – a super yacht for another high-profile client. 'It's the dream project,' says March. 'The level of craftsmanship is in a different league to dealing with a house, because everything is moving on a yacht.'

'Everything has to be engineered to a different level, which is amazing,' he says, clearly relishing the challenge.

Again no names, no specific details. All this discretion must be difficult from a PR point of view?

'Obviously we would like to show people more of what we do but it's all word of mouth and you hopefully go from one project to the next,' says March. It seems to be working so far. ■

(www.marchandwhite.com)



'British design is



TOP ROW, FROM LEFT:
SUSSEX GARDENS ©
KILIAN O'SULLIVAN;
KNIGHTSBRIDGE
APARTMENT © KILIAN
O'SULLIVAN; LUXURY
HOME IN THE MIDDLE
EAST; RIGHT: DETAIL OF
THE BESPOKE ETCHED-
MIRROR RECEPTION DESK
IN LOBBY OF SUSSEX
GARDENS APARTMENTS
© KILIAN O'SULLIVAN



still at the top of its game' – Elliot March



ELLIOT AND JAMES AT THE ARTS CLUB, MAYFAIR. MARCH & WHITE WORKED ON THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE CLUB AND THE INTERIORS, PICTURED, WERE CREATED BY SAGRADA.