

THE GLOSS

INTERIORS

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MAGAZINE

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timeless

autumnal
vibes

Chocolate
Burgundy
Corduroy

leaving
well
enough
alone

Adapting the English Town
House and Irish Country
House for modern living



Tree SUITE

A rejuvenated woodland in Co Cork is the site of 24 lodges that nestle in the landscape or mingle with the tree line

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RUTH MARIA MURPHY



ABOVE A striking central oak monolith table with bespoke silk shades and brass table lamps designed by Róisín Lafferty. Travertine flooring complements the curved polished plaster walls, while full-height windows immerse guests in the surrounding woodland.

The Woodland Suites, perched on stilts, are harmoniously integrated into the treetops. The structures are clad in slatted, charred timber, resembling nests woven into the forest canopy.

The relationship between human beings and nature and well-integrated sustainable architecture is, we are told, the future of tourism. A fine example of how these three elements can combine successfully to deliver an unparalleled guest experience, is the design for the redevelopment of the wild and rambling grounds at The Montenotte Hotel in Cork. The project, by architects Henry J Lyons (HJL), involved the creation of 24 lightweight lodges, a number cantilevered over the River Lee (the River Suites), with the remainder (the Woodland Suites) and a residents-only clubhouse, within the rejuvenated woodland. The scheme unlocked the potential of the steeply sloping site, while enhancing the features of the historic garden and working to heal and regenerate the landscape.

The minimalist, low-impact architecture, aimed at reconnecting the suites with nature and rejuvenating the woodland, lent itself to the sort of avant garde luxury interiors that we have come to expect from interior designer Róisín Lafferty. Her aim was to foster a sense of tranquillity and immersion in nature, while also showcasing innovative design and craftsmanship.

NATURAL DESIGN



The interior of a suite from the entrance, looking through the breakfast bar towards a beautifully framed Japanese maple at the centre. An oak box encloses this space, separated from the sleeping area by custom-designed rice paper bi-fold screens that diffuse the light softly. The substantial travertine countertop complements the silver travertine flooring below.

Lafferty drew inspiration from Scandinavian and Japanese design, using natural materials like American oak, natural silver travertine floors, and custom rice paper elements that diffuse daylight into a soft glow, creating a serene, nature-focused atmosphere. “Each suite incorporates a tree, mirroring the calming presence of nature and creating an atmosphere where the only ‘noise’ is that of the natural elements,” says Lafferty. The suites are designed to enhance the connection to the outdoors, with beds and freestanding stone bath basins oriented towards panoramic views.

Choosing designs to suit the natural landscape while enhancing features of the historic garden was the priority, according to HJL architects John Burgoyne and Holly Lagerqvist: “A key aspect of the architectural design process involved preserving and celebrating the existing features of the site including retaining elements such as old walls and steps, capturing the essence of the site’s former history and character.”

The architects worked closely with local authorities to ensure the project was sensitive to its environment, reflecting a deep commitment to sustainability and respect for the natural landscape. For every stay at the Woodland Suites and River Suites, The Montenotte’s owners have pledged to plant a tree – the Nights-for-Nature initiative is in partnership with Irish charity, Hometree. ■



ABOVE A cosy seating nook and suspended leather banquette seat create an intimate and inviting atmosphere. BELOW The interiors capture the serene beauty of the treetops, with custom-designed oak beds that transform into sofas. A freestanding bath is positioned at the foot of the bed, a luxurious vantage point from which to admire the surrounding woodland. The headboard, crafted with integrated bi-fold rice paper screens, adds a subtle, diffused glow to the space.

