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Downtown deluxe

Gallerist Rabih Hage's new London hotel champions an offbeat homespun take on luxury



Sometimes you walk into a building and it feels right – it's nothing to do with ideal proportions or expensive interiors, rather a sense of calm and informality that makes you feel at home. Rough Luxe is one such place. It's London's newest hotel, but you won't find a swanky reception desk or intimidating staff here. Instead, in a narrow Georgian townhouse that climbs ever upwards, there are nine bijou guest rooms where shabby chic meets modern glamour; plus a housekeeper to attend to your every need.

It's the idea of London gallerist Rabih Hage, known for his exhibitions of work by cutting-edge talents. A friend bought the building – located just in front of Rabih's King's Cross gallery – from a family who'd been running it as a hotel for years. Originally the pair planned just a basic modernisation, but as old wallpaper was

peeled away, forgotten layers of antique pattern were revealed and began to work their charm on Rabih's creative spirit. 'The walls just started talking,' he explains. 'So we stripped them back and left them.'

Against this backdrop a concept of offbeat, homespun luxury was born. Rabih amassed a diverse collection of furnishings and artworks, including antiques, new pieces and bespoke designs, to create an effect that is deliberately rough around the edges. 'It's minimalist in the Japanese way – minimal effort for maximum effect,' explains Rabih. 'True luxury is not "bling", but something you experience in a place that's unique.' He's now planning to convert a cowshed in St Moritz and a bodega (wine cellar) in Spain. Roughing it seldom seems so tempting. ●►

*Rough Luxe, 1 Birkenhead Street, WC1
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'It's minimalist in the Japanese way – minimal effort for maximum effect. True luxury is not “bling”, but something you experience in a place that's unique'



Previous page, from top The dining room features enlarged photographs by Italian artist Massimo Listi. The bespoke table, which is teamed with mismatched chairs, is made from oak planks reclaimed from Brighton Pier. The hotel garden is furnished with Dutch designer Per Hein Esk's salvaged-wood chairs and tables

This page, from top left A mirror-effect artwork by Daniel Baker in the dining room. In the entrance area is a seat made from old chair frames by Karen Ryan. The portrait of Gilbert & George is by photographer Jonathan Root. A guest bathroom boasts a mix of contemporary and vintage design, including a table clad in Braxza tiles. Bedrooms all feature hotel owner Rabih Hage's own bed design, which cleverly transforms into a huge sofa by day. **DECO**

