

ONLINE | INTERIORS

Albion Nord Q&A

London, UK

Interior design studio Albion Nord's work on two townhouses at the redeveloped Chelsea Barracks has resulted in a collection of British-made furniture and homewares inspired by the project. Creative director Camilla Clarke explains what makes this young practice tick



ONE OF TWO TOWNHOUSES DESIGNED BY ALBION NORD AT CHELSEA BARRACKS

DESIGN ANTHOLOGY UK: Can you explain more about the Chelsea Barracks townhouses?

CAMILLA CLARKE: We really wanted to create houses that feel like homes – homes that have been collected and curated over time. We began by looking at Belgravia and the surrounding area and then the immediate site of Chelsea Barracks and its history. Inheritance and legacy plays such an important role in the wider development that we really wanted to weave that narrative into the smallest details within the house through carefully selected art, antiques and accessories.

DAUK: At what point did you decide to create an accompanying collection of furniture and homeware?

CC: It evolved as part of the original plan when we were commissioned by Qatari Diar to design and dress two of the townhouses at the development. We understood the ethos and importance of legacy within Chelsea Barracks, and wanted to take this one step further by creating a capsule collection of pieces that draw upon the deep-rooted history of Belgravia, the Georgian era and the Barracks itself – standing as items that can last a lifetime and be passed down from generation to generation.



BEN JOHNSON, OTTALIE STRIDE, ANTHONY KOOPMAN,
CAMILLA CLARKE OF ALBION NORD



WELLINGTON DESK BY STRIDE & CO AND COLLIER WEBB
FOR ALBION NORD



BELGRAVIA LAMP BY DAVID TURNER/CONCEPT BESPOKE
FOR ALBION NORD



ELIZABETH SIDE TABLE, BY STRIDE & CO FOR ALBION NORD

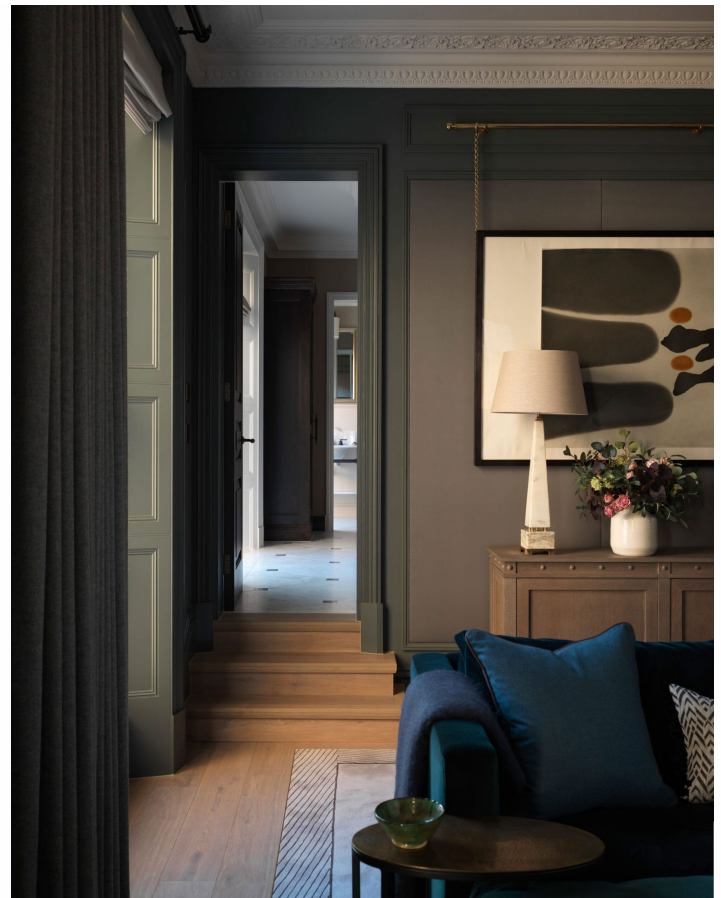
DAUK: What are some of the stories behind the design of the pieces in the collection?

CC: Each has its own story to tell that harks back to Belgravia, the barracks, the Georgian era and Great Britain. The Elizabeth side table takes inspiration from the popular tea tables seen in the 18th century. We have reimagined it into a single sculptural form using a beautiful English pippy oak. Named to pay homage to Queen Elizabeth II who visited the barracks as one of her first official engagements as Queen, the piece celebrates the wonderful nature and character of English oak and is one of our favourite items in the collection.

Another statement piece is the Wellington desk. It's based on a military campaign desk and comes in three parts – two legs and a carcass – referring to the portable nature of these objects, which would typically have been moved from post to post. Named after Arthur Wellesley, the 1st Duke of Wellington, our interpretation is a wooden desk with lockable, leather-lined drawers and a desktop made from a single piece of pippy oak. The desk and drawer fronts are clad in reeded timber and each of the lockable drawers come with their own cast key featuring the Chelsea Barracks rose mark. The base is also inspired by the original collapsible legs of a military campaign desk, with bronzed legs and lion paw feet in brass.



THE HALLWAY IN A JOHN NASH-DESIGNED TERRACE IN
MARYLEBONE



THE LIVING ROOM IN A JOHN NASH-DESIGNED TERRACE IN
MARYLEBONE

“The beauty of British craftsmanship is that the craftspeople are masters in the materials they work with, and their traditional making methods mean that the pieces they make will stand the test of time”

DA: You’ve collaborated with some great British makers on the project, from ceramicist Sally Marien to furniture maker Stride & Co. Is working with craftspeople one of the nicest parts of your job?

CC: Absolutely. We are very lucky to work with some incredible British craftspeople who we can trust to deliver the best design possible. The beauty of British craftsmanship is that the craftspeople are masters in the materials they work with, and their traditional making methods mean that the pieces they make will stand the

test of time.

DA: What's the recipe for creating soul and character in a scheme, especially in a new build?

CC: One of our favourite ways to do this is through the use of antiques. We love to mix the old and the new in our projects and antiques add a sense of character and history that bring a home to life. There is nothing more charming than a well-loved piece of furniture; to see the patination in an old mirror or marks on a well-used desk makes the pieces feel more special, and adds character and soul.

DA: What's been your most challenging project to date?

CC: We are currently working on a private Grade-II listed stately home in Berkshire. The property is rich in history, designed by architect Henry Holland and with landscapes by Capability Brown. We are currently working to sensitively restore this historic property into a home for modern day living. The challenge of this project is getting the perfect balance of mixing the old with the new. We aim to create a home that responds to the everyday needs of the client whilst honouring the history and heritage of the site.



DA: How does the past inform your work? Do you always like to have elements of old and new together?

CC: For every project, we always start by looking at the history of the site and surrounding area. Our ethos is ultimately all about making homes that will last a lifetime, so we often look to the past in order to speak to the design of the future.

The notion of mixing elements of old and new has also played a particularly prevalent part in our designs for The Chelsea Barracks Collection. For example, the Barracks bench is a modern interpretation of the ancient Thebes stool: our version is a fumed pippy oak wooden bench with a soft leather seat cushion upholstered in one of the bespoke fabrics we designed for the collection. Beneath the seat cushion is woven cane, a feature that draws particular inspiration from the first replica of an ancient Egyptian Thebes stool made by William Birch for Liberty London in 1883. While our interpretation of this piece fits nicely into the context of the new townhouses at Chelsea Barracks, we have designed the Barracks bench to be the most resolved development of the Thebes bench to date.



BARRACKS BENCH BY STRIDE & CO FOR ALBION NORD

Words Emily Brooks

Images Courtesy of Albion Nord

