



Department of the interior

Sella Concept melds old and new to design coworking community PUBLIC Hall



PUBLIC Hall, Huckletree, design by Sella Concept, all photography by Genevieve Lutkin

The new Westminster workspace PUBLIC Hall is set to open its doors – to reveal a striking heritage-meets-modern interior conceived and created by London design studio Sella Concept (aka Sella).

One Horse Guards Avenue sits comfortably among London's most impressive buildings. Built in 1884 in the French Renaissance style, it stands an imposing 100ft tall and stretches 600ft along the edge of Embankment Gardens, an iconic stretch of London's classic Thames vista. Initially an apartment block, it served as MI6 HQ during the First World War. Now, it enters a new chapter as the home of PUBLIC Hall – Westminster's only curated co-working space focused on public-sector technology start-ups and innovators (aka GovTech).



A collaboration between venture firm PUBLIC and workspace accelerator Huckletree, the new open-plan shared workspace aims to nurture a community of startups, investors and innovators, enable them to build relationships with civil servants and Westminster policymakers, and help shape the future of public services.



To succeed, the environment needs to be inspiring. It has to engender collaboration, nourish creative thinking and support productivity. Following Sella's work on East London creative hub De Beauvoir Block in 2018, Huckletree turned to design duo Tatjana von Stein and Gayle Noonan, and charged them with transforming a Grade II-listed heritage space into a unique and energising environment for disruptive modern thinking to thrive.

"We were conscious that although our designs needed to bring newness, they also needed to be mindful of their historic setting. We chose to work with Sella Concept to help evolve our aesthetic, in line with the heritage of One Horse Guards and PUBLIC. The result is a merging of old and new, bringing new sophistication, a contemporary take on Art Deco, and colours that are reflective of English heritage, including Celestial Blue, Dorchester Pink and Sage Green."

– Gabriela Hersham, Huckletree founder and CEO



Sella was responsible for the look and feel of all aspects of the space, which can accommodate up to 250 members. As well as an open-plan workspace, this includes communal areas and meeting rooms, a bespoke library and a bar.



Thrilled to have such a magnificent building as their canvas, and with an abundance of beautifully crafted details to draw on for inspiration, Sella were also conscious of the challenges of working within the constraints such a setting imposes. Prevented from making structural changes to dictate flow, Tatjana and Gayle concentrated on using furniture, fixtures, paintwork and other decorative elements to determine the evolving relationship between aesthetic and function within the space.

Taking cues from both the French Renaissance architecture and the progressive habits of today's communal working culture, Sella have developed a timeless blend of heritage and modernity. Material touches such as French cane on the reception desk pay tribute to the historic elements, whereas bold forms and colour palettes, and wooden accents tilt the scales towards the contemporary. Huckletree's own brand motif of black and white stripes is woven into the space with imagination and subtlety – such as in the black glossy tabletops with cylindrical striped timber legs in the meeting rooms.



The overall feeling is one of openness and light; corridors lead into expansive work spaces and communal areas, creating a sense that one is emerging into open space – a feeling of discovery.



Looking to maintain an atmosphere of elegance and simplicity in PUBLIC Hall's office spaces, Sella worked with Opendesk, customising one of the company's desk designs with a touch of colour to sit more comfortably with the setting.

"The main objective was to retain the grandeur of the space while injecting the Huckletree brand's playful nature – a piece of the past and a step into the future. We added a contemporary layer that merges both worlds with a discreet elegance that can make you feel calm, at home, and inspired to create."

–Tatjana von Stein, co-founder, Sella Concept

One of the most dramatic areas of the project is the bar and event space, where an integrated tree serves to bring the outside in, establishing a seamless connection to the Thames-view terrace. Soft organic colours and forms – combined with an abundance of greenery – underscore the room's connection with nature and



contrast with the haughty theatricality of the original plasterwork on the ceiling. At the heart of the room is a curvy bespoke banquette seat – fitted with a bolster and upholstered in Pierre Frey fabric – that can easily be removed if the room needs to adapt to suit a specific function.



The lower-ground floor is the only non-original part of One Horse Guards Avenue, leaving Sella with the challenge of establishing a sense of coherence and continuity with the period spaces above. In the library, the use of arches – a Sella design signature – creates a visual connection with the rest of the building, including the arched partitions in the meeting rooms. To address the limited natural light in these basement rooms, Sella used sisal wall panels and Arte wallpapers to add texture and lightness.



Notes to editors

For more images of PUBLIC Hall and interviews with Sella, please contact Grace Ridley-Smith at grace@zetteler.co.uk or on +44 (0)20 3735 5855.

About PUBLIC Hall

PUBLIC Hall powered by Huckletree is the first GovTech-focused workspace, bringing together a curated community of start-ups, investors and innovators transforming public services. Created in partnership with leading GovTech venture firm PUBLIC, and based on the iconic Horse Guards Avenue, PUBLIC Hall is located at the heart of the UK's policy making district.

About Sella Concept

Founded in 2016 by Tatjana von Stein and Gayle Noonan, Sella Concept is an international design studio specialising in interiors, identities and installations. Known for its attention to sensory detail and brand-driven design process, Sella's work encompasses interiors, visual identity, branding, set and event design and curation. Its projects encompass offices and workspaces, retail and other commercial spaces, restaurants and bars, hotels and members' clubs.

sella-concept.com

About Huckletree

Founded by Gabriela Hersham and Andrew Lynch in 2014, Huckletree is a workspace accelerator bringing together a diverse, disruptive community of start-ups, scale-ups, innovation teams and global brands who are working collaboratively to build a better future. Its expanding community already counts locations in London, Dublin and Manchester. PUBLIC Hall is the latest expansion announcement from the Huckletree group, with further spaces planned for 2019 and 2020.

huckletree.com

About PUBLIC

PUBLIC was founded by the former deputy head of the No. 10 Policy Unit, Daniel Korski, and venture investor, Alexander de Carvalho, and brings together experience from the public sector, technology and finance to help technology start-ups transform public services. PUBLIC is the world's largest supporter of GovTech ventures and runs its accelerator programme GovStart in London, Paris and Berlin.