

PS
STUDENT LIVING/GLOBAL
**BRAVE
NEW DORM**

With the student-housing sector booming we meet three developers creating sleek spaces designed to foster connections.

Bombarda House
Home from home
Lisbon

By most measures Bombarda House is a surprise. The student accommodation block in Lisbon, which opened last year, has done away with the small rooms and dingy corridors that typify student digs; here you'll find large, bright spaces with double beds, quirky vintage-shop finds and reclaimed wood alongside modern kitchens and private bathrooms.

Designed by architect Tomaz D'Eça Leal for student-accommodation developer Rebel, the project shows what is possible in a sector that is underserved in both quality and quantity. "Only one in five students in Portugal can find a place in specialised student accommodation," says Duarte D'Eça Leal, a director at Rebel and Tomaz's son. "The rest rely on private landlords."

An internationally mobile student population is fuelling demand globally for purpose-built housing. According to UK property specialist Savills, which commissioned research into the sector last year, 2015 was a record year for student housing, with €14bn invested globally. But even in mature markets supply is low, with only 24 per cent of students finding specialist spots in the UK and as little as 6 per cent managing to do so in Australia and Spain. In Portugal, demand also significantly outstrips supply.

These figures are driving Rebel's investment. The firm was co-founded by Duarte and his brother Bernardo, who own a number of hotels and hostels in Portugal and aim to have 250 rooms across



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Lisbon by the end of 2018; their target is some 1,000 rooms in Lisbon and Porto by 2020. But Rebel is also keeping an eye on design. "We don't want our spaces to have a franchiseable feel. We want them to be original and authentic," says Duarte.

Alongside sleek private apartments, Bombarda House also features communal living-and-dining spaces. Used for studying, socialising, movie nights and parties, they are key to the design approach. "We allow for privacy and comfort but we have a social philosophy," says Duarte. "It's important to be able to meet other people and feel like part of a community and it's something students really value too."

Areas for study are key but laptops and tablets have broadened the spaces in which students can work; banks of desks are no longer appealing. Instead Bombarda House offers comfortable sofas, shared tables and a homely atmosphere.

Safety is a consideration too, with in-house security on site. "We welcome everyone with a personal briefing, letting them know we're here for any problems or questions. These are young adults taking a leap of faith. We want them to have a memorable experience and we have a responsibility to them and their parents."

Of course, this all costs money to build and service – rooms here start at €545 a month, which is pricey for Lisbon – but Duarte says the student market is not as price-conscious as people think. "We offer the most expensive student accommodation in Portugal but we've discovered that if you offer high-quality spaces and service, you can follow through with the right price. We have envisioned a different approach to student living." — TL



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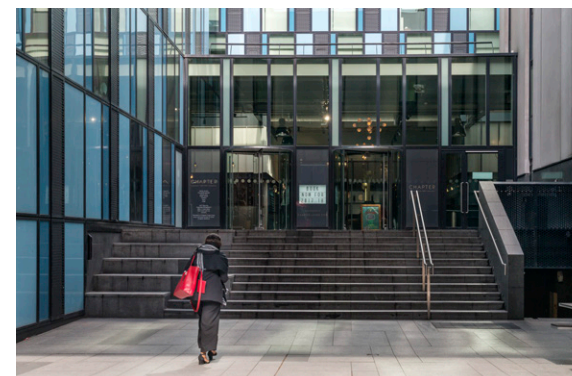
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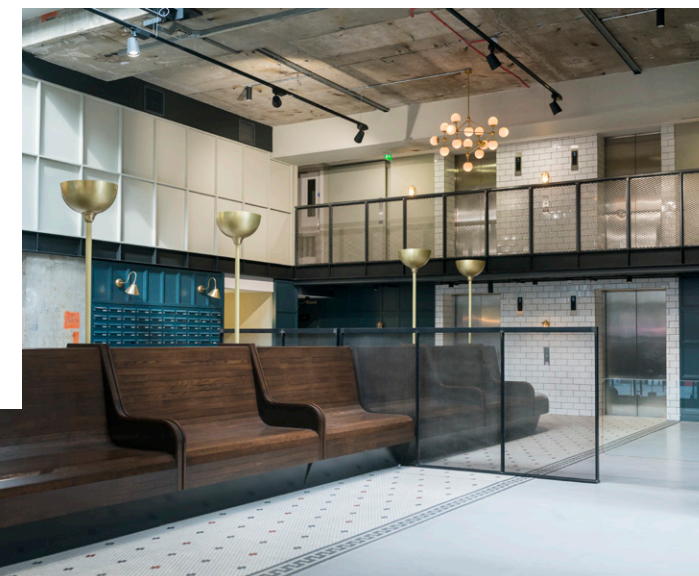


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(1) Welcome home (2) Social study sessions (3) Take a seat (4) Let there be light



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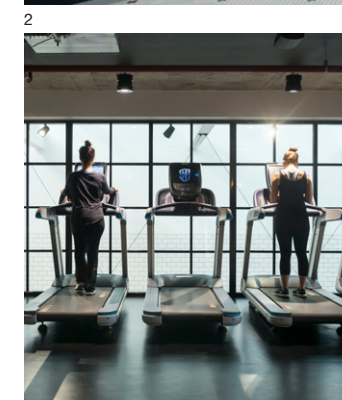


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Chapter Living
Rewriting the book
London

"Ten years ago student accommodation was designed by 40-year-old guys saying, 'Aha! It's for the kids so we need primary colours and bean bags,'" says Neil Burton, a director at multinational developer Greystar. His company saw an opportunity to do something different: since 2013 the firm has been acquiring and redeveloping student properties close to London's top-tier universities under the label Chapter Living. They now have eight dotted across London. Seated on a chesterfield sofa in the grand lobby of Chapter Living's King's Cross location, Burton nods to the design around him. "We looked at other industries with a resident-centric design process at their core."

That's why the lobby is more Soho House than student dorm. There's a black-and-white mosaic that snakes between ping-pong tables (OK, they are quite studenty) and brass uplighters on a long oak bench care of Tigg & Coll



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Architects. "The King's Cross area is so connected to railways that we wanted to create the feeling of a station platform," says David Tigg, who was approached to transform the building for Chapter in 2015. "It was about finding a strong sense of soul."

Halls of residence have become something of a golden goose: institutional investors spent £4.3bn (€4.9bn) on student accommodation in 2016, lured by their lucrative and predictable profits. Chapter specifically set out to net a proportion of the almost 450,000 international students who come to the UK each year. It now has residents from 105 countries sleeping in its 4,500 beds. They're enticed by security first, according to Chapter, and then by the amenities the residences can offer.

The feeling of a members' club is no coincidence, complemented by screenings in a cinema or a spot of paint-throwing in the courtyard for the Hindu festival of Holi. In the shared study hall on the first floor Ash Shaffer, a budding biochemist, is sitting on a green-leather banquette cramming for mid-term exams. "It's clean



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(1) Main entrance at King's Cross (2) Tigg & Coll Architects' railway-influenced lobby (3) Café at Spitalfields location (4) Gym at King's Cross (5) 24-hour security is key (6) Study area at Spitalfields

PHOTOGRAPHERS: Rodrigo Cardoso, Alejandra Carles-Tolra



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(7) Sleek sleeping (8) R&R ready in the King's Cross location's cinema



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and it's communal," says the first-year University College London student. "It's also been excellent for my career because I get to meet post-grads and hear what they did next."

There's definitely a straight-facedness about Chapter's style that's removed from the laidback, even shabby surroundings more typical of student life (putting posters on walls is discouraged). Yet the brisk, businesslike tone of the place – more akin to a hotel than a student hall – clearly speaks to its international market: we hear Russian, Mandarin and Turkish on a stroll through the halls.

While everyone here sounds bullish about the student-accommodation market, the mood could change. Last year the UK saw fewer students coming from overseas, some discouraged by a recent change in visa rules. Then there's Brexit. "We are actively looking for more development sites around London," says Burton, undeterred by the UK's forthcoming departure from the EU. "There are phenomenal universities here and that's not going to change any time soon." — CL



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The Student Hotel Hybrid high life Amsterdam

From the light-filled lobby to the colourful, ubiquitous mid-century modern furniture, The Student Hotel: Amsterdam City is not your average student-housing block. This branch is just one of The Student Hotel's nine operations throughout Europe and the company, which is at the forefront of a revolution in student accommodation, is growing fast. TSH is all about bringing together great design, top-notch amenities and a stimulating environment. And the properties are not exclusively for students either: these hybrid residences also have popular short-stay hotel rooms for the "student-at-heart".

"Our aim here is to help our guests discover their purpose and we create the best possible space for them to do that," says CEO Charlie MacGregor, a Scotsman who started the company in 2006 after he became frustrated while attempting to launch something similar in the UK. At Amsterdam City – one of two branches in



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- (1) Entrance to The Student Hotel: Amsterdam City
- (2) Checking in at Amsterdam City
- (3) Screening booth
- (4) Getting comfy
- (5) Co-working space
- (6) Head office
- (7) Room with double bed
- (8) Drinks in the restaurant
- (9) Kitchen at work
- (10) Hotel gym



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"We believe we can really regenerate an area with our clientele. We bring people in 24 hours a day, seven days a week; it's not like an office block"

the city – that means free-to-use bicycles from Dutch brand VanMoof, a laundrette with an app that tells you when your wash is done, a games area, vibrant interiors and communal spaces, all designed by Amsterdam agency Staat. There is also a gym, sleek restaurant and a year-round calendar of parties, lectures and other events all under one roof.

Student bedrooms – which come with linen, a television and furniture – cost an average of €860 a month at Amsterdam City, and are single-occupancy with a private bathroom and shared kitchen. "At first I thought it was really expensive," says 23-year-old Claudia Perez, an advertising and journalism student from Madrid who is attending a university in the south of Amsterdam. "But after two months I think it's worth it. I wouldn't live anywhere else."

There are plenty of perks for non-students too. The Amsterdam City branch includes a co-working space for those in the neighbourhood, something that will extend to other locations. It's all about creating a multicultural, connected community of newcomers and residents who work, live and study together, says MacGregor. The company also intentionally chooses to build on or renovate existing sites in neglected areas that they think have potential. "We believe we can really regenerate the area with the diverse clientele we attract," says MacGregor. "It brings people in 24 hours a day, seven days a week; it's not like an office block."

In addition to the nine Student Hotel properties already up and running there are nine more being built. Most are in the Netherlands but there are also branches in Paris and Barcelona, and more will soon be opening in Florence, Bologna and Dresden.

Although MacGregor doesn't expect to make a profit until the company has opened a few more hotels, turnover last year was close to €60m and its properties housed about 4,000 students. The demand for accommodation with character and comfort is definitely there, he says, despite the response he got from Dutch property professionals when he first aired his idea in 2005.

"They told me I was living in cloud cuckoo land and that I should go back to Scotland," he says, laughing. "But there's a big cultural change happening where people are realising that if you want to offer world-class education then you need to offer similar accommodation." — VR

PHOTOGRAPHER: David de Vrieschauer