

MEDIA RELEASE:

A new vision for Edinburgh's iconic Observatory House revealed as artists and architects reimagine the historic space as a unique hilltop retreat



Observatory House Winter 2020 photo: Paul Andrews

- Collective - the centre for contemporary art on Calton Hill brings the historic home of leading astronomers back to life as stylish holiday destination
- Artists and designers Rachel Adams, Thomas Aitchison, Rabiya Choudhry and Christian Newby have been commissioned to create stunning new interior features
- Collective Architecture are leading the restoration of iconic 18th century James Craig building to enhance the interior and frame the city's most spectacular views
- Booking available now at www.observatory-house.art/book

Collective - the centre for contemporary art on Calton Hill have revived Observatory House set on their iconic site overlooking Edinburgh, as a unique destination for visitors. The 18th century historic building designed by James Craig and formerly used by leading astronomers of the age is now available to book as a short term holiday destination.



Observatory House Astronomer's Suite photo: Scott Clark

[Observatory House](#) forms a prominent corner of the City Observatory site redeveloped by Collective in 2018, is a residential house dating back to the 18th century. To support its charitable mission to bring people together around new art, Collective have upgraded the house and transformed it into a self catering space creating a new, unique hilltop retreat at the heart of the Scottish capital. Booking for the main house opens today with a new apartment space in the basement becoming available to visitors in early 2022.

The building's historic 18th century architecture is now complemented by contemporary styling and new artworks from some of the most exciting artists working in Scotland today. These include; Rachel Adams, Thomas Aitchison, Rabiya Choudhry and Christian Newby who have all been specially commissioned for the new site. The fully equipped kitchen, designed by Aitchison, is inspired by the iconic silhouette of the National Monument. Adams meanwhile has created new textile and lighting works for the master bedroom, and Choudhry's trademark vibrant language covers the walls in a new wallpaper based on the history of stargazing. Newby's commission complements these with a series of new wall paintings in the dining room of the house, subverting Western art tropes. The result is a dining room with harlequins, fruit and flowers adorning the walls. All of the artists have a long association with Collective,

having participated in early career development programmes and exhibited in Collective's exhibition spaces prior to these commissions.



Observatory House Kitchen photo: Anna Henly

Collective appointed Collective Architecture to lead the restoration of Observatory House. The award-winning Scottish architects previously led the redevelopment of the rest of Collective's site, which was shortlisted for the RIAS Best Building in Scotland Award in 2019. The architects have blended a mix of natural finishes, Harris Tweed accessories, Lusso stone, sandstone, wool, leather and rich walnut and brass accents to complement the artist commissions.

The restoration of Observatory House also follows Collective Architecture's design of The Lookout, the unique new hilltop restaurant run by Collective's restaurant partners the Gardener's Cottage. The Lookout is just a short accessible walk from the new accommodation, allowing visitors to experience both during a visit.

Observatory House, with extraordinary views overlooking the city and a short walk from the centre, yet peaceful and close to nature is also the oldest surviving building on Calton Hill. The house has multiple aspects from each room giving 360 views taking in the geological crags of Arthur's Seat, the medieval Old Town and castle, the Georgian New Town, the Port of Leith with the Firth of Forth and beyond, the Kingdom of Fife.

As well as being available to hire, Observatory House will host artists visiting Collective as part of its programme of international art commissions from artists who have never shown their work in Scotland previously.

The House will also be opened to the public for special events such as Doors Open Day, which are open to everyone to attend. Collective are a charity and the income from Observatory House will go directly back into supporting the arts in Scotland.



Observatory House Dining Room photo: Anna Henly

Siobhan Carroll, Interim Director, Collective, said, *"We are delighted to launch Observatory House, and to look forward to welcoming visitors to enjoy this historic space, with it's stunningly refurbished spaces and newly revealed artist commissions. The site is the perfect spot for a city getaway for those living in Scotland and from further afield to stay at the heart of the Scottish capital."*

Observatory House is one of the very few extant buildings designed by James Craig, the planner of Edinburgh's first New Town and is a spectacular site for artists to engage with. A well-known landmark in Edinburgh, it is the oldest building in the Observatory walled complex on Calton Hill, it is both architecturally and culturally significant in the history of the city and the nation. The renovation of Observatory house is the final part of the site to be fully developed and will support Collective's charitable vision.

The notion of art and artists being the lens through which we view the city and understand ourselves to be in it has a long history on Calton Hill. We are thrilled to have commissioned Rachel Adams, Thomas Aitchison, Rabiya Choudhry and Christian Newby to create integrated new artworks for the newly developed Observatory House on Calton Hill. Collective is a platform for artists' work and a

meeting place for ideas. We are working towards a thriving creative society, where artists inspire new ways of looking, questioning and thinking through art. Part of this is a commitment to bring art into everything we do, to demonstrate how artists and their work can engage with and transform everyday life”



Emma Fairhurst, Collective Architecture, said, “*Observatory House is full of character and history, the first of the collection of extraordinary buildings on Calton Hill. Our work has been focused on making the interiors feel calm and understated, to allow the multiple breathtaking views and integrated contemporary art to take centre stage. Staying in the house will be a special experience; the upper floors feel light and airy with visual connections out in every direction over Edinburgh, in contrast to the lower level which feels more immersive and rooted to the hill.*

In the renovation of the three storey house, Collective Architecture have opened up new spaces sympathetically, creating a new larger kitchen and socialising space at upper ground and linking spaces to form a master suite on the top floor. New bathrooms have been created with an understated palette of honed marble and brass with inviting freestanding bathtubs. The top floor bath has a view looking over the National Monument and the new lower floor bathroom extension connects to a planted internal courtyard, that was previously a closed off area of disused outhouses. The kitchen and dining space has been designed with input from The Lookout restaurant, to enable professional catering to be provided for guests, fine dining experiences or small gatherings. We look forward to seeing guests inhabiting Old Observatory House and enjoying the unique qualities of this very special part of Edinburgh’s history”

Observatory House will be managed by premier hospitality provider ALTIDO. ALTIDO to manage the day-to-day running of Observatory House. ALTIDO manages a range of unique properties across Europe with a mission to re-imagine hospitality through world-class customer service and local knowledge.

Emma Poulton Parley, General Manager of ALTIDO Scotland said *"ALTIDO are absolutely thrilled to be working with Collective on bringing the magnificent Observatory House to market. It is such an honour to be able to count this extraordinary property as the jewel in our crown, and we cannot wait to start welcoming guests for what will be an unrivalled holiday accommodation experience."*

ENDS

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View and download hi res images here:

<https://app.box.com/s/iir4ds2kto2cm4e70p1jgs4n8xue45cs>

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Bookings are now open via: www.observatory-house.art and subsequently on Airbnb, Booking.com, Home/Away. Observatory House sleeps four adults. Observatory Apartment will also each sleep four when it becomes available but is sized differently and will be priced accordingly. Collective are operating Observatory House on a minimum three night stay with prices starting at £250 a night.

About Collective

Collective brings people together to look at, think about and produce contemporary art in a new kind of City Observatory. Collective was established in 1984 and opened its new home on the redeveloped City Observatory site on Calton Hill in 2018. Collective's mission is to bring people together around new art. collective-edinburgh.art

Collective Architecture

Founded in 1997, with offices in Glasgow and Edinburgh, Collective Architecture was established by the founding members to pursue the themes of participation and sustainability in architecture. Our output ranges from intimate community installations to large scale urban regeneration. We are the first Scottish employee-owned architecture practice established to reward and involve staff in practice development, bringing care and commitment to every aspect of our work. Our ethos encourages individuals to express themselves and research issues which are of relevance to both their work and to the wider society. We share our learning where staff teach, lecture and guest at schools of architecture in the UK and across the world. We have won many national and international awards including AJ Architect of the Year 2018. <https://www.collectivearchitecture.com/>