

MICHAEL LEWIS: TRUMP'S DEADLY DECISION

VANITY FAIR

Angie

Solo

"Things Became *Difficult*"

By EVGENIA PERETZ
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MARCUS PIGGOTT

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Mayfair Flair

Andrew Dunn and Alex Michelin, co-founders of Finchatton, introduce Twenty Grosvenor Square—their most ambitious project to date and home to the first stand-alone Four Seasons Private Residences in the world

Finchatton specializes in bespoke turn-key homes, the antithesis of “shouty luxury”, and to meet co-founders Andrew Dunn and Alex Michelin is to understand why the emphasis is on “home” rather than property. The pair, friends who met at Charterhouse School, founded the international design and development company in 2001. The name emerged over a family Sunday lunch—a tribute to the charismatic big-game hunter and soulful lover of Karen Blixen in the film *Out of Africa*. Denys Finch Hatton was a renaissance man, a poet, pilot and safari adventurer, and it is this spirit of being one of a kind that gilds the Finchatton vision.

Take their most ambitious project to date: Twenty Grosvenor Square, the first stand-alone Four Seasons Private Residences in the world.

“It’s the pinnacle, the best address in Mayfair—a south-west facing property overlooking the grandest garden square in London,” says Michelin. “We’ve partnered with Four Seasons to create the best level of amenity in any building in London. It ticks all the boxes. It’s utterly unique, the culmination of our lives’ work to date, and it’s a responsibility we take seriously. We are cognisant of the history and want to develop and enhance this incredible classic property with a sensibility to make it one of the listed buildings of the future.”

From its construction in the 1720s until the Second World War, Grosvenor Square, the largest garden square in Mayfair, was considered the most prestigious address in London. Developed around a vast, oval, landscaped enclosure on the orders of Sir Richard Grosvenor of Cheshire, its proximity to Hyde Park and Whitehall made this centerpiece of the Grosvenor Estate a desirable place for the great and good to establish their London presence. Its reputation was established by the number of aristocratic families who resided there in the 18th and 19th century and immortalized by arch literary commentators such as Jane Austen and Charles Dickens.

“We are a long way from Grosvenor Square, are we not, Mr Darcy?” says Caroline Bingley, indicating her disdain for a local dance in *Pride and Prejudice*. In *Little Dorrit*, Dickens had the socially pretentious Barnacle clan live at “four Mews Street Grosvenor”—which “was not absolutely Grosvenor Square itself but it was very near it”.

TWO OF A KIND

Andrew Dunn and Alex Michelin, co-founders of Finchatton international design and development company



TWENTY-TWENTY VISION

A CGI image of the unique Four Seasons Residences at Twenty Grosvenor Square

“IT’S THE BEST ADDRESS IN MAYFAIR, WITH VIEWS OVER THE FINEST GARDEN SQUARE IN LONDON”

If the Square’s distinguished credentials needed reinforcing to a modern audience, who better than Violet Crawley, the Dowager Duchess of Grantham from *Downton Abbey*? “And what about the Hepworth House in Grosvenor Square?” she reminisced plummily to Lord Jinx Hepworth in the 2011 Christmas Special. “I spent so many happy evenings there with your father in hot pursuit . . .”

History, status, heritage, romance: these are the elements so respectfully safeguarded in the so-called Renaissance of North Mayfair. At its centre—the crowning glory, if you like—is Twenty Grosvenor Square. The scheme, launched by Finchatton in partnership with Four Seasons, will see this iconic building lead the way in reverting to discreet residential status, with each of the 37 private apartments receiving the benefits of living in a five-star hotel but with investment benefits of actually owning the asset.

The property on the northwest corner of Grosvenor Square holds a special place in the colourful story of London society. Its first owner was Algernon Coote, the 6th Earl of Mountrath. Following a number of exchanges, it became the headquarters of the US Naval Forces in Europe from 1939 to 2007, heralded by an eagle insignia and comprising sets of rooms assigned



to officials including General Dwight Eisenhower, who directed the D-Day Landings and other campaigns from his map-lined war room.

Finchatton was appointed in 2013 as the development coordinator by the consortium of investors which then acquired the building. Since 2001, Finchatton has designed, managed and financed more than 60 major development projects worth in excess of £1bn around the world. In addition, the company has completed more than 75 prestigious private commissions. That is the impressive big picture, and it has been achieved by a forensic attention to tiny detail, a professional desire to seek out the “best of the best”.

Sympathetic to the heritage, Finchatton’s restoration of Twenty Grosvenor Square will see the façade return to its original 18th-century splendour right down to the understated Square-facing front door. With a recessed drive-in vehicle entrance on North Audley Street, residents will also enjoy a grand sense of arrival.

The lobby stretches back with a vista to the garden library, and further through to a covered outdoor terrace and greenery—an oasis of tranquillity in the centre of London.

In terms of specifics, the 250,000sqft development offers three-, four- and five-bedroom

apartments, each featuring a wealth of private amenities, from elegant drawing rooms with high ceilings, media rooms, family and catering kitchens, and separate access for staff. Think classic proportions, superb lighting, book-matched marble, sublime timbers and joinery, with the latest technology such as touch sensors, home automation systems and dual-zone wine coolers.

Shared amenities include a state-of-the-art gym; a private wine room and cellar; a fully staffed spa with 25m swimming pool, steam room, sauna and treatment rooms; media/cinema room; business suite; crèche; and secure underground parking.

Four Seasons will provide first-class services such as a 24-hour concierge, laundry, in-home dining, valet parking and housekeeping as well as the opportunity for grocery stocking, childcare, dog walking, event planning, and residential maintenance. “It will be the only building in the world which has Four Seasons services without a hotel attached to it, but it is a home,” Michelin emphasizes. “The global elite want to live with amenities at the touch of a button. That level of servicing is important . . .”

As an example of sophisticated homeliness, he points to the wine cellar furnished with individual temperature- and humidity-controlled fridges and a central tasting table. “You can have your wine collection looked after by the in-house sommelier. You can call and say, ‘I’m having a dinner party tonight . . . can you bring up a bottle of . . .’ whatever you fancy. Or, take friends down to try a few bottles. It’s so personal.”

Other people might alight upon the fully staffed crèche, the private lift access, the spacious dressing rooms and comfortable seats next to the bath so that couples can chat while one is soaking in the tub (a request from a private client that has become a default feature in Finchatton bathrooms) or the acoustic glazing in the traditional sash windows that maintains tranquillity in a central London location.

“This is the future of high-end living and Finchatton is at the leading edge,” says Dunn. “People are time-poor and we want to make life easier for them. They don’t want to have a separate gym membership. They want to organize a meeting in their own building, invite friends for a coffee in the garden library, or ring down and book the cinema. People may have several homes around the world. The joy of Twenty Grosvenor Square is that you can call or email the concierge and when you arrive your suits are pressed and hanging in the wardrobe, your fridge is stocked, you’re ready to roll without the hassle of hiring your own staff.”

The apartments start at £6million; a four-bedroom property is listed at £17million. Almost 50 per cent have sold and moved on to the customization stage. An in-house Finchatton team of 45 talk each buyer through design requirements, desires, and special facilities. “We have an incredibly passionate, talented creative team,” says Michelin. “It is a team effort and we all spend blood, sweat and tears on every single detail to try and make it perfect.”

As the first residential building developers in the area, Finchatton works closely with the Grosvenor Estate which, along with all the stakeholders in North Mayfair, have ambitious plans for the transformation of the area. When the Estate talks about taking a long-term view about potential investments, they mean a 200-, 300- or 400-year view. Again, it’s all about heritage and legacy.

“They’re very good at upgrading the streetscape and curating their tenants to include great retail offers, cafes, florists,” says Dunn. “It’s a sophisticated village feel and that’s what hugely attracted us. Our residents can lead their lives in a great community.” □

