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Maira Wong
ORTHODONTICS

Style Counsel

Working with history

A quirky building with plenty of history has provided a suitable home for orthodontist **Dr Moira Wong's** new practice, even if it needed to be almost entirely rebuilt





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Sometimes things are meant to be, despite disappointment. 'I was walking the streets of London for two years looking for suitable premises for my new practice,' says Dr Moira Wong owner of Moira Wong Orthodontics in London's Kensington Church Street. 'I found something I thought was perfect and made an offer; but it fell through in the end. At the time, I was disappointed, but in hindsight, thank goodness it did,' she says. 'The current site of my practice is in a much better location. I wanted a premises that could be flexible in its space to get close to a purpose-built practice; this one had all the right spatial potential to satisfy my requirements without compromise. Things happen for a reason, right?'

QUIRKY HISTORY

Finally settled in to her new location, Moira's new orthodontic business is a fresh and approachable boutique practice with a focus on individual, personalised care. It's also based in an architecturally fascinating property with a quirky history. 'The building was originally an 18th century stable,' she says, 'the front section was where the carriage would have been kept, with a loft above it for storing the horses' hay. The three small, brick cottages behind the coach house were where the stable boys used to live.' Before Moira acquired it, however, it was used as a hairdressers' salon - and not just any old salon, this one had an A-list clientele. 'It used to be a hairdressers called Antenna Hair which - despite its rather off-putting name -



A yellow, white and grey colour palette contributes to the 'clean, minimalist, and contemporary' look Moira wanted





The old building was extended to link the three surgeries



'I thought it was a great idea to have a nice garden area that patients could wait and relax in before their appointments,' says Moira



attracted stars, including Tina Turner, who apparently had her hair extensions done here, believe it or not!' Perhaps she enjoyed the view of the builders' yard out the back? We'll never know.

Today, Dr Moira Wong Orthodontics consists of three fully equipped surgeries, an office, staff room and sterilisation room. There's also a shower room and a disabled bathroom, and further space for two more surgeries should Moira want to expand her business.

A lot of work went into creating this stunning practice. The building was pretty much falling down when Moira bought it, so the work was extensive, with little choice but to pretty much knock most of it down and start again. 'The front building had to be demolished due to structural problems, so very little of the original building was kept, apart from three brick walls!' she tells PPD. 'We put a new floor in, and new roof on the cottages,' she says, 'and a completely new building was put up to house the fourth and fifth surgeries.'

The entire project took almost two years, from putting in an offer, to refurbishment work being complete, which was six months longer than hoped. Things were held up early on in the project when Moira placed an initial offer for the property in August 2012, but the purchase took seven long months to complete due to Land Registry issues. But as soon as she had the green light, building work started promptly in April 2013 and took just under a year to complete, with the practice opening its doors on 29 March 2014.

THE DESIGN

There were no issues in terms of designing the space, as Moira knew immediately what kind of practice she wanted to work in. 'I wanted it to be clean, minimalist, modern and contemporary in style,' she says. 'Having a children's entertainment area was very important to me as I want parents to be able to relax, knowing that their kids are having fun!'

A neutral colour scheme is used throughout to create the feel she wanted and consists of yellow, grey and white. 'There is lots of natural light, which is important to me as the winters here are so long and dark. I thought it was a great idea to have a nice garden area that patients could wait and relax in before their appointments. I basically wanted to offer them the option to chill out at the dentist, even though we are positioned in one of the busiest areas of central London.'

Moira worked with architect Alan Tate of Grey Associates to help her design and plan the new space. With her own ideas for the interior, she developed these ideas by seeking inspiration from friends and family, rather than turning to an interior designer. 'Lots of wonderful friends came up with ideas, including Veronique Zorzi, who has been an inspiration throughout the project.'





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THE BUILD

The first part of the actual build was the single-storey extension that linked the ground floor of the three cottages and also formed the disabled WC and OPG room. The ground floor of each of the three cottages were destined to be the three practice surgeries and needed to be linked from the outside to avoid loss of surgery space. The remaining open area beyond the cottages became a limestone terrace with planters.

'The planning permission for demolition of the front build was rejected in July 2013, which meant that all building stopped until December when the second application was successful, indeed in total Alan dealt with ten planning applications during the course of this project' says Moira. 'Building then continued in January at lightning pace, as I was desperate to open my practice - as you can imagine!'

THE RESULT

With this all safely behind her, the impressive new practice has been open since April 2014, and Moira is already fully settled in to her new space, although admits she'd like to give the interior more attention. 'I am still keeping my eye out for more bits of contemporary furniture, but at the moment I'm just enjoying making it my home. I like its simple, clean, minimalist feel. I also love the reception desk, sourced by Alan, which is lit and glows and will hopefully help to give us all a boost and a 'feel-good' factor during those long winter evenings.' That said Moira's favourite part of the practice is actually one of the corridors. 'I especially love the space outside the surgeries. They have huge skylights above them and glazed sliding doors on to the terrace to give what is otherwise a narrow passageway, a lovely sense of space.'

Moira is at last enjoying working in her new practice. 'It was a very challenging re-development project, but I am pleased with the results and I look forward to doing what I do best, creating beautiful smiles.' ■

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