LATICRETE helps to recreate a historic 1920's London hotel rennovation

The Situation
Within a few metres of the world famous Bank of England building in the City of London, the former historic headquarters to the Midland Bank lay empty for many years following the acquisition by HSBC in 1992.

Originally designed by Sir Edwin ‘Ned’ Lutyens in 1924, this building was a masterpiece of its age, widely regarded as the finest commercial building of its time with a grand banking hall and offices in the Neo-Classicism style. It was granted a Grade-I listed building status before the end of the last century, and shortly before Midland Bank moved out of the building.

In 2012, the building was sold to Soho House Group Ltd, who have a number of five star hotels in London and New York. Their aim was to turn this building into The Ned Hotel - named in honour of its creator.

The Ned would eventually become a sumptuous five star hotel, spa and beauty club and include a collection of restaurants. Due to its Grade-I listed status it had to keep the historic features of the original design, and any new edition to the hotel would also have to look like it was an original part of the building, designed in the neo-classic trend of the 1920's.

This was a significant challenge for the designers at Soho House Group and the New York based hotel group Sydell Group.

Soho House lead designers Adam Greco and Alice Lund trawled the bank's archives to find out what the building looked like in its 1930s heyday, and were inspired by the great ships of that era such as the Normandie, and transcontinental trains such as the Orient Express.

Comprising of 11 floors, with a total floor area of 29,500 square metres, The Ned contains ten restaurants, 250 bedrooms, a roof-top club which has a pool, gym, spa, hamam and late night lounge bar. It also has a number of grooming services for both men and women.

As part of the new development of the building, a spa and healthclub would also be built within the vaults of the old bank building, including a swimming pool within the basement.

Senior Designer of Soho House Group Alice Lund commented: “The scale is spectacular, the architecture is phenomenal, and when you’re in here you do feel like you’re almost in a different time.”

The Challenge
Design Challenge: The design for the basement pool and spa area was going to be a challenge. Based on the designs of the Victorian and Edwardian London bath houses, surrounding the pool and spa area would be a specially chosen hexagon shape tile, around 300 x 300mm in size. The designers and architects were very pleased that this tile matched the trends of the Edwardian era. The hexagon tile was divided by three colours: black, white and a dark green reproduction verdite stone in a diamond shape, to give the impression of a three-dimensional square. The Dark green is to match the 92 African Verdite covered columns that are in the main banking hall.

Extraordinary Grout Colour Choice: To also keep the feel of the 1920's, a dark green grout colour was chosen to match the colour RAL 6012 and the green verdite stone.
This colour would be prominent throughout the floor area around the swimming pool. As the grout would be used away from the pool and not in the pool, a cementitious grout to the standard EN 13888 CG2 WA was chosen as acceptable for this project. Unfortunately, after looking for some time for this grout colour, or even a similar colour, the designers were resigned to the fact that they would not find this colour or a manufacturer who could produce the grout at a realistic quantity or at a price that would fit the budget.

**A LATICRETE Solution**

Finally, on the recommendation from Sydell Group in New York City, Alice Lund contacted LATICRETE Europe. The PERMACOLOR® SELECT ANYCOLOR™ grout system was suggested and then specified for the solution. The proposed RAL colour together with a sample of the tile was provided, and LATICRETE matched the grout colour exactly.

The benefit to Soho House Group and to the contractor Ardmore Group, was that the quantity order requirement was very low and the cost affordable without being extravagant. The COLOR KIT pouches took two weeks to manufacture and ship to London.

“We spent a few days getting the colour match correct, and with the help of my North American colleagues matched the RAL number exactly. The grout COLOR KIT pigment packs arrived very quickly after that, and with the base powder already produced in the UK, we were ready to go.” said Jason P. Smith, LATICRETE International Regional Manager, Europe.

After one site visit to the contractor to demonstrate the mixing procedure of the product, and to get the colour approved, Ardmore Group were able to very quickly complete the installation and grouting of the tiles within the basement pool and spa area.

“The contractor was very impressed with the easy mixing process of the grout and the fact that this grout had a built-in STONETECH® Sealer. All they had to do was make sure that they had 1.2 litres of water in the pail, drop the dark green COLOR KIT pouch into the water then mix the white base. This meant that the grouting was completed very quickly, and most importantly within the construction schedules”, added Jason P. Smith.

Photo courtesy of EPR Architects, London, UK
Outcome

The Ned Hotel was completed in May 2017, boasting as one of London’s most stupendous and extravagant hotels. The whole project took four years to complete.

Both the renovated exterior facade, and the detailed interior design are breathtaking, taking the individual back immediately to a different time in history. This colossal project cost £200m to complete and every detail from the basement to the roof-top has been imaginatively recreated to give the customer a glorious experience of the era the building first opened.

“We were very happy with finding the dark green grout as every detail to us was vitally important to make this hotel just perfect in every way,” said Alice Lund of Soho House Group.

Summing up the four-year-long renovation project, The Ned Hotel Managing Director Gareth Banner said: “The Ned has the wow factor, and the outstanding architecture is so well preserved you can’t help but fall in love with it.”

The Ned was named as The AHEAD Awards European Hotel of the Year in 2017, as well as additional awards at the same event for Best Event Space, Best Restaurant and Best Spa and Wellness.

The Ned is probably the most audacious hotel project in London in recent memory. Sitting proudly at 27, Poultry in the historic City of London, the building is now back to its former glory, in the way Sir Edwin Lutyens would have approved of.

Many of the original features and rooms survive. The new parts of the hotel blend in as if they have been there since 1924. Once this was a place to cash cheques, now it is one of London's smartest and most inspirational hotels. LATICRETE played their part with an innovative product and grout colour that would have been unobtainable otherwise.

This very special old building has a new lease of life.