

Living Rooms apartment
at 5 Maddox Street

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*Finding a gap in the market,
hotelier Tracy Lowy's serviced
apartments offer the best of both
worlds to the modern traveller.
By Corrie Bond-French*

A TRUE HOME AWAY FROM HOME



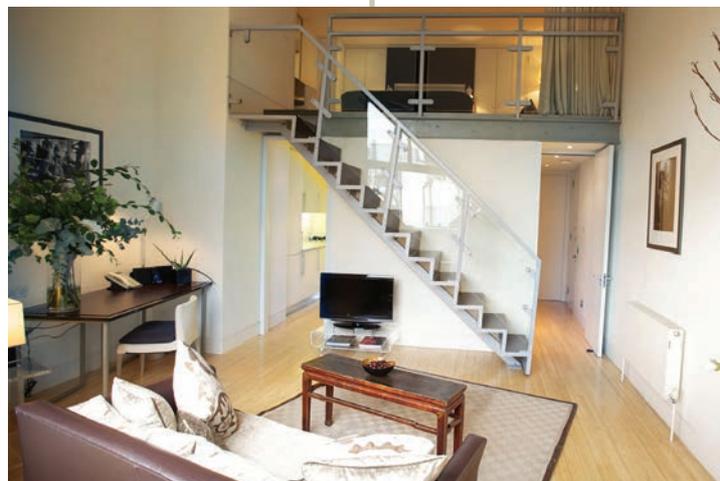
ABOVE AND OPPOSITE:
No 5 Maddox Street
RIGHT: Tracy Lowy



Britart from the likes of Tracey Emin and the Chapman brothers adorns the walls, eclectic mid-century pieces punctuate a vast living area resplendent with stunning architectural features. There's a practical, even indulgent, utility room next to the fully equipped kitchen and space enough to cartwheel around or host a happy gathering. Through huge sash windows the village-in-the-city charms of central London beckon.

As a pied à terre, this would take some beating. But this is a home from home with a difference; the convenience and luxury services from the remote hotel concierge are just one push of a telephone button away. Combining hotel luxury and services and at-home space and privacy in the thick of London's vast accommodation offerings might have once seemed a contradictory endeavour to some, but it is a fusion that Living Rooms creator Tracy Lowy has perfected since she first spotted a gap in the market for the modern traveller.

More than a quarter of a century has now passed since Tracy, then diligently working as a draughtsman considering a career in architecture, had a



lightbulb moment in response to planning constraints that were scuppering her family's hotel business plans for expansion into the neighbouring property.

Her suggestion to keep the apartments as apartments, but conveniently serviced by the hotel took off, prompting a career change that still played to Tracy's strengths in her architect's ability to visualise and create spaces.

"It was my family's hotel in Bayswater, and Westminster council wouldn't give them planning. We were sitting there for nine months, so I said why don't you just knock a hole through that wall and create apartments that you could link to the hotel? People who rented them could have as much interaction as they wanted. After that it just evolved," says Tracy.

Living Rooms now offers four variations on the theme in central London. Short and long-term stays are now offered at Mayfair's no 5 Maddox Street and 56 Welbeck in Marylebone. Vast two- and three-bed apartments are offered in Little Venice's Europa House. The Laslett Hotel in Notting Hill beat off stiff competition to win industry awards.

Initially available as 90- or 180-day lets, the Living Rooms business model has proved particularly convenient and popular with employees within the entertainment and finance industries. Often, clients book for a few months then end up staying for years. With shorter lets now available, the apartments also have serious staycation appeal.

Locations have been carefully chosen, and Tracy's attention to detail and ability to cut the cloth of each building has resulted in Living Rooms carving a niche in the boutique accommodation market that boasts a 95 per cent occupancy rate. The remaining five per cent is off-inventory time for re-decorating.

Tracy's passion for art and design is evident throughout. She attends auctions and sources items from dealers, and has ensured that she supports British artists.

"It's not dictatorial, it's about getting the balance right. What we try and do is create a canvas that's about comfort, and quite neutral. We do have people

who stay for quite a long time so we don't over-furnish things because we have a lot of entertainment people, and when they come for a long time they bring things with them and they'll hang their own things on the wall.

"Every property has its own DNA; but they've all got a common thread. I want them all to feel like home and give people the privacy and space – but if they really want the service, it's there."

living-rooms.co.uk