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page 1 of 2

FASHION UNIQLO'S NEW GROOVE SPORT WOMAN OF THE HOUR FOOD ADELAIDE FRINGE FEASTS DRINKS LOW-CARB HEROES

Life & Leisure

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PICTURE PERFECT

A first glimpse at a NSW estate's \$10-million facelift

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Above left: Horderns Restaurant. Above right: Alan McMahon of Studio Mac, who led the estate's redesign. PHOTOS: PAUL BANFORD, LOUISE KENNERLEY

TRAVEL NEW SOUTH WALES Good as new

Eugenie Kelly takes in the \$10-million refurbishment of a historic estate.

Life & Leisure is on-site at Milton Park in Bowral for a first look at the hotel's \$10-million rebrand. Set in a historic Southern Highlands estate, the hotel reopened earlier in February after six months of renovations, becoming the flagship in Sailer Brothers Hospitality's new Ardour portfolio. A lot has changed – but the misty light that casts this part of NSW as an antipodean England is as enchanting

as ever, even on a steamy February day like today. Gazing out the hotel windows at the electric green lawns, set against an indigo blue sky, the scene feels expressive and romantic, as though Turner himself painted it. It's precisely this diffused light that both seduced and tormented interior architect Alan McMahon of Sydney firm Studio Mac, who led the redesign. "The outward views feel almost like artworks," he says, "but as

beautiful as they are, the quality of light here meant we went through a massive process of refining the colours we had planned for the property. It was quite a journey." Milton Park was built in 1910 as a grand country estate for Anthony Hordern (part of the Hordern retailing family) and his first wife Viola. In 1984, the Federation Arts and Crafts manse transitioned to a hotel, favoured by Sydneysiders escaping the

city for the weekend. During those years, the interior deco was in-line with French Provincial-style, with four-poster canopy beds, burgundy carpet and mustard paint. Now the old girl has had a glow-up, starting with a new colour palette pulled straight from the garden. "We drew inspiration from the countryside manners of Europe, but when I say that, it has been infused with a distinct modern sensibility," says McMahon, who previously redesigned Osborn House in nearby Bundanoon. "It's not like we picked one property as a reference; rather it's about how a manor house evolves over decades. How they grow a different personality as you move from room to room." The hotel reception is accessed through a porte-cochere and up marble stairs, where the original Federation-style wooden flyscreen door is still intact (and satisfyingly smacks shut behind you). The soft-sage green walls (Duhau Jungle Moss, in case

i **Need to know**
Rate: from \$549 a night for a Garden Terrace Room, breakfast included.



Above: One of the blush-pink suites. Below: Ardour Milton Park Bowral has the feel of a British country estate. PHOTO: PAUL BANFORD

you're inspired) set a contemplative tone for gilt-framed original paintings retrieved from the Horderns original collection. "We wanted to play a game of chalk and cheese," explains McMahon. A pair of traditional French olive-velvet lounges original to the homestead are styled alongside a selection of contemporary coffee tables shaped in organic cloud forms, striking a balance between soft and structural. Underfoot, custom rugs bloom with botanical motifs. Next door, a reading room painted in a muddy-butter hue (Dulux Clay Bake) is anchored by a soft pink blossom rug and a baroque mirror that sits atop a grand marble fireplace, while a contemporary, 1970s-inspired floor lamp adds a wink of Italian post-modernism. "For me, it's these complementary

elements of surprise you wouldn't expect that weigh out the overall playing field," explains McMahon. Across 44 guest rooms (including six suites), three different colour palettes – sage green, cobalt blue and a dusty blush – ensure no two stays feel the same. Murals referencing the estate's weeping beeches float above beds – a delicate motif that's complemented by the rooms' swirling wood carpets. The existing restaurant (named after the family) has been relocated and expanded from 38 seats to 102 seats. Its legendary Polo Bar – formerly a bastion of tartan gloom – has also been made over with dusty pink and apricot walls detailed with wainscoting, ornate antique mirrors, a contemporary sweeping sofa and soft magenta high-backed armchairs. At its centre is general manager David McDonald's pride and joy: a charcuterie room where regional meats and cheeses are carved to order from a central butcher's block, served with condiments made in-house under executive chef Mark Holland (ex-Nomad and Paddington Inn). As contemporary as these new dining spaces feel, they all offer orchestrated views of ponds, statues, espalier plants and the ivy-clad pool house. Proof that even though Milton Park may be newly polished, reinvention can look remarkably like continuity. **AFR**

