

The Drake Devonshire Inn, Wellington, Prince Edward County

In the small historic town of Wellington, in Prince Edward County, Drake hotelier and visionary Jeff Stober enlisted design firm +tongtong under the direction of John Tong to reinvent a tired bed and breakfast and original, c. 1880 foundry into an 11-room and two-suite contemporary inn. Perched over a meandering creek and a private waterfront, with sweeping views of Lake Ontario, the inn is the rural counterpart to its hip, urban sister, Toronto's Drake Hotel, also designed by Tong and his former firm, 3rd Uncle. The Drake's approach has been to draw inspiration from the culture background and vernacular of the local community while also instilling a contemporary perspective to the mix. The Drake Devonshire's aesthetic cues blend this with inspiration pulled from a lexicon of references including the British country inn, retreats in the Hamptons, summer camps, and Southern Ontario's farmhouses and cottages, with their tapestry of historical layers and styles, particularly their practical ad-hoc renovations, readily available building materials and mismatched furnishings.

With the help of ERA Architects, specialists in heritage and conservation, Tong removed a series of additions that had been made to the original foundry and then "reinstated" them, with seemingly iterative additions. These include a 'barn like' pavilion, a Douglas Fir dining hall, a modernist special events space, the Glass Box and an outdoor bar featuring a masonry chimney and double-sided fireplace and its cedar bleachers that cascade to the Devonshire's waterfront. The public areas offer a variety of open and private seating areas linked together through spaces that frame views and articulate the building's new volumes and layers, presenting a building as an evolutionary experience, encouraging travelers to discover and delight in its offerings.

Both the guest rooms and the public areas are teeming with doses of the Drake's brand of idiosyncratic and mischievous personality. Bright and contrasting tiles are mixed with patterned fabrics and straight materials in a deliberate, but seemingly ad-hoc manner that heighten the delicate balance of old and new. Tong and the Drake's in-house stylist and Drake General Store buyer, Carlo Colacci, scoured local and international antique markets and vintage fairs, picking and curating furniture, fixtures and accessories. These were refurbished and set with bespoke furniture, hand-turned lamps, virgin wool blankets and accessories that all follow the centuries-old tradition of "made not bought". With the Drake's in-house art curator Mia Nielsen, site specific and evolving contemporary art installations by emerging and well-known art stars were commissioned to surprise and delight throughout the property—indoors and out.