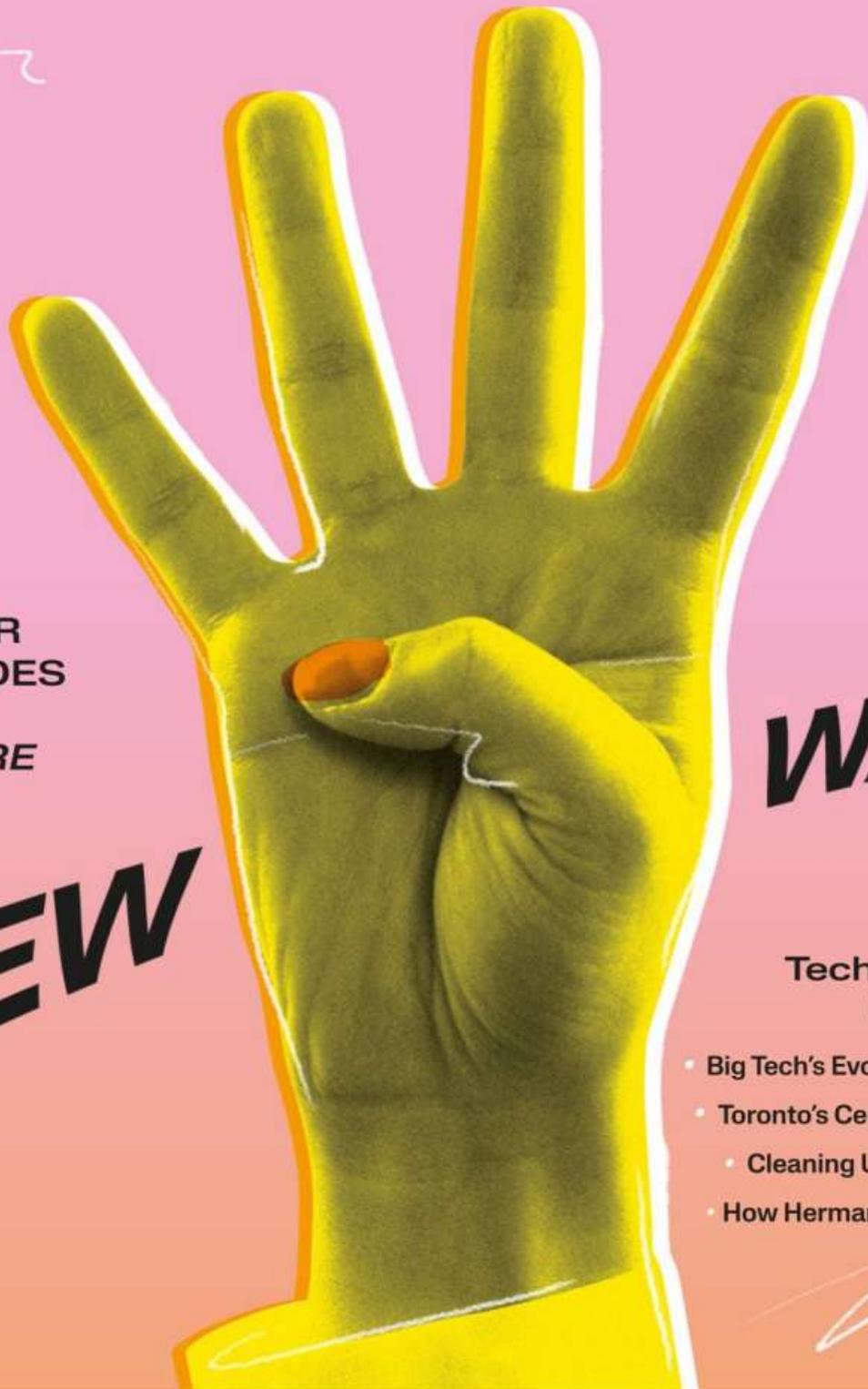


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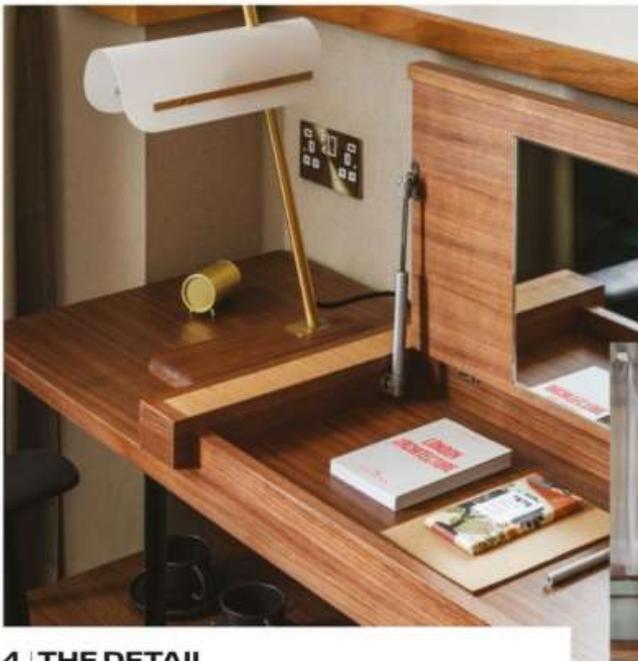
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## SITE VISIT



### 2 | THE SETTING

The double-height lobby repurposes what was once HSBC's typists' room. (The main banking hall now operates as a pub that was beyond the scope of this renovation.) Holloway Li used that history as a starting point, poring over the bank's archives until an image from the 1950s caught their eye. The photograph showed the space's beaux-arts identity tempered by more disciplined modern design — and led Coningsby and her team to follow suit. But even with this minimalist slant, introducing softness was another big priority. "All the grey marble looks gorgeous, but it sucks the warmth out a bit," she says. It was just as important to reflect the hotel's modern context. "You're surrounded by the busiest banking sector of London," she notes. "That clientele and the idea of quiet luxury was another big source of inspiration."



### 4 | THE DETAIL

Adding to the renovation's warmth is custom lighting by Joe Armitage. Along with the check-in area's backlit wall feature, he also envisioned the custom octagonal pendant in the lobby. The design references a similar ring fixture that Holloway Li found during its archival image crawl — although the original skewed rounder and was hung much higher up. "It was a nice opportunity to reinstate something, but we also didn't want to copy exactly what had been there," says Coningsby. The guest room table lamps, sold as part of Armitage's Modernist collection, pull from another retro source of inspiration, reinterpreting the work of the designer's grandfather — architect Edward Armitage — with contemporary flair.



### 3 | THE DESIGN

To build a stronger sense of intimacy, [Holloway Li](#) drew a datum line dividing the double-height lobby in two. The lower half layers in warm oak veneer paneling, while everything up top stays true to the building's historic character. A brushed brass rail marks the division; it also supports bespoke curtain headers designed to mimic shirt cuffs — a nod to both the crisp tailoring favoured by today's financial crowd and the area's pre-banking identity as a garment district. "People always talk about Savile Row or Soho tailoring, but those are quite different. The work here was not as shouty — but super durable, clean and stylish," says Coningsby. "That was a nice underlying philosophy for us." The seating, designed to suit a range of needs, is similarly dignified, pairing an &Tradition sofa and Poltrona Frau armchairs with a communal worktable.



### 5 | THE SCENE

Rounding out the lobby revamp (which also includes an espresso and cocktail bar) is a trio of canvases commissioned from local artist Elizabeth Power. "The rest of the interior scheme is relatively clean and pared-back," Coningsby says. "So artwork was a good opportunity to bring in a pop of colour and something more expressive. One painting is of a guy drinking a coffee, which really captures the vibe that we wanted the space to have." (Another depicts the nearby Leadenhall Market, while the third is a still life of a plant.) Coningsby notes that the artworks tie into Holloway Li's larger mission with the project: "We're peeling back all these layers and bringing out the space's original beauty," she says, "but we also wanted to develop something personal that's unique and signifies this new identity." **AZ**

PHOTO: COURTESY OF HSBC ARCHIVES (THE SETTING)