

Reclaimed furniture at the Basement Bar in Edinburgh

# Modern twists

In our latest interior design report, we look at trends in furniture design for bars and highlight the interior design at some of the newer openings

To mark its 20th birthday, the Basement Bar in Edinburgh's Broughton Street had a makeover.

Working with leading design practice Tibbatts Abel, they refurbished the bar with striking new features while at the same time remaining true to its Mexican and bohemian roots. This extended to the furniture where, alongside new bespoke pieces, much of the older furniture was retained and given new life by being painted in a variety of colourful designs. "We feel that we enhanced and brought the 'original' venue back to life," says designer Adam Tibbatts.

Reclaimed, or "upcycled", furniture is a popular choice for bar owners, creating an aesthetic that combines the old and the

new to create something unique. Also in Edinburgh, The Lucky Liquor Co went for a stripped-back feel, sourcing furniture from antique dealers such as vintage bentwood chairs that were sanded down and painted aquamarine. These are accompanied by classic girls head tables with round walnut tops and steel bases while tractor-seat high stools line the bar.

At The Bell Inn at Selsley, near Stroud in the Cotswolds, the owners Debbie Long and Dave Excell chose a combination of upcycled and new furniture as part of an extension and a refurbishment to introduce a modern new look. "Initially we considered revamping the original furniture to give it an authentic style but decided against that," Debbie says. "We were extending and the existing furniture wouldn't accommodate the new floor space. Another consideration was that we had a mismatch of heights and sizes so there was no way to bolt anything together in a modular way to accommodate the range of group sizes we anticipated would use the pub. Our existing furnishings were also very tired in both looks and usability and we were looking for a newer, fresher style with a modern twist. Looking around the wider area, it seemed to us that everyone had gone down the rustic and vintage wood look and we were keen to differentiate."

They called in Pub Stuff, a specialist in reclaimed and new furniture for the bar and pub trade, which came up with chairs



Furniture from GO IN at Funky Monkey in Vienna

and tables that would create an eclectic look, using a combination of five different styles alongside a consistent use of four different fabrics. "The tables were modular and of similar heights but different styles, some had a painted finish and others didn't," explains Pub Stuff director Sally Huband who worked on the project. "They also added oblong, oval or round styles to break up the uniformity. The diversity of the range chosen, the ability to adapt the finish of the wood together with the recommended



The Bell Inn



Pitcher & Piano in Royal Tunbridge Wells

choice of fabrics made for a superb, unique end result.”

An eclectic mix of new and classic furniture was used in a stylish revamp by Marston's of its Pitcher & Piano in Royal Tunbridge Wells in Kent, moving it away from being more of a late-night venue. Comfortable lounge-style seating has helped to make it more of an all-day offering, open



## Las Iguanas

Latin American flavours inspire the interior design as well as the food and drink at the new Las Iguanas restaurant and bar in the London Designer Outlet in Wembley, north-west London. B3 Designers came up with a smart, relaxed Latin American tone, heavily influenced by the industrial 1950s, referencing authentic and classic furniture and fixtures.

Key features include a perimeter-ceiling feature made from timber beams, which creates a canopy-like effect giving an outdoor feel. The faded glamour of old Havana weaves through the aesthetic of the space, such as the decorative timber floor which creates a feeling of old ballroom-style rooms along with a decorative ceiling coffer with detailed corning housing three large feature chandeliers. Fret-cut antique bronze metal screens present an industrial aesthetic while bringing softness with patterns, combining to create playful shadows through the space. Dark iroko undulating timber panelling frames the servery area, complemented by the vibrant coastal colour palette of coral, mustard yellow, and jade green that features in the textured fabrics and worn paint finishes.

for breakfast through to lunch and dinner and cocktails. Leading hospitality design practice Concorde BGW worked on the interior, aiming for a modern feel with quirky touches. Furniture on the upper ground floor is a mixture of communal high tables with zinc tops, wooden benches, leather Chesterfield sofas and low industrial stools, selected to create a relaxed space for eating, drinking and socialising. The lower ground floor is a bright and airy space for dinner or cocktails, with luxurious seating, textured wallpaper and velvet fabrics.

The current trend in furniture design is all about new combinations of novel and traditional materials to create innovative and individual styles, points out Jan Dammis of hospitality furniture supplier GO IN. “The choice of materials used in furniture design has never been greater. Elegant woods, trendy weaves and futuristic stainless steel are all available in an unrivalled variety of forms and colours. These define not only the form of the important pieces of bar furniture such as tables, chairs and stools, but are also important in characterising the ‘feel’ of the pieces too: the robustness, the build quality and the luxuriousness.”

The mix-and-match capabilities of GO IN's modular range of tables, including choices of tops, bases and columns, allow an unlimited combination of variants for bar interiors, from trendy, colourful designs in man-made materials to more traditional finishes such as natural wood. For upholstered seating, the choice of covering material is even wider, from imitation leathers, leathers and fabrics in different colours, patterns and textures. “The choice of upholstery material is perhaps the most important selection to be made because your guests will not only see these elements but they will also touch and feel them,” Jan adds. “So the choice of material – perhaps high-quality leather or velvety soft velour – will speak volumes about your establishment. The bold use of colour or patterns on furniture, or subdued tones, can define a whole interior. Given mix-and-match options and a wide range of materials, you'll be able to create individual furniture designs for your specific ‘house’ style, whether it's ‘hip’, ‘glamorous’, or ‘traditional’.”

Classic and contemporary design come together in new pieces from Lyndon Design, a specialist in top-end hospitality furniture. As part of its ongoing partnership with furniture designer Mark Gabbetas, it has introduced a striking new contemporary



## Salvation in Noodles

A striking interior design marks out new noodle bar Salvation in Noodles – or SIN – as outside the ordinary. The venue in Dalston, London, has been opened by restaurateur Colin Tu, specialising in Vietnamese food alongside wines from Borough Wines and beers from London's Crate Brewery. The design is the work of Michaela Reysenn of Kai Design, whose previous projects include The Lost & Found in Birmingham and The Betsy Smith in London, working with creative agency Arm and Eye. Wallpaper featuring the “10 commandments of noodles” runs throughout the space, while the back room is filled with knotted noodle-like lighting from the ceiling. “The overall look is a contemporary twist on industrial-style street food dining with a Dalston cool identity,” Michaela explains.

seating collection called Frank. Featuring an armchair and two-seater sofa, it consists of an external timber frame with upholstered panels, available in natural oak, walnut or a stained finish. Referencing mid-century wooden frame styles, it makes a contemporary statement with its angular and geometric proportions and frame detailing.

Lyndon Design's in-house designer Caroline Atack has also come up with new luxurious furniture aimed at top-end hotels



Frank from Lyndon Design

## interior design



Uni from Metalmobil

and lounge bars. Called Mr & Mrs, it is a new take on the classic wing chair, inspired by the iconic design's stately grandeur but with contemporary touches. The high-backed version has a full underframe, full seat and wooden buttons for a more masculine feel while the low-backed comes with loose cushions, fabric buttons and leg detail. "Their aesthetic design fully reflects the fireside allure that wing chairs have,

combined with the ultimate in indulgent comfort," adds Lyndon Design managing director Tim Armitt.

A bold modern furniture design of chairs and barstools from interiors and equipment specialist New Concept is proving "hugely popular" with bars and clubs, according to sales manager Richard Pearson. The Uni design from Metalmobil, created by Italian designer Francesco Geraci, is made from polypropylene moulded into curves. They come in 10 bright colours such as violet, azure and boss green, with a range of styles to suit different venues. "The seats are comfortable and eye catching, as well as hugely practical for operators to wipe down and clean," Richard adds. "They give a really premium look and can obviously match any décor."

For a "wow factor", a range of illuminated chairs, poseur tables and other products have been introduced by Jusi Colour for the UK hospitality market. Suitable for indoors and out, the range is lit by LED colour displays and made from low-maintenance



Jusi Colour illuminated table and chairs

polyethylene which has the durability to be used in bars and clubs – and left outside all year round. To match the furniture, the range includes decorative spheres, planters, ice buckets and ash trays. "First impressions matter and, with these products, you are guaranteed to get the wow factor, helping to quickly differentiate yourself or your business," says Jusi Colour owner Sian Lancaster.



## New interiors out of the Bluu

When Bluu opened 10 years ago in a former fish market in Manchester's Northern Quarter, it was a stylish destination for food and cocktails. However, the downstairs bar was in need of a refurbishment, with years of use leaving it "looking like a tired and well-worn 80s strip club", according to Richard Wilson, owner of hospitality design specialist Concorde BGW. It was brought in to carry out a major revamp of the basement bar.

"We transformed it by moving the bar to the other side of the space and creating a full new back fitting as well as adding in intimate areas of fixed seating," Richard explains. It includes a feature wall finished in the form of pressed tin panels, shipped over from North America, with

gentleman club-style dark oak panelling and herringbone-patterned reclaimed boarding. The floor was fully replaced with new understated reclaimed timber. The seductively dimly lit scheme adds colour through turquoise crushed velvet, vibrant purple felt and caramel-coloured leather. The light fittings are industrial with visible filament lamps to add to the atmosphere. The back fitting is simple but dressed with an array of antique decanters, crazy curios and a grand spirit selection. It is all lit with industrial-style Anglepoise lights. Additional pops of blue are added through hidden blue lighting under the bar counter and reflecting off the tin wall panelling from behind the fixed seating. There is also a feature neon light quote and a neon toilet sign.



## Bull's Head

Legendary live jazz venue The Bull's Head in Barnes, south-west London, has undergone a complete refurbishment by operator Geronimo Inns. Alongside the existing bar, the venue now has a new dining room, two private dining rooms and a jazz room with its own bar. It was redesigned by Geronimo co-founder Jo Cleveley with in-house designer Clare Sibun, who retained many of the original features, such as the fireplaces, the main bar, beams and fittings. Remaining sympathetic to the heritage of the building, the overall vision was to create a townhouse with a twist. They have added a new public bar as well as a library-like space to relax in. Key design features include refurbished furniture, comfortable sofas and armchairs, a giant antique bird cage and a selection of photographs, posters and art work – much of it from the original pub, or salvaged from the basement, and reframed and hung. The space is full of colour and texture, from painted brick walls, polished concrete flooring, and bright book shelves to a variety of soft furnishings.