

## TACKLING DESIGN HEAD ON

**LONDON'S HEDDON STREET WAS IMMORTALISED ON THE COVER OF DAVID BOWIE'S ZIGGY ALBUM IN THE 70S. TODAY ONE OF THE STREET'S PROPERTIES IS HAVING A 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY MAKEOVER TO BECOME THE LATEST LIVING ROOM, BUT IT WON'T HAVE A SPACESHIP THEME, ACCORDING TO JOSH SIMS**



SHIDEH SHAYGAN  
Photo Knut Koivisto

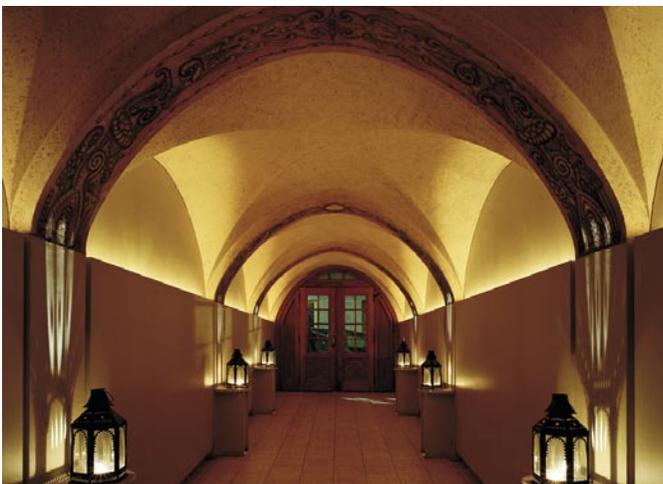
**T**here was a time when walking into a bar meant being greeted with a sawdust floor, a ragtaggle of chairs and tables and the obligatory grumpy barman behind his well-worn counter. Things are very different now. Enter a bar or restaurant today and not only are the home comforts expected, but so is a

print of the album cover on the wall, but I think that will be all," says Shideh Shaygan. "Mature people want to dine and talk and be comfortable. Not feel like they're inside some kind of spaceship." Shaygan is the interior designer who will be creating the look of Heddon Street. Growing up in Iran, with its mix of traditional Islamic architecture and modernist developments, and having lived in Scandinavia for 12 years, has given her a unique

books and prestigious awards. It is why the catering industry hires the likes of Christian Liaigre, David Rockwell, Karim Rashid, Jordan Mozer and other design big-guns to makeover their diverse premises. Bars today run from small bolt-holes through to giant complexes. They are less traditional drinking establishments as places to meet, to see and be seen, for all levels of society – designers have to create places that are not so over designed that they

for instance, you may well be prepared to spend £2.50 on a coffee in Starbucks rather than get one for 50p from a greasy spoon.

Consequently, Shaygan suggests, one central design tenet is that every bar needs to leave something in the customer's mind – Heddon Street will have a striking contemporary staircase, "just to remind everyone that, hey, it's 2005!" she says. Hence also the rise over recent years of



ENTRANCE OF THE RESTAURANT ANNAKHAN IN STOCKHOLM  
Photo Ake Eson Lindman

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degree of theatre. With Living Ventures' new bar opening on London's Heddon Street, the pressure is on – not least because the building in which it will be based features on the cover of David Bowie's 1972 album 'The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and The Spiders From Mars'. So, a rock and roll theme is in order?

"A Ziggy look? Well, we should at least have a good

perspective on design. This has helped her already to win a roster of impressive clients, from bars and restaurants in Stockholm, private residences in London, Amsterdam, Sardinia and Switzerland, to office refits in London.

Shaygan is still working on the initial plans for Heddon Street, which is due to open in November. She knows that with commercial interior design improving continuously and customer expectations rising all the time, the bar has been set high. After all, restaurant/bar design is the focus of dedicated

scare casual diners away, but not too scruffy that people feel they can't dress up for a night out.

Indeed, bar/restaurant operators, such as Living Ventures, are well aware that ultimately experience is their product; what they are selling is not just a tasty dish or cocktail, but emotion. A bar/restaurant style is a reflection of its patrons. This is in part why,

ever more extravagant ways of catching the eye, from bold art works to interactive accessories, raw industrial materials and even champagne fountains. Super-futurism, Arabian style Nomadic settings, and even imitation bedrooms have all featured as design styles for recent bar launches.

We may now expect everything we use and every place we visit to be visually appealing, but there is always the danger that overly-themed bar/restaurants get old fast: Planet Hollywood went bust (though some restaurants still



RESTAURANT  
ANNAKHAN'S  
INTERIOR DETAIL  
Photo Ake Eson Lindman



DINING ROOM AND OPEN KITCHEN, PRIVATE HOUSE IN LUGANO, SWITZERLAND, FOTO TORRE

operate) and Steven Spielberg's LA-based, submarine-styled restaurant Dive! went under (in the business sense, of course). Shaygan prefers her designs to be more understated.

"It's a question of balance. You can try so much that you overdo it and end up destroying the effect you wanted," she explains. "My philosophy is to be as subtle as possible, so the customer feels that sense of familiarity, but also notices interesting things about the place. People go to restaurants and bars to get a different experience from the ones they're used to. They want to feel comfortable, but also get the occasional surprise."

Certainly new trends in bar design have seen a shift away from bold colours – now viewed as very 80s, when bars opened and closed with much greater regularity – and towards the use of more gently unusual fabrics, textures, shapes, scale and

colours to give a bar a more timeless feel: the Heddon Street Living, for instance, will use rich, muted, dark shades, walnut and Welsh slate, sandblasted stone for flooring and a rubbed effect wall surface – materials that are essentially warm, classic and dependable given a gentle updating.

Lighting too is more likely to be clever but unobtrusive, with more use of LED and fibre optics, which can be used to create different effects for different areas of the venue. Indeed, technology is increasingly a shaping force in interior design: bars with dance floors or performance areas may employ the new 'liquid flooring', for instance, which can be programmed to look as though it is tropical ocean or even on fire. Not many people have that at home.

But while you may be able to pick up a few styling tips at a Living or Bar&Grill to take back



EXHIBITION DESIGN FOR FASHIONATION AT MODERNA MUSEET IN STOCKHOLM Photo Ake Eson Lindman

home with you, don't be fooled into thinking that bar/restaurant design is all about surface. Design is often mistakenly thought to be just about styling, but it can actually undertake a more holistic approach to functionality. This means taking into consideration exactly what type of food is being offered, the type of people behind the operation, even its location – "because the experience of a New York bar/restaurant would be very different to one in London, and different again

in Milan," says Shaygan. It will consider how the 'front of house' interacts with the parts you don't normally see, such as the kitchens.

Getting this right at an advance stage is important: it influences such factors as speed and style of service or the overall ambience. It can even have a bearing on the type of menu offered and how much the customer ends up spending. In other words, it's not all about having interesting chairs.

"Good food and service

you have to take as a given. That leaves the visual effect of the bar/restaurant the most important aspect of whether it's a success. And that encompasses the entire space and the total experience of it," says Shaygan. "I once designed a restaurant and two-thirds of the time was taken up designing the open kitchen, and the guests were only giving feedback on the dining area! But design has to make the space work in all its elements. It can't just be superficially beautiful."



BATHROOM WALL DESIGN

