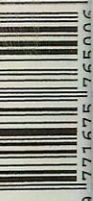


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the elementary issue

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SAMSUNG





lounge bar

A football-inspired bar lounge in soccer adverse America? **form** finds out how that concept plays out.

Text by Sam Yen

The Lower East Side of Manhattan contains an area known as Alphabet City, a rectangular area consisting of four alphabetical avenues - Avenue A, B, C and D - bordered by East Houston Street to the south and 14th Street to the north. Historically, the area has a particular reputation as host to a succession of different immigrant groups, in a city well known for being an ethnic potpourri. It was first colonised by the Germans, who named it Kleindeutschland (Little Germany), who eventually moved Uptown, leaving the area to the Eastern Europeans, Jewish, Italians and Irish. By the middle of the 20th century, its demographic began to change again, this time welcoming swathes of Puerto Ricans and Hispanics into its folds.

Today, Alphabet City stands as one of the most diverse areas of Manhattan and the subject of the musical 'Rent'; an eclectic mix of African Americans, Latino and white bohemian communities that is as international as it is American. There isn't a better place in New York City than this to create Mundial, a football-centric lounge bar. And when we say football, we mean The Beautiful Game, not America's version of rugby.

LEFT
Soccer to me

BELOW
Team spirits



Exploiting Space

Designed by 'multimedia laboratory' Arts Corporation, Mundial (Spanish for 'worldwide') was commissioned by a group of investors from a New York football team. The brief was simple: to create a sleek contemporary bar that could double at any moment into a place for large groups to watch football. To that end, Arts Corporation devised a design that principal Mike Latham describes it as 'something of a jewel box'. The space consists of two separate 5m by 20m areas interconnected by a short corridor. One serves as the buzzing bar while the other operates as a relaxed lounge. A patio of the same dimensions runs along the rear of the property.

Tackling the Task

Adapting the space the requirements of Mundial proved no easy task. While the end result is a wide, breezy space, the process of getting there involved the removal of a huge amorphous art installation in the lounge which had been put there to conceal numerous flaws in the interior of the building. According to Latham, plenty of time was spent on restoring the brick, moving water pipes, rearranging air vents and soundproofing to support the speaker system without interfering or interference from the apartments directly above

the lounge. The final product is an inviting, warm and homey space that is an exercise in juxtaposition: the rugged, exposed red brick walls complementing the polished low white oak ceiling and the hardy, pristine black slate floor.

Theme Work

The materials that go about making Mundial such a cosy experience were chosen for their economy, durability and dynamic colour qualities. The white oak, which forms both the ceiling and the bar, projects a warm, vibrant atmosphere that becomes starker as the sun sets and the lights come on in the evening. The cold but sturdier slate floor was chosen as a contrast to the white oak, but also because it was able to withstand a hundred pairs of dirty football cleats trudging in and out after Sunday football matches. A further level of contrast is evident in the so-called 'artificial' portions of Mundial: the extensive glass and mirrors used to magnify the dimensions of the space as well as exposing the inner technological workings and brains of its installations within the confines of the more natural materials used.



Kick-off

In the lounge, a large projection screen displays the hustle and bustle of competitive international football, while various other screens of different sizes litter the bar, sitting contentedly next to intoxicating bottles of alcohol. In warm weather, projection screens are also set up in the patio. During popular matches, however, vision can be obscured by many heads, which is where Arts Corporation's customised TVTables come in: functioning as both movable drink counters and viewing screens that can flip up or stay down, depending on preferences. The rest of Mundial is furnished with a mixture of custom furniture made in Arts Corporation's New York and Mexico City workshops (like the wooden stools in the bar) as well as modern staples such as Eames loungers and Arne Jacobsen chairs. Of the entire design, Latham is particularly proud of the glass DJ booth that sits next to the bar, describing it as 'the nerve centre of every piece of technology in the space, including eight screens and a fantastic sound system. It also gives the impression that it is the DJ that is captaining the ship called Mundial.' It works. World class DJs such as Ray Velazquez have already been attracted to spin

their tunes in Mundial's intimate setting.

Full Time Comfort

Although it is primarily a setting for American football fans to relax and enjoy matches, the design hasn't gone overboard with football (or as they say in America, soccer) references. In fact, apart from screens showing 22 men kicking balls on a pitch and framed world maps on the walls, there is little to even indicate Mundial's association with football. So instead of being overt, attention was paid to the layout and setting of the area to heighten the enjoyment of viewing the game in a social setting. A non-football loving patron would be able to enjoy the Mundial atmosphere just as much as a die-hard fan, if they didn't mind the inevitable raucous roars when a ball hits the back of a net. Designed to be both a sleek lounge and a sports bar, Mundial effectively straddles that balance to become much more than the sum of its parts. And that surely must be the highest tribute of all. ■

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CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE
 Spectators spots
 Belle of the ball
 Instant replay