



1. Interior of new Church Street bar LüB. **2.** The bar features a single, sinuous line snaking from the foot rail, up the wall and across the ceiling. **3.** Bright colours and curvilinear shapes are the hallmark of LüB's interior.

The Recycled Cafe-Lounge

When the bones of a place are good, a transformation requires creative adjusting rather than major renovating to achieve a new look.

By **Leslie C. Smith**
Photos by Clint Adam Smyth

Larry Peloso was strolling down Church Street in Toronto's Gay Village a little over a year ago when he noticed that Blu, the fancy boîte-cum-café designed by II By IV, had closed, after only six months of operation.

Joking to a friend, Peloso remarked that all one had to do was move the "b" over to coin an entirely new and suitably blue brand name. Thus LüB was born. And Peloso, a film and advertising creative director, ended up being one of four partners running the place.

Friend Michael Taylor, of the architectural firm Taylor Smythe, was brought in to grease and redirect the design wheels, after the initial refit by II By IV.

"There seemed to be elements that were brought in later by the owners that did not jive with the overall picture," Taylor comments. "We wanted to transform it into something new, but leave the good bones in place. We also had very little money to work with, so we con-



centrated on fixing what really needed to be fixed."

The "bones" that remained are indeed elegant: in the downstairs bar-café, slabs of slate line the walls, interrupted by a large striped tile mosaic on either side. Matching slate forms the floor, while the white ceiling above is interspersed with unobtrusive recessed MR16 pot lights.

Upstairs in the bar/party room stands yet another slate wall, fitted with a built-in fireplace and TV. Beyond that is a wooden outer balcony (newly rechristened the Skyy Deck in honour of one of the bar's liquor sponsors). Blue acrylic windows dot the upstairs area and are echoed by a large acrylic lightbox downstairs.

Colour was the first thing to change in the conversion process from Blu to LüB. "The challenge was in warming up the space," Peloso says.

Inspiration came from a fresh set of melon orange bar stools from Kiosk. That same shade was later used throughout the lounge – on wall areas, in selected artwork, in the acrylic lightbox, on the outside sign, right down to the abstract umlauts on staff T-shirts and the double melon chunks on toothpicks that stick out of the bar's signature martinis. The



4-5. Recycling a name: Blu became Lübb simply by moving the letter "b."



other, more substantial, change consisted of removing the main floor's stainless steel deli counter and substituting a slim bar counter with a white backlit ribbed acrylic front, topped by white ribbed laminate.

Borrowing an element that has proven effective for other architects in connecting up a small space, Taylor used a single, sinuous line to

snake from the bar's foot rail, up and across the counter, curving around overhead and then drifting along the ceiling in an eventually diminishing ribbon.

"I just got riffing on the name Lübb," says Taylor. "I liked the idea of something being squeezed out of a tube. We also needed something strong to balance the strength of the rest of the area."

Afterimages of this ribbed filet are to be found in the back coat check counter and the upstairs bar and DJ booth. As well, a wide band of orange paint runs up the far downstairs wall, across the second floor ceiling and down the opposing wall, forming a warm orange envelope that offsets the somewhat stark dark grey slate wall beyond.

Lübb's owners and Taylor are all satisfied with the final effect. So to are the customers, who have kept the place hopping since its opening Halloween 2003 party.

So have any of the original designers been by to view the recycling of their work?

Michael Taylor isn't sure, but trusts they will find it still holds true to their intentions. "To me, it felt like a collaboration. I hope they feel the same way."



Windows on a sparkling world

It's worth visiting Toronto's Church Street village to view the windows of Ma Zone and enjoy the range of eclectic products and high style merchandising.

Photos courtesy of Ma Zone

The windows of Ma Zone, the high design home fashion accessory shop in the heart of the Church street village, delight patrons and passersby alike. The product styling displays rival comparable shops anywhere in the world, with a hydro bill of over \$1,000 a month to prove it. Both pristine and whimsical, these gem-like window stylings provide a clear and fresh image compared to the otherwise rough-around-the-edges bars and other sundry neighbourhood establishments. Although the neighbourhood is changing (see Byzantium and Lübb), Ma Zone is a small, shiny shop stocking some 300 lines of

designers as loyal clients for both product and styling consultation. He has provided products for some of the city's best condominium model suites and restaurants.

"The shop/showroom is a calling card for clients," says Martiros. With a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Toronto's York University, he started his career designing store fixtures for trade show and retail display clients before opening the shop, and has recently launched a line of display systems of clear coated recycled iron used extensively throughout Ma Zone.

(mostly glass) products.

Iranian-born shop keeper Armin Martiros has a keen eye for stylistic trends, counting a number of interior