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LOCATION SYDNEY | AUS
PROJECT THE ARGYLE

FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS

A POPULAR CLUB IN SYDNEY'S HISTORIC ROCKS AREA HAS RECEIVED A MAKEOVER WITH AN EMPHASIS ON VERSATILITY

When The Argyle was re-launched at the end of last year, guests were invited to one of several smaller parties in curtained-off areas of the club. Gradually throughout the night, the series of diverse spaces that now comprise the venue were unveiled and it became one big party.

It couldn't have been a more fitting re-launch for The Argyle, showcasing the flexibility of the space, which has received a colourful, feminine makeover from Rachel Luchetti of Luchetti Krelle. Patrons visiting the venue now find themselves in what appears to be a collection of smaller, more flexible spaces – from the tapas dining experience in Bazar restaurant to the glowing white VIP bar upstairs – instead of one vast nightclub.

It wasn't a clear-cut brief though, explains Luchetti. Rather, it was an evolutionary process that began with a few pieces of furniture. But, as the saying goes, from small beginnings come great things.

Luchetti Krelle has a long history of working on interiors for Sydney restaurateur John Szangolies – including Saké (*Indesign #41*). When The Cut Bar & Grill was added to his stable of venues in The Rocks, Luchetti came on board to design the interiors. With the addition of The Cut, Szangolies also hired a precinct manager, whose first impression was that The Argyle lacked oomph. So, Szangolies asked Luchetti to pick up a few pieces for the club while working on The Cut. "The new Argyle evolved from furniture to lighting," says Luchetti. "And now it's got a life of its own."

The first pieces to be introduced as part of the new fit-out – and which went on to inspire the rest of the



LEFT The colourful patchwork armchairs, imported from Europe, were the catalyst for the whole fit-out

ABOVE Texture and pattern create an eclectic aesthetic with a more feminine feel than the previous fit-out



bit more shiny, a bit more colourful, a bit more female-friendly”

revamp – were the patchwork armchairs in the main bar. The luxurious fabric used for the upholstery isn't an obvious choice for a popular venue that often caters to over 3,000 people in a single busy evening. But the patterns and textures are just as effective at disguising spills and stains as a more obvious choice of dark, durable upholstery.

However, not everything was designed to be hard-wearing. As Luchetti points out, "you've got to have some degree of maintenance and can't expect things to last forever". White tables in the dining and bar areas, for example, were used to lighten up the dark space even though there's no doubt they will take a beating over time.

Compared to the previous fit-out, which was very masculine, Luchetti's melange of floral and patchwork is "a bit more shiny, a bit more colourful and a bit more female-friendly". This is an important consideration when a large proportion of the club's patrons are women. Bar stools in the main bar (upholstered in Crypton, an easy to clean, water- and stain-resistant fabric) have been cut to a custom height to help prevent women wearing heels and skirts feeling uncomfortable when climbing up or down.

The custom height also makes it comfortable for large groups to interact while both standing and sitting. The key to a hospitality project such as this, it seems, is flexibility. "All these tables cater for groups of thirty having a full à la carte meal," says Luchetti, "or groups of four having drinks."

Texture and colour throughout highlight the heritage building through contrast, while screens and furniture of various heights break up the space. Custom floral pendant lights from Edit also give the vast space depth, bringing the eye level down and directing it toward the back of the main bar.

Upstairs, the Belvedere Bar – a VIP space inspired by the architecture of ice hotels – looks down over the main bar. Designed before sponsors were approached, the frosted Belvedere vodka bottles that line the bar and the Belvedere tree logo that adorns the front of the bar couldn't have been a better fit. It's a cool, glowing contrast to the colour and texture down in the main bar and, like the rest of the fit-out, a contrast to the heritage building itself.

"Some people try to mimic heritage design but we think contrast is more successful," says Luchetti. "If you're trying to make something stand out, you need to treat it differently." And in the hospitality industry, where three years can be a lifetime for an interior fit-out, it's just what The Argyle needed to make it stand out in the sea of bars and clubs in Sydney.

Mandi Keighran is Deputy Editor of
Indesign magazine.

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THE ARGYLE

INTERIOR DESIGN Luchetti Krelle
JOINER Contemporary Furniture Design

BUDGET \$500,000 (approx.)
TIME TO COMPLETE 6 months
(planning and construction)
TOTAL FLOOR AREA 1,000m²

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FURNITURE In Main Bar, 'Anne' armchairs, 'Bensington' lounges and 'Clobberly' chairs from Yury & Yury, 'Medallion' bar stools from Hughes Commercial Furniture, 'Louis' chairs, 'Collect-A-Billard', 'Collect-A-Bill' and custom tables from Interstudio, and 'Louis' sofa, chairs and easychairs from Affra Holland. In Perch Bar, Macetamesa 'Moma Lum' tables from KE-ZU, Derlot 'Twig' bench from Stylecraft.

LIGHTING In Main Bar, 'Florence' 12-light and 'Vienna' 8-light, from Online Lighting, and custom print photo pendants from Edit. In Perch Bar, 'Peris CE2020' chandelier from Online Lighting. In Courtyard, 'Bloom' pots from Café Culture.

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ABOVE The Belvedere Bar, inspired by ice hotels, is a glowing white contrast to the heritage building.

ABOVE RIGHT The Argyle now houses a tapas restaurant called Bazar.