



Optic nerve

Veronica Simpson looks at five of Europe's finest new bars, oozing personality and functionality

In the fast and fickle world of bar design, the right look will make or break a venue. And right now that look is 'experiential', according to Howard Watson, author of *The Design Mix – Bars, Cocktails and Style* (Wiley, £14.99). Each new space attempts to create a unique experience, he says. 'Right now, worldwide, it's heading towards maximalism.' But he gives it only two years before this trend will implode, its devotees suddenly nauseated by

an unrelenting diet of richness and visual excess.

Having studied the sparkling universe of bars for some years, he reckons: 'The ones that survive the short-term trends are the designs that have a narrative arc, creating a total space that has depth as well as impact. They give you that "wow" experience, but you notice new details every time you come back.'

Only time will tell if the bars assembled here from cities across Europe are future classics.

Stripe a light

The Club Zum Rennweg is Zurich's newest members' club. Targeted at 'innovators, trendsetters and integrators', its interiors have been conceived by Florin Baeriswyl, director of Dai design agency. A brand experience specialist, his inspiration came from a drink. Carpe Diem is a green tea-based, non-alcoholic infusion apparently much loved in northern Europe (and the brand is owned by one of the club's board members).

Colours are natural and calming – cream, beige, pale yellow and dark brown. Baeriswyl says: 'We have used materials that are sensual, like horsehair-woven curtains, raw silk wallpapers and lots of wood that is lacquered dark to look like teak. The lounge carpet is made of tightly woven black horsehair which has a reflective sheen, like a lake. Walls are mostly back-lit, so it gives a spacey atmosphere. There are wooden lattice stripes across the light boxes to give it an Asian feel.'

The vertical stripe is repeated in chair backs, on upholstery and light box screens, as if the room is coated in an elegant beige and cream pinstripe. It's an analogy Baeriswyl enjoys. He quips: 'Like our customers, we hope that behind the suit is an enlightened person. Extremely busy and successful men and women want to drink and dine in an atmosphere that's cooling, inspiring and excellent.' Boris Becker is one celebrity member. Go figure.