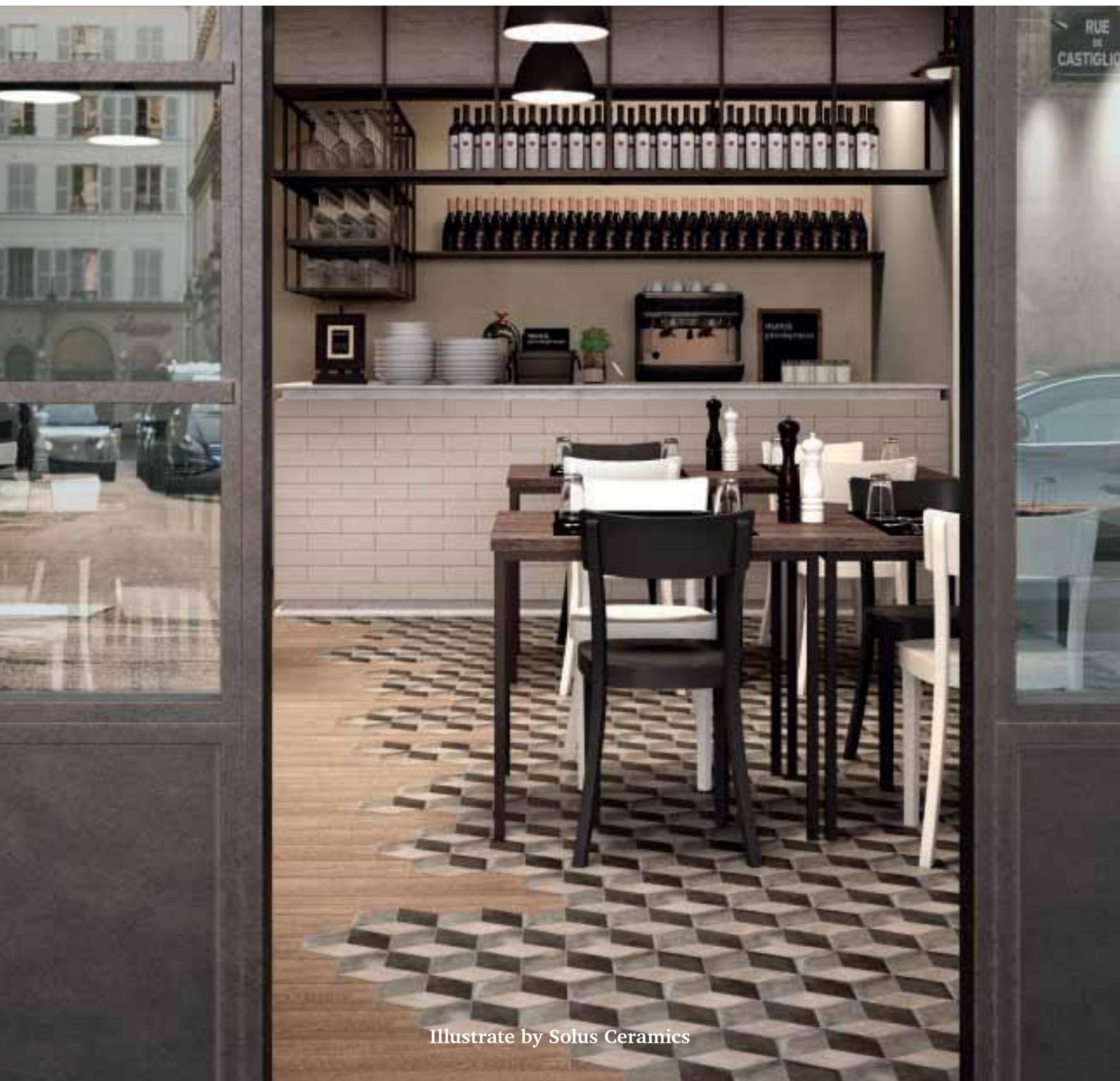


Hospitality Interiors

INTERIOR DESIGN FOR HOTELS, RESTAURANTS, BARS & CLUBS

Issue 57 | January-February 2015



Illustrate by Solus Ceramics



Stephen St Kitchen is the latest project from the team behind Great Court Restaurant at the British Museum, Serpentine Bar & Kitchen in Hyde Park and Soho private members' club, The House of St Barnabas. Appointed to redesign the head offices of the British Film Institute (BFI), architecture and design practice, Softroom, has created an open and inviting space that will act as a creative hub and meeting space for the film community.

Stephen St Kitchen, London

The BFI and Benugo approached award-winning architecture and interior design practice, Softroom, to redesign the BFI's head offices on Stephen Street after the popular restaurant group took over the institute's catering in 2013.

The BFI and Benugo approached award-winning architecture and interior design practice, Softroom, to redesign the BFI's head offices on Stephen Street after the popular restaurant group took over the institute's catering in 2013.

Located off London's famous Tottenham Court Road, Stephen Street was spread over seven floors in a rather neglected 1960's property. Aside from a basement with two viewing theatres, the building lacked any excitement or interest to make it commensurate with the industry it represented, nor did it reflect the importance of the BFI's role within that industry.

The BFI contributes to the artistic and economic success of British film through its support of next generation filmmakers and audiences, and it needed a space that better translated and facilitated this public role. The new BFI HQ would be a go-to destination for the film industry in London, with comfortable spaces where staff could grab a coffee, meet, greet and interact with colleagues and industry folk alike.

From the start it was clear that the ground floor had to be opened up to make it more welcoming and accessible for all – from the film student to the established filmmaker and MP or journalist – providing a creative hub where ideas could flourish

and industry connections could be made.

For the BFI reception lounge area of the ground floor, Softroom's main priority was to create a highly flexible space. Seating areas with loose furniture can be arranged in assorted ways to accommodate parties of all sizes – from small informal meetings to larger industry events. Upholstered club chairs, leather sofas and mid-century armchairs in a teal-based palette can be combined around marble-topped coffee tables as required.

By installing a slim-profile steel-framed glass partition between the BFI lounge area and the Benugo restaurant occupying the other part of the ground floor, the two spaces, although acoustically separated, remain visually united. This creates a cohesive and expansive sense of space throughout – the flow between both areas left virtually uninterrupted and inclusive to all visitors, whilst still retaining a private club feel.

The restaurant's glass frontage and glass doors to the rear of the building develop this language of expansion and accessibility further. On a sunny day, the glazed french doors can be opened to create an alfresco feel, turning attention back onto the streets of the local film community beyond, as well as to the rear outdoor terrace. Beautifully aged oak chevron flooring in a bleached 'pavement grey' also links the lounge and restaurant areas.

Walls clad in grey-toned lacquered pebbles further enhance the indoors-outdoors feel and, together with Wood Wool panelled soffits, add texture, interest and improved acoustics to the

scheme. Exposed, shot-blasted concrete pillars allow diners to appreciate the architecture of the space, delivering utilitarian contrast to the more polished aspects of the scheme.

Inside and central to the restaurant area, an open kitchen forms the heart of the space. At its core, a sculptural, feature pizza oven in patinated bronze – a contemporary update on the traditional brick vernacular – adds warmth. Counter dining is also a key feature of the restaurant, allowing patrons to enjoy the theatrical action of the open kitchen from the comfort of tan leather upholstered bar stools.

Deep black and gold Marinace stone counters, together with a glazed lavastone servery, provide a sense of luxury and high quality finish to work tops and bar dining surfaces. Dining chairs in olive velvet complement the dip-dyed and decolourised Persian rugs scattered throughout, as well as the generous banquettes to the centre of the space that allows for more intimate group settings.

Light fittings that were custom designed and fabricated by the Lebanon-based .PSLAB, in powder-coated corrugated metal and brass, add warm ambient light to the concrete columns and maximise the feeling of height in the space.

'Light Drawings' by Christopher Bucklow hang on the back wall of the restaurant and make the connection between film and contemporary art in a subtle way. Like film, Christopher Bucklow's pieces rely on an external light source to bring them to life.

W softroom.com

