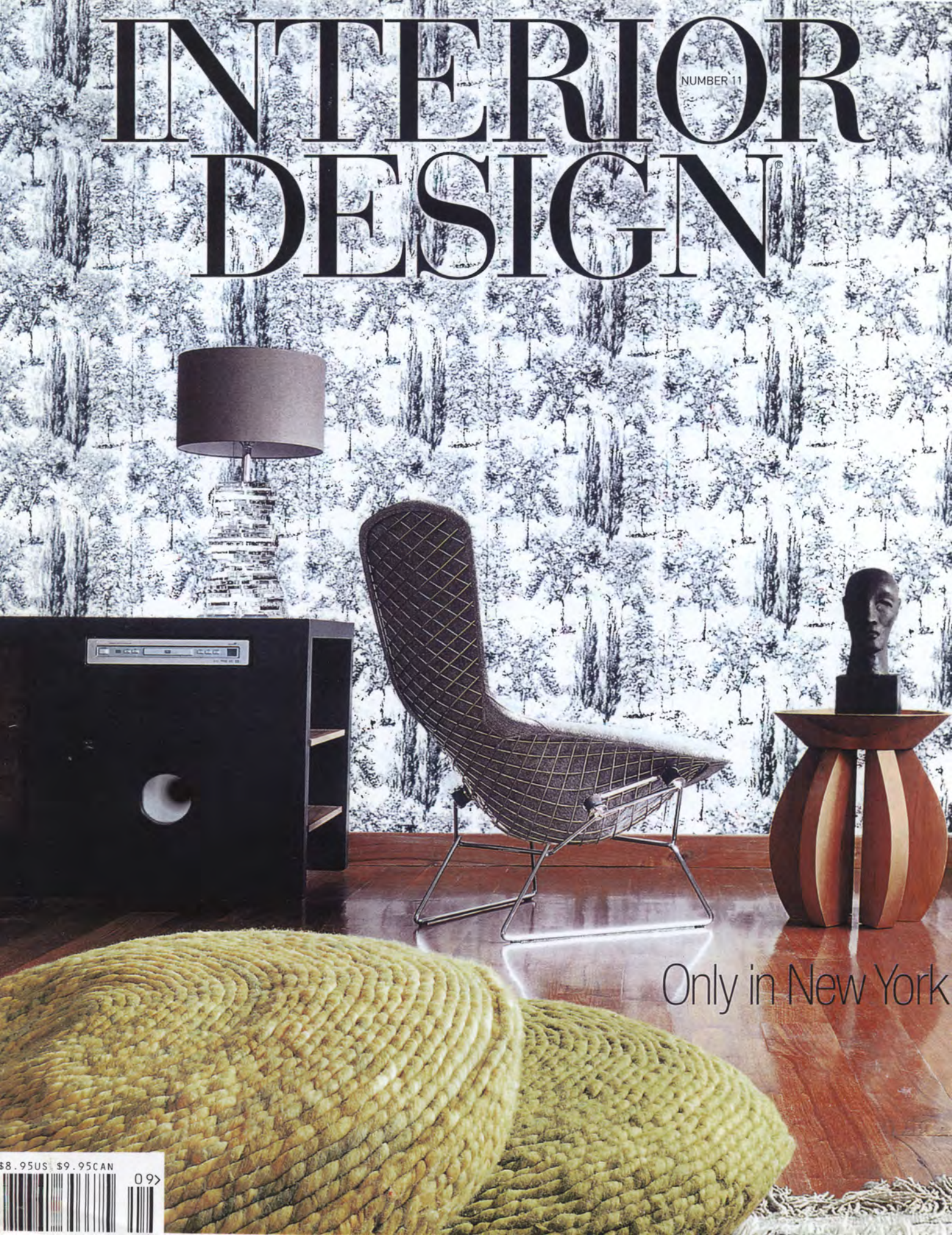


INTERIOR DESIGN

NUMBER 11



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moroccan fusion

Scenesters get privacy at
a chic New York City haunt

By Sofia Galaza
Photography by Frank Oudeman

Managing partner John Blair wanted no ordinary designer for the Spider Club, a VIP hangout for New York City's rich and beautiful. He wanted a designer that understood his business. Namely, a lounge with bottle service, a concept that's all the rage in cosmopolitan cities, where patrons order whole bottles of liquor or champagne—at a price (think \$250 for a bottle of house vodka, or \$500 to \$3000 for champagne).

Blair enlisted David Ashen of the New York-based firm d-ash design. They had worked together on other projects, including Avalon, a nightclub in the same building as the Spider Club (once the notorious hot spot Limelight). “He understands the business and creative sides,” says Blair. The task at hand was to revamp a 900-sq. ft. space located on the third floor of a 19th-century, neo-Gothic church, and conceive a plan that would make it conducive to lounging, and more importantly, generating sales. The other request: to have a Moroccan theme, in keeping with the Spider Club outpost in Los Angeles.

When clients are paying for a product that would cost many times less at the local liquor store, says Blair, the venue's got to have an exclusive, but comfortable vibe. Ashen and Blair agree that it's a place to see and be seen. “But there's also a catch 22,” says Blair. “Clients want their privacy as well.” A visit to the Spider Club begins at the private, exclusive-feeling entrance through the basement. “It's a mysterious passage,” says Ashen, of the old steam tunnels he purposefully left raw, giving clients the sense that they're entering an Arab market. It leads to a dimly lit staircase, decorated with a series of star lights, and the walls are painted in unexpected hues of mustard yellow and sky blue. The mood, and sense of privacy, is set.

Inside the club, there are two, visually distinct areas: the main room, and the tube room. Ashen considered the fact that a bottle service venue typically draws parties of eight to 12. So in the main room, he put together vignettes of low, modern sofas and modular stools that accommodate groups this size. Initially, he

Plush seating vignettes (this page) fit parties of eight to 12, the appropriate size for bottle service. 200 disco balls are part of Ashen's lighting design.



wanted to have backless lounges, but favored complete sofas in the end, since they add a sense of privacy. Ashen also experimented with varying platform levels, explaining that it breaks down the scale of the space. The cozy result juxtaposes Moroccan opulence and minimalist décor.

Conversely, the Tube Room is a futuristic, backlit space with no lighting within. Neon lights wrap around the front frame, while a plush interior adds warmth. This was, in fact, Ashen's initial concept for the entire space, a modern interpretation of the Moroccan theme. But the client didn't want something completely

disconnected, which is why the main room incorporates more obvious accents, including cushions and silver tray tables.

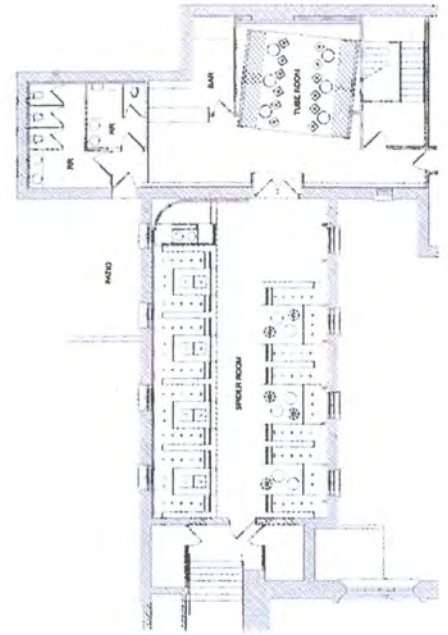
Blair also asked Ashen to design a space where people didn't feel like they were in a church, yet keep the gothic qualities. One of the ways the d-ash team solved that problem was with lighting. For acoustic reasons, the stained glass windows were sealed off. LED boxes were inserted in the window areas for atmospheric lighting. To take focus off the cathedral ceiling, Ashen installed 200 disco balls at varying levels. This isn't Studio 54 with dizzying, spinning action, though. The balls are lit indirectly, and they're still, providing the illusion of a crystal-like ceiling.

The greatest challenges in this project stemmed from the fact that it is an old building with landmark status. Floors in the main room needed restructuring, as did the back wall of the main room. In replacing windows, they had to be historically accurate, which meant working with a landmark consultant. "What was an interiors project ended up spreading to the exterior," says Ashen.

Another challenge was working within the client's budget, which was "not as great as we could have hoped for," says Ashen. Still, Blair admits that the d-ash team cut costs creatively and worked with the inherent quirks of the space. They left old bead board and some ceiling innards exposed. But better a low budget here than in a daytime space. Ashen confesses that in nightclubs, where lights are low, "there's a lot you're forgiven for."

In the end, says Blair, "the design fits the function." And if business is driven by patrons purchasing bottles of liquor, the design is conducive to that. It works with the contradiction of the A-Lister lifestyle—see and be seen, but keep things private. And as long as the beautiful people are comfortable, so is the business. ■

Project Summary



Who

Project: Spider Club. **Client:** Steve Adelman, John Lyons, and John Blair. **Architect, interior designer:** d-ash design; David Ashen, principal in charge; Ayelet Gezow, project designer; Christopher Dierig, project manager. **Construction manager:** Ideal Interiors. **Photographer:** Frank Oudeman.

What

Paint: Benjamin Moore. **Laminates:** Laminart. **Lighting fixtures:** Lucifer, Color Kinetics. **Lounge/cocktail seating:** Kartell. **Banquette/built-in seating:** Barrett Hill. **Upholstery:** Designtex. **Other occasional furniture:** Marikesh. **Architectural woodworking, cabinetmaking, signage:** Ideal Interiors, GW Manufacturing, Millennium Display. **Carpet:** Lanes Flooring. **Ceramic tile:** Dal-Tile, Bissazza Tile. **Flooring:** Walnut. **Glass:** McGrory Glass. **Stone:** Nemo Tile (granite). **Plastic:** Lightblocks. **Plumbing fixtures:** Kohler.

Where

Location: New York, NY. **Total floor area:** 3,500 sq. ft. **No. of floors:** 3. **Cost/sq. ft.:** \$100.