



Cultural & Glossy: Ginger 62

A Spicy, Sultry Vancouver Nightclub Re-Opens

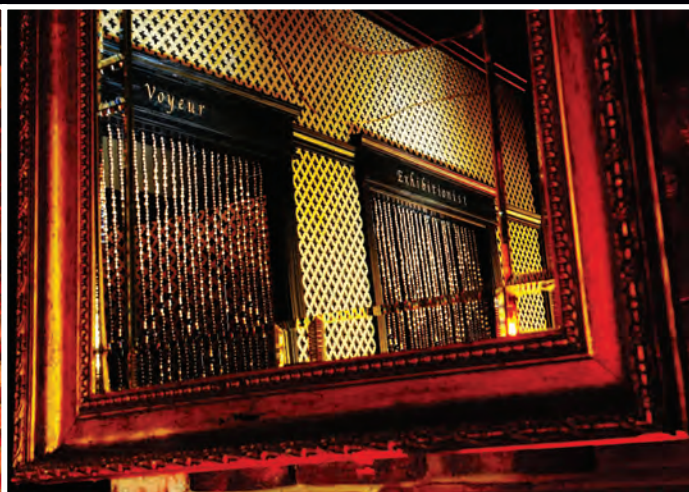
BY REBECCA GOLDBERG

Ginger 62 was Reisa Pollard's first nightclub. Pollard, the founder and president of Beyond Beige, a new Vancouver-based design firm, pursued the project with vigor and landed it with one promise: "I've never done this before, so I'll work way harder than anyone else."

The nightclub was constructed in just six weeks; Pollard and her team built much of it by hand. And the club, a pre-existing Vancouver staple, only shut down for one weekend.

Pollard designed the space to unfold like a fun house, and guide the guest through a series of burlesque enclaves, like pit stops on a journey, that are designed to provoke conversation.

"Normally, a club is just standing and sitting — but there has to be different ways to experience it," said Pollard. At her client's request, she designed the space with the intention of giving Vancouver something to talk about.



Far Left: The start of the journey, cracked mirrors and lounge seating create one of many enclaves at Ginger 62; Above: Confessional booths — choose wisely; Below: A 40-foot chandelier inspired by the Lawrence Welk Show

The experience starts outside in the line-up where guests can see through peek-a-boo windows that tease the interior of the club.

“You walk up to an old ticketing window that says ‘admissions’ and ‘overcoats’ and ‘no refund if raided.’ Then you get hit with a wow when you walk through and see the details. We are all about details,” she said.

The project was first built in Pollard’s imagination. She knew the nightclub well, and used the mandate to shock and inspire to pull from life-long influences — a 40-foot chandelier inspired by the Lawrence Welk show, a backlit photo of Bridgette Bardot, her favorite female icon, and plenty of touches from early 20th century fashions.

Prior to her career as an interior designer, Pollard spent a decade as a librarian. It was there that she cultivated her skills for research and immersion in a topic. Though she doesn’t feel that the career suited her, it did serve her conceptual mind well.

“What are you selling,” said Pollard, as she recalled a conversation that she had with her clients. “It’s not alcohol and dancing; we’re selling femininity and sex.”

As the original Ginger pre-renovation was more lounge than club, its dance floor space was awkward and small. Pollard’s design focuses on a dance floor that has doubled in size, while the lounge feel has been retained with a series of vignettes.

“We built two confessional booths with rosary beads on the doorway,” said Pollard. “There’s a big bed inside there, and a one-way mirror in-between [the booths].” Outside of the booths, signs read ‘exhibitionist’ and ‘voyeur.’

In another space, an old-fashioned telephone booth enclave was created where club-goers can graffiti the walls.

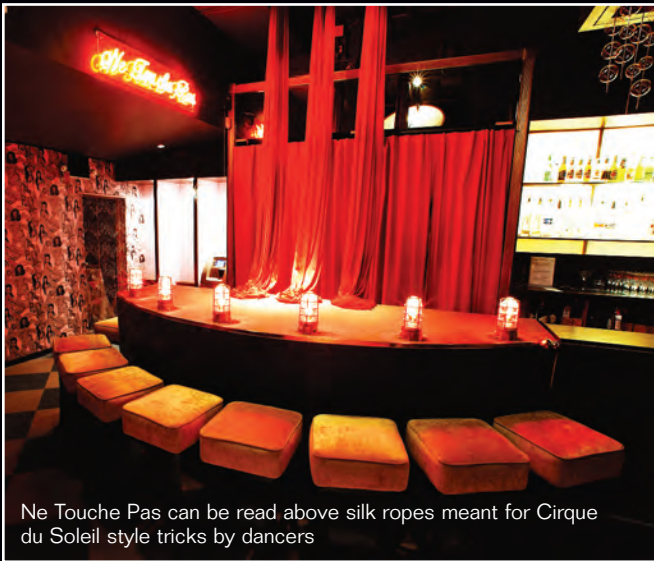
“Then you go through to the next ‘entertainment’ section,” said

Pollard. "There was a big huge brick area that protruded from the wall. It wasn't vented properly but we built an old fashioned fireplace there and put a flat screen TV in it, which can air a DVD of a fire, or anything else they choose."

"The next section is the group section where we have a big banquette, which is one of the items that paid homage to the old Ginger," said Pollard. Here, she included lots of details like an antique photo booth, neon scribble, and decorative signage like a Hi-Fi sign, inspired by a "Modern Done Upholstery" storefront she had often seen as a child. The vintage feel of the sign fit the pin-up dynamic of space.

"All of the furniture in the lounge area has been purchased from junk stores or second hand stores," she said. Vintage fabrics — with burlesque motifs, such as hot pink and animal print, of course — and lamps were used to make the space more loungey.

Behind the lounge space, she ripped out a wall to expose a VIP section.



Ne Touche Pas can be read above silk ropes meant for Cirque du Soleil style tricks by dancers



The VIP area displays bottle service in cages

"The one thing that Ginger never had was VIP space," she said. "I had this vision of almost like the old '50s style Playboy Bunny club. This whole upper area has red shag carpet, red tufted banquettes and red wallpaper."

There was one problem, however. Traditional table service is illegal in Canada. According to Canadian law, if someone buys a bottle of alcohol in a nightclub, they cannot serve themselves. To skirt this, Pollard designed a system of eight cages that is as functional as it is flashy.

"There is a cage above the tables that lights up to display the bottle when it's locked," said Pollard. "If the guests want another drink, they pull a chain and the light goes out. Then the server comes over."

The elevated VIP area is also the home of the DJ booth, where the same bright red is carried through in the form of a red glass wall. Disco balls and tiny spotlights are embedded in the walls and hang from the ceiling across the section which runs behind Ginger's back bar as well.

"Our backbar is this tucked away gem," she said. "The experience there was that it was the end of the road. The flooring goes right up over the bar. I wanted this effect as though you are behind the stage."

There, hundreds of bird cages — some with vintage designer shoes — hang above the bar.

"People say they go there six or seven times and they'll all of a sudden notice something new," said Pollard.

Her final challenge was the Ginger bathroom, which had a reputation in Vancouver for being "horrendous." She used red tile throughout, with red glass mosaics — and red grout — on the ceiling, and big, sparkly porcelain tiles on the floor.

The bathroom's most identifiable element came as an accident. Pollard's budget was running low and she happened to be shopping around Christmas time. She was struck by Virgin Mary statues that she saw, and thought that they would fit in with her motif of iconic women. She bought them, spray painted them black, and hung them above each toilet.

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"In the men's room, it was all based on tongue and cheek," she said. "We painted it bubble gum pink and put a six foot picture of Burt Reynolds on the ceiling."

Up next for Pollard is an old Irish pub that is connected to Ginger 62. It's going to be a whole different animal. "I'm excited that they recognize me as a chameleon that I can go from one experience to the other," she said.

We bet it will roar.

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