



venue profile



The Hoxton Pony

It's not many places where you sip a Grapefruit Martini under the beady eye of a magpie and a black-headed seagull. But the Hoxton Pony is not like many places.

The eyes really are beady thanks to the plethora of stuffed animals that feature as part of the eclectic and inventive interiors of the new bar, which has opened in the premises of what was The Pool in Shoreditch, east London.

The split-level 400-capacity bar and restaurant has been created by an experienced team led by owner Gerry Calabrese, who has run a number of London bars such as Meet Bar in Farringdon, and is the son of legendary mixologist Salvatore Calabrese. He has brought in another leading mixologist, Andy Pearson – founder of consultancy Intoxology – to head the bar team.

With designer Yank Allard, they have come up with a venue that mixes some traditional British elements with a minimalist feel, plus lots of reflective surfaces. Calabrese says this mix is mirrored in the name which is meant to sound like

a traditional pub but more "rock 'n' roll" in line with the diversity and trend-setting of that part of London.

Organic

The impressive range of over 200 spirits on the back bar has a strong focus on gin – with over 30 brands – drawing on the London Dry heritage. Calabrese and Pearson have used organic British produce in the 30-strong cocktail menu, which includes seasonal ingredients, with the promise of loganberries in July and pears and quince in October. The food menu, under head chef Renaud Marin, also has a traditional British and East End theme, with dishes ranging from jellied eels to pies and mash.

The pair have also come up with a modern twist on the concept of afternoon tea. The Hoxton Pony Tea Party features cocktails served from self-cooling infusion jars into platinum-coated tea cups, with matching sweet and savoury food, on an afternoon tea stand.

With the expertise of Gerry Calabrese and Andy Pearson and a genuinely unique design, the Hoxton Pony mixes the traditional and the modern

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Key notes

Where to find it
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What's it all?

Designer Yank Allard
Altra-Tech Plus
Concept Bar
Comways
Mission
PSV Construction
SCP
Shipman Security

While the bar has many unique design features, one of the most unusual is the "dioramas" – the three-dimensional nature scenes that were popular in museums in the late-19th and early-20th centuries. They fill the walls on both levels, with a range of stuffed birds and other animals. Allard is quick to point out that none of them was "custom stuffed" and have been recycled, with some dating back to the 19th century – and he reassures us that the taxidermists got to the barn owl and sparrow hawk before they became protected species.

While Allard is reluctant to say there is a particular theme to the Hoxton Pony, the dioramas fit into a recurring focus on "making you look twice at something and challenging how you see things". He describes the venue as "sleek, shiny and polished", with smoked mirrors, images printed on to reflective surfaces, grey glass, polished stainless steel, black glass and high-gloss lacquer.

Obscured

Features include a 20 metre mirror on the way in, on which an image has been blown up and printed in silver film and laminated but to such a size that the subject is obscured. Other pictures have been printed on to lightboxes elsewhere in the bar, such as an 18th-century Fragonard painting, again "playing on what is an image", Allard explains.

Also look out for a wall of wrecked metal, made up of parts collected by Allard from car wrecks and painted white to create something new. "They are quite eclectic ideas that I believe work together and get together as a space," he says. He adds that inspiration for the venue's design originally came from a dance track – Mind Games by Abyss – "a crisp clean thumping piece of minimal electro that had a freshness and boldness, which is what we felt the bar should be like".

Allard says that he and Calabrese agreed that, from this foundation, the Hoxton Pony needed to be "something bold, fresh and more grown up". "It was never about making a Starck-style design statement, nor an architectural one," he stresses. "Rather, it was about making a well-designed space, inspired and inspiring – one where great moments happen."

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Designer CV

Yank Allard

Born in Canada, Yank Allard moved to Europe to study interior architecture and design at Ecole Camondo in Paris. In 1993, he joined Polo Ralph Lauren as creative manager, overseeing the brand image across Europe.

In 2001, he set up his own practice working on private residential commissions and for large retailers such as Boots and Puma. He also completed a degree in architecture at London Metropolitan University.

Allard believes that design, architecture and furniture should all be approached from one single viewpoint. "The potential which design holds to bring value to quality in our life makes it both fascinating and challenging," he says.

"I try to make our experience of life a bit more enjoyable." Based in Clerkenwell, London, Allard has already begun work on other bar and restaurant projects in Notting Hill and Fitzrovia after the success of the Hoxton Pony.