



## Unexpected Delights: Pub Meets the Fairground

In the heart of Bloomsbury, Russell Sage Studio has created the second site for the hip darts club, Flight Club. At this central London venue, the studio presented a unique and exciting theme of Victorian try-your-luck fairground entertainment fused with traditional British pub charm.

Established in 2005, Russell Sage Studio prides itself on an original and creative approach to hospitality design, which puts people and their experiences at the forefront.

Following the success of Flight Club's impressive Finsbury Square site, the designer, Russell Sage, was approached by the bar's co-founder, Steve Moore, to begin work on the next venue, based in Bloomsbury.

Flight Club has become the home of Social Darts and offers a truly unique experience. The game of darts has been cleverly reinvented to be enjoyed by a wider audience, in particular, young people. Everything centres around the

game. Technology plays a fundamental role in the running of the venue; customers can order food and drinks through a tablet – there's no need to go to the bar. "It's a really fun and relaxed environment. It's about the sport, but mainly it's about hospitality," explains Russell.

Russell Sage Studio drew on their research and understanding from the first project, developing existing styles and themes. The design concept for Flight Club Bloomsbury was: what happens when a pub goes to the fairground? The studio wanted to showcase a mixture of traditional pub elements and elaborate circus elements, fusing them together to create





▲ an entertaining and memorable experience for customers.

Russell comments: "With Flight Club, we set out to capture the imagination of millennials. In this day and age, going out is different – it's all about those big 'Instagram moments' and the sharing of experiences. We wanted Flight Club to echo this. The space has many points of interest to get people excited and it can be experienced and explored in many ways. It is blurred, not perfectly defined and most importantly, it's fun."

Hidden within a 1980s-office block, Flight Club Bloomsbury is spread over two floors: the ground floor and the basement. The venue boasts nine oches with the same accompanying electronic scoreboards as the Finsbury Square site and has a capacity for 250 people. When entering the bar, you discover a world of fairground fun and childish delights. With arresting flashing lighting, rich colour schemes and extravagant circus features, it is a space full of character which rouses feelings of joy and wonderment.

The vibrant carousel-themed bar makes

a statement with its original detail and eye-catching illuminations. For Russell, this was the most memorable part of the project. "The bar is L-shaped, curving round the side of the room. As the main feature, we wanted it to be viewed from lots of different angles. We incorporated lots of fine detail, shelving and opted for classic leather bar stools."

Old-fashioned wood panelling and aged, distressed walls hark back to a bygone era of pub society. The colour yellow is featured throughout the space, which again plays on the traditional pub theme. The furniture is good quality yet straightforward and there are plenty of tables for circulation. Chairs are covered with deep coloured leathers and the overall style of the seating, like many other elements of the interior, is very traditional.

Over the course of the project, the studio worked with an array of contractors and lighting designers, as well as some small bespoke companies. Lighting played a major role in the aesthetic of the venue. In keeping with the buzzing fairground experience, chasing lights

were added across the ceiling, making the space appear visually busy and to create a sense of speed and energy. "An important element for us to consider was the lighting of the oches," reflects Russell. "We figured this out while we were working on the previous site. The dart boards needed to be lit perfectly. Like with any hospitality design project, practicality is key."

There are lots of interesting details and themes to add to the unique experience. "We have created little stories in the interior to generate discussion. At Flight Club, there are many hidden corners to explore!"

The client was very pleased with the final outcome. Russell Sage Studio drop in every now and then to see how the space is functioning. The bar is running very smoothly and is equally as popular as its sister venue. Flight Club continues to expand. In fact, Russell Sage Studio are currently working on a new location, in Manchester.

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