

# JUNIPER COOL

Defining a new era of hospitality, YSG's Four Pillars design creates an unfolding experience of grown-up sophistication and cool as hell chic

TEXT GILLIAN SERISIER PHOTOGRAPHY ANSON SMART

**LEFT** The Juniper Berry Bar in blue concrete by Concretecivie. Above the bar is a Macquiver Model's steel canopy and Behind Bars Agency bar internals.  
**ABOVE** The exterior of Four Pillars' new locale is housed inside the 1930s Bussell Brothers building in Crown Street, Surry Hills.



**B**ringing to mind the most famous of gin bars, the fictitious Rick's of Casablanca, and the celebrated Humphrey Bogart line: "Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine", the Four Pillars experience is quintessentially of its time. Where Rick's was all palm fronds and beauties in trench coats, Eileen's Bar is a sea of contemporaneous cool where style trumps fashion and conversation is king. The Gin Lab is similarly of the moment with a proactive push towards an informed palette where subtle detailing ensures the focus remains on the product, while informing the experience as sensorially complex.

Creating this mood is the extraordinary interior courtesy of YSG.

"Their approach was thrilling for us, knowing that we would be pushed in our thinking and ideas, but slightly terrifying at the same time as we needed to ensure that we held onto what makes us Four Pillars," say Leah Mackenzie and Matt Jones.

Utilising a reduced palette and knockout feature elements, the space is sparsely elegant, but never dull. Starting from the street, the view through a large window into the retail and tasting room offers precise rows of repeated form. To some extent it has a similar feel to the Aesop offering, in that rounded bottles and symmetrical shelving are used to create a repeated pattern with very little colour. Walls and floors of micro cement in a nude copper



**TOP** The blue staircase leading up to Eileen's Bar. The SIA bar stools are custom stained and designed by Tom Fereday. **ABOVE** A close-up of the Eileen Bar's entrance.

**OPPOSITE TOP** The Crown Street retail shop. Walls and floors in Concretecure nude copper micro cement with Jonathan West redgum timber cabinetry and gin tasting table. Counter lamp is Maiden with a Chee Soon & Fitzgerald linen shade.

**OPPOSITE BOTTOM** The Four Pillars Gin Lab with its 70-litre German-engineered Carl copper still and Eileen's namesake as its centre and custom-stained Tom Fereday Design table and chairs.



#### THE FACTS

PRACTICE

YSG

PROJECT

FOUR PILLARS: GIN LAB,  
EILEEN'S BAR AND RETAIL

LOCATION

SYDNEY, NSW, AUSTRALIA

shade soften the whole, while redgum timber cabinetry by Jonathan West is meticulous, extremely beautiful and both practical and quirky (the separate gin tasting blocks, for example). Hovering above the counter is a curved timber rail supporting light fittings. It is the counter Maiden lamp, however, that reads as the room's lighting. Seventies-ish style in timber and an open weave linen shade (Chee Soon & Fitzgerald), the lamp is a small foretaste of what awaits upstairs beyond the dense sliding wall of Portuguese cork.

It is well worth noting the considerable care taken with the design of the sliding wall, which securely contains all indications of a staircase beyond, with the exception of the brass handrailing it neatly surrounds. This is clever on several counts. Yes, it looks good, but more importantly it gives a hint to further activity for those on the lookout, who may then note the discreet brass lettering of GIN LAB on the upper surround. The street door to enter Eileen's Bar is similarly of the speakeasy ilk with the four dots motif of Four Pillars Gin discreetly set into the doorstep for those in the know. A small brass plaque confirms your destination, while a lit glass inset filled with a gin flavouring (oranges, for example) piques curiosity.

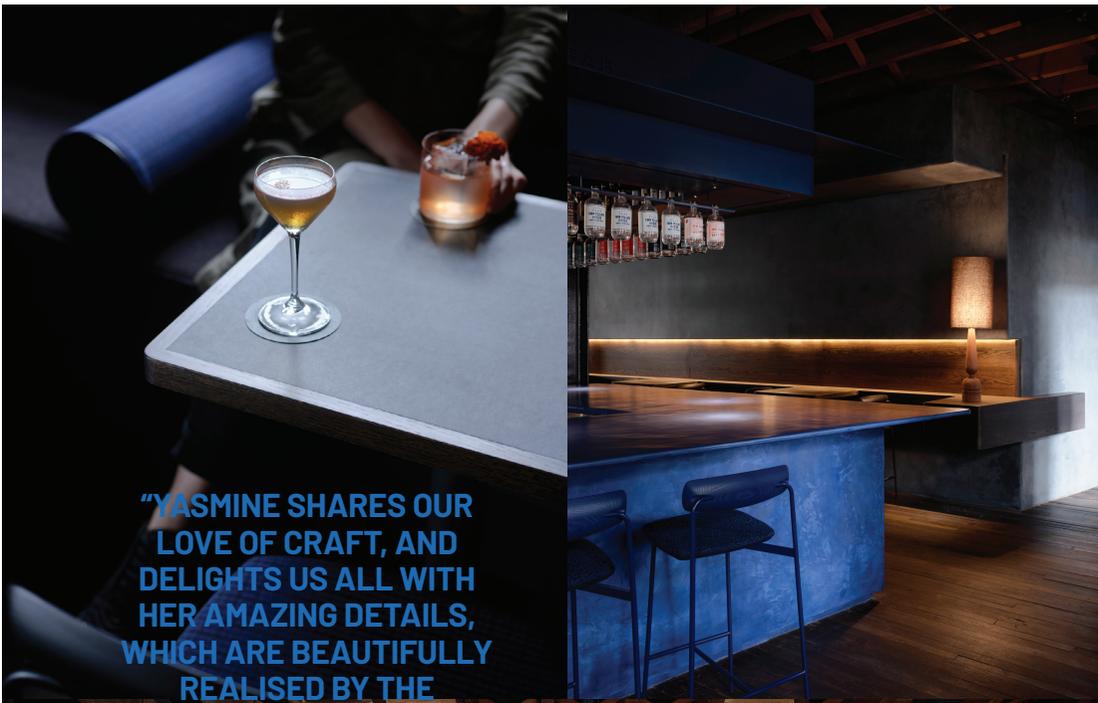
The two upstairs offerings are each entered separately. From the retail outlet the stairs take patrons to the Gin Lab and home of the glorious German still, Eileen, which gives the bar its name. Seductively pairing utility and gleaming copper, the still is most decidedly a sculptural master stroke with sufficient size and gravitas to easily hold the room. Timber detailing is again a major player with grained screens running across the back of the bar; timber joinery, custom Tom Fereday Design tables, chairs and stools, plus floors and exposed timber joists all contributing to a complex, but never busy whole. The Four Pillars dots are here realised as a set of unique Anomalous (formerly Studio Ham) fibreglass orbs delivered as feature lights directly above the bar.

To enter Eileen's Bar, a discreet street door opens to a staircase of blue that hints of the upstairs world and... that world is fabulous. Using a deep blue that sits halfway between the blue of a juniper berry (the main ingredient of gin) and the navy blue of the Four Pillars brand, the bar pedestal is effectively an enormous block of blue cement. Complemented with a steel bar surface and racking system, co-designed with Oslo-based hospitality design company Behind Bars, there is a much finer profile than usually seen in Australia, resulting in a table like surface that hovers through the mid-section of the space. Describing a U, the bar's height, coupled with a complete absence of bar paraphernalia and clutter, puts the bartender directly in line with the patrons.



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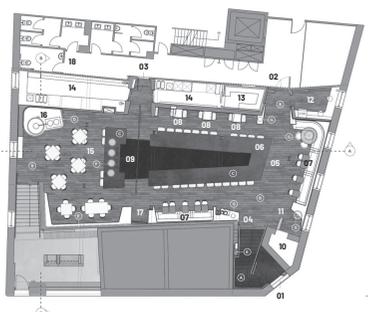
**LEAH MACKENZIE AND MATT JONES**



**OPPOSITE LEFT** Kvadrat Maharam bolsters and banquettes in juniper blue and custom Tom Fereday Design tables.  
**OPPOSITE RIGHT** Another angle of the bar with Ludi Braga and Fitzgerald Interior wall treatments.  
**OPPOSITE BOTTOM** The Four Pillars' dots realised in fiberglass orbs above the bar by Anomalous - formerly Studio Ham.  
**LEFT** A close-up of another Chee Soon & Fitzgerald linen-shaded table lamp.

**THE PLAN**

- 01 Eileen's Bar entry
- 02 Accessible entry
- 03 Access to bathrooms
- 04 Host station
- 05 Service bar
- 06 Eileen's Bar
- 07 Perimeter banquette seating
- 08 Tinder Lane
- 09 Workstation
- 10 Storeroom
- 11 Safe door
- 12 Office
- 13 Coolroom
- 14 Back of house
- 15 Gin Laboratory
- 16 Eileen's Still
- 17 Louvred timber divider screens
- 18 Bathrooms



"We devised a custom speed rail so that all the bottles could be hung from above and have their labels seen without interfering with the space," says Yasmine Ghoniem, YSG principal. Effectively, the arrangement makes the experience intimate, while the scale negates any feeling of hovering service. It's a fine line that few get right.

Timber is again plentiful with floors, bespoke tables and chairs, stools and fittings outstandingly well resolved. The two feature lights are, however, absolutely brilliant. "Amazing joiners: this is our first experience with Maiden, but their attention to detail... they are a small studio, twins, Nick and Scott. The client loved it so much two of the lamps were named for them - a really beautiful way to say thank you," says Ghoniem, adding. "All the joiners on this project [Jonathan West and Maiden] were just amazing, really, really amazing attention to detail." Just as importantly, the client is in full agreement. "Yasmine shares our love of craft, and delights us all with her amazing details, which are beautifully realised by the craftspeople that she collaborates with," says Mackenzie and Jones. "The scale and presence of our juniper blue bar was an amazing surprise when we first saw it, but the exquisite bespoke lamps inspired by our stills are our favourite."

Oversized and a nod to the seventies, each lamp has a turned wood base and open weave lampshade and, while fabulous in their own right, it is the game of scale that YSG is posing that makes their resolution exceptional. The ceiling is also exceptional with the exposed timber rafters leading to a discovery of copper cladding. "We were so lucky, it was totally existing as timber with copper inserts, but you couldn't see it. It was all disguised in a sea of tract lighting and AC ducting. Our goal was to celebrate what was there, so [we needed to] get rid of everything that was ceiling mounted. Everything is dim and moody because we made a point of not attaching anything to the ceiling," says Ghoniem.

This, along with the glorious brick walls, subtly claims all the history of the Heritage build. "The brick interior was really special, so we didn't touch anything. We created a header to match the façade, but it was just a beautiful backdrop to work with," explains Ghoniem.

Cleverer than the parts alone, the project effectively describes a loop with the screen between Eileen's Bar and the Gin Lab sliding back to join the two rooms when function dictates. In this instance the bar becomes a huge O shape and the full view of the gin bottles is at its best. Moreover, the still is visible and, again, it is exciting to see how well YSG handles scale. From Rick's to Eileen's the gin joint mood remains cool, immersive and a decided cut above. Even more importantly, it is a very, very good place to have a drink.

**lessons learned**

**01** Four Pillars' new locale is housed inside the 1930s Bussell Brothers building in Crown Street, Surry Hills. **02** A row of two-seater benches colloquially known as Tinder Lane were designed by Tom Fereday. **03** The choice of blue sits somewhere between the navy blue of the Four Pillars brand and the deep blue of a juniper berry. **04**. Custom-made for Four Pillars in Stuttgart, Germany, Eileen is the smallest of the distillery's copper stills, named after co-founder Matt Jones' mother.