





## Q&A

# Sundukovey Sisters Design & Architecture Studio

Irina and Olga Sundukovy's studio was opened in Moscow in 2004. Since then, they have established themselves designing public space interiors in Moscow. Clients include restaurants by Alexander Rappoport, the Novikov Group, Ginza Project, Uilliam Lamberti, Anatoly Komm and other reputable and top-end Moscow restaurateurs. Today Sundukovy Sisters is a team of 40 professionals successfully working in public space interior projects in Russia and around the world including: 23 hotels, over 60 restaurants, bars and cafes, over 70 offices, banks, shops.

### **Could you tell us a little about how the Sundukovy Sisters started? Was it always your ambition to open a design studio?**

We opened the studio in 2004 and there were five of us at the very beginning. Today we are a team of 50 professionals, and Sundukovy Sisters is one of the leading studios in designing public space interiors in Moscow and working with notable restaurateurs worldwide.

We remember what triggered our interest in interior design very well. We were teens when our family moved into a new apartment. There was no time to think of decoration and our mother did it all by herself. When we saw awful standard furniture, in a soviet postmodernism style, we immediately started dreaming of a new place to live. In addition, our mother told us that the furniture is to be our family heritage, which we would leave to our children. That seemed quite logical to her as she studied herself at an antique table devolved from her grandmother. There was the moment when we realised that we wanted to change interiors and furniture around us, so our children would grow up in a quite distinct atmosphere free of standards. We never planned our studio to become that big as it is now. However, we were always hungry for working on the most interesting projects. That hunger for creative work led us to what we have today – a team of passionate people crazy about design. We

are happy to have that big team that continue growing fast.

### **How would you describe your unique style?**

We try to do each of our projects unique and distinct, yet you can see Sundukovy Sisters recognisable hallmark in each of them. We take a rational approach to design – people plus location define a public space first of all.

We start our work from analysing the audience. Who will come to have dinner in our restaurant – which travellers will stay in our hotel? The history of the place, its location is no less important. Our public space interiors must be part of the space, everything should create the mood for guests in harmonious combination with the geography and history of the location. We seek specific solutions that comply with the functional tasks: ergonomic effectiveness, navigation, logistics, lighting, materials tactile features. And we don't forget about self-irony. Our interiors have a contemporary chic, yet foreshadow trends – establishing them as part of the unique Sundukovy Sisters style.

### **What would you say are the top three trends influencing bar interiors at present?**

For us the main trend is not to be in trend. The core is to bring a concept and idea to life, to create a place comfortable for guests.

We divide all trends into two types: artificial trends and natural trends. The industry create artificial trends – those we can observe at design and furniture shows. We do not follow such trends, but we do track them not to get hooked on them. Natural trends is a result and reflection of changes that happen in our life, customs and habits. Those trends are always simple and logical, easy to explain, and those trends we follow when creating interior design.

These are the three trends we observe in bar interiors at present:

– Distinctiveness. Excessive loft style and ubiquitous oversimplified hipster style are being replaced by individual style. We should ask the question: how our bar differs from the one next to us, which in turn is alike the neighboring bar. The answer is obvious – the advantage is in our identity. For roof top gastro bar Maybe. in Moscow we mixed aristocratic Art Deco with plenty of green plants. The main point of attraction here is stunning view that is why we made quiet interior design. However, the bar itself is shining and inviting, with a big rose mirror through which you can see Art Deco drawings.

– Personal interaction – friendly barman has always been more important than interior itself. We think that principle worked for the very first bar in the world. Nowadays personal interaction, and not a virtual one, has become





even more valuable in guests communications. After the overall euphoria about technologies like an option to order via tablet integrated right into your table has gone, we realized that guests actually come for a visit, not just to eat and drink. We have recently implemented this idea in the bar of Le Louis MGallery By Sofitel hotel in Versailles while working on its renovation last year. Hotel guests almost never spent time in an old bar. Therefore, we relocated the hotel bar from the close-off area to the center of orangery so you can see it from every corner, we added a stylish light – art object that create a cozy illumination, and made a round table so the barman could interact with all guests. To support our idea we recommended hotel management to pay attention on a barman charisma.

– Integration of contemporary art into design. Contemporary art has become more interactive, this trend is reflected in interior design for bars. Integration of contemporary art into interior design is especially relevant in the era of millennials. We have been implementing this trend in our recent works.

We have just finished renovation of public areas of Pullman Berlin Schweizerhof. As a part of new design concept we installed a large

3d LED screen, hanging over the bar space with extension in lobby and on the second floor. The screen is the core element of the hotel bar and lobby. It serves for projection of our unique designed drawings, which repeat the hotel style. Following our own approach – the hotel interior shall form part of the city space - we decided to bring the nearby point of interest, the zoo, into the hotel and make it in the Bauhaus style. A luminous giraffe is looking into the hotel lobby from the street. A big zebra continues the zoo theme meeting guests in the restaurant. Expensive materials supplement the strict geometry of Bauhaus shapes. Our aim was to change the standard image of a business hotel, but to keep comfort and service level of a five star hotel.

**What would you say is the most memorable or unusual bar you've worked on, and why?**

Sleeper Bar 2017. This year's event is Loyalty: Lessons in Love, which makes us think how we can create unforgettable experience for guests. Our design will emphasise the importance of human interaction in eliciting loyalty: not only loyalty between people but loyalty between the brand and individuals. The central aspect of the Sleep Bar is a communal table where guests sit

and communicate with each other.

Most importantly, we place the barman in the midst of the guests as event host who entertain them. This all forms the basis for personal networking and unique opportunities for live interaction. As a visual reflection of all these components, we have used mirrors in the décor, which give the impression of an endless table that unites humans. The Sleep Bar is closed-off from the main area with partitions, which provoke guests' desire to join in this shared event. Together, these elements create a completely modern, artistic and exceptional bar – which offers guests the chance to enjoy unique wonderful feelings and fond memories.

**What design challenges do you feel are unique to bar design and how do you overcome them?**

To create a unique atmosphere is a core for a bar. That is where the design process starts. First, think of the atmosphere and then create it. Another challenge is to consider ergonomic aspects. Barman workspace should be well organized. Bar counter is like a rocket dashboard, every detail matters, everything should be at hand reach. Moreover, light is



important. There should be warm subdued lighting focusing only on the main points of attraction. It is almost a scenic lighting work.

**How do you ensure your projects stand out in such a fast-paced and heavily populated sector?**

We strive to make each project unique, and constantly ask ourselves – how can we develop even further? We start with an idea and a concept, and then in the process we constantly specify it, cutting off all that is unnecessary. We follow only natural trends, not the mere fashion itself. We make an aesthetically well-done design, putting the comfort of the guest on the first place, and not forgetting about the functional processes and pay back.

**Have you got any new projects underway or on the horizon you're able to share with us?**

We are currently working on design for a restaurant in the famous Zaryadye park in the heart of Moscow. The restaurant design appeals to a nostalgic feeling about the life in 60s referring to a heritage of Russian Avant Garde, Art Deco and the era of space exploration.

Another recent project is Remy Kitchen Bakery in Moscow. The idea was to create a place balancing between past and future. A grandmother style drawing on the floor, hipster style ceiling finish reflect the past, and elegant bar in Art Deco style and graphic style decoration for windows symbolize the great style comeback in design.

In addition to Europe, we are glad to work on projects in the Middle East. Two restaurants,



Osh La Mer and Berezka Chalet, designed by us are opening this year in Dubai. Osh La Mer Dubai interior was supposed to include the exact copies of architectural masterpieces of Samarkand with contemporary touch.

We divided the restaurant into two zones: affordable interior of the first level attracts guests with oriental design elements, while the second level takes a guest to the atmosphere of Samarkand. We unite those two levels by a bespoke light art object and beautiful spiral stairs.

For Berezka Chalet restaurant (Berezka – a symbolic Russian tree) we had to create a classy restaurant of Russian and Uzbek cuisine using wood finishes. The solution was to use

berezka unique colour to paint the palms at the entrance of the restaurant. This funny feature helps create the proper mood: Berezka Chalet is not about luxury and VIP, but classy and affordable. We mark all our interiors with a note of self-irony.

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