

The enchanting forest canopy created by Carolyn Quartermaine and Didier Mahieu for The Glade at London's multi-level, multiple restaurant and gallery space, Sketch. The duo lovingly daubed the interior by hand, inspired by a 1900s communion card.

FOREST FABLES

An artistic duo's neo-Romantic design, inspired by a vignette from a humble family heirloom, fills this London bar with a fairytale quality.

MAGIC MOVES IN mysterious ways, never more so than at the hands of artists Carolyn Quartermaine and Didier Mahieu, who have recently brought their multi-disciplinary approach to transforming The Glade, one of the invitingly discreet little bars you'll find tucked away in the heart of London restaurateur Mourad Mazouz's Sketch restaurant and gallery space in the city's West End.

Here, they've created a dreamy landscape of an enchanted fairytale forest, achieved painstakingly by hand via their own distinctively modern take on the age-old craft of decoupage. The Glade's name proved the starting point for the duo's design, which was further inspired by an image of a scene found on an old 1900s communion card handed down to Mahieu by his grandmother.

The transformation of the room was lightning fast in application – with just one week to play out their construct/deconstruct/reconstruct forest fantasy before the opening, Quartermaine and Mahieu set about reinventing the sweet, simple image to dramatic effect. “We repainted, flipped, mirrored, enlarged and rescanned it, before printing it out onto hundreds of metres of paper. A team of 12, scalpels in hand, then set about cutting out the elements of the forest's intricate detail into tens of thousands of pieces, some a metre long, others as tiny as postage stamps,” Quartermaine reveals. >

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Hand-screened fabrics adorn the curtains, cushions and upholstery in the dramatic space. All these elements help lend a textural depth and dimension, beyond the layers of paint and paper on the walls, to the artists' romantic vision for the room. "As the eye tries to form a picture through all these layers, it's really down to what your imagination tells you that forms the final story for each person who visits," says Quartermaine.



< Meanwhile, she and Mahieu painted the walls with vast patchwork swaths of blue, intermingled with unexpected flashes of colour, including citrus green, against which the cut-out pieces were pasted. *Trompe l'oeil* shadows of leaves added another layer of depth and, finally, as they began to glue, a story took shape and unfolded along all four walls. Existing pieces, such as the twig-like chandelier and sleek Corian shelving (which Quartermaine painted with a backdrop of acidic mimosa yellow) married well with pots from Biot (also painted by Quartermaine) and tabletops Mahieu squeegeed with paint for the knotty feel of a freshly sawn log.

The array of curvaceous, tactile Riviera-chic rattan pieces, reupholstered in Quartermaine's own fabric designs, have been collected by the artist from the south of France over years of travel; she divides her time between London and La Colle sur Loup, near Nice. For the lush, enveloping green of the ceiling-to-floor curtains, Quartermaine "pushed deep, deep colour into the cloth, blending and blurring it like you would on a canvas. I wanted them to feel like when you look at them, they quiver."

Quartermaine, also a renowned stylist, fabric and interior designer whose work is regularly featured on our pages (she produced *Big Ideas* on page 162), and Mahieu, a Belgian artist whose work mixes sculptural installation, photography, sound and painting, came to this project through a long history of friendship and a series of collaborations with Sketch's Mazouz. A dynamic, charismatic presence on the London restaurant scene since he opened Momo in 1997, he and three-Michelin-star chef Pierre Gagnaire took on the 18th-century Conduit Street site, once Dior's London headquarters, to create Sketch in 2002. In its mix of dining and drinking spaces, each room's mood and style are wilfully changed by Mazouz, who recently worked with Turner Prize-winning artist Martin Creed to reinvent the main Sketch: Gallery restaurant space.

The intimate mood, created by the artists' very personal craftsmanship, is part of what both see as "a wave of neo-Romanticism about to break," according to Quartermaine. From such a precious keepsake, discovered "in a box of things inherited by my grandmother which were of no real use, and yet lovingly kept and passed on," adds Mahieu, "an amazing story unfolds, where the card became a forest, and the forest became a journey for us in the actual physical making, which will now become another journey for others in the viewing."

The hand-touched, hand-created nature of every element, from the rattan chairs to Quartermaine's screenprinted fabrics, has brought the romantic vision to life. "I think that's why the room has such an emotional impact – we need to create interior spaces that let us dream a little more," she says. "It's all about the reverie..." **FIONA MCCARTHY** *The Glade, Sketch, 9 Conduit Street, London W1 (+44) 20 7659 4500; sketch.uk.com. For more information on Carolyn Quartermaine's work, visit carolynquartermaine.com.*



"We need to create interior spaces that let us DREAM a little more"



Opposite page: Quartermaine and Mahieu, **top left.** The communion card that inspired the pair, framed and hung, **centre left.** Layers of paint, paper cut-outs, rattan and hand-screened textiles lend a sensuous edge, **bottom left;** vases and accessories tie in to the botanical background, **top right.** **This page:** the sleek back-lit Corian shelving (with a wash of fluoro yellow) contrast with the rough glamour of the vintage rattan.

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