

# Checker Hall by Design, Bitches

By Abigail Stone  
Photos by Laure Joilet

**THE CHALLENGES** of renovating a historic space are multiplied when it's listed on the National Register of Historic Places. But Rebecca Rudolph and Catherine Johnson of Design, Bitches enjoy a puzzle and like to create innovative, modern settings that wink at the past.

Their work at Checker Hall in Highland Park, a restaurant and bar which seamlessly fits into the 9,500-square-foot multilevel space, demonstrates their ingenuity at merging old with new.

The Renaissance Revival-style building's past as a Masonic lodge was the jumping-off point for their design. Building on the secret society's iconography, which is woven throughout the building's existing wood paneling, Design, Bitches added an angled bar based on the group's logo and tapped their checkered pattern

for the linoleum that covered the entryway's main stairs. Layered over this mystical symbolism, a saturated color palette nods to the building's setting: the variegated blues of the changing sky; the gold of the night's stars; and the dusty greens of the surrounding hills. The nearby arroyo's thistles blossom on the Timorous Beasties wallpaper that anchors the dining room, albeit enlarged to mythical proportions. Set against this background, a mix of vintage and new furniture and lighting, including an arresting cross-shaped fixture over the bar that formerly illuminated a bank in the Netherlands, contributes to the blurring of the line between past and present. The result is a space that's the very definition of timeless. "We wanted it to feel comfortable and yet also surprising," says Rudolph. Check and check.



