



# CHANGING SPACES

**Sharon Martin** meets the CEO of the Midlands design company responsible for creating two of the *Good Food Guide's* Top 20 Most Exciting Restaurants in the UK

**N**ick Jones and his wife Catherine, of 2G Design & Build, worked on the redesign of local Michelin star restaurant Carters of Moseley and The Wilderness, which have been named as two of the “most exciting restaurants” in the UK by the *Good Food Guide*.

Nick Jones, CEO of 2G Design & Build, said: “We are so proud to have worked on five of the restaurants featured in the *Good Food Guide*, including Carters of Moseley and The Wilderness. It’s an exciting time for the Midlands and Birmingham’s hospitality scene and it feels great to have played a part in it. Our vision is to create strong, long lasting spaces for brands which will enhance consumer experiences, and this is especially important in a restaurant setting. We’re so pleased that these well-deserving restaurants have received this recognition.”

The brief for Carters of Moseley was to reflect chef and owner Brad Carter’s



personality, to make the space more experiential and to create an atmosphere that would connect diners with the chefs.

“The project relied heavily on lighting, which was reduced and made more purposeful, highlighting the tables and adding a moodier atmosphere. Directional spotlights from Buster + Punch were used, creating a ‘stage lighting’ effect. The restaurant’s kitchen was opened up and a raised chef’s table was created in order to be in line with the kitchen opening, allowing Brad to interact with his customers and providing a more tailored experience.”

“‘‘ Loud, clear and intensely sophisticated’’ was the brief given to Nick for The Wilderness restaurant in Birmingham’s Jewellery Quarter. The 2G team were tasked with creating a ‘rock and roll’ interior for head chef, owner and former Great British Menu finalist Alex Claridge.

“The site, a listed building, included an array of period features which remained throughout the build. The restaurant’s offer of

a tasting menu and wine flight accompanied by guitar music was paired with the added element of ‘playful kitchen drama’ unfolding before the diners’ eyes, so an open plan kitchen was added, framed by 3D black tiles which gave texture to the pass. Jet black honeycomb gold 3D tiles were also added to the kitchen, removing any ‘commercial kitchen aesthetic’, alongside bespoke stainless-steel, conical hot lamps created in-house.”

Nick comes from a long line of architects, surveyors, and joiners within the family and did a masters in construction project management, after a psychology undergraduate degree. Early in his career he also worked in high-end restaurants as a chef. All of this adds to a wealth of knowledge and experience when it comes to designing, planning commercial spaces and understanding human behaviour within the hospitality space.

Catherine worked in the wine and drinks industry, travelling around the world training companies and working on commercial

development in this arena. After that she studied at KLC and St Martin’s College, entering the world of interior design to later set up the design side of 2G Design and Build, managing the team of designers.

“For both of us it was a natural progression. Nick has come from a family of builders and with the focus on bars, restaurants, and heritage – it brings all of those worlds together,” said creative director, Catherine.

Nick set up the business initially to support the residential sector, however, as the company progressed Nick started to work more within the commercial sector and now it is an even split between the two. At ➔



this stage, whilst his team worked with other design companies it was realised that many designers created beautiful aesthetics but with little thought on the execution of the design and the efficiencies required by the people working in the space. This was when Nick and Catherine decided to amalgamate their skills by offering design and build together as a complete service for both residential and commercial clients.

“We work with the client from the briefing stage all the way to the final delivery of the whole project, even, at times, down to the procurement of cutlery, crockery, and uniforms. We work within the hospitality industry, the culture sector and heritage arena,” said Nick.

One of the more unusual projects the company has worked on, Nick tells me, was The Joint Works, a Grade II listed 10,000 sqft derelict (former jewellery factory) building that needed to be brought back to life. “This brought all of its obvious challenges as well as a number of stakeholders interest (external and internal in the project) that we needed to ensure were being considered. This was a challenging but fascinating project of which we were

nominated for Insider refurbishment/fit out of the year.” As for high-end projects, having done a third of the restaurants located in the area featured in the Michelin guide, it’s hard to choose just one.

Sustainability has become a key element for the business in recent years. “We have been active in the sustainability networking discussions and Catherine is due to take the AP Well qualification. We ensure that we are working with sustainable products as much as possible and ensure that our designs have longevity. We will not work with low-cost expendable furniture that creates more waste. We work with each supplier on a need to know basis of where products come from and the total environmental impact they have.”

Taking a holistic approach to each project and indeed the company as a whole presents an added element which elevates. “We have the perfect mixture of an experienced build and design team, experience in the industry, a passion for creating new spaces and doing it all with a holistic approach. We believe the key to success is how effective, efficient layouts create a sound foundation. The flow of a space in a commercial, hospitality setting is vital to its operation - not only for consumer happiness but worker involvement and retention too. We look at every element, ➔





from how is a space heated, or cooled? How is a space used at different times of the day? How is the space lit and how does that affect mood and purchasing habits? What colours are best suited to the product on offer to maximise purchasing. People behave very differently in different environments, 2G help our client understand how this happens and how best to play to their strengths. How environment affects behaviour. Our in-house team of designers, project managers and tradesman work together to make our ideas a reality. From the inception of an idea to the finished article our team will guide you through the process.”

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**I**f you are considering designing a restaurant or bar, Nick offers a few words of caution. “It is much harder than one thinks. We so often get people coming to us who have created their first restaurant (basically getting ideas from Pinterest) and wished they sought advice – from acoustics, layout, flow of people, bar space etc. There is so much to consider that I would always recommend getting advice from people with the expertise.”

Architectural and interior home design trends for the year ahead, Nick predicts, will be centred on a warm colour palette, sustainability, durability, and texture.

“Greens will be big with sustainability and durability being key components steered by environmental responsibility and energy costs increasing. Textures enhance experience beyond the visual and surface textures are key. In the commercial sector more consideration to employee wellbeing will be driving design.”



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