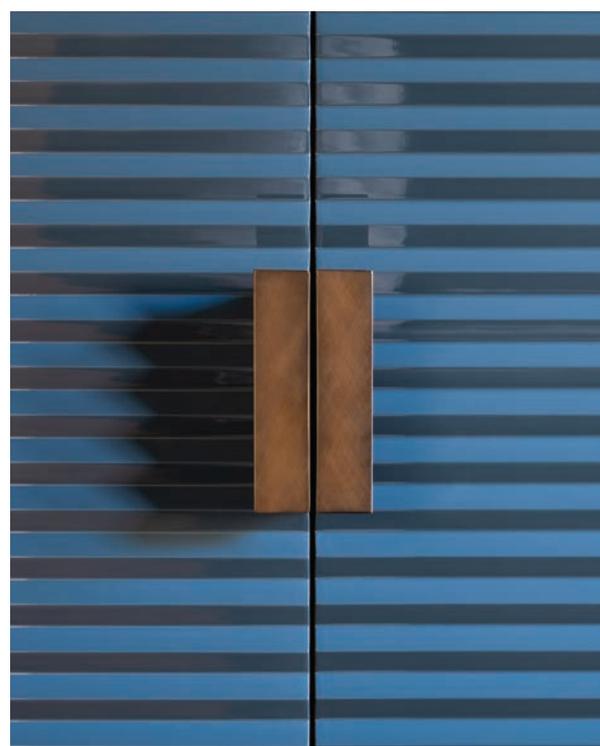




DETAILS

What A renovated townhouse
over four floors

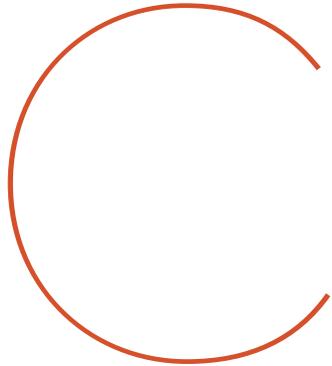
Where West end of Glasgow
Interior design Chelsea McLaine



BLITHE SPIRITS

THIS STYLISH, ELEGANT ROOM WAS DESIGNED
FOR THE ENJOYMENT OF WHISKY, BUT IT HAS
GIVEN ITS OWNERS MUCH MORE THAN THAT

Photography ZAC and ZAC Words Judy Diamond



cocktail cabinets, once the sign of a sophisticated home, fell out of favour a long time ago. They've enjoyed something of a revival in recent years, but their glamour is often subverted by a knowing wink, almost as if the owners understand they're just playing at being grownups. But what if you *are* properly sophisticated, with a substantial drinks collection that's worth showing off? Forget the cocktail cabinet: perhaps these bottles deserve a room of their own.

That was the thinking behind this project in a townhouse in Glasgow's west end. Its owners have worked their way around its four floors one room at a time, gradually refurbishing each space. For the past three years, the interior design team at Chelsea McLaine have joined in, leading the redecoration and helping to make this a home that better reflects its owners' taste and style.

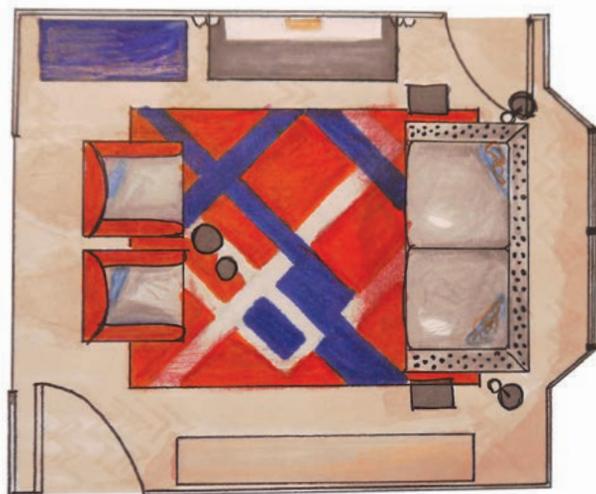
With the elegant drawing room on the first floor recently finished, attention turned to its neighbour – a smart, well-proportioned space that was nominally the dining room but which, since the completion of a large open-plan kitchen-diner downstairs, was never used. "We were asked to reimagine it as a room for the client's extensive whisky collection," recalls Lorna Collins, lead designer on the project. "He was hoping for something with the feel of a gentlemen's club, a place for relaxing, entertaining and listening to music."

That brief suggested a low-lit, cosy atmosphere – rather tricky when the room's standout feature is a pair of tall windows that fill the interior with daylight. Solving the lighting, Collins knew, would be the key to getting the right ambience. "That was our starting point – that, and working out how to accommodate a hundred bottles of spirits without it looking like you'd walked into a bar," she says. "We did a survey of all the bottles before we started – there's every shape and size, with a gorgeous variety of honey tones. That was something we were keen to show off."

A bespoke display cabinet incorporating its own lights was therefore top priority. But simply back-lighting the bottles wouldn't be sufficiently remarkable or impressive; rather, it was decided, the light in certain sections would be filtered through thin slices of marble, bringing colour and a genuine sense of opulence into the design. The LEDs installed behind these panels – laser-cut to make the marble thin enough to be translucent – heightens the stone's characteristics and natural beauty. "We deliberately sourced marbles with taupes, mustards, cloud-whites and amber tones to complement the spirit," says Collins. The studio then worked with a cabinetmaker on the design, wood finish and lighting for other sections. As a way to bring out the beauty of whisky, it's a triumph.

Guests in this house aren't obliged to stick to Scotland's national drink – there's a fine selection of other tipples in an elegant blue cabinet. Its lacquered doors, with their ridged, 3D profile, are an eye-catching addition to the room. "Julian Chichester, who designed it, made a bespoke version of the cabinet for us with the internal lighting tweaked – it now comes on automatically when you open the blue doors, softly illuminating the glass shelves and antiqued mirror back. It's incredibly heavy – it took four men to move it into position. That was a nerve-wracking day!"

The rest of the furniture continues the made-to-measure theme. The smoky-grey leather sofa is a Chesterfield with a twist – without the traditional rounded arms, it feels strongly contemporary. The rug, too, was commissioned for the room. Its colour and pattern sit well within the scheme, making a ▶





[Previous pages] The moody, sophisticated whisky room has a modernised Chesterfield sofa in ILP grey leather and two comfortable armchairs, all by Orjor. The curtain fabric is by Casamance and the standing lamps are by Occhio. The rug was made bespoke by Turnberry Rugs. "The display of whisky bottles meant there was no need for pictures on the walls," says designer Lorna Collins. "We positioned each bottle almost like placing art in a gallery." Thin slices of translucent marble, lit from behind, are the standout feature of a remarkable room. The ridged doors of the Julian Chichester cocktail cabinet also make a strong statement. **[Above]** The display cabinet was designed by Chelsea McLaine and put together by its team of cabinetmakers. The armchairs have been upholstered in a Casamance embroidered satin and a Designers Guild velvet. **[Left]** A sketch of the layout, showing how the rug brings everything together



statement as well as being a functional layer of warmth. “The pattern is a variation on a straightforward plaid,” explains Collins. “The client entertains friends from all over the world in here, so we wanted to add another element alongside the whisky that would give a subtle nod to Scotland.”

Pulling everything together and setting the scene is a moody-toned wallpaper and a ceiling painted in a stunning Sanderson midnight blue. The latter required a leap of faith on the part of the client: “He was a little nervous as the first coat went on, but he trusted us enough to go ahead. And once the room was complete, he agreed it was the right thing to do.”

A matt finish is crucial if you’re using dark tones, she adds: that’s because dark paint highlights imperfections, and any hint of sheen will accentuate lumps and bumps. The cornice was painted in the same deep blue; rather than making it disappear, it has become much more a part of the character of the room.

The wallpaper, an Elitis vinyl, also played an important part in achieving the moody vibe. “It has a mix of textures so it doesn’t feel dense or flat, which is often a side effect with dark colours,” says Collins. “It’s printed using a special process that lets it have layers of tones. The base is dark with a wide stripe; then there’s a linen-textured middle section in a deep colour; and, finally, there’s a layer in a lighter tone. This creates interest.”

Pops of orange stand out against the darker shades, a link not only to the whisky but to the light, bright drawing room that lies through the glass double doors. “We were mindful that the two rooms needed to flow but also feel completely different,” says the designer.

“The orange creates a subtle connection but the whisky room is still cosy and comfortable. As soon as you walk in, you want to spend time there – relaxing, listening to music and sampling a dram or two.” We’ll drink to that. ■



[Opposite] The mirrored interior of the 'bunny bar' by Julian Chichester can be seen with the door open. Its light was important: "There is not much illumination in the room - just a set of wall lights on either side of the fireplace, two floor-standing lamps and the whisky display lighting," says designer Lorna Collins. "We wanted to keep the lighting low and use it to create little feature areas." [Left] The moodboard shows the Elitis wallpaper and the GP&J Baker printed velvet used on the cushions - the flying ducks have become a talking point. [Below] Looking through to the drawing room - the two spaces contrast in atmosphere but share hints of orange; the glass doors replaced existing doors; their glass panes allow light transferral from both rooms. The handles are from Rocky Mountain Hardware

“THE RUG’S PATTERN IS A VARIATION ON PLAID. ALONGSIDE THE WHISKY, IT’S A SUBTLE NOD TO SCOTLAND”

