

INTERIOR DESIGN[®]

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A man in a dark suit is sitting on a large, glowing orange, bulbous sculpture. He is looking down at a small object in his hands. The room is dark, with the walls and ceiling featuring complex, illuminated orange structures that resemble pipes or abstract architectural elements. The lighting is dramatic, with bright highlights on the orange structures and deep shadows in the surrounding space. The floor is dark and appears to be made of wood or a similar material.

BESTofyear

ippolito fleitz group

White Monkey Pizza Lab & Bar, Leipzig, Germany



How do you reinvent something as basic as a pizzeria? For starters, try a new utensil. Diners here are handed giant scissors for snipping through long rectangular pizzas with toppings ranging from the classic to the nontraditional. Nutella, anyone?

Next, introduce eye-catching furnishings and graphics. That's where *Interior Design* Hall of Fame members Peter Ippolito and Gunter Fleitz enter the picture. Referencing the White Monkey in the establishment's name, they employed cheeky simian shapes throughout the 3,300 square feet. (One monkey presents bananas on a platter.) Monkey business aside, references to pizza's native Italy dominate. Red, pink, and earthy tones recall sunny Tuscany; ceramic tile nods to the flooring in classic trattorias; and splashy, slightly surreal murals combine images of Renaissance art with *dolce vita* photography. "In a big space, an assertive collage is a conversation-starter," Ippolito notes. Fleitz adds, "Everything is totally familiar but, at the same time, not at all."

The 130 seats are configured to cater to families, solo diners, and everyone in between, thanks to a mix of banquettes, freestanding two-tops, and spots at the bar, a sort of E shape in glossy black. Bar patrons can perch on the gray leather-covered seats of stools while sipping cocktails. They include three monkey-themed variations.

—Mairi Beautyman

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