



THE SECRETS BEHIND SAN FRANCISCO'S MECHANICAL CAFÉ



Welcome to the mechanical wonderland that is The Interval at Long Now (<http://theinterval.org/>). Located in San Francisco, California, this incredible bar, café, museum, and non-profit foundation is filled with whimsical industrial experimentation—including a prototype for a 10,000 year clock! In fact, that's part of their mission: to foster long term thinking and responsibility.

We were lucky enough to speak with the Executive Director, Alexander Rose, and got some insight from the design team, Because We Can (<http://becausewecan.org/>), about this space. They gave us the scoop on its design, history, and how it proves mechanical *can* be beautiful. Read on to find out more.



Photo Credit: via Because We Can (<http://becausewecan.org>)



How would you describe the style of The Interval?



The term “diesel punk” was used when we started the project, but that seems more industrial than how it turned out. We weren’t consciously trying to fit with any style. Our goal was for the historic space and projects of the organization to drive the aesthetic. With the wood-work and modern machine elements, it feels more “futurist craftsman” or “techno-craftsman” in style.



Photo Credit: via Christopher Michel (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/cmichel67>)



Where did you find your inspiration for The Interval?

The inspiration came from a few sources. One was the historical space itself. Originally, it was a forge and machine shop for a military base built in the 1930s. We tried to strip as much of the space back to those historic roots as possible, exposing original concrete floors, walls, and metal structure.



Photo Credit: via Because We Can (<http://becausewecan.org>)



We're also inspired by our mission. Long Now's mission (<http://longnow.org/>) is to promote long-term thinking, so we wanted to weave ideas about time throughout everything from the room design to the drink menu. That included prominent features like artifacts from our projects and lots of small subtle things, too.



Photo Credit: via Michael David Rose (<http://mdrp.net/portfolio/restaurant>)



How did you cultivate the theme of science and discovery?

There's nothing like tall shelves of great books to remind everyone of how much knowledge there is in the world. And more generally, we wanted every surface and fixture to have a story behind it. But we didn't want to be heavy-handed with our messaging or ideas. Rather, we wanted people to ask their way into the ideas with as many interesting objects as possible. Of course, the details are available for those who are curious. They can find out why there's a picture of a mammoth on the wall (<http://longnow.org/revive/>) or a micro-etched disc (<http://rosettaproject.org/>) with text in many languages in our display case.



Photo Credit: via Because We Can (<http://becausewecan.org>)



How did you translate that style and inspiration into The Interval?

The Because We Can (<http://becausewecan.org/>) design team knew Long Now well, and we were already fans of their work. So it was a great collaboration and conversation, where we used cues from the historical roots of the space, the design style of Long Now, and the needs of the business. Long Now wanted the Interval to function as a welcoming daytime café and a bar with substance and style at night. With such strong elements to pull from, the way forward became really clear.



Photo Credit: via Because We Can (<http://becausewecan.org>)

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Photo Credit: via The Interval (<http://theinterval.org>)

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How did you keep the space feeling modern and fresh?

I think we accomplished that by trying to make it feel as open and clean as possible. A difficult task with a small space, but the tall ceilings and large windows help.

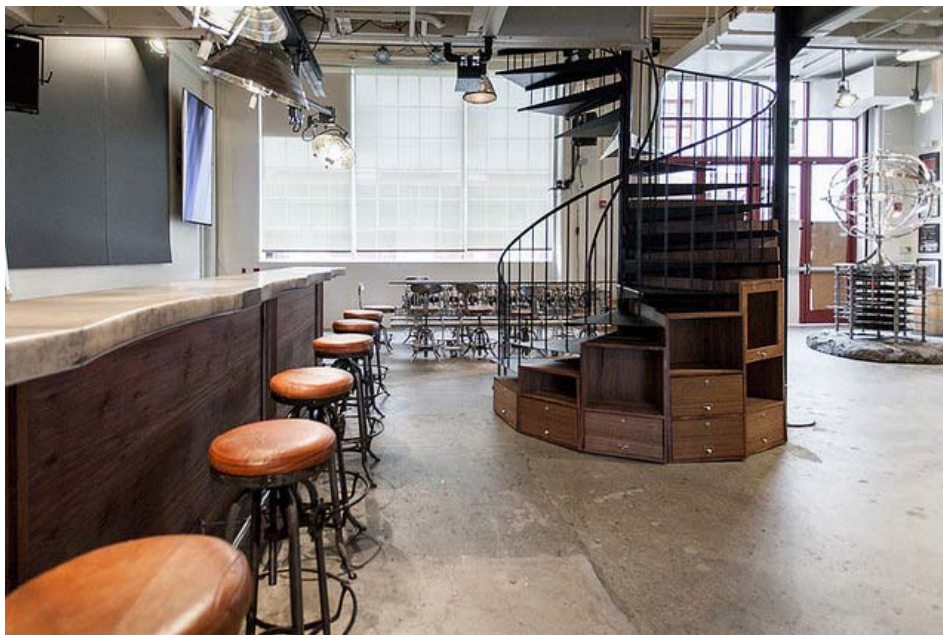


Photo Credit: via Patricia Chang (<http://www.patriciachangphotography.com>)



What is something people don't know about the Interval?

I don't think many people realize that our bar top is made from pieces of stone that our diamond chainsaw robot has been cutting to make the stairs for our monument scale, 10,000 Year Clock project (<http://longnow.org/clock/>). It makes for a nice contrast with our floor, which is the original floor of the machine shop of the '30s—both are undesigned organic elements. One is geological, formed over millions of years, the other is concrete from an earlier industrial age.



Photo Credit: via Because We Can (<http://becausewecan.org>)



Tell us about those tables. Are they made from reclaimed machinery?

The main common table (<http://blog.longnow.org/02014/03/06/chime-gen-table/>) is made from a prototype of our Clock project. It is a mechanical computer we built that can ring a series of ten bells in a different sequence each day for 10,000 years. Over 3.5 million combinations.



Photo Credit: via Michael David Rose (<http://mdrp.net/portfolio/restaurant>)

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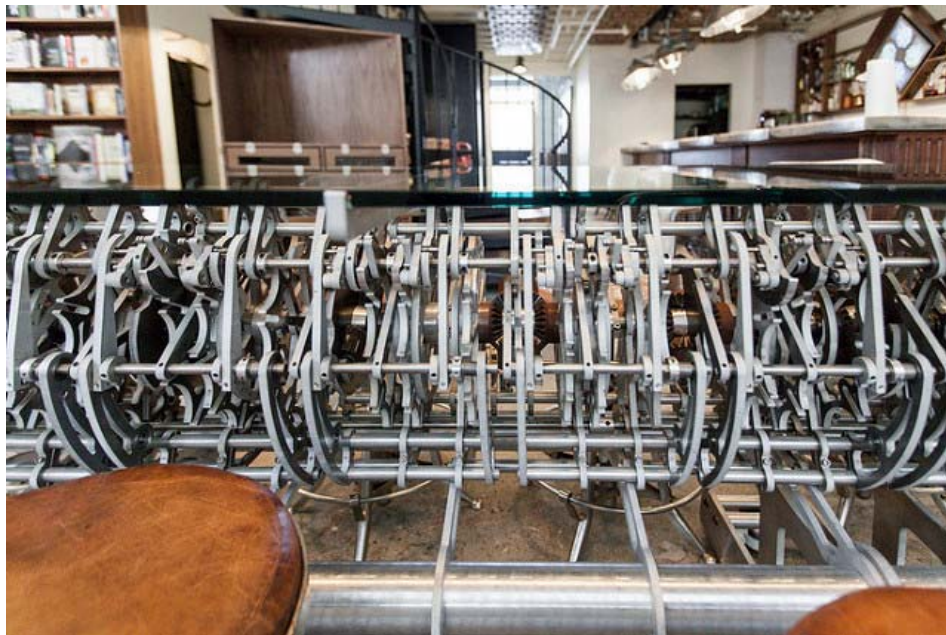


Photo Credit: via Patricia Chang (<http://www.patriciachangphotography.com>)

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The other machine-like small table is based on a machine scissor lift, but is actually a modern item. We keep it low as a coffee table most of the time, but it can be cranked up (more than tripling in height) to be used as a podium for our lecture series.



Photo Credit: via Because We Can (<http://becausewecan.org>)

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What is the experience you hope guests take away from their visit to the Interval?

We want people to leave with more questions than when they arrived. We hope we can convey some of our ideas about the value of long-term thinking, but we want it to be more implicit and compelling than overt and lecture-y. Maybe most of all, we want them to feel like they haven't figured our place out entirely so that they want to come back again.



Photo Credit: via Because We Can (<http://becausewecan.org>)

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What is your favorite part of The Interval?

I love the Nixie tube (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nixie_tube) clock in our bathroom. It counts off the seconds and minutes of how long you are in there. It makes some people nervous, some people curious... but it makes *everyone* who notices it aware of time...

Want More? Tour this wondrous space here (<http://www.dotandbo.com/designdistrict/2016/06/tour-the-mechanical-wonders-of-the-interval/>) (or head to its San Francisco location and/or website (<http://theinterval.org/>) for an up close look). Then, check out our collection (<http://www.dotandbo.com/collections/mechanical-wonders-at-the-interval-sf>) inspired by its designs and create a similar look in your own home today.

BRING THIS STYLE HOME

(<http://www.dotandbo.com/collections/the-brewery/54248-norm-stool#Bar Stool>)

Norm Stool
\$242 ~~\$359~~ 33% off

(<http://www.dotandbo.com/collections/moonstruck-modern-interiors/37665-equinox-ringed-pendant-light>)

Equinox Ringed Pendant Light
\$349 ~~\$389~~ 10% off

(<http://www.dotandbo.com/collections/industrial-impressions/chutes-and-ladders-stand>)

Chutes and Ladders Stand
\$982 ~~\$1220~~ 20% off

(<http://www.dotandbo.com/collections/coastal-summer-on-nantucket/29996-old-world-standing-magnifier>)

Old World Standing Magnifier
\$56 ~~\$70~~ 20% off

(<http://www.dotandbo.com/collections/at-the-drive-in-2/40230-literary-classics-collection-set-of-8>)

Literary Classics Collection - Set of 8
\$204 ~~\$248~~ 18% off

(<http://www.dotandbo.com/collections/gritty-industrial-styling/aristocratic-sofa-bed-brown>)

Aristocratic Sofa Bed in Brown
\$1440 ~~\$2155~~ 33% off

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