Because We Can's Fantastic Social Space for the Long Now Foundation

The Long Now Foundation is not your typical nonprofit. Formed “to creatively
foster long-term thinking in the context of the next 10,000 years,” they undertake unusual projects like building a thought-provoking super-clock that “ticks once a year, bongs once a century, and the cuckoo comes out every millennium.” (It’s designed to last for ten millenia, and they’re actually building it.) So when they needed an atypical, multifaceted gathering space, they turned to atypical, multifaceted design-build firm Because We Can.

Called The Interval, the resultant design is an amazing combination bar/café/library/conversation space and event space with so many layers that it’s difficult to know where to start
this photo tour. So I’ll begin with my normal difficulty-breaker in life, the booze. Because We Can brought the Japanese practice of *keepu*—whereby patrons can purchase their own private bottles of libations which are reserved for them at the bar—and put a little twist on it. For bottles they use globular laboratory flasks, which are suspended from slots in this overhead rack.

The silver canisters contain tea, for non-boozing patrons.
When you want your bottle, the bartender pulls it down. And being located in the Bay Area, the rack is hung from anti-earthquake hardware.

Another cool detail is that the bottoms of the bottles resemble light bulbs but obviously aren’t, yet they reflect what look to be LED lighting strips hidden within the hanging structure.
You might be wondering how those round-bottomed flasks are meant to stand. Here you see the solution.

The bases are custom-made from walnut, and the keepu hooch is made in-house.

If you prefer to forego keepu and just want
common booze, there's off-the-shelf stuff populating the back bar.

But what makes the back bar decidedly not common is the centerpiece, this animated, kaleidoscoping art piece designed by Brian Eno.

It constantly changes patterns.
Even knowing that bar-goers’ eyeballs are going to be drawn to the Eno piece, and probably not looking down, the design-builders poured attention into the custom foot rail. I’m loving the exposed end of the dowel. And in this close shot we can also get a good look at the locally-sourced walnut the bar is made from.

Although the space is sprawling, Because We Can couldn’t resist pulling one of their
space-saving moves: To utilize the space beneath a spiral staircase, custom-made curiosity cabinets display pieces of the Foundation’s projects.

Remember that clock we mentioned earlier? An early prototype of it has been harvested to create the large communal table.
The bookcases stretch two stories high behind this centerpiece in the entryway, also made from clock prototype parts.

And what’s cool about those bookcases is, one of them is actually a hidden door leading to the office upstairs.

That’s not a gimmick: In addition to providing some extra storage
space, the book-filled
door serves as sound
insulation from the
space below.

As the Long Now
Foundation describes
the space:

The Interval
provides all our
visitors with a
place that is
welcoming and
inspiring
whether they
are students,
tourists, local
residents, and
whether it’s
their first visit
or they are
long-time
members

The design
vision was to
create a
compelling
venue for
conversation
that invites
visitors to
spend time in a
place that itself
encourages
long-term
thinking. It's a work in progress, but we are off to a great start. e students, tourists, local residents, and whether it's their first visit or they are long-time members. With The Interval we have re-made our space to better represent Long Now and serve all our guests.

We partnered with the design-build studio Because We Can to create a gathering space that features a floor-to-ceiling library, state-of-the-art A/V system, unique art by Brian Eno, and Long Now prototypes and artifacts. We
serve artisan tea & coffee by day and inspired cocktails by night. The Interval also hosts live events and activities for our members and the public.
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