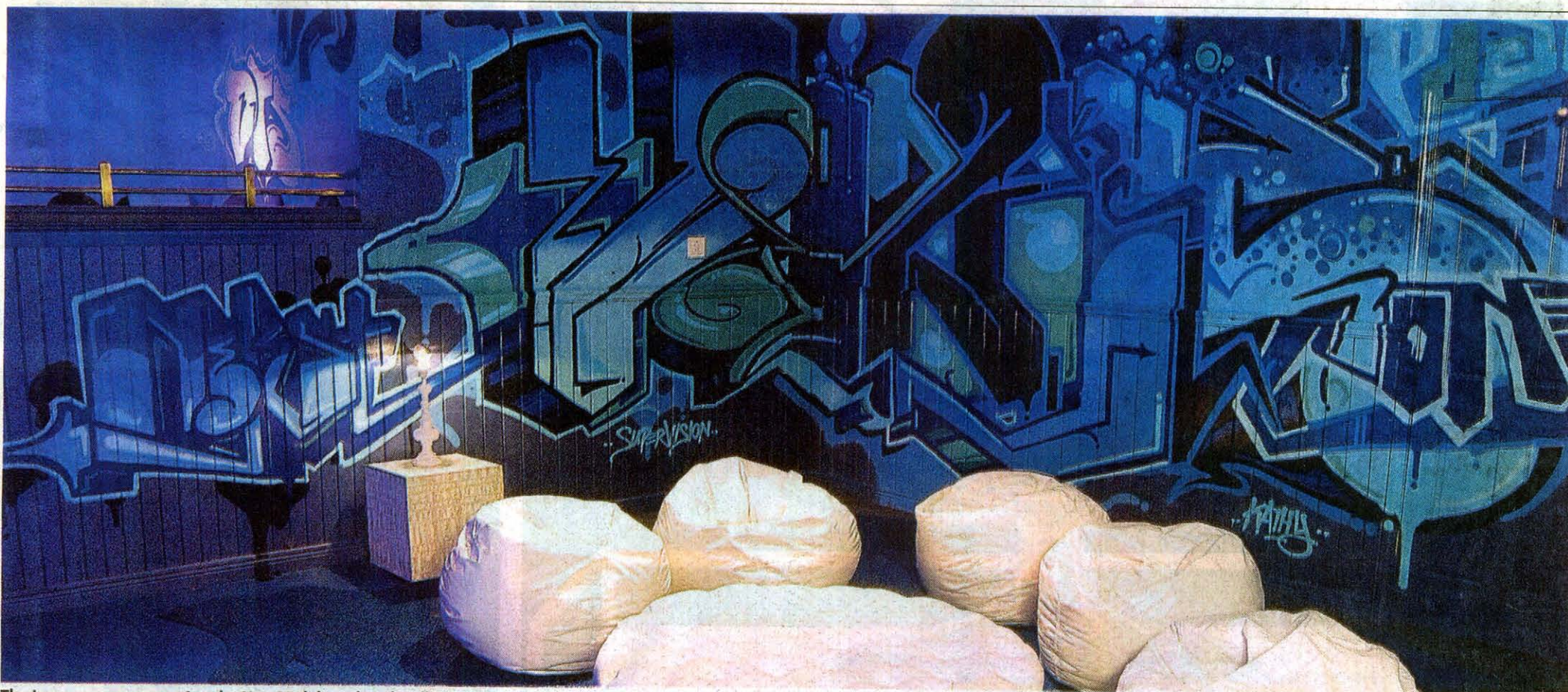


COLOUR



The temporary pop-up eatery by New York-based Rockwell Group, designed in dynamic shades of blue.

When the mood is indigo



JANICE LINDSAY
COLOUR WATCH

style@globeandmail.com

For two weeks ending early this month, 600 to 800 New Yorkers a day got to experience indigo. Bon Appetit magazine enlisted the services of the New York-based Rockwell Group to design a temporary venue, a pop-up supper club in a vacant Hard Rock Café on 57th. Each night, a different celebrity chef held court, catering parties, fundraisers or film premieres in the deep-blue event space.

The Rockwell Group is known for its design dynamism, whether it's the sushi

restaurant Nobu 57, a building for Cirque du Soleil, a Broadway musical set, or hospitals and hotels. And for this guerrilla eatery, the group applied a theatrical approach – make it cheap, make it fast and make it magic. Focus on the effect and not the minutiae. The solution: blue paint.

Blue is the hue most often chosen by people as their favourite colour. Yet it is used sparingly for interiors. The vivid blue of ultramarine (also known as lapis lazuli) is a colour that for centuries was so rare and expensive that it was valued above gold. Blue became the colour associated with the Virgin Mary, not because it evoked the heavens above but because it cost so darn much that artists made sure her robes were painted with the good stuff.

By the end of the 19th century, synthetic colours made

all hues equal from a price point, but for Van Gogh and other artists blue was still the divine colour. For Picasso, poor and lonely in turn-of-the-century Paris, it was the colour of sadness and longing. In 1958, French artist Yves Klein invented a recipe for an artificial blue he thought was as beautiful as the actual ultramarine pigment, so he patented it as IYK (International Klein Blue) and made the colour the sole subject of a series of canvases. Today at New York's Museum of Modern Art, in a room full of bold, modern colour-field paintings, a Klein blue canvas is the only painting that has a Do Not Touch sign beside it (which, of course, makes one long to touch it).

Blues look insubstantial; they give a sense of space that dissolves the solidity of walls. Stores that sell china, glass or

jewellery use blue in displays because, psychologically, the colour of things we cannot hold – air and water and space – is the Do Not Touch colour.

In the 57th Street supper club, the Rockwell Group covered everything from the walls and ceiling to the stairways and balconies in blue paint to create what the designers called the “envelope” or the mood. Blue paint was made to look as though it had poured down the stairs and pooled on the floor.

White was used for focal points – the high-topped tables and stools, candles, a web of ceiling-to-floor bungee cords, a dozen bean-bag chairs in a corner beside a DJ booth.

Above, hundreds of mirrored panels lit with blue and violet light were suspended on fish line making a canopy, like a fractured chandelier, that

evoked the Manhattan skyline at night.

And what works in an abandoned Manhattan space can work in any room that is used mostly at night – a dining room – or places that could use drama, like a windowless powder room. Indigo on the walls and ceiling dissolves the boundaries of the room. Mirror and crystal add the required sparkle. White comes in to draw focus to objects and areas that deserve attention.

Blue is not cold when it is dark and infused with purple. It is not sporty when it is rich and leans toward navy. And as it no longer costs more than its weight in gold, we might as well start using some of the good stuff for ourselves.

» Janice Lindsay is a Toronto colour and design consultant. 416-961-6281, www.pinkcolouranddesign.com

The blues

Ready to venture out on your own and take a run at turning your living room into a restaurant? Here are a few dramatic paint colours in deep indigo that will suit the mood:

BENJAMIN MOORE
Wizard (CC966), Basic Blue (CC968)

GENERAL PAINT
Harbour Blue (AC076N)

PITTSBURG PAINT
Egyptian Violet (4467)

C2
Jazz (6noA)

» Janice Lindsay