onOffice

£14

176

DESIGN AT WORK

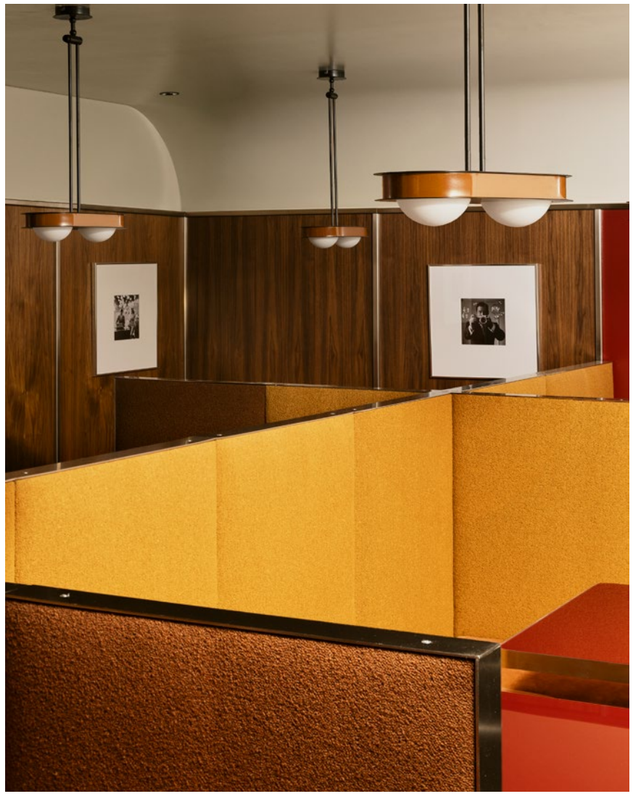
AUTUMN 2026 ONOFFICEMAGAZINE.COM

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

Lève Office Bar in Turin, Fabio Fantolino's chic hospitality project, draws on the golden age of office design

WORDS BY **CHIARA RIMELLA**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **LUCA ARGENTON**

↓ A classic café arrangement of divided booths works just as well for remote working as it does lively conversation



→ A stainless-steel reception desk contrasts with wood panelling and deep red walls

Many cafés around the world have become de facto workspaces for those who need nothing more than a laptop. Still, not all of these establishments are necessarily well equipped (or welcoming) for the freelancers who perch at their tables.

In the north Italian city of Turin, Lève Office Bar references the spaces of its name in both style and substance; it's a *Mad Men*-esque fantasy that's angular, striking and extremely seductive in its steel, leather and wood accents.

"I wanted the venue to be interpreted as being linked to the world of offices," says designer Fabio Fantolino, who has studios in both Turin and Milan. His team was commissioned by clients who already run a restaurant and whose ambition was to create a bar that would be appealing all day (and evening) long. Set on a verdant square in the historic centre of town, in an area that's surrounded by plenty of workplaces, the bar occupies a site that used to be home to a bookshop and café – and today is frequented by many of the local employees. "It had to provide for all the breaks related to office life: breakfast before going into work, coffee runs, lunch and then aperitivo and dinner for team building," says Fantolino.

Still, the bar also had to be alive and dynamic in the hours in between these moments, which is why the architect set up the space so it would lend itself well to remote working. There's a carpeted upstairs mezzanine where desks are surrounded by plush seats, sound-absorbent structures, rounded pendant lights and abundant plugging-in points for all manner of devices.

The studio borrowed deliberately from the canon of workplace design. But rather than referencing the sometimes-sterile or minimalist world of contemporary co-working spaces, the architect aimed squarely at the golden era of the 1960s office for an enticing result that hints at lush boardrooms – all leather chairs, dark woods and a deep palette of burgundies and browns. "We asked ourselves: in what era did offices look like they could be adapted and reinterpreted into a place where you could also have drinks?" In Fantolino's mind, offices in that decade were built with great attention to people's wellbeing and comfort – with a seductive sense of confidence that makes them suitable to a hospitality venture. Specifically, the team looked at mid-century offices in the US for explicit inspiration.

"Even if they were very big, American offices at the time were very looked-after. Even those that weren't as 'considered' were far more considered than those of today," he explains. "You had ⊖

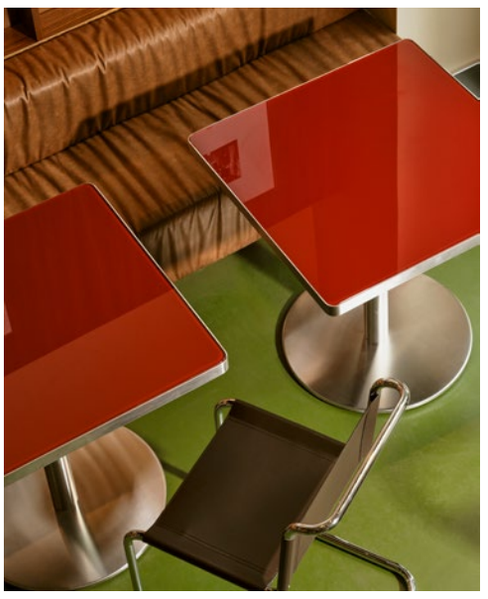
↓ A ruched leather banquette echoes the wood grain of the walnut panel

↓ Mirror-finish tables in bright red and Thonet S33 chairs by Mart Stam are a wonderful contrast to the bottle-green resin floor

carpet on the floors, soft colours and tonalities that are very contemporary – red, green, orange…"

Metal-wired, Z-shaped chairs and square lacquer tables anchor the décor, which is also held together by striking, bottle-green flooring and walnut wall panelling with its distinctive, organic grain pattern. Hovering above the austere steel counter, pared-back lights by Canadian brand Lambert & Fils are a technical-looking accent that proves this space means business. The leather banquette's ruffled cover softens the atmosphere – but texture is everywhere. "We love to deploy colour as material: through textiles, wood or chrome," explains Fantolino.

Though his studio has worked across many disciplines, from products to interiors, and on projects from retail and hospitality spaces to residences and yachts, office design holds a particularly special place in Fantolino's heart.

"I love offices: I started my career as a salesman for office furniture," he says, laughing. "It's a category I am very attached to." He also believes that many projects today – whatever their intended purpose – have plenty to learn from the office of the 1960s. "The elegance and wellbeing that you felt being in those offices are very hard to find today," he says. "If you feel good in a space, it's because it has been well designed, is well-balanced and it gives you a sense of belonging." It's a principle that's always worth working towards – be it in an office, a bar or a space that's a bit of both. ◘

"If you feel good in a space, it's because it has been well designed, it is well-balanced and it gives you a sense of belonging"