

Alba in central Auckland has been reborn as Sheinkin,  
the coolest cafe in the CBD. FIONA MAYO takes a table by  
the window; BECKY NUNES takes the photographs.

glamour

# INJECTION

As I sat at my desk surrounded by a writer's detritus, I sipped my coffee – which wasn't a bad brew, but realised something was missing. When staying in became the new going out, many coffee lovers rushed out and bought machines. But machines can't replicate the cafe experience, and seeking that, I touched up my lipstick and headed out the door.

Auckland architect Andrew Lister wanted to inject glamour into the cafe experience when he designed the interior of Sheinkin in the heart of Auckland's CBD – Lorne Street, the southern extension of High Street. His friend, and the cafe's owner, Brendan Turner brought with him the excellent reputation of Sheinkin's sister cafe, Dizengoff on Ponsonby Road. Lister, who lives on the West Coast, used to take coffee there on the weekends, and a friendship developed between the two based on mutual respect for each other's work.

"The budget wasn't huge but we wanted to create an exclusive feel to the place. We wanted to reinterpret Dizengoff – but in the city environs. We wanted to create a place that was glamorous to go to at lunch." Having spent many years serving coffee in variety of cafes around Auckland while a student, Lister says he is hard-pressed to count five cafes in Auckland that are exciting, stimulating places to visit.

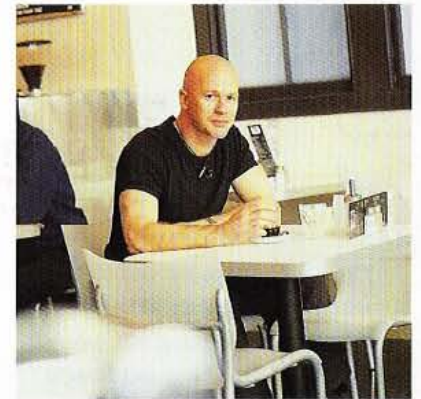
"I wanted to alter people's perception by using reflection and optical illusion," says Lister. He chose mirrored wall planes, ceiling lighting, wall and floor gloss and unusual counter proportions to evoke the sense

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of space and light, while diners sitting in the full view of street traffic are almost on stage. Turner intends developing this aesthetic further by replacing the front window with three sliding glass panels that open up to the street. "That will be really cool for summer," he says.

While Sheinkin will most probably appeal to Auckland's grande monde (whoever they may be), its elegance doesn't intimidate. Turner loathes pretension, and deliberately chose an eclectic mix of staff to work behind the





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counter, from students to actors and artists. "The staff is young so the place attracts not just High Street suits but other students – fashion workers and the like. I wanted to create a welcoming atmosphere and the kind of place that people would walk past and go, wow, that looks interesting."

Sheinkin, like Dizengoff is named after a street in Tel Aviv and serves Israeli (though not kosher) food. So fava beans, humus and chopped liver and lebenah cheese feature on both menus. Sheinkin, however, has a wine license, and Turner intends to soon open it at night.

A piece by local artist Judy Darragh, famous for her fascination with human hair, combined with the extremely comfortable Phillipe Starck chairs and the open frontage, makes spending time at Sheinkin an interesting, voyeuristic experience. One could sit there for hours if one had the time. ●

