



## POCKET-SIZE PATIO BAR

Saint John, N.B.

● Happinez is a warm wine bar—especially on a typically foggy evening in Saint John, N.B. But on a bright weekday afternoon, in a port city that’s no stranger to rain, this downtown bar had a hard time attracting after-work sun seekers to the cellar level of a historic building.

Happinez owner Peter Smit wanted an outdoor space that would complement his wine bar without compromising the façade of the Brodie Building, an Italianate structure built in 1878, back when “there was no precedent for patios,” Smit notes. His first step: Engage two of his wine bar’s regular patrons, Monica Adair and Stephen Kopp, co-founders of Acre Architects, a Canadian design practice based in Saint John. A concept that began appropriately enough—over a glass of wine—soon evolved into a patio design that received a standing ovation when presented for approval to the Heritage Development Board of Saint John. “They realized it was unique,” says Smit. “Most patios are built from the cheapest materials and have umbrellas emblazoned with the names of alcoholic drinks. This was an effort to make something special.”

The new space takes its name from a fusion of his bar’s name and the term *patio*. Hapito, only

4½ feet wide by 25 feet long, is a modernist mix of solid surfaces and open spaces corralled by interlocking wooden slats. And although it has a small footprint, Hapito has already had a broad impact. It was chosen from more than 100 submissions for inclusion in last year’s travelling exhibition “Twenty + Change,” a showcase for emerging Canadian architects. “Hapito demonstrates the importance of investing in smaller spaces,” says Adair, “and not only out of respect for the environment. Building small offers an opportunity to investigate details that are often overlooked in a large project.”

—*Suzanne Robicheau*



In 2009 the touring exhibition “Twenty + Change 02” and its associated publication featured Acre Architects’ design for a tiny sidewalk bar attached to a heritage building in downtown Saint John, N.B. The organization promotes innovative Canadian designers through its biennial exhibitions.