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HOSPITALITY EXPERIENCE & DESIGN



THE 100TH ISSUE

The Dubai Edition

DUBAI

In a city known for its extravagance, a collaboration between the Ian Schrager Company and LW Design gives rise to a new hotel that favours minimalist sophistication.

Words: Nicola Chilton • Photography: © Natelee Cocks

2021 was a big year for Dubai's hotel industry, with towering monoliths, seaside palaces and urban lifestyle properties all opening their doors to capitalise on the influx of visitors to Expo 2020. But one new addition towards the end of the year brought a sense of calm, simplicity and minimalism to the city more often known for its superlatives.

The 275-room Dubai Edition landed in November just off Downtown's buzzy Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Boulevard, a prime spot lined with palm trees, restaurants and cafés located a few steps from Dubai Mall and the Burj Khalifa.

While many of the city's hotels feature grand entrances with sweeping driveways, arrival at the Edition's low-slung, softly-lit porte cochère comes with a sense of the unexpected. Pooja Shah-Mulani, Design Director at LW Design, has worked on the project from concept to delivery and describes the experience as being punctuated by "moments of wow", from the first glimpse of the three-storey spiral staircase to the 15m cathedral-like arched ceiling with a dramatic Czech crystal chandelier hanging from its centre.

"As you look through the double doors from the porte cochère, only the first spiral of the staircase is visible," says Shah-Mulani. "Guests don't actually know what it is. When they come through and see that it rises up and up, that's the first wow. Then they see the chandelier, so there's an architectural wow in the volume."

This sentiment is echoed by General Manager, Daniel Kingston. "The moment guests step through the door, they get a sense that we are not a typical property," he explains. Sensory elements, from a Black Tea fragrance by Le Labo to the lobby playlist, as well as landscaping and abundant foliage by American garden designer Madison Cox, also contribute to the element of surprise.

The seeming simplicity of the lobby's soaring lines belies their complexity. "We went through about 15 iterations of the space," Shah-Mulani confirms. "At the time, curves weren't really a thing, and LW isn't typically known for organic shapes. We're very architectural with clean lines and a linear approach to design." For this project however, the team decided to take a risk and presented the concept of the arch to owners Bhatia & Co. The risk paid off, and the design was further developed into the dramatic dome-like space that is now emblematic of the property, with dark oak wood panelling ensuring that the vaulted venue doesn't feel too ecclesiastical.

Sharing the lobby yet separated by three steps and a false façade, is Italian restaurant Duomo. The overall design language here is unchanged, though the space is differentiated by mustard-yellow Chesterfield sofas lining the perimeter and a mesmerising artwork by Barcelona-based studio Onionlab. Projected onto the ceiling at night, it creates an ambient yet dynamic display that progresses from abstract patterns to scenes reminiscent of the works of the Old Masters.

Out on Duomo's cosy terrace, olive trees in large terracotta planters divide seating areas that feel private yet connected at the same time. Rather than facing out to the street, Shah-





Sharing the lobby yet separated by three steps and a false façade, Italian restaurant Duomo is lit up by night thanks to an immersive ceiling installation by Onionlab

Mulani explains that the terrace is designed as an inward-looking experience, with seating facing towards the building. And while the Burj Khalifa is clearly visible in the distance, it is also reflected in the large picture windows, creating a layered effect against the backdrop of the dining room and light projection.

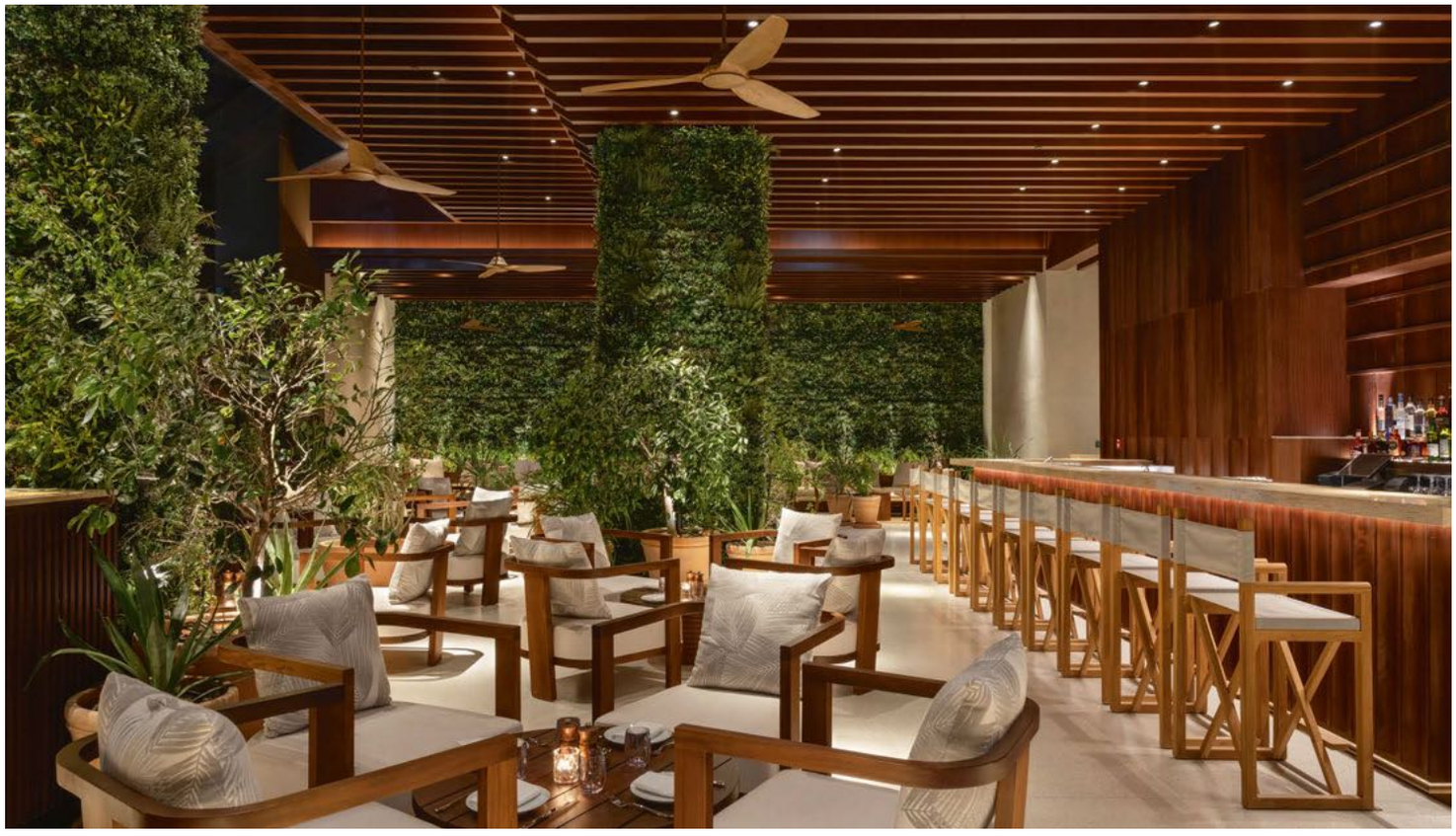
Aside from Duomo, the hotel's other food and beverage outlets – Leon, Jolie and Thia – each have their own distinct visual narrative. The unexpected is key at Leon, a speakeasy-style bar located just off the lobby. Pops of colour, from pink bar stools to teal sofas, contrast with a dark stone mosaic floor, while in the low light, scalloped oak walls look like the drapes of black, providing a completely different energy from the rest of the property.

On the mezzanine level, French brasserie Jolie intentionally moves away from the all-day dining concept. Anchored by a large bar topped with marble and flanked by moss green leather stools, the high-energy restaurant has been enhanced by a series of fashion shots from New York-based photographer Landon Nordeman. Its design is also warmed with the use of walnut, rattan and parlour palms, complemented by teak chairs and an acacia chef's table, while the individual large-scale components of the terrazzo floor have been deliberately sized to create a sense of differentiation, yet remain homogenous in colour so as not to distract from the overall aesthetic.

Thia meanwhile flips the concept of a pool terrace on its head. Rather than being an extension of the pool with a daytime focus, the brief was for a evening venue with a full-service bar. "The key when starting on a space is firstly understanding what we're designing it for," says Shah-Mulani. "When we began thinking in that way, we forgot about the day function because people will come to the pool and use it as they need to. They won't necessarily visit a pool bar that they have been to in the day if it's not designed to be a bar at night."

At dusk, Thia's poolside cabanas and recliners cleverly convert into sofa seating, while the







lighting goes down and the music pumps up to add to the ambience. The walls are also covered in natural-look artificial greenery for that Instagram moment, and to cope with summer temperatures that top 45 degrees Celsius, the bar and furniture are made from weather- and temperature-resistant teak.

Equally considered for the climate, the 100m tower's façade was envisioned by Cristina Wakamatsu, Design Director and Partner at LW, who combined a glass frontage with bronze screens, textured grey cladding, natural stone and timber – all set at a 45-degree angle to the base podium.

According to LW's Founding Partner Colin Doyle, this angling of the building has a clear intent. "The planning principles are derived from the desire to capitalise on the Burj Khalifa views," he explains, adding that the orientation of the lobby and the triple-height Duomo ceiling are also designed to maximise the vista.

Bedding down for the night, the uncluttered nature of the guestrooms, all of which share a uniform design based around light oak wood and travertine, along with the hotel's supremely comfortable beds, leads to a blissful sleep experience. Unusually for Dubai, where hotel rooms are more likely to feature marble, leather wall panels and wallpaper, those at Edition are entirely clad in timber, imparting a sense of warmth, intimacy and cosiness with a look that is much more minimalist than most of the city's other accommodations. "The guestrooms have three-metre ceilings and full-height windows that provide spectacular views, so the architectural volumes, spaces and envelopes create a good base for adding a layer of simplicity," says Shah-Mulani.

It's a refreshing change in a city where less doesn't always mean more. Judging from the number of guests already snapping photos in the public spaces, the hotel seems to be striking a chord with an audience hungry for a taste of minimalist sophistication.

EXPRESS CHECK-OUT
Owner: Bhatia & Co
Developer: Sol Properties, Jarvis Investment Management
Operator: Marriott International
Architecture and Interior Design: LW Design, Ian Schrager Company
Landscaping: Madison Cox
Main Contractor: Bhatia Company
www.editionhotels.com