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We're familiar with comfort food, but how about comfort interiors? Lim + Lu revive vernacular elements that are fast vanishing from Hong Kong's urban landscape and inject them into healthy fusion restaurant Kasa.

Recovering Old Hong Kong

Kasa, by Lim + Lu

Words Marta Catalan Eraso Photography Dennis Lo and Nirut Benjabanpot (courtesy of Lim + Lu)

Three main elements of Hong Kong's urban identity have been skillfully employed to revive a sense of local culture: the *cha chaan teng* (tea house), wet market, and neon sign.



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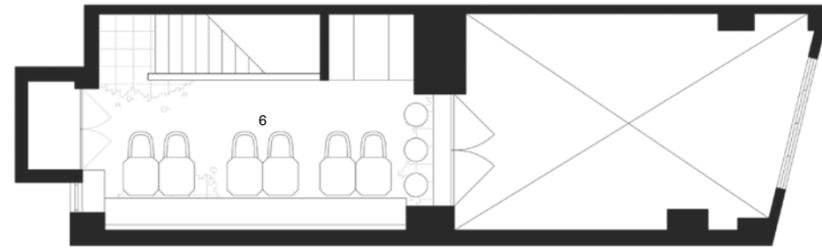
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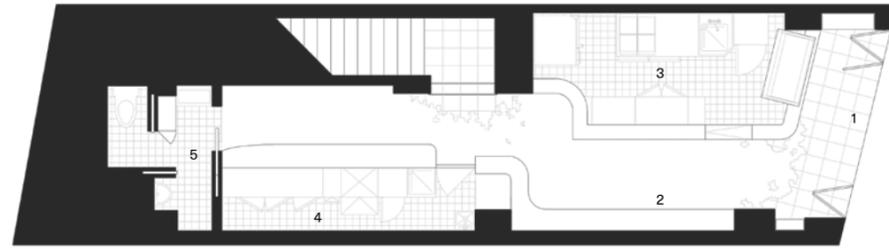


健康飲食

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Mezzanine Plan



First-storey Plan

There are many ways for a hospitality environment to make a customer feel at ease. Located in busy Wellington Street in downtown Hong Kong, Kasa's facade fully opens up to embrace the sunlight and illuminate the interior. The bi-folding doors allow the boundary between interior and exterior to be erased, inviting guests to experience the restaurant as an extension of the street.

For designer Vincent Lim, co-founder and Creative Director of Lim + Lu, comfort is not only one of the most important concepts in design, but also something that trumps aesthetics. In the case of Kasa, where healthy food merges with a Hong Kong influence, comfort and aesthetics are intertwined.

Throughout the two-storey restaurant, three main elements of Hong Kong's urban identity have been skillfully employed to revive a sense of local culture: the *cha chaan teng* (tea house), wet market, and neon sign. The take-away area (with its open kitchen) and the drinks bar are located on the ground floor. Upstairs, with a mezzanine that looks over the entrance, we find a more tranquil sitting area. A window in the mezzanine offers a voyeuristic perspective of the ground floor – a kind of interior-exterior loop.

The designers were seeking a similar effect when they decided to set windows with mirrors into the walls of the second storey. "It's something that reminds me of my childhood tram trips, where I absolutely loved peeking into other people's living rooms," shares Lim. He and his partner Elaine Lu (co-founder and Managing

Director of Lim + Lu) recently returned to Hong Kong after studying and working in the US.

The outer face of the enclosing wall to the mezzanine is covered with tiles, and these appear across the floor in different spots, merging with polished concrete in the waiting and sitting spaces. Although these tiles are new, Lim + Lu decided to preserve the existing tiled staircase – a feature that harks back to an old *cha chaan teng*. The reduced chromatic choice for the tiles, in pink and green, established the overall colour scheme, with a freshness that references the healthy food concept. The locally sourced furniture follows this colour scheme.

As there is no fresher food in Hong Kong than that from the wet markets, the red lamps hanging over the ground-floor take-away area are a wink to the local plastic lamps in the fish and meat market stalls. A neon sign with Chinese characters announces the healthy food choices offered in the restaurant, bringing us back to Mong Kok streetscapes and the vanishing art of shop neon lights.

The fusion of local elements with the healthy food concept results in an inviting space that, in the hustle and bustle of Hong Kong, feels airy and relaxed. It gives the visitor a break from the urban intensity while encouraging a sense of longing to recover memories from the old city.

limandlu.com

Legend: 1 Entrance | 2 Standing Gallery | 3 Open Kitchen | 4 Bar | 5 Restroom | 6 Seating.

Page 133: In the mezzanine dining area, tiles merge with concrete flooring and reference the old tea houses of Hong Kong. Pages 134-135: An open kitchen faces the street. Neon signage and windows set into the wall enclosing the mezzanine floor bring an urban character to the restaurant. Opposite, top: Mirrors mimic windows on the mezzanine level, reflecting the blue hues of a wall mural by Peter Yuill that extends down the stairwell. Opposite, bottom: Mirrored walls beside the takeaway counter and rear bar relieve the narrow proportions of the interior.

