

# PREFACE



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## The RECIPE

From vomitoriums to cannibalism, the Eucharist to Emily Post, ice cream cones to crystal goblets and silver spoons, elaborate human rituals are predicated on the act of eating. If man is, as they say, a social animal, then beyond its caloric function, eating, and eating out, is one of the most fundamental ways to satisfy the itch for interaction or to escape entirely from it, to reach outside ourselves or to withdraw inward. Food and eating spaces give us the excuse to wrangle a deal, form an alliance, fall in love or break up. Or they create sensual experiences that transport us to places that are outside of ordinary experience even when they live inside our bodies.

In the following pages, the editors have made a selection of international food spaces, not based on the menu (though food design is an equally worthy topic) but structured instead around the character of the interior. These are designs that choreograph our consumption, whether it is eating, drinking, or shopping for food or drink. They represent an exploration of the relationship amongst our spaces, communities and food, of the elements that determine the nature of an eating experience, and what is needed to foster an exceptional one. What sets one species of restaurant apart from another and why is this difference significant to restaurateurs, chefs and patrons, alike?

These restaurants, bars, cafes, supermarkets, food trucks, art installations and a table in the sky fall into nine categories that suggest what it is that people value explicitly or viscerally about the spaces in which they choose to eat, about the businesses that feed them and about what keeps them coming back for seconds. They represent a celebration of this uniquely intimate, obscene, satisfying and human rite: The diner swallows food and the dining room swallows the diner.

## The INGREDIENTS

Amplifying all the design elements in support of an already amped-up menu (sweets, frozen yogurt, coffee or fast food) Pop interiors work, perhaps in small part, to gloss over the sinfulness of the indulgence. Even more, however, they serve to make the experience and, not least the brand, feel larger than life. Especially appealing to families with children or adults looking for a thrill, this bigness suggests a game, something whimsical, naughty or both. As in times past, inexpensive food and loud design have a clear connection. At its worst, this can be vulgar; at its best, invigorating, even intoxicating.

So it is with *Solid Air's* TOKYO BAR in Manhattan, which is defined by the Manga-like comic frames that cover the ceiling and parts of the walls. Colored neon lights outline each character's talking bubble to create an effect that is part playful and part Red Light District. On the other hand, Asylum's Singapore-based FROLICK yogurt shops are wallpapered with colorful panels on which saucy slogans related to the frozen treat read: "We stay hard longer," "Size does matter," and "I like it topless" in large type.

In recent years, a number of franchises like FROLICK have been making an effort to vary their interior concepts according to location. MacDonalds and Starbucks, leaders of global retail imperialism have even begun opening unbranded spaces or, phrased another way, spaces that are designed to appeal to locals (wherever those locals may be on the planet) instead of to the company's CEO and marketing divisions. Fast food and coffeehouses, however, aren't the only ones to expand into chains today: Even innovators and higher brow establishments like Pontus! in Sweden are proliferating, using the same name while experimenting with the character of the interiors. Aside from the downtown location with its exclamation mark for emphasis, the Pontus group, owned by Pontus Frithiof, consists of Pontus by the Sea, From Pontus - Gourmet to Go and a hotel (one assumes with a restaurant) "by Pontus." To the great delight of Malmö locals, the quantity hasn't diluted the quality one smidgeon.

Even artist *Tobias Rehberger* has gotten in on the chain expansion. The artist, who won a Gold Lion for his Italian pavilion bar at the Venice Biennale, "fran-

chised" his design by creating a second installment at another culturally exalted institution, the Kunsthalle in Basel, Switzerland. Rehberger based his designs on the dazzle graphics of WWI warships which were dressed in stunning (literally) Op Art-like patterns to confuse the enemy's read on the ship's position, speed and direction. In both cafés, Rehberger punctuated relentless black and white stripes and chevrons, which covered every surface of the space in every which way, with neon colours. These are perhaps the apotheosis of the Graphic interior aesthetic, which imposes a visual experience based on large-scale (room-sized) illustration and pattern. These can be intense enough, like Rehberger's, to radically exaggerate or even delightfully overpower the menu or, if the food is extreme enough, to serve as an extension of it. The importance here is placed on the engagement of the diner, whether he has an epileptic seizure, feels slightly dizzy or walks out feeling euphorically caffeinated. In the case of visitors to the Venice Biennale, caffeination would have been entirely welcome.

Another species of eat spot that may feel almost as kinetic invoke the high tech in their visuals (menus projected onto the tabletop), or in their construction (using algorithmic software or computer numerically controlled routers). BANQ in Boston is clad in swagging, staggered, CNC-milled layers of wood, for instance. But these restaurants can suggest as much about the low-tech, the natural and the handcrafted as they do about technology, references that bring us round again to the qualities that make up the finest food: low-tech, natural ingredients, made-by-mom.

In FLOOD, *Mathieu Lehanneur* creates a space that is genuinely way ahead of its time (he creates furniture that filters, measures and indicates the air quality to match the purity of the food being served) but he harnesses something primitive (algae) to do it. In Hong Kong's PISSARRO bistro, *Michael Young* CNC-milled the front door and digitized an Impressionist painting, on the one hand, but then hand-blew his own lighting fixtures in a workshop at the foot of Mt. Fuji and hung thousands of pieces of hand-folded paper on the wall, each a pixel in a section of the digitized painting by Pissarro.

Like Young, designers everywhere are coming up with a more flexible and inclusive vision of grandeur. At a juncture in history when more people have more than ever before, they must redefine the notion of luxury. If it is more widespread, how do we create a new standard by which to organize the social ladder? In restaurant interiors, the definition of grand has become more about culture than caste, more about authenticity (of ingredients and of materials) than artifice, more focused on health than hedonism.

So, forget the velvet rope. Exclusivity is the province of those in the know: if you can find the deliberately mismarked APOTHEKE in a dark alley off the





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Bowery in New York's Chinatown, you can take the cure in this 18th-century apothecary: "Prescriptions Served Daily," the menu reads, listing unique cocktails under the categories Health & Beauty, Pharmaceuticals, House Remedies or Therapeutic Treatments, and featuring unusual ingredients like absinthe, opium and "coco" leaves (not to be confused with coca, one wonders?): In Stockholm, OPERAKALLEREN'S historical interior was renovated opulently by *Claesson Koivisto Rune*. The designers highlighted the authenticity of the original finishes using exceedingly new materials: In the dining room, large mirrors (a classic sign of grandiosity) were tinted gold instead of silver and laminated with a new lenticular film that blurs reflections at certain angles while directing the gaze of diners to the decadently carved ceiling which remains in sharp focus overhead.

In both Grand and Private spaces, the social aspect of eating becomes paramount. At the communal table, in a more intimate setting, guests sit beside friends deliberately and strangers, who are seated beside them by the host, incidentally. At the Chef's Table, the communal experience is raised a notch, with the added feeling of proximity to an open kitchen, to the preparation of the food and to those preparing it. This bestows the privilege of being made part of this creative, behind-the-scenes action. The private dining room is booked by a group looking to do a little business or bonding or both en masse. It has become popular again but with a more restrained showiness, not in honor of the sagging world economy (although, granted, conspicuous consumption has dropped conspicuously out of favor); rather due to a renewed focus on eating good food in good company and attending to the brisk business of being a social (and professional) animal. In these chambers, with their subdued silks and small accents of gold, the construction and maintenance of relationships is the special of the day: *Project Orange* designed a dining room in the WHITECHAPEL GALLERY where art collectors and gallerists can hammer out their high-stakes financial and cultural alliances. At CONDUIT in San Francisco, the private becomes public: *Natoma Architects* exposed the "private" dining room behind glass walls, formalizing the separation between the regulars and the cloistered guests, who are presented like a precious artifact in a museum box.

Beside Grand interiors, straightforward eateries feel like the emperor without his clothes. But they wear their asceticism with pride; after all, frank spaces serve "honest" food. And don't mistake a straightforward space for a dully pragmatic one. These eateries are functionally practical, re-placing our attention on the senses: taste, smell, touch and colour, the clattering of saucepans from the kitchen. The purpose of the visual restraint? To keep guests attuned to the sensations of eating by keeping the volume low on the interior design. (A restaurant like Frankfurt's MICRO FINE DINING by Concrete, with a pervasive design that nonetheless allows diners to

cocoon themselves in their own dining "pockets" via long tendrils that hang from the ceiling, is the exception rather than the rule in this context.) As the straightforward dining room eschews pretension and gimmicks in favour of candor and comfort, it is often no less extraordinary in its appearance. After all, chicken soup still looks delicious.

Tokyo's ORI HIGAYASHI gift shop sells traditional sweets and gifts and shows shoppers how to best present them. Designed by the aptly named *Simplicity*, it is a box, glazed floor-to-ceiling, that seems to have been captured in a colour photograph, a perfectly spare composition in rice paper and bare wood that is the picture of austere refinement. At the other extreme, in Syracuse, Italy, *Francesco Moncada* built PIZZA PEREZ from materials typically piled in the corner of a construction site – fiberglass, shipyard plywood – that he left unvarnished and unembellished. Like the pizza on the menu, the ingredients were good, the construction was superbly done: The lack of finishes became irrelevant.

This interest in the unembellished has grown among food space designers today. In contrast to the 1990s' glamour-driven and unabashedly trendy emphasis on places to see and be seen, the Noughts have witnessed a clear movement toward emphasizing the quality, provenance and authenticity of food while expressing this in our food space. In some part, this parallels our growing concern over environmental crises and issues of sustainability and responsible living, but the Rustic Chic approach is not limited to this. The embrace of elegant rawness is anchored in our trust and memory of familiar (or historically "familiar") objects. It has become a search for authenticity of experience as much as the purity of food. Therefore, it entails a respect for the small, local, family-run places (the farm and the farmer's market, the village butcher shop and the milkman) that once grew, produced and distributed our food on a scale that we could relate to. It also honors an era when we not only knew where our food came from; we knew precisely where the people who made it came from. The focus on real relationships and responsible eating and living is literally built into the interior of Cape Town's BIRDS BOUTIQUE CAFÉ by *Frauke Stegmann*. The resourcefulness of Birds' construction – from materials collected at the local hardware store and held together in places with rip-ties – reflects the hard, humble labor that went into the growing and production of the food on offer.

Projects like Birds are labors of love. Aside from the deep-pocket restaurant brands, there has been a profusion of small, personal, passion-driven projects in the form of curated food outlets like HEARTSCHALLENGER, which sells sweets and other somewhat random products from a fleet of small pink trucks. There are cupcake joints and Third-wave coffee culture outlets run by that one person who wants to – and can! and does! – make the best coffee or cupcakes in town.

Some engagingly eclectic projects exhibit the same passion: Copenhagen's KARRIERE restaurant juxtaposes design and art, taking both out of the fussy gallery and bringing them into the food space. The result is an interior that improvises a multitude of extraordinary individual moments as guests listen and spy through peepholes between terrace tables or watch, charmed, as a functionally upside-down sink (an artwork called Fountain) shoots water from its drain over the faucet. Personal projects create personal experiences for the diner.

Finally, to create the truly unexpected eating experiences, there are the "performers," chefs and designers and restaurateurs who take the idea of the food event further. These spaces and happenings become immersive: In London, *Bompas & Parr* filled a room with the vapors of gin & tonic while visitors imbibed through their eyeballs. At PROEF, culturally critical product designer *Marije Vogelzang* asks if we taste differently when the food is at a different temperature than expected or if potato-crisps would still be enjoyable if they sounded like jelly. By choreographing eating events and letting serendipity take over during the meal, Vogelzang questions long and deeply held conventions. *Martí Guixé's* FOOD FACILITY was a temporary restaurant that turned the mechanism of Boolean online searches into an interior: Diners ordered take-out from other restaurants and ate it in FOOD FACILITY, splitting orders with other guests if they wanted to have a Thai appetizer, Surinamese main course and an Italian dessert in a single meal. *Martijn Engelbregt's* REST. was a pile of 45 stacked picnic tables. Guests went on "adventure hikes" to harvest edible weeds while staff collected scraps that would have been wasted from other local eateries. Then the chef turned these odds and ends into artful meals like blackberry-muesli puree garnished with edible wildflowers. These installations, performances and meals appeal to basic human instincts. They also renew our relationship to food and culture, which means of course, to ourselves. Ask yourself: When was the last time you tasted something for the very first time?

by  
SHONQUIS  
MORENO



# POP



The pop aesthetic is one that makes beauty out of the banal and finds it in both exaggeration and repetition. It is the opposite of subtlety and all about the robust, the brilliant, even the overwhelming. Appealing to a younger audience, and to families and kids, designers are using bright neon colors and hypnotic patterns, exuberant wall murals and illustration, even walls that reach into the room to create an



immersive experience that can range from playful and friendly to ironic and even pushy. Walls, no longer a 2D architectural element, are given depth: chocolate drips from the ceiling of Wonderwall's GODIVA SHOP, yogurt melts into the SNOG shops by ico design and Cinimod Studio. This voluptuous extrusion is matched by elaborate lighting, behind the walls or overhead, using hues from cool violet or orange to

shades that shift through time of day and season. Robust texture is no less a tool of the pop mentality: designers may weave a “textile” from a profusion of 3D patterns clustered frenetically against the wall or dripping in long cylindrical pendants from the ceiling. This delirious layering creates a complex eye-level landscape that makes the interior dynamic. Although pop, with its eye-candy and 80s references, is a democratic aesthetic, characterizing international, consumer-coddling, unpretentious businesses, their looks can sometimes prove more delicious than the smells of the food coming from their kitchens. Skewing the scale of objects or images – making them smaller or larger than expected – can make an entire brand, not just an interior or the objects in it, larger than life.





# RUSTIC CHIC



Rustic chic is not just a response to global crisis or economic downturn, and it's not (necessarily) a political statement either. Finding the luxury in raw objects and rough environments is, rather, a turning away from the end-of-millennium bling, away from ostentatious luxury and the "convenience" of technology and towards a contemplation of more simple things. This species of eating space is inspired by our trust for, and memory of, familiar objects. These interiors blend traditionalism with modernism, coziness with innovation, excess with austerity. They are marked by more neutral or subdued colors, and filled with objects that have stories or even a history; furnishings collected from a flea market or left by the previous owner, materials



that can be picked up at any construction site, farm implements and old kitchen equipment, bare bulbs, naked unplanned wood.

The colors of these interiors are the colors of the materials used to build them: grainy wood, warm brass, sheer sheets of plastic, foam scraps, and multicolored rip-ties. Surfaces are left unvarnished, unpainted, hardly finished, merely dusted with age, and then dusted off thoroughly to be put to a second (or

ninth) use. Back to the handwritten, back to carpentry! Go grab the glue gun! It is an era of uncomplicated shapes and less complicated lives. Bakeries and markets



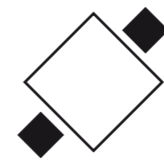
have been swept up in the rush towards organic, local foods and the clarity and candor of their presentation. Restaurants whose interiors reflect this show respect for a time when we knew where our food came from and can provide escape from the idea of the city, if not from the city itself. It is inspired not by nature, but by living with nature. Sure, rustic chic may not bring diners and shoppers and coffee drinkers back to nature, but it may help bring us back to our senses. Behind "cabin culture" is the longing to rediscover a place in our heads that isn't hurried, overwhelmed, or terrorized; that isn't polluted or exhausted.





# STRAIGHT FORWARD

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Straightforward restaurant and food shop interiors celebrate the first purposes of the public food space: beyond providing flavor, selling comestibles in a lucid way that makes shopping easier, or showcasing a gem of a product, place, or Michelin-starred chef in a whitebox setting, as the aptly named Simplicity studio did with the gallery-like ORI HIGASHIYA Sweets Shop in Tokyo. All true, but these types of spaces provide more pervasive nutrients in

our daily regimen: They offer a place to meet, the comfort of company, a way to break bread and break news to neighbors or even attractive strangers. Their lightly finished or even naked materials, the clear forms, the fewer (though still expressive) colors, the embrace of windows and terraces that look into greenery; all these give us a way to engage the senses beyond taste. Like comfort food, the reassurance they give lies in their candid simplicity. Sometimes unvarnished environments lend us new, unfamiliar space that isn't home, but where we can still feel at home, undistracted by doo-dads and uplighting and see-through rest rooms; as

Hemingway once wrote: "a clean, well-lighted place". These are boîtes that are just boxes, avoiding the pretention of five-star restaurants and the see-and-be-seen scenes that mar much of nightlife, making it so difficult to avoid gimmicks and cliché. They are based on one



simple, strong idea. So much so, in fact, that one may not recall the look of the place once you have left it, but you will recall the feeling you had while in it, and it was a good one. Frank spaces appeal

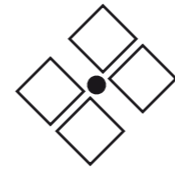
to those of us who do not necessarily want to escape or network or role-play to snare a mate; they are for those who want to savor good food and good company and share both. What you see is what you get.





# PERFORM

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Today, eating out is more deeply experiential than in compliance with the gestures and dictates of mere etiquette. Eating designer Marije Vogelzang, for example, questions etiquette, itself: by choreographing eating experiences, she throws a measure of serendipity into her recipes and perhaps, in the end, gives her guests the relief of catharsis.

Restaurants have long used the tropes of theater to cultivate baroque social rituals around food. Nowadays, dining out is as universal a form of recreation and escape as theater ever has been. Scenography and staging, graphical and architecturally acrobatic spectacle, and sometimes an almost vaudevillian confusion of performer and audience generate a sense of play around food



that restores something forbidden to us from our early childhood. One mustn't play with one's food after all. Or

should we? Today, designers use a palette worthy of Aristotle's "Poetics" to bring the palate – and eating space – to life: plot, character, themes, and reversals. What drama! Who expects to eat dinner at a table suspended from the sky (well, okay, a very tall crane)? This species of interior (and exterior) is sometimes

ephemeral, lasting anywhere from a night to a year; convertible, opening and closing like a flower at the push of a button; or mobile. Eat in a former train carriage or a salvaged shipping container. Or dine in a tree house. These interiors spark performances in our heads, inspiring flights of fancy; or place us on a stage of the surreal, even offering, like Bompas & Parr, an alternate



means of consumption. Inside their misty ALCOHOLIC ARCHITECTURE, visitors drink Hendricks & tonics through their eyeballs, not their gullets. Other eateries bring a fiction to life: Marti Guixé's FOOD FACILITY makes a virtual concept (the search engine) physical by creating a restaurant where all the food on the menu is ordered from and made by other restaurants. They ask, as every good playwright should: what is possible?



# OPEN & SHUT



Some restaurant interiors are designed to foster personal experiences and interaction.

This can involve proximity: guests at the chef's table actually sit inside the kitchen to enjoy a real exchange with the people who are preparing their meals. Or it can be about taking one's dinner in a private dining room that is separated to some degree (by walls, porous partitions,



screens, or sliding glass doors) from the main restaurant. Designers may simply open the kitchen to views from the restaurant floor, allowing clients to at last see, if not take part in, the action. Marcio Kogan's FORNERIA SAN PAULO gives the eyes clues to where the action is: the sheerness of soft curtains and a large glass wall that forms a TV screen over the kitchen invite the gaze even more readily because they are paired with (beautiful but opaque) visual dead ends: wood panels and a tiled floor. In the white-tiled BOTTEGA LOUIE, a vast glazed downtown space is dotted with chefs and bakers mixing up a batch of macaroons, brewing the coffee, and arranging mozzarella on a slab of dough before nudging it into the wood-fired

oven. In other spaces, these more private chambers formalize the separation of the group from other diners in the restaurant, putting the focus on the social experience as much as the food.

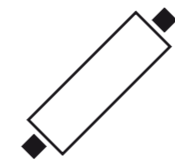
These quiet, contained spaces are usually more restrained in the intensity of their lighting (although the chandeliers are never very "restrained"), more conventional in their elegance, and

slightly subdued in color. It is a restraint perhaps that allows diners to leave theirs at home.





# THE NEW GRANDEUR



Throughout history, grandeur has been signaled by the precious and the monumental.

Today it sometimes takes less rigid, status-encrusted forms. At a time when luxury is available (in a watered-down way perhaps) to greater swathes of the population, how can a designer redefine it?

Today's exclusivity is about knowing the secrets and mapping the unmarked doors. Christopher Tierney remade a former Chinese take-out into a lush 18th-century boîte where the value is on rarity of ingredients, the bespoke, and on the



personal experiences these engender; on things that are no longer made or hard-to-find – whether it's cocktails, views,

furnishings, or the restaurant, itself. At places like APOTHEKE, no one will be turned away who knows where to find the door and once inside, the pampering begins...

Grandeur is about contrasts as much as pampering: the deliciousness of eating and drinking well in the slums. Behind a vulgar, greasy-spoon exterior, guests are wrapped in opulence. The historic has become decadent in and of itself because its age and the authenticity of its materials and finishes (from cast iron

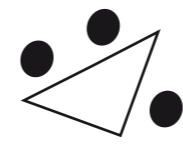
pillars to bare brick walls) tell secret stories. But age is more greatly appreciated when juxtaposed with the modern, or with modern elements that have the potential to become classics in their own right. Jaime Hayon played wittily with historical notions of luxury in LA TERRAZO DEL CASINO by perverting classical forms (running a column's fluting sideways) while maintaining them at a classical scale. Many eating space designers also recognize that views – from terraces, through windows – are tools of decadence as well because they frame the incomparable masterworks of either nature or man. In Stockholm's LE ROUGE, however, Styllt Trampoli found themselves without a window to work with, discovering instead that, as in the boudoir, artifice can prove as sublime as authenticity: They draped the walls with fabric and oil paintings to create a stage setting that became essential to the restaurant's rich flavor.

Finally, there's always the grandeur of having so much that anything can be thrown away: Christian Liaigre's BUDDAKAN exudes luxury in the form of a generous waste of the one thing that is most precious in New York City: space.





# HIGH TECH.



Eating spaces infused with technology may be functionally high-tech or aesthetically so. At the tail end of the digital revolution, designers are bored with their end-of-the-millennium neglect of the handmade in favor of all things virtual and have begun



to create hybrid environments that bring craft and computer together. Michael Young does this in Hong Kong's

PISSARRO where he brings hand-blown glass and hand-folded paper walls together with industrial processes and computer-controlled production. Conspicuously techie restaurants, like London's INAMO, may have menus projected in living color over each guest's place-setting and tables that can be altered to suit the mood of the party. Or, like BANQ in Boston, they may have



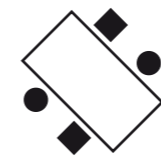
layers of geometrical architecture that has been constructed from advanced



production processes like CNC milling. Lehanneur turned "technology" on its head in FLOOD by using a low-tech – dare we say primitive? – tool (air-filtering algae) to accomplish something (maintain, measure and indicate air quality) that might seem a bit sci-fi to a civilian. Other spaces look gorgeously apocalyptic – framed by conduits or populated with space pods – or serenely au naturale – diners find themselves outdoors when they walk inside – precisely because designers were limited by windowless sites or equally blind clients. And for this we are grateful.



# JUXTAPOSE



There is nothing that keeps a space as freshly engaging as contrast. By juxtaposing opposites and suggesting contradictions, interiors keep their audience alert, awake, and sometimes even arguing. The restaurant is a stage: arranged scenographically, it becomes a locus of drama that draws diners out of their quotidian routine, into another world.

And that's a good thing. Any old opposites will do: historical and modern, inside and out, private and public, red and blue, local and global, industrial and domestic, the familiar and the strange. Diners can escape into Denis Kosutic's ORLANDO DI CASTELLI interior, which mashes together the characters of Queen Elizabeth, American rapper 50 Cent and a girl from Tyrol in a single, white room



like a particularly schizophrenic stream of consciousness text scribbled euphorically on a blank piece of

paper. One of Turkish design firm Autoban's café's brings Achille Castiglioni into the 18<sup>th</sup> century; another mixes steel beams and heavy glazing with homey furnishings and warm walnut wood.

Copenhagen nightspot KARRIERE confuses restaurant and gallery, taking pop art and postmodern design-art off their precious white plinths and brings them into the dining room to create an eatery where consumption of culture is as natural as the consumption of food. Well, isn't it?





# GRAPHIC SPACES



The graphic restaurant interior is shaped and given its mood and personality by color or illustration. These eateries are tattooed with room-size graphics; graphics that are not simply scaled to the wall, but sometimes challenge the volume of the space, influencing the diner's perception



of its size, shape, depth or illumination. In Japan, Shinichiro Hinematsu layered thick slices of sky blue material to create every aspect of the cheerfully monolithic – and thoroughly original – VINEGAR CAFÉ. SHH Architects used industrial colors and graphics, reminiscent of road signage and construction symbols, to make a virtue of the sparseness of the APPLEMORE COLLEGE CAFETERIA. Perhaps the apotheosis of the graphic aesthetic, however, is artist Tobias Rehberger's LA BIENNALE BAR, in which he used the trompe l'oeil graphics of World War I ships – relentless stripes, triangles, and chevrons in black, white,



safety orange, and strategic doses of other colors – to dazzle visitors. In the most extreme instances, graphics give form to architecture, not the other way around.





# EAT OUT



## RESTAURANT DESIGN AND FOOD EXPERIENCES



Edited by ROBERT KLANTEN, SVEN EHMANN,  
SHONQUIS MORENO & FLOYD SCHULZE  
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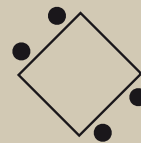
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