

PRESS INFORMATION

DAVID ROCKWELL DESIGNS NOBU DOWNTOWN – A MODERN EXPLORATION OF MATERIALITY IN JAPANESE CRAFT AND CUISINE



David Rockwell’s collaboration with Chef Nobu Matsuhisa began with one small restaurant in Manhattan’s Tribeca neighbourhood. It was there the duo conceived a design concept inspired by Chef Nobu’s innovative cooking and the culture of the Japanese countryside, where the chef was born and raised.

Twenty-three years later, Nobu Tribeca has been closed to make way for a new flagship - Nobu Downtown – set in a landmark building in the Financial District.

For this reinvention of Nobu, David Rockwell, has engaged with a number of makers/craftspeople: [John Houshmand](#), a Catskills, New York-based furniture maker and designer, [Pascale Girardin](#), a Montreal-based ceramic artist and the Philadelphia based textile designer [Isabella Amstrup](#).

DESIGN CONCEPT

David Rockwell and Nobu Matsuhisa's vision for the space is a continuation of their story of Japanese craft that began more than two decades ago. This exploration of materiality is a reflection Chef Nobu's inventive, non-traditional cuisine: the quality and translucency of the fish, the composition of color and texture in each dish, and the blending of Japanese and Peruvian cuisines.

DESIGN HIGHLIGHTS



Occupying the ground floor and cellar level of the historic building, Nobu's design connects old and new. The ground floor features a bar, lounge, and informal dining area. An interior landmark, the 4,500 SF space is framed by heroic Botticino marble columns, a 30' high ceiling, and polished limestone flooring.

For the bar and lounge area, Rockwell conceived a design influenced by the Japanese art of calligraphy. Window screens comprised of white rope dip-dyed in black, inspired by Japanese sumi-e ink and persimmon ink, referencing Nobu's Peruvian influences, dramatically evokes the bristles of a calligraphy brush and anchors the room.

Main bar

A centrally located circular bar volume features a backlit onyx bar, die-cast and resin-cast candle holders along the back bar that cast a subtle, luminous glow in the space.



A sushi bar occupies one section of the bar, while four of the building's original marble Doric columns nestle semi-private pockets around the bar.

Custom chairs, sofas, and organic banquette seating with wooden frames are upholstered in patchwork fabric inspired by Peruvian folk traditions and feature Japanese patterns.

Bronze and glass table and floor lamps merge modern Japanese design with art deco influences.

A delicate ash wooden sculpture designed by Rockwell Group and hand-carved and realised by New York artist John Houshmand depicts a swirl of watery sumi-e ink suspended in mid-air.

The site-specific piece floats above the central bar and moves above the lounge to the main staircase, leading guests to the cellar-level dining area.



A river rock wall at the base of the stair is a nod to Nobu's original Tribeca location. Composed of LED tiles forming an 8' long digital pond, the feature will display images designed by the LAB at Rockwell Group.



Dining area



The dining area is organised into a series of experiences connected by an undulating wooden canopy inspired by *kirigami*, a type of origami involving the folding and cutting of paper. Abstracted ash trees, inspired by Nobu's original location, seem to support the canopy.

The main dining room is flanked by a sushi bar towards the back of the space and a semi-private dining room behind the stair.

Plush banquette seating upholstered in custom fabrics with Japanese patterns in rich Peruvian colours define the main dining room.

The upholstery extends over the backs of freestanding banquettes to mimic kimonos draped over the seats.

Elongated curved banquettes sit against a radiated plaster wall with a ceramic mural by Canadian artist Pascale Girardin mounted above the seating.



Hand-cast glazed tiles by Girardin in subtle shades of blue form a feature wall in the 35-seat private dining room, which can open up to the main dining area.



Sushi bar



The 13-seat sushi bar is made of ash and blackened steel. The upholstery of the custom bar stools continue the idea of a kimono draped over the back of the chair. Off to the side, two shelving units form the walls of an intimate sake room. The shelves are filled with handmade ceramic sake carafes by Girardin.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

About Rockwell Group

Based in New York with offices in Madrid and Shanghai, Rockwell Group is an interdisciplinary architecture and design firm that emphasizes innovation and thought leadership in every project. The firm merges architecture, theatre, craftsmanship, and technology to create unique narratives for their work, including hospitality, cultural institutions, offices, transportation, residential, set design, products, exhibitions and festivals.

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