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east point

East. Melbourne,
Australia.

East is the new place to eat delicious Chinese food and listen to cool music, but it was the fabulous interior by Hecker Guthrie that caught the eye of (*inside*) co-editor Jan Henderson when she visited this Melbourne eatery.

design_ Hecker Guthrie. text_ Jan Henderson. photography_ Shannon McGrath.





Tucked under the Sheraton Hotel in the city centre of Melbourne is a small restaurant the interior of which shimmers like an Eastern bijou in the sunset. Prosaic words for the design of the latest restaurant to join the burgeoning Melbourne Asian food scene, but a fair call when you peer through the large picture windows front and side and see the turquoise jewel inside. East opened its doors in November 2014 and is making quite a name for itself – not only for the excellent food that it serves, but also for its stylish surroundings.

It's not always easy to make an identity for a restaurant that is a part of a hotel. Many have tried and failed, but East has managed to carve out its corner of the Sheraton Hotel landscape and become a destination of note. Located under the hotel, it straddles the corner of Little Collins

Street and Coates Lane East with the entrance in the laneway. Two large windows offer patrons the chance to watch the passing parade of people and, in turn, passers-by are able to view inside.

That East has an identity of its own is due to the creative prowess of Hecker Guthrie, a design practice that has made an indelible stamp on the Melbourne hospitality scene over the years. Its creative and innovative designs are to be found everywhere, but each project is individual and so East is another stand-alone interior that has answered the client's brief, established a solid identity and, perhaps most importantly, provided a space that is beautiful and comfortable for patrons.

The project was the latest for an established client, Jeff Xu of Golden Age Developments, and the timeline was

intense. From inception to completion, the project was achieved in just four and a half months. The plan was to design a space that would offer different dining experiences within the 57-seat establishment and, at the same time, reference a contemporary Chinese aesthetic. The original concept was adhered to throughout the project and the initial drawings are picture perfect of the final presentation. The colour palette is strong, with turquoise blue/green (referencing jade) the dominant colour. Rendered ceilings, white doors and trim, and bar and furniture in black, set the scene for a wonderful dining experience.

Turquoise glazed ceramic tiles (colour Green Jade, client supplied) are the hero and have been used in a wide band that encircles the interior walls and large

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above—The bar facade is clad in turquoise glazed ceramic tiles and the lattice shelving in powder-coated, blackened steel provides storage for glasses and bottles. **opposite**—Overview of the main area of East with banquette seating to the left and high tables to the right. **previous**—Positioned next to the Laneway window rectangular high tables and stools cater for casual eating and larger groups.



above—Load bearing columns have also been clad in the turquoise tiles that encircle the interior of the restaurant. opposite—The more private area has been designed for two and four people per table and features individual overhead pendant lights that enhance the intimacy.

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By tiling the middle, the swathe of turquoise appears to float above the floor and below the ceiling, and the colour envelops the space, so that the interior feels more expansive.

load-bearing columns. They have been laid much like bricks, with black grout for outline, and the effect is lattice-like, similar to a basket weave design. Interestingly, the design also references tuck pointing of brickwork and this adds a clean geometry to the interior. By tiling the middle, the swathe of turquoise appears to float above the floor and below the ceiling, and the colour envelops the space, so that the interior feels more expansive.

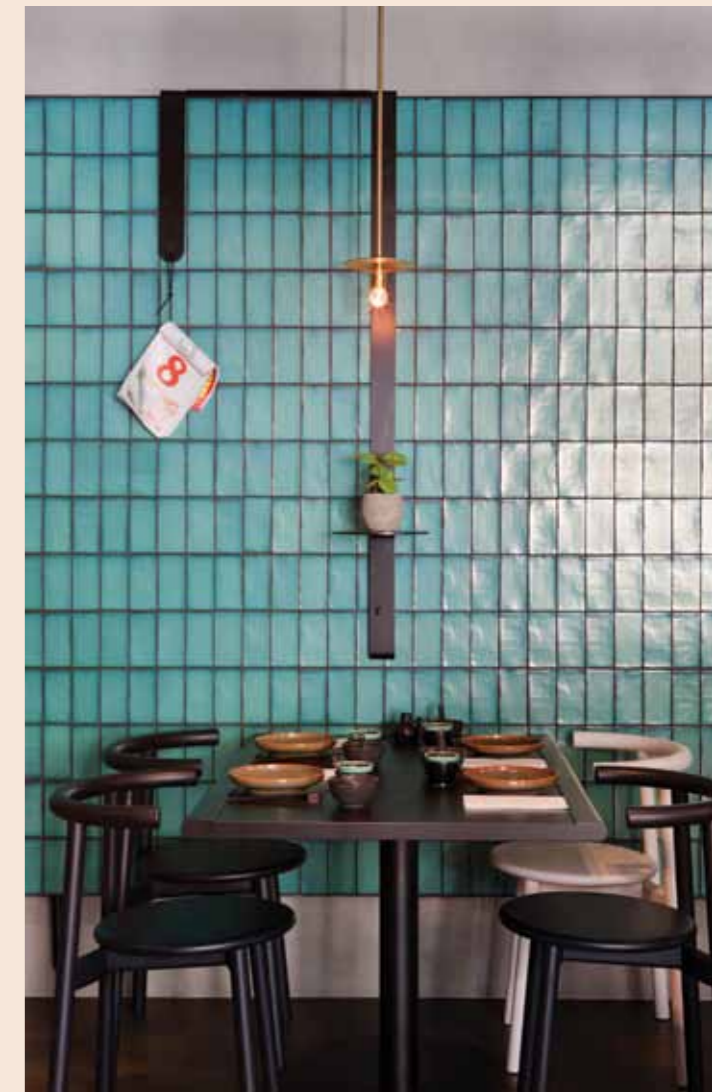
There are four particular areas in the room. The first is the blackened steel bar clad in turquoise tiles, with large powder-coated, blackened steel overhead lattice shelving that holds glassware and bottles.

Moving through and along the back wall, there are two- and four-seat tables (black solid timber, bespoke design) and comfortable chairs (He Said, Mattiazzi, District), while individual small pendant lights (Mance Design) are hung low and help to create a sense of intimacy.

A further delineation of this more private area is the three-quarter height, dark stained American oak wood lattice screen that has been affixed to the back of the banquette seating (bespoke design with black semi-aniline leather, Pelle) that has been positioned towards the middle of the space. Larger groups are catered for in this area, with the banquette seating and rectangular tables and stools (black steel and black solid wood respectively, bespoke design).

At the window fronting Little Collins Street a high table of black steel with off-white small square-tiled top (tile Sugie Mosaic Hanten, INAX, Artedomus, base black steel, bespoke design) runs the length of the glass and black stools (Solo bar stool, Mattiazzi, District) are perfect for single diners.

This fourth area caters for the casual diner, as stools surround three more high tables that have been positioned 'end on'



to the laneway side window. The different seating groups make it possible to visit East to have a quick snack, a casual group lunch or an intimate dinner, depending on the area in which you choose to sit.

For the 'wow' factor, six beige canvas pendant lights (Mance Design) have been hung in the middle of the room. Shaped as large and small cylinders, they hang in a random configuration above the heads of diners and it's almost as if patrons are sitting within an art installation.

Through the design and choice of colour and furniture, the atmosphere in the restaurant is both soothing and invigorating – a dichotomy, but the perfect encapsulation of East. Hamish Guthrie, who led the team and Rita d'Souza the designer on the project, have achieved a refined result that ticks all the boxes and, with excellent food, hip music and a great interior, East is set to establish itself as the new place to be. ■