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INDESIGN

INTERIORS ARCHITECTURE DESIGN

IPLI ARCHITECTS HUMANISE INDUSTRY

MILAN DESIGN WEEK | CSYA | JAIME HAYON | AESOP STORES BY RUSSELL & GEORGE
KATAMAMA BY ANDRA MATIN, TAKENOUCI WEBB AND PTT FAMILY | SINGAPORE DESIGN WEEK

BLEND & MIX

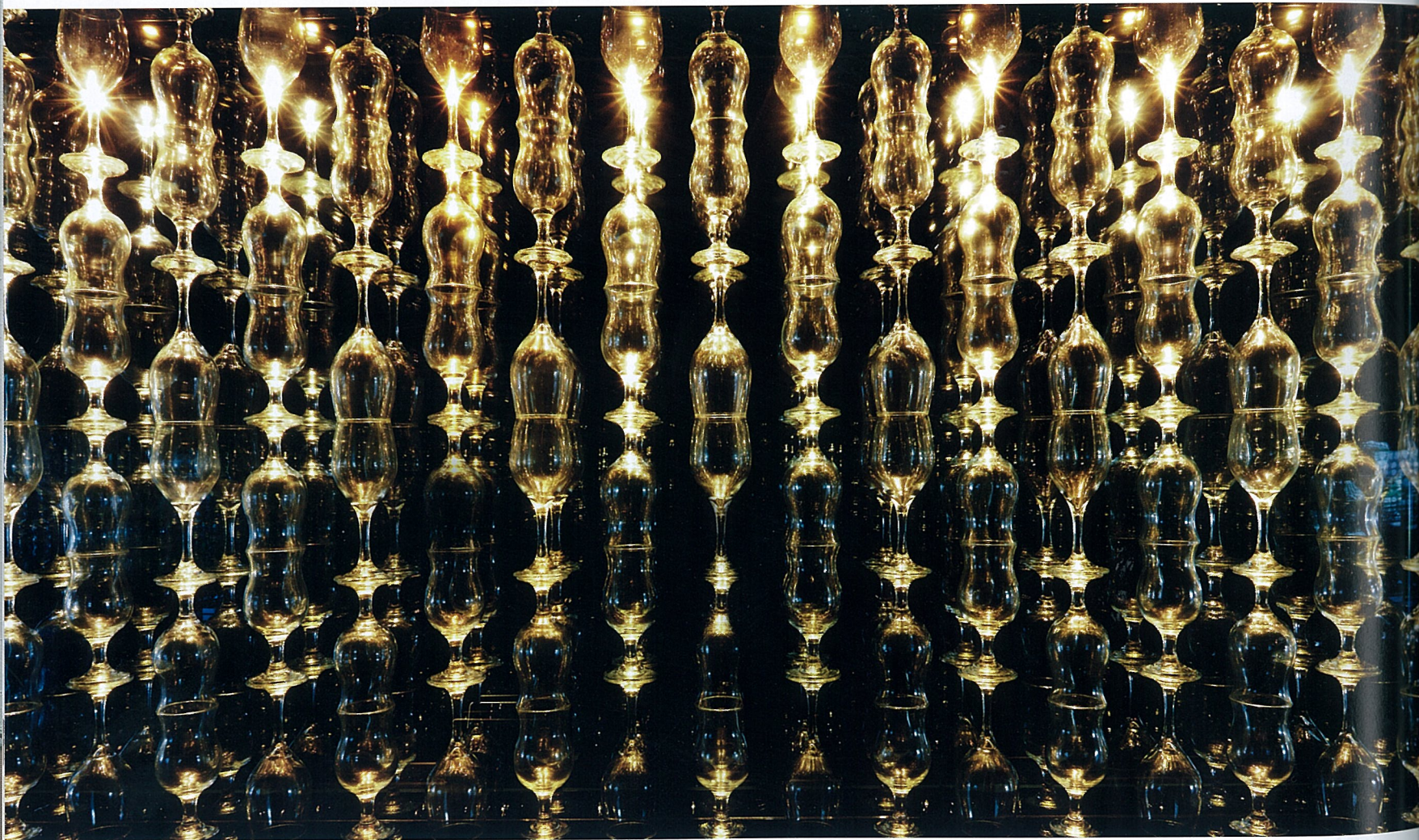
ASYLUM DISSOLVES A SPATIAL BOUNDARY
TO INVITE PANORAMIC VIEWS INTO COCKTAIL
BAR SMOKE & MIRRORS.

TEXT

» STEPHANIE PEH

PHOTOGRAPHS

» LUMINA PHOTOGRAPHY (COURTESY OF ASYLUM)



Above: Smoked mirrors conjure
the infinite reflection of a
wine-glass installation along
the entrance alley



ACCORDING TO CHRIS LEE, the Founder and Creative Director of multi-disciplinary design studio Asylum, the recent cultural recognition of bartenders has led to a paradigm shift in how bar spaces are being experienced today. “In the past, the bar was a little ledge,” he recalls. “But today, a lot of cocktail bars have big counters because the mixologist is now the star. Today, designers can really dictate the energy of bars,” he adds.

Smoke & Mirrors, a cocktail bar perched atop the National Gallery Singapore, celebrates the craft of mixology with a sculpted, reflective bar counter that calls to mind the art of Anish Kapoor or Jeff Koons. “Being part of the most important museum [in Singapore], we wanted the bar to be a little jewel on top – like a crown perched on top of the building,” says Lee. The polished steel bar was sculpted in a jewel-like form that conjures curious reflections, enhancing the bar experience.

“You can say that the bar is made up of mini art installations,” says Lee. Aside from the bar counter there is a wall installation made up of 1,400 wine glasses, and a timber screen that encourages an optical illusion. For the creation of the curvaceous counter, the team sought the help of a sculptural specialist from Beijing who typically manufactures large-scale, outdoor fine-art sculptures. The bar

counter was made in three parts, lifted into the level-six space through the balcony opening, and welded on site.

The dramatic bar counter serves a secondary role as an important mechanism in the plan. The unit originally consisted of clearly demarcated indoor and alfresco zones. “There is nothing interesting about a floor plan like that,” Lee suggests. Early layout configurations resulted in scenarios that would have had customers sitting outdoors,



Top: A more traditional ledge bar within the entrance alley is perhaps the most 'interior' space in the bar

Bottom: The polished stainless steel bar was custom made by a Beijing-based sculptural specialist and welded together on site



“IN THE PAST, THE BAR WAS A LITTLE LEDGE ... TODAY, DESIGNERS CAN REALLY DICTATE THE ENERGY OF BARS.”

» CHRIS LEE

neglecting the indoor space. While the site’s skyline vista was to be celebrated, Lee’s team was wary about creating abandoned corners indoors. “We had to force ourselves to bring the view into the bar,” he recalls.

The team proposed the blurring of the boundary line to allow the positioning of the bar counter between the indoor and outdoor spaces. The former enclosing glass wall was removed, creating an ambiguous notion of the ‘indoor’ and ‘outdoor’. “Now,” says Lee, “the bar can’t be closed.” This bold planning move meant that the whole floor area became one space and everybody could enjoy the view. “Nobody can choose to sit indoors or outdoors. That was the key idea,” Lee explains. It also meant that the client, Park Hotel Group, had to think outside the box in operational terms. The mechanics of the air-conditioning system, for example, had to be carefully calculated to keep the space cool.

“The bar’s gallery-facing facade is lined with tactically angled timber tiles that form a seemingly ‘floating’ plane,” explains Coretta Van Wijk, Asylum’s lead designer for Smoke & Mirrors. “We designed it like a curtain with invisible strings. It gives you a feeling of movement as each panel is set at an angle,” she adds. Theatrics are also present in the main entry and exit passageway – a space lined by a wall display of wine glasses and smoked mirrors that conjure illusions of an infinite corridor. It is an experience trumped only by the infinite views reflected off the rounded steel bar.



SMOKE & MIRRORS

CLIENT Yan Pte Ltd (Operated by Park Hotel Group)

DESIGN FIRM Asylum Creative

PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS Chris Lee, Cara Ang, Coretta Van Wijk, Clarissa Budiman, Michelle Tan, Julia Tan

TIME TO COMPLETE 8 months

TOTAL FLOOR AREA 234.64 sqm

ASYLUM CREATIVE

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FINISHES

Along the windows, customised walnut timber panels produced by R&C Design Solutions. Along interior entrance alley, installation of wine glasses produced by R&C Design Solutions. In interior, customised carpet supplied by Etesse.

FURNITURE

Custom-made polished stainless steel bar counter manufactured by Sino Sculptures. On the deck, B&B Italia ‘Crinoline’ chairs supplied by Space Furniture; Moroso ‘Tropicalia’ chairs supplied by Xtra. In the interior, Moroso ‘Love Me Tender’ sofa and Magis ‘S.s.s.’ barstool supplied by Xtra.

LIGHTING

In interior along booth seats, customised copper lights produced by R&C Design Solutions.

Etesse (65) 6908 0889 etesse.com.sg
R&C Design Solutions (65) 6268 4826 rcdesignsolution.com.sg
Sino Sculptures (86) 10 6040 9662 sinosculpture.com
Space Furniture (65) 6415 0000 spacefurniture.com.sg
Xtra (65) 6836 0288 xtra.com.sg

Left: The wall facing the gallery is lined with angled timber planes and was designed to give a feeling of movement

Right: The removal of the existing boundary wall has blended the indoor and outdoor. As a result, technically, the bar cannot be closed