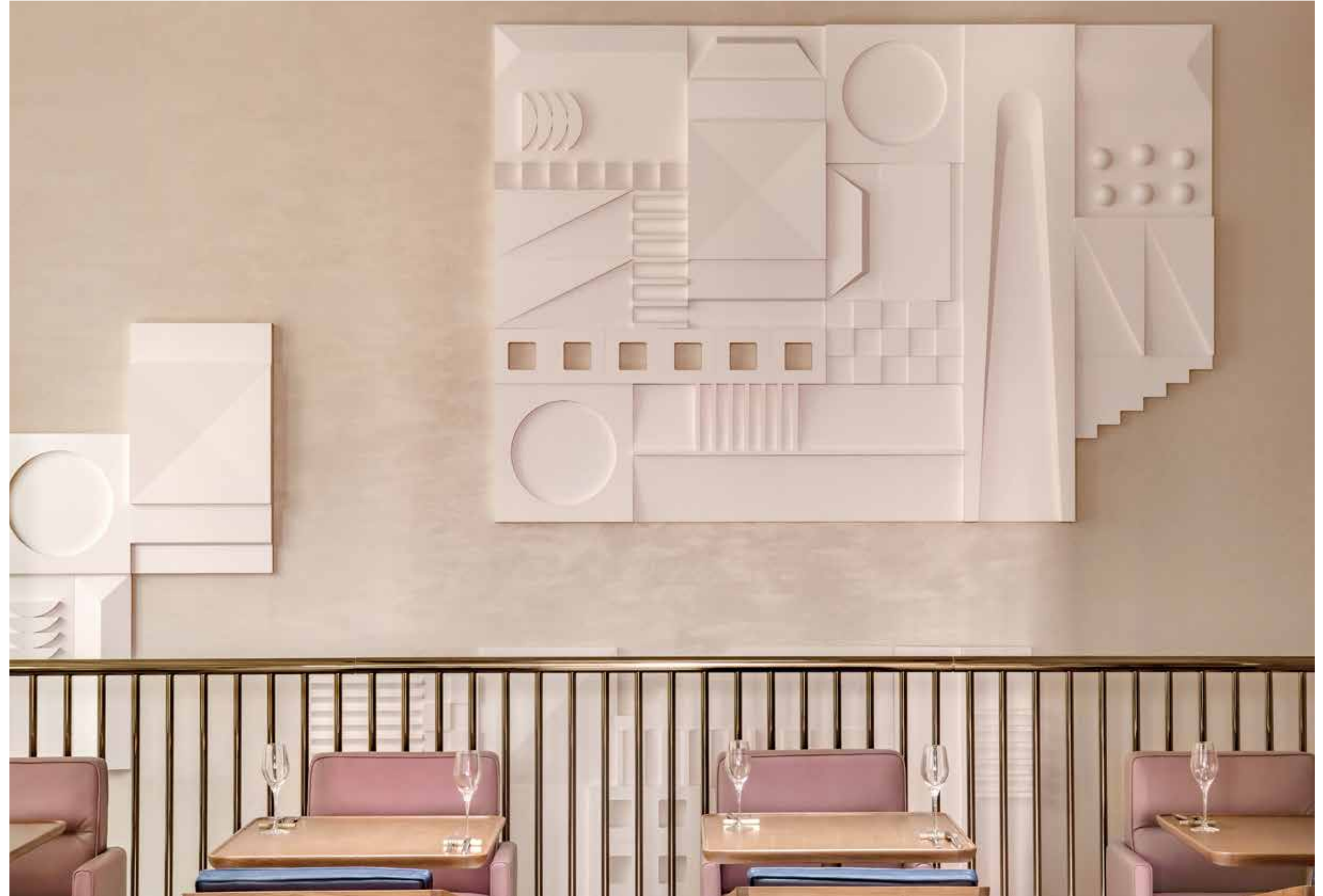


The Upper

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Photography —
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and Satoshi Matsuo

In Tokyo, Sydney studio Luchetti Krelle has created two distinguishable yet highly compatible dining retreats, channelling mid-century Italian modernism and Art Deco decadence.



Above — The tenth floor's rear double-height wall is adorned with an array of white relief panels designed by the architect.



Above — Level nine’s bar, made from white ceramic tiles partly covered with massive granite panels, offers a soaring display cabinet of backlit bottles.



Above — The gilded elevator doors open at the ninth floor to reveal emerald green walls.

Tokyo has an extraordinary ability to absorb incongruous influences, objects and images while comfortably maintaining its own identity – and perhaps thereby reinforcing that identity. The street facades are an architectural zoo of exotic styles, the commercial interiors freely incorporate multiple cultures and historical periods. Which is why The Upper (a bar and restaurant occupying the ninth and tenth floors of the recently completed Marunouchi Terrace Tower) so readily belongs here, despite its apparent lack of coherence and contextualism. The eclectic mixture of motifs, materials, colours and patterns, including more or less overt references to mid-century modernist design from Italy and Brazil, the monumentality and kitsch of American Art Deco, the glamour and decadence of early twentieth-century Shanghai and the era of steamship travel – of riveted metal panels, leather-strapped suitcases and wooden cargo trunks – make it a quintessentially Tokyo design, a partial microcosm of the city.

The architect was requested to create a “metropolitan lodge,” a sophisticated retreat for dining and drinking in Marunouchi, a prestigious business district occupying the area

between Tokyo Station and the outer gardens of the Imperial Palace. Accessed from the street by a dedicated elevator, The Upper comprises two levels, differing in ambience but linked physically and aesthetically by an internal stair.

The gilded doors of the elevator open at the ninth floor to reveal emerald green walls with a brass lattice ceiling above. To the left is the concierge desk, an assemblage of polished and patinated metal whose copper legs support a riveted brass volume with a stainless-steel top. To the right is the main bar, a block of white ceramic tiles partly covered with massive granite panels. Behind it is a soaring display cabinet of backlit bottles set within a blue lacquered grid. The grid motif appears throughout this level, from the oak flooring featuring light-stained squares within dark-stained lines, to the embossed patterns on the wall-mounted glass sconces. An open kitchen runs along one side of the long, narrow space, opposite which is a raised area of circular booths clad in blue-black leather, set against full-height glazing. Curtains by American designer Kelly Wearstler have been hung so as to resemble the *noren* at the



Above — The grid motif appears throughout level nine, including the oak flooring featuring light-stained squares within dark-stained lines.

entrances to traditional restaurants, and Melbourne designer Anna Charlesworth provided white, curved pendant lamps. At the far end is a private dining room with walls rendered in grey plaster, above which are strips of glass blocks supporting a mottled-gold vaulted ceiling.

The tenth floor is reached via a spectacular stair that slides beside and behind the bar. Its stone treads appear to float, due to open risers or inset mirrored panels. Behind it, the double-height wall is decorated with an array of white relief panels designed by the architect. The miniature mezzanine above the stairwell is capped with a large skylight articulated by an elegant timber grid, recalling Japanese window lattices and Brazilian interior design motifs.

More casual in atmosphere, this level is largely defined by plastered walls and teak wood detailing, though with the same keynote shade of green. The walls are punctuated with circular sconces of crinkled glass, created by Sydney’s A Design Studio, which cast rippled light across the walls. Furniture upholstery seems to have been chosen to evoke a

Japanese sensibility – dark plum and cherry blossom pink fabrics on the chairs, green tea-coloured leather on the banquettes. The kitchen is behind operable shutters, giving the impression that diners are sitting al fresco. Indeed, some of the interior finishes seem more suited to exterior use, such as the terrazzo floor tiles in the central area and the glazed tiles on the tabletops. At the far end, the ceiling is higher and fully glazed, like a greenhouse. Truly outdoor dining is possible on an intimate terrace area, described by the architects as “biophilic,” lined with greenery-covered trellises, suffused with sunlight, shadows and breezes.

Sadly, the ongoing pandemic panic has so far prevented the ninth floor from being opened to the public. It remains pristine, used only for occasional private parties – and, unsurprisingly, as a ready-made backdrop for fashion shoots and television dramas. Like a Wes Anderson set design, The Upper’s witty balance of dissonance and retro charm has produced a photogenic, cinematic stage for the lifestyles of the metropolis in which it sits. 🍷

“The miniature mezzanine above the stairwell is capped with a large skylight articulated by an elegant timber grid, recalling Japanese window lattices and Brazilian interior design motifs.”



This page — On level ten, the skylight's latticed timber frame subtly connects the space to level nine's details.

Opposite page, top left — The maître d' station, with its kinetic arrangement of floor tiles, is a welcoming entry point for guests.

Opposite page, top right — Dark plum and cherry blossom pink fabrics on the chairs evoke a Japanese sensibility.

Opposite page, bottom — At the far end of level ten, the ceiling is higher and fully glazed, like a greenhouse.



Project —
The Upper
9th + 10th F
Marunouchi Terrace,
1-3-4 Marunouchi,
Chiyoda-ku Tokyo,
Japan 100-0005
the-upper.jp

Design practice —
Luchetti Krelle
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luchettikrelle.com

Project team —
Luchetti Krelle

Time schedule —
Design,
documentation:
19 months
Construction:
6 months

Builder —
Garde

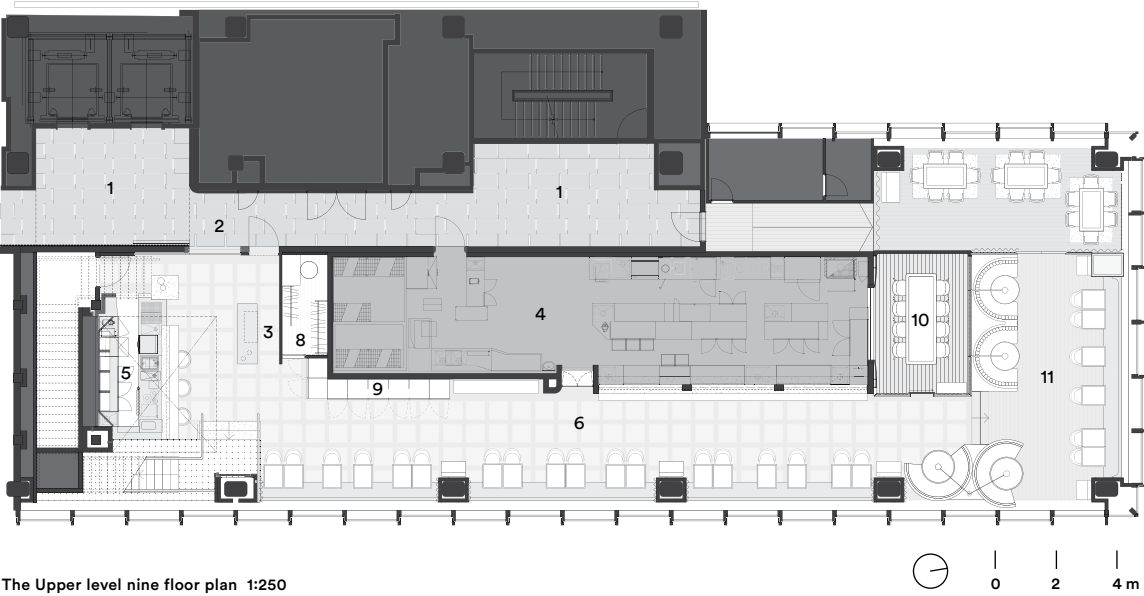
Engineer —
Mitsubishi
Jisho Sekkei

Project manager —
Transit
General Office

Landscaping —
Solso

Products —
Walls and ceilings:
Level ten custom
timber grid installation
at skylight. Natural
fibre acoustic sheeting.
Flooring: Custom
timber parquetry
on level nine. Level
ten is tiled Brasilia
by Popham Tiles.
Joinery: Custom
designed by
Luchetti Krelle.
Lighting:
Level nine: Crisp
light and Chip light
from RBW. Eny Lee
Parker Oo lamp from
The Scope. Anna
Charlesworth 6 Lamp
pendant and 4 Bowl
pendant. Custom
bronze swing arm
lights by Luchetti
Krelle, fabricated by
Daiko Electric Co.,
Tokyo. Level ten:
Crackle sconce from
A Design Studio.
ADA alabaster sconce
from Allied Maker.
Surface Sconce
from Henry Wilson.
Furniture:
Level nine: By Lassen
dining chair in main
dining space. Archilab
Vienna chair in private

dining room. Maître d’
desk, private dining
room dining tables
and curved blue
leather banquettes
all custom designed
by Luchetti Krelle,
fabricated in Tokyo.
Level ten: Jay Rattan
chair along window
from Reddie. Diiva
dining chair from
Grazia and Co. Large
long banquette,
timber waiter stations,
dining tables with
glazed Smink Studio
by Di Lorenzo Tiles,
maître d’ fluted timber
desk, smaller love seat
sofas, terrace lounges
and terrace timber
tables, all custom
designed by Luchetti
Krelle, fabricated
in Tokyo. Chairs on
terrace by Gibson Carlo
from Design By Them.
Other: Level nine:
Brass hanging sculp-
tures at maître d’ desk
by Beth Naumann.
Diana Miller artwork
in private dining room.
Level nine: Graffito
curtain fabric by Kelly
Wearstler. Artwork
behind maître d’ desk is
The Arch by Tory Burke.



Above — The generous outdoor dining terrace provides guests with ample natural light, cross breezes and gentle green shades.

