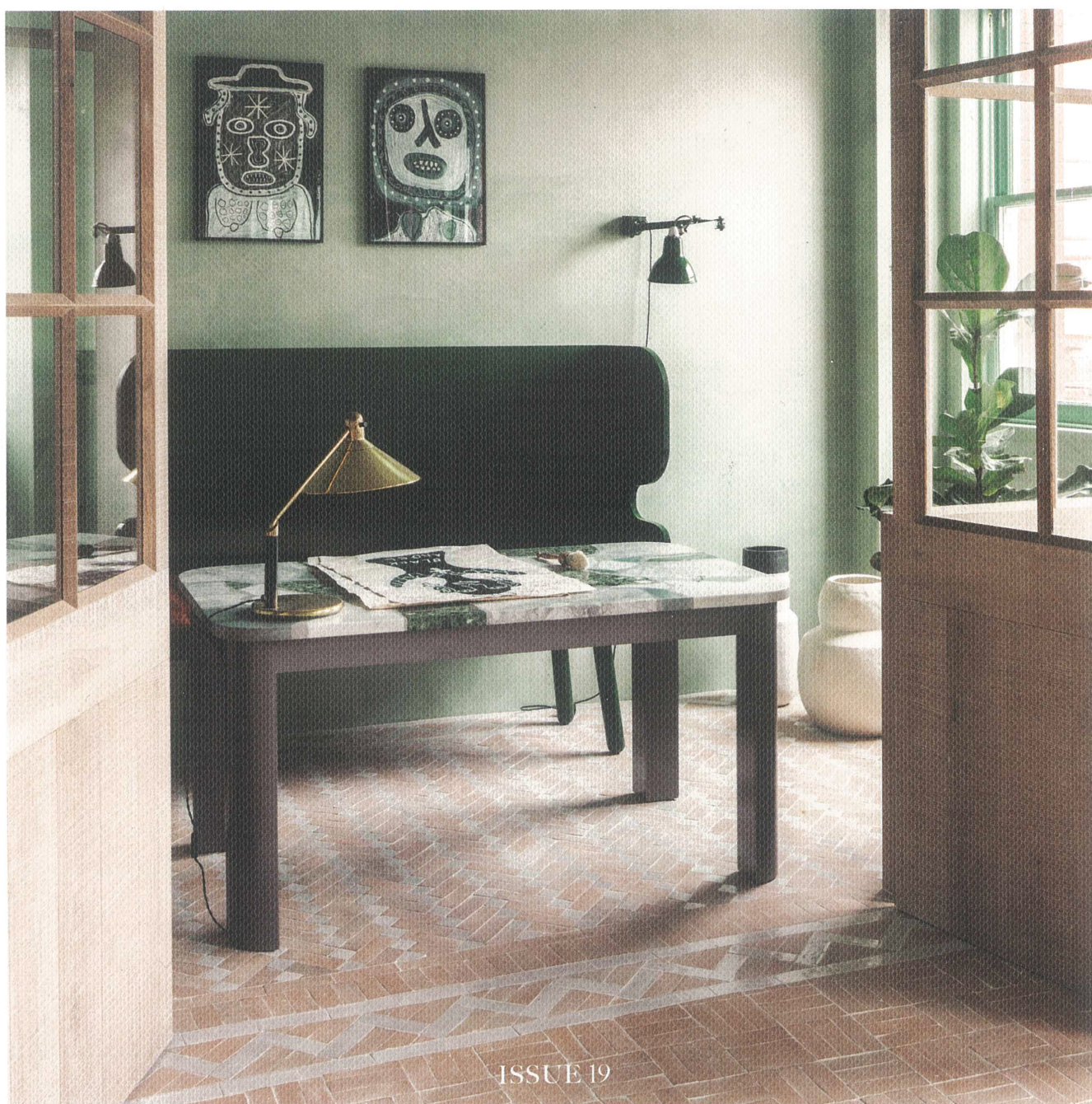


# design anthology

INTERIORS / ART / ARCHITECTURE / TRAVEL



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*Design news from around the world*

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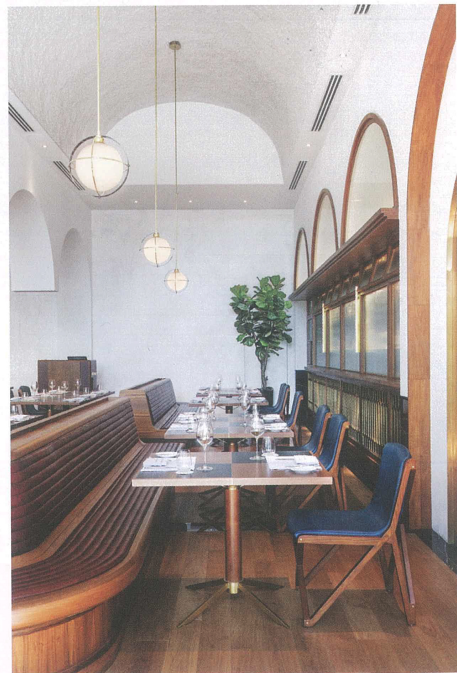
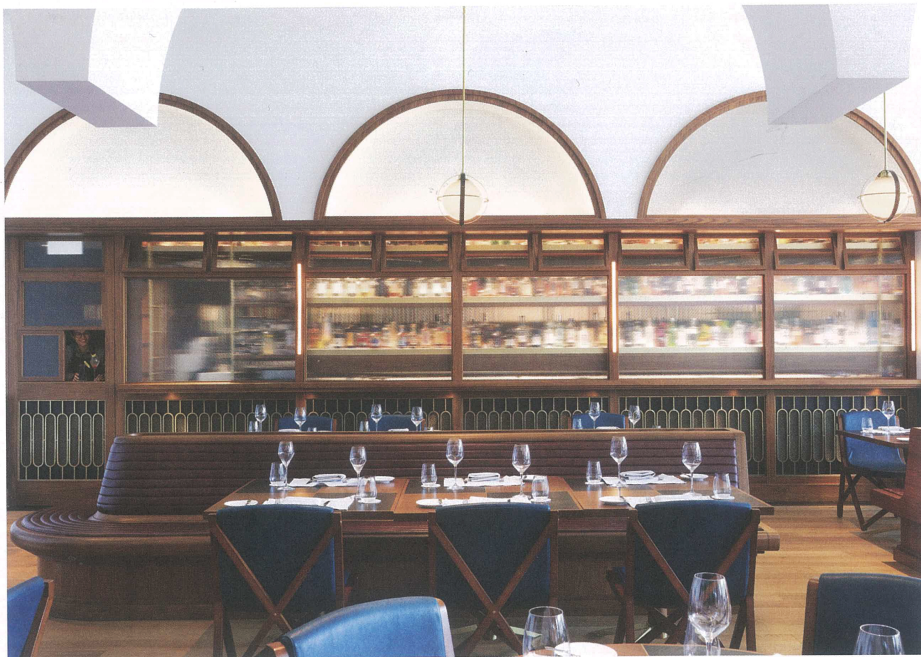
The newly renovated Origin Grill in Singapore's Shangri-La Hotel  
Image by Dennis Lo



## Ode to the Journey

*Text*  
Jingmei Luo

*Images*  
Dennis Lo



Facing page, top  
With its design  
based on the  
train stations  
of yesteryear,  
Origin Grill in the  
Singapore Shangri-  
La is characterised  
by strong motifs,  
defined spaces and  
rich hues

Facing page, bottom  
Design studio  
A Work of Substance  
paid homage to  
the opulence of  
the Shangri-La with  
Venetian plaster, teak  
and marble  
flooring, elaborate  
light fittings and  
brass accents.  
Seating was chosen  
to invoke train  
station benches

Entering Origin Grill within Singapore's Shangri-La Hotel is like stepping into an oasis. Away from the hotel's lobby and its cacophony of human traffic in transit, a tunnel of white thresholds leading into the restaurant — elegantly arched and timber-lined — emanates calm.

Full-height windows light up this alabaster corridor as it segues into the voluminous and gloriously sunlit main dining room. Natural light dances on the surfaces in a perennial play of light and shadow and highlights the domed soffit above, which continues beyond the glass walls into arched overhangs, guiding the eye towards the verdant exterior.

Textured with an acoustic layer, the curved ceiling offers a raw, cavernous feel. More significantly, it's reminiscent of train station architecture. This is the crux of the design concept, according to Maxime Dautresme, founding partner and creative director of A Work of Substance, the Hong Kong-based design agency that was tasked with renovating the space in the hotel's newly refurbished Tower Wing.

The starting point was a photograph, provided by the client, of an old train station, with a brief to celebrate the hotel's grand legacy and reflect its fresh produce, particularly seafood and exquisite gourmet steaks — think snow-aged, full-blood wagyu from Niigata, Japan.

Dautresme's approach was to slow things down — literally. The aforementioned entrance corridor begins that process, and in one of the arches lining it a custom-designed kinetic sculpture — a ball that navigates through a network of metal paths — offers further pause. 'A key aspect of train stations is the fluidity of the layout — how one space reveals another to provide an efficient route. We wanted to capture this and highlight how

a journey isn't about getting to a destination as quickly as possible, but also about the time that is experienced during the transition. A journey is multidimensional, just like the food at Origin, which involves the process of ripening produce, the maturing of meat, and so on,' Dautresme explains.

The arched ceilings, uncovered after the removal of layers cladding a former Japanese restaurant, are a perfect foil for the leitmotif of curves and arches Dautresme repeats in portals, wall features and alcoves — the latter a cosy feature within the bar that is separated from the main dining room by a fluted glass wall. Backed by the mise en scène of silhouetted alcohol bottles, the wall reveals, according to the designer, 'organised chaos of colour'. Furthest from the entrance, a trio of large domed sliding doors open up to private dining rooms.

'The high arches provide a sense of discovery, pace a customer's journey throughout, and create mystery and the desire to discover more. The division of space creates rhythm,' explains Dautresme. Venetian plaster on the walls, teak and marble underfoot, sculptural light pendants overhead and brass accents throughout reflect the hotel's historic grandeur. Wall lamps inspired by train signalling lights and timber seating similar to the benches found in train stations reinforce the narrative without being overly literal. Within the bar, hues of deep blue set the mood for more intimate encounters, matched by low-slung cane sofas and elaborate parquet flooring oozing vintage appeal.

Origin may be modestly sized, but there is much to observe. The transformation of the space is considered and refined; the combination of elements encapsulates the exoticism of travel without ever falling into the trap of kitsch.