

NEW SHANGHAI, DUBAI

Pattern and texture lead New Shanghai to new heights and a new market in Dubai



New Shanghai is well known in Australia as a casual dining destination. Its traditional Shanghai laneway is its signature design and appears across six sites.

Giant Design, the team behind this much-loved streetscape since 2009, recently refreshed its original design concept, delivering a more sophisticated, contemporary design for the first New Shanghai site in the Middle East under the AZADEA Group.

In fact, this new design concept was first launched in 2016 at New Shanghai's seventh Australian site in Chadstone, Victoria, with great success.

But as Chris Wilks, Design Director, Giant Design, explains, "Our client wanted something new and unique for the Dubai Mall – they wanted the newest and best version of New Shanghai when they went overseas. And we came up with a couple of new elements to put into the design, while still making it recognisable for any Australians who travel there. We knew we had to take the design to the next level. And the size and scale of the Dubai project did that automatically."

What this meant for Chris and his team was taking a literal streetscape design and creating something more abstract. And what they've ended up with is, "Beautiful detailing in a contemporary restaurant that doesn't particularly look like anything. There's an element that could feel a bit like a streetscape, but in a more abstract way, as opposed to a literal translation of a streetscape. And it's still a family restaurant, but the aesthetic look is more glamorous," Chris remarks.

In a mere 13 months, from brief to completion, this creative team has delivered a contemporary Chinese restaurant that is inspired by 1930s Shanghai, using a material palette that stayed true to the original concept but with some exciting new twists. Patterned Petersen D92 brick walls, Basalt cobblestone

flooring, black timber latticework and hand-painted murals have truly taken New Shanghai to the next level.

And it's the geometry, pattern and texture that sets it apart. Take the brickwork for starters. Chris searched in vain for eight years for the perfect slim profile, grey brick with a 50mm height to use as a brick tile on the walls, a key element of the original design. "When we did New Shanghai Dubai, we finally found the perfect grey brick. We also liked the variation you get across the whole set of Petersen bricks and they have a softness about them. They look powdery and authentic like the ancient brick walls you'd see in Shanghai. The edges are a little bit tumbled, and they have an instant aged aesthetic right from the get go," Chris says.

Once delivered to site, each brick was sliced to a one-centimetre skin and laid as a tile on the wall, but not with an ordinary brick bond. "The walls are so tall – at 4.7m – and it's such a long and narrow space that we wanted to break it up. In the original concept we would've done that with windows and doorways, which we weren't doing this time around. So, it was a matter of working out what we could do instead. This meant rotating the bricks, using a different pattern and breaking it up with black steel bands along the length of the walls," Chris comments.



A revision to the new concept also saw bright yellow louvers added to the walls, targeting the space more to the family market and breaking up the more monotone cobbles and bricks.

One of the most spectacular design elements that adds a definite splash of colour are the hand painted tiled panels hanging in the restaurant and across the shopfront. "Originally, we thought we'd get the tiles painted in a studio, but because of timing they were painted in situ on a finished panel. The artist was there for a week painting whilst everyone else was working below him. The idea was that it was like a mosaic wall – and that's the best way we could do it apart from getting each individual tile painted or glazed," Chris recalls. As you can see they are simply stunning.

Of course an original and much loved feature of New Shanghai, and perhaps more prominent at the Dubai Mall, is the black timber latticework. This is one of Chris's favourite features, along with the Petersen D92 bricks. "It's the combination of the black timber latticework – the extent of it is dazzling,

there's almost an element of the Great Wall of China because of its length – and when you look through it straight on, you see the brickwork behind it. It's a combination of what you can do with two finishes, and pattern and texture; it was really nice to be able to do that in a contemporary way," Chris says.

Not surprisingly, Giant Design's Australian client (New Shanghai's original owner) and the AZADEA Group were both ecstatic, wanting to move forward in Australia and the Middle East using this new design. Giant Design has more than delivered on its brief to develop something new and unique for Dubai, creating the most outstanding New Shanghai site so far.



Interior Design:	Giant Design
Product:	Petersen D92 bricks
Owner:	AZADEA Group
Builder:	Blue Print Emirates interiors LLC
Photographer and painter:	Jivan Hovhannisian