



“My design philosophy is to aim for “wow”, then everything else falls into place. We must balance the practical with design spaces. An effective restaurant design is realized by developing a functional floor plan for smooth and timely service from the operational side, while delivering an equally enjoyable dining experience for customers.”

Des. Sumesh Menon



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# IL REFETTORIO, VENICE

giuseppe tortato architetti,  
milano  
lead architect: ar. giuseppe tortato,  
principal architect and founder

**Design brief and aim**  
To design an immersive restaurant.

**How this was accomplished**  
Situating in a timeless setting near the central church of San Rocco, the restaurant is a meeting place for Venetians and visitors, alike. The client wished to create a special place to feel good, in contrast to the disposable design of modern times.

The challenge was to create a space that reflected the true soul of Venice, inspiring the architect to design the furniture and lighting fixtures around the choice of colors. Materials were also carefully chosen to create an exclusive, warm, and welcoming environment with skilled craftsmen for the production.



The design develops like metaphysical research with a deep investigation into the human being, starting with the senses, natural materials, and artisanship as research tools. Color becomes an important design element with the blue flooring, red bricks, gray plaster, and black ebony. The client's ten brand locations in Venice, are characterized by particular attention to detail in the food and the spaces where it is prepared and consumed. For this project, the firm handled all aspects of the design, from material selection to designing the furnishings and lighting fixtures and producing them.



Select artisans worked alongside the architect to create timeless pieces. The bar, the centerpiece of the room, is made of pewter and ebony, as the client wished to use materials that lasted long and aged well. It is made through the insertion of two metal bars on the front that record the two greatest historical levels of high water in Venice. It is a trademark conceived by the studio for Majer, starting with the first restaurant in Giudecca and its corporate packaging.

All the furnishings of the two rooms are designed by the principal architect and exclusively made for this restaurant by artisanal producers. An intense focus on detail can be seen in the interlocking joints of the tables, the material palette and colors, and the metal skirting boards and grates evoking the work of Carlo Scarpa.



The environment, including the solid wood furnishings, is illuminated by the warm light of the customized lighting fixtures. Dark shades, verging on black, are used for the built-in furnishings with light oak for the tables and chairs against a stone, brick, and plaster wall background with antique wooden ceiling panels. The blue terracotta flooring recalls the importance of color in rooms and was created by the Fornace De Martino, a historic Salerno company that has been in business for 1200 years.

The minimalist staircase in exposed concrete is the second centerpiece of the restaurant, and appears to be suspended over the blue terracotta floor. It is accentuated by a burnished metal handrail, which is the same finish as the baseboards and window frames, and a handcrafted parapet with intertwined metal strips.