

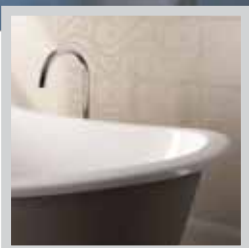
Interiors

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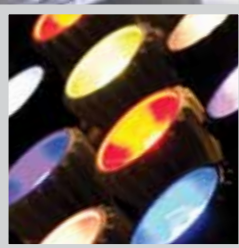
Grand designs

Inside Ritz-Carlton Abu Dhabi



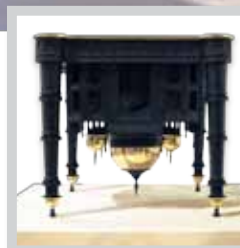
Ceramics showcase

Unicera focus on technology



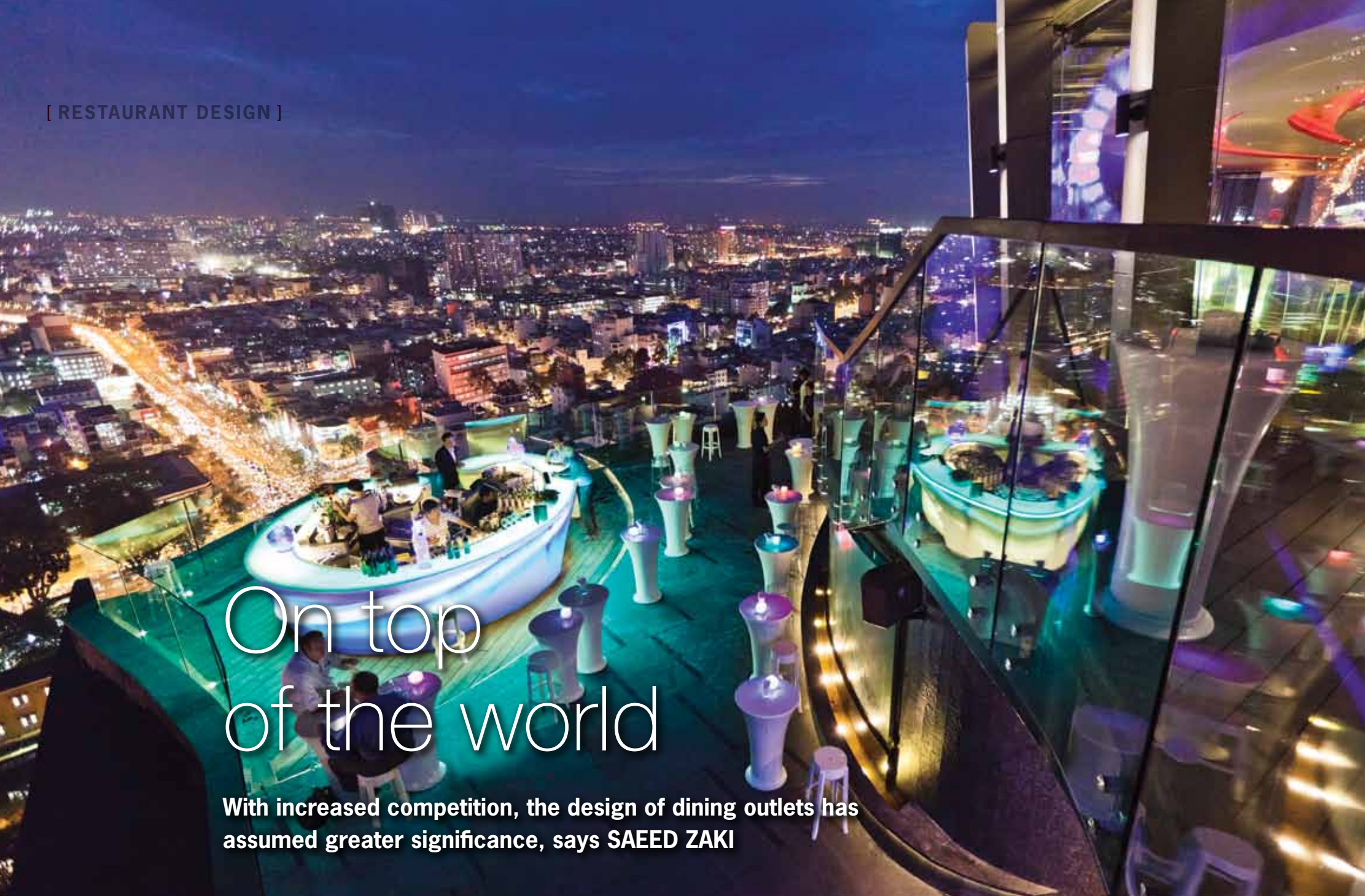
Light fantastic

LEDs are setting trends



Design Days

Finest pieces on display



On top of the world

With increased competition, the design of dining outlets has assumed greater significance, says SAEED ZAKI

The professional interior design of a food and beverage (F&B) outlet, regardless of type, requires careful consideration and meticulous attention to detail. Not just a question of aesthetics, all aspects are included in this regard, with respect to its brand, location, type of cuisine/drinks served and whether or not it is a signature or flagship restaurant, bar, club or other outlet. With the increased competition in the hospitality segment the world over, the design of dining establishments has assumed even greater significance. A restaurant's design can epitomise the brand and make a major difference in its perception, standing, longevity and social success, as well as contribute to the bottom line.

While most hotels carry a typical all-day dining and one or two specialty restaurants, the emerging trend, particularly in Asia, is to create a signature outlet, which is more known for its design and ambiance, rather than the cuisine offered.

Another trend is to create a wining and dining experience on top of the building in question, especially when high-rise. This experience often incorporates an outdoor lounge and/or skybar, as well as an al fresco dining area, providing their diners with a breath-taking view of the city and its urban landscape.

ROOF-TOP VENUES

Creating such high altitude dining experiences represents a major design challenge, as most

existing buildings were not originally designed to include these outlets and their facilities. Often high-rise building rooftops are littered with equipment and mechanical and electrical engineering systems, serving the building. Public accessibility is not intended for these areas and, therefore, access is very limited and layouts are cramped or raw at best.

Conceiving a fine dining outdoor venue on the roof of a building, therefore, requires not simply interior design skills, but also architectural interventions, in order to create an unparalleled experience for the diner. Furthermore, there are considerable concerns to be made for safety issues, in addition to protection from climatic conditions, without compromising the user experience. From a design and



Successful design:
Sirocco Restaurant at
Lebua Hotel in Bangkok

layout point of view, it is most important to create a journey for the user, from start to finish, to generate the desired 'experience'. Right from the point of entry, all the way until they reach the table they will dine at, arrive at the sofa they will lounge on or come face-to-face with the bar they will stand next to or perch beside.

Such experiences can only be conjured up with the aid of careful conceptualisation of the design. The creation of a story that the space narrates, the overall ambience that literally evokes picture frames for the visitors to capture in their minds and with their cameras, should extend to both interior and exterior spaces. Blending indoors and out seamlessly through designing transitional spaces is a key to this, as well as capitalising on the view and incorporating it as a design feature. At no point should the user experience be interrupted throughout the journey, and no detail should be overlooked, as the designed spaces reveal themselves, together with the breath-taking views of the surroundings city, land or ocean scape. Whether a glistening ocean on the horizon, a rushing river into the distance, twinkling city lights and a muted buzz below, integrating the surroundings and the venue can augment the experience and transport guests to an exclusive pedestal. The overall experience should be such that one is tempted to visit the place, time and again,

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[RESTAURANT DESIGN]



Dr Zaki

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to recapture the emotions awakened, when moving through the space.

VARIED PORTFOLIO

dwp (design worldwide partnership) has a vast and varied portfolio of hospitality projects from architecture to interiors. Over the past decade, dwp has been innovating rooftop restaurant and bar design, understanding the requirements and creating a successful design philosophy for rooftop venues. The immense successes of Sirocco Restaurant and Skybar and Breeze at the Lebua Hotel in Bangkok, in the early 2000s, was followed by the equally successful design of the Capital Club in Bahrain and Dubai, Chill Skybar and Restaurant in Ho Chi Minh City and recently with the launch of the already acclaimed Horizon at the Hilton Pattaya, Thailand. As just a sample of dwp's work in this field, this demonstrates that, sometimes, the design alone can carry the success of an F&B outlet.

In all of the above projects, the design approach was to integrate architecture and interior design seamlessly and seemingly effortlessly, to

create award-winning and successful venues. The approach was simple and unlike many signature restaurants seen today, these places created were neither glittered with expensive finishes and furniture, nor were they overly complicated. They were unpretentiously designed around the views from a position on top the world, naturally captured by the space, and were intended to transport the visitor on a journey, as part of the experience. The journey, of course, needs to offer a series of pleasant surprises, which is essential throughout the conception of spaces and leads to a memorable experience. These surprises can be further enhanced through evocative audio, visual and lighting stimuli, for the ideal ambiance, but with uncomplicated finishes and furniture, to minimise distraction of the user and maximize the enjoyment of the experience, which all too frequently is something most rooftop restaurant designs fail to harness. A signature piece or two, such as an outstanding bar feature can speak volumes, rather than adding clutter and confusion, which would tend to be a formula for landmark success.

Novel design: Breeze bar at Lebua Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand

