



# MUTED DECOR

Bernard Khoury Serves  
Up an Ideal Culinary Space

WHILE CREATING A RESTAURANT THAT STANDS OUT MAY BE A CHALLENGE NOWADAYS, CREATING ONE WHERE THE DÉCOR TAKES A STEP BACK GIVING CENTER STAGE TO THE MENU IS AN EVEN MORE DAUNTING TASK. ENTER BERNARD KHOURY WHO IS NO STRANGER TO PRODUCING DESIGNS THAT AMPLIFY CONTEXT AND HIGHLIGHT MAIN FEATURES. HOWEVER, UNLIKE SOME OF BERNARD KHOURY'S MOST MEMORABLE DESIGNS, WHICH EVOKE LEBANON'S TROUBLED PAST THROUGH HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT LOCATIONS OR WAR-TORN BACKGROUNDS, COPLA IS SOMETHING ELSE. YES, THE DESIGNER'S SIGNATURE TOUCHES ARE PRESENT AND THE DÉCOR HAS BEEN REIGNED IN WITHOUT IMPAIRING THE DESIGN OF COURSE, BUT WHAT'S DIFFERENT HERE IS THE CONTEXT; THE CUISINE.

WORDS RAMI SAIDI, PHOTOS © ANTHONY RAHAYEL



“A  
DINING  
SPACE  
MUST  
THEREFORE  
BE  
NOTHING  
MORE  
THAN A  
BACKDROP,  
ALMOST  
MUTE  
AND  
SILENT”

“I no longer tolerate the notion of decorating a restaurant. The act of doing so is a parasitic measure; parasitic in the gustatory sense, which is essentially a restaurant's raison d'être. A dining space must therefore be nothing more than a backdrop, almost mute and silent,” says Bernard Khoury. The result is exactly that. A simple rectangular space makes up the Spanish Bistro's main hall, which is clad from floor to ceiling in gridded orthogonal wood paneling, thus creating a pattern that is pleasing to the eye but never distracting. On either side, glazed surfaces mark the entrance and a mirrored façade overlooking a garden is present on the other side.





The interior seating is lined up against one wall and directly opposite is the bar. In between is an easy passage from one end to another in an unobstructed linear space. Bench-like seating upholstered in black leather appears to be carved into a niche in the wood paneling, vis-à-vis specially designed tables and chairs from DW5. Facing the dining area is a bar that also runs the entire length of the space, at the end of which a spiral staircase leads up to a private table located on an entresol, from which one can view the kitchen.

In typical Bernard Khoury fashion, the space located in the Beirut Central District, has the ability to transform its appearance from bright and serene during the day to intimate and cozy at night allowing for two completely different experiences. Another design staple by the Lebanese designer is the flow of uninterrupted symmetry, which has become something of a rarity these days. For a Michelin star quality restaurant like Copla "Any excess or embellishment would simply be parasitic," states Bernard Khoury; and we at Curve won't argue with that.

