

Rack to the Future

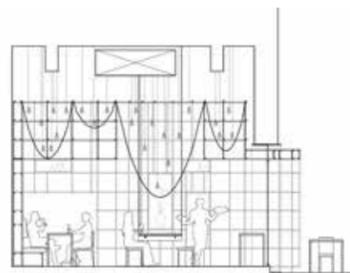
On a mission to modernise the traditional Chinese noodle restaurant, Lukstudio has combined tradition and originality to create a contemporary design for the interior and exterior of Changsha's The Noodle Rack, including its bespoke centrepiece and namesake.

Noodle soup is a common street food all over China. While most of these noodle eateries spend tremendous effort to win customers over with taste, some have started to add attractive store design to their branding recipe. A good example is LongXiaoBao, a newcomer which set foot in Changsha with an ambition to spread the local ShaoYang style rice noodle to the rest of China. Commissioned to conceive a contemporary identity for its first restaurant, Lukstudio integrated the tradition of noodle making into the spatial design by reinterpreting a noodle rack.

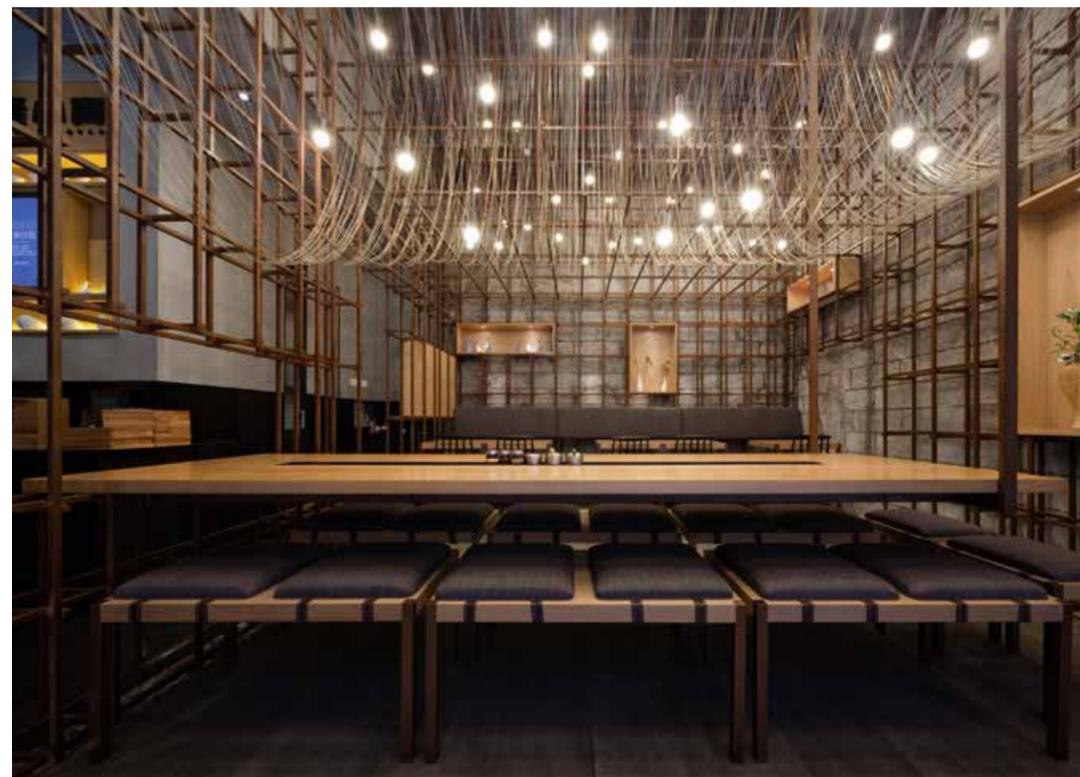
Nestled along an outdoor shopping promenade nearby the Xiangjiang River, the 50sqm noodle restaurant exudes a calm yet mysterious presence with its bamboo-cast concrete storefront. Two rustic steel boxes penetrate through the solemn exterior: the taller one clad with rusted steel panels and its shorter neighbour built like a metal scaffold. These three elements together orchestrate a journey of discovery, illuminated by Tons exterior strip lights and ODL-003P in-ground luminaires.

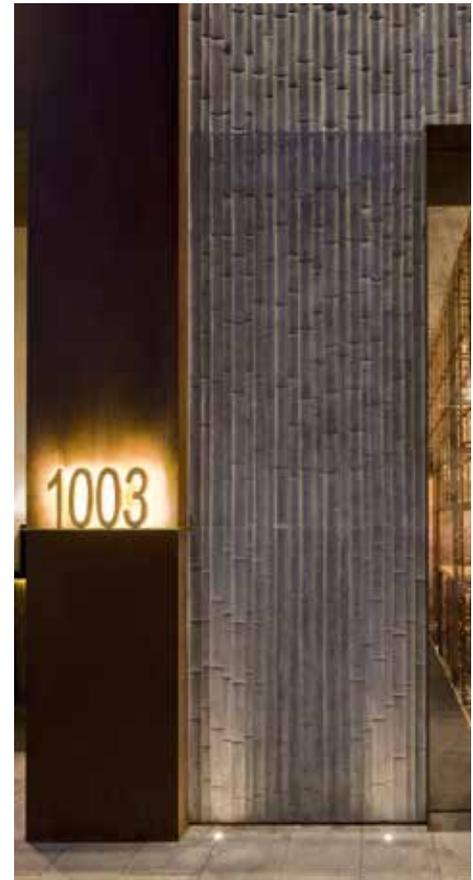
Walking past the entry box, customers are greeted by a composed counter design lined with the bamboo mold used for casting the exteriors.

Continuing on towards the halo surrounding the grid structure, the interior layers start to reveal themselves. Firstly, the original wall has been stripped down to its structural blocks to resonate with the rustic metal grid; secondly, wooden boxes have been carefully placed within the rack to showcase selected porcelains, illuminated by Tons DA-501AD display case luminaires. Finally, a series of metal wires are draped across the dining room to create the focal lighting feature created by 85 custom-made pendants. Included in each luminaire's design, the bespoke metal casing was made to hide the upper plastic part of the LED dimmable lamps. These lamps were ordered directly from the factory by the contractor according to the specifications in size, wattage (7W), and 2,700K colour temper-



Pics: Courtesy of Peter Dixie for LOTAN Architectural Photography





Above The restaurant's bamboo-cast concrete storefront is washed with a warm glow by Tons exterior LED strip lights and ODL-003P in-ground luminaires. Left Morning bamboo table lamps from Sozen provide a gentle contrast with the interior's rustic concrete walls.



ature. Balancing the rustic interiors, these reflective strands create a poetic notion of dining under a noodle rack.

Additional decorative elements include jiu wall lamps from Bentu, used to create atmosphere at the restaurant's counter and Morning bamboo table lamps from Sozen, providing warmth in the concrete space.

Playing with the duality between rustic and refined, eastern tradition and western representation, Lukstudio has introduced a crossover between fast food chain and upscale diner. The Noodle Rack differentiates itself from the stigma of kitsch fast food 'hole in the wall' available on every street of China. It demonstrates how Chinese eateries have the potential to be reborn into hip gathering spots comparable to the new trend of cafés.

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PROJECT DETAILS

The Noodle Rack, Changsha, China

Client: LongXiaoBao

Architects: Lukstudio

Design Team: Christina Luk, Alba Beroiz Blazquez, Cai Jin Hong, Pao Yee Lim

Lighting Suppliers: Tons, Bentu, Sozen