

hot right now **style**



No white tablecloths... (clockwise from main) Rachel Luchetti decorated the Cut; Sake; the Argyle; and Lo-Fi. Photo: Steven Siewert



Rachel Luchetti

Feast on these designs

From meat-cleaver door handles to rainbow-hued chairs, this team is reshaping restaurants, writes **Amy Cooper**.

Rachel Luchetti's spaces are a backdrop for celebrities at play. Mark Wahlberg, Lady Gaga and John Travolta are among the many famous visitors to the hip Sydney restaurants that bear the 30-year-old interior designer's signature.

Critics love her work, too; last week, Luchetti and her business partner, Stuart Krelle, won the Interior Design Excellence Awards (IDEA) people's choice prize for venues such as one-hatted Sake Restaurant & Bar, its six-week-old sister restaurant, the Cut Bar & Grill, and Miguel Maestre's just-opened tapas spot, Bazar, in the Argyle hotel.

But no matter how flash the venue, Luchetti always approaches the project with the down-to-earth eye of a waitress.

"I was a waitress at Establishment's Sushi e while studying interior design at uni," she says. "I loved the job because I love food - especially Japanese - and it gave me an understanding of how hospitality spaces work. They're complicated, with multiple technical demands. They're really hard-working spaces."

When Luchetti and Krelle started their interior design firm, Luchetti Krelle, nearly three years ago, both were set on specialising in hospitality. Krelle was the mastermind behind the lavish, Versailles-style interior of Oxford Street nightclub De Nom and Luchetti had been cutting her design teeth at architecture firm PVH.

Luchetti says: "We felt that in Sydney, fine dining was so often like eating in a boardroom - the white tablecloths and the really stuffy atmosphere. People want to go out and have a complete experience. It's not just about the food, even when the food is amazing. It's the theatre of the whole thing."

The duo had a chance to realise this vision with their first major job: the

interior design for Sake Restaurant & Bar, in The Rocks. The challenge was to reflect chef Shaun Presland's fusion of ancient Japanese and contemporary Australian cuisine within the confines of a heritage sandstone building. It took a year of "working day and night" but Luchetti Krelle pulled it off beautifully. "Everything is custom-made, with Japanese joinery and integrity and honesty that mirrors the food," Luchetti says.

Sake scored Luchetti Krelle the emerging interior design practice award at the 2010 Australian Interior Design Awards. The judges commended the firm's "new and fresh approach encapsulating a spirit of youthfulness and fun".

More jobs followed. If it was new and hot, it carried the Luchetti Krelle name: Bootleg bar in Potts Point, the pop-up King's Vault bar and edgy Taylor Square bar Lo-Fi.

When Sake's owner, John Szangolies, hired Luchetti Krelle again this year for his new New York-style steak restaurant, the Cut, the result was a playful, chic balance of "glamorous and rustic", filled with delightful details such as handmade chopping boards as tabletops, a Driza-Bone lampshade and meat cleavers wedged into the toilet cubicle doors.

While working on the Cut, Luchetti also refreshed the interior of Szangolies's nearby hotel, the Argyle, with an *Alice in Wonderland* confection of colourful chairs and white tables and has been flying up to Brisbane to work on a new Sake (opening next month). Then there's the Via Del Corso Pasticceria e Caffè in the new Westfield Sydney and Maestre's eagerly awaited Bazar.

"Luchetti Krelle clearly have fun with what they do," says the assistant editor of *Indesign* magazine, Mandi Keighran. "It results in spaces with a unique character and sense of spontaneity... It's an attitude that's going to get them noticed."

'Luchetti Krelle clearly have fun with what they do.' Mandi Keighran, *Indesign*



Time for a facelift?



Does your bathroom need a makeover in time for Christmas? At Splash we make bathroomware shopping simple and easy. Come into our new Alexandria showroom - you'll notice the value, the quality and the expertise of our helpful staff. Smiles guaranteed.

**Splash** bathroomware

Sydney Showroom Level 1, 69 O'Riordan St, Alexandria (opp. Domayne) Open 7 days. M-F 9-5 Sat/Sun 10-5  
Plenty of parking on site T: 8660 1744 Buy online: splashbathroomware.com.au



ORIENT HOUSE

CONTAINERS FROM AFRICA & CHINA - JUST UNPACKED

Australia's leading source of antique Chinese furniture, African and South East Asian decorative pieces

45 Bridge Road, Glebe Ph (02) 9660 3895 Open 9 - 5 Mon - Fri 10 - 5 Sat & Sun

www.orienthouse.net.au

