



Deliciously diminutive

The Noodle Rack may be compact, but it represents big ambitions on the part of owners LongXiaoBao, who aim to bring their signature noodle dish to the rest of China

From left
Set against the rustic interiors, reflective strands of lighting create the poetic notion of dining under a noodle rack

Inside, the original wall has been stripped down to its structural blocks, while wooden boxes are set within the metal grid to showcase porcelainware

Located along an outdoor shopping promenade near the Xiangjiang River, the Noodle Rack's intriguing exterior comprises a bamboo-cast concrete storefront and two rustic steel 'boxes'

Sited along an outdoor shopping promenade near the Xiangjiang River, the 50 sq-m noodle joint projects a calm, intriguing presence with its bamboo-cast concrete storefront. Two rustic steel boxes penetrate through the solemn exterior: the taller one is clad with rusted steel panels, while its shorter neighbour is built like a metal scaffold. These three elements together orchestrate the beginning of a journey of discovery.

Inside, as one proceeds towards the halo surrounding the internal grid structure, the interior layers begin revealing themselves. Firstly, the original wall is stripped down to its structural blocks to resonate with the rustic metal grid. Secondly, wooden boxes are carefully placed

within the rack to showcase porcelainware. Finally, a series of metal wires are draped across the dining room to create the lighting feature with hanging bulbs.

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

Playing with the duality between rustic and refined, eastern tradition and western representation, Lukstudio has crafted a crossover between a fastfood chain and an upscale diner. The Noodle Rack demonstrates how Chinese eateries have the potential to be reborn as cool gathering spots, comparable to the new trend of hipster cafés. ●



TEXT:
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PHOTOGRAPHY:
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Noodle soup is a common street food in China, served at *dai pai dongs*, 'hole in the wall' eateries, hawker stalls and even upmarket restaurants. Each vendor will have their own special recipe to set their offering apart from their competitors, and in line with this move to win the hearts and tastebuds of customers, increasing importance is being placed on venue design.

In Changsha, the capital of central China's Hunan province, newcomer LongXiaoBao has lofty ambitions to bring the local Shao Yang-style rice noodle to the rest of the country. A large city with a history dating back to the Zhou dynasty

(1046-256 BC), Changsha is known for its rare collection of excavated Western Han dynasty tombs, known as the Mawangdui. Fittingly, Shanghai-based practice Lukstudio draws upon history and heritage in its design for The Noodle Rack, LongXiaoBao's first restaurant.

In crafting the venue's contemporary identity – encompassing storefront design, interiors, custom furniture and lighting design – Lukstudio founder Christina Luk and her team integrated the tradition of noodle-making into the spatial design by reinterpreting the rack on which noodles are placed to dry.

THE NOODLE RACK
Location: Changsha, China
Net area: 50 sq-m
Project team: Christina Luk, Alba Beroiz Blazquez, Cai Jin Hong, Pao Yee Lim
General contractor:
Shanghai MaiChang Construction Project