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HOMIES

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REINVENTING A CLASSIC

Paper Moon restaurant, just steps away from the fashion hub that is Via Monte Napoleone, is a revered institution among fashionistas and creative professionals. Now the renowned brand, which has established outposts in cities ranging from Hong Kong to Dubai, has doubled down on Milan, opening a second restaurant, Paper Moon Giardino at 12 Via Bagutta.

The addition of the word giardino, Italian for garden, is fitting, given the restaurant's picturesque courtyard. Hong Kong-based firm AB Concept was commissioned to design the restaurant, which is destined to become as iconic as the original.

"Paper Moon has been around for almost three decades and everyone in Milan knows about it," says Ed Ng, one of the founders of AB Concept. "They are famous for their hearty food and cosy atmosphere. Everyone has a certain image when they think of Paper Moon and that posed a challenge for us in the beginning. However, the owners, Stefania and Claudio, told us they wanted the new restaurant to take the Paper Moon brand to a new level while retaining its subtle characteristics—the friendly service, and food that is not fancy but uses the best ingredients."

The restaurant is housed in a 200-year-old villa within Palazzo Reina that was formerly the home of the noble Luigi Bolis Gualdo. "The building, however beautiful, also posed a slight worry to the owners in the beginning because—and this is very Milanese in



thinking—they were concerned that it looked too palatial, too showy," says Ng.

The result is decor that looks contemporary but friendly, luxurious but not intimidating—aspects that the team also derived from the restaurant's ethos for its food.

The layout of the restaurant reflects its former life as a luxury residence, with the main areas named after the original rooms—the grand salon, parlour, wine library and, of course, the giardino. AB Concept came up with a different look for each area while sticking to an overall palette of cream and earthy tones. The neutral colour scheme pairs well with the terrazzo tile flooring as well as the restored arched doorways, ultra-high ceilings and original frescoes.

An unexpected bonus, says Ng, is that one of the neighbouring buildings is positioned just right. "We get this softly diffused sunlight throughout the day, which really enhances the space and makes it comfortable," he says.

While the design work respects the traditional Milanese preference for subtlety and quiet refinement, Ng didn't forget the restaurant's chic clientele. "I added a lot of mirrors because we are, after all, in Milan and in the heart of the fashion district—inevitably it will become a place to see and be seen. That was a no-brainer," he says." papermoonrestaurants.com; abconcept.net