

Metal Architecture

Posted March 3, 2015

Cross-Pollination Yields New Expression for Metal Architecture

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Metal in architecture is ubiquitous, and with good reason. Strength, durability, cost-effectiveness and beauty are just a few of the qualities that so often lead designers to work with metal products and systems.

Let's add another to the list: inspiration.

In recent years, new work by many architects and interior designers has reinforced the public's admiration for iron, chrome, copper and especially steel. Working with these materials—whether as structural elements or as finishes, or both—never fails to stimulate new ideas and approaches. This makes our job as architects easier and more enjoyable by constantly opening up new possibilities inspired by previous projects and adapting them for application to others. In many cases, we can even transplant these metal elements from one building type to others, creating a kind of cross-pollination process that expands the use of metal architecture.

Examples are everywhere. One recent retail and hospitality project for a Spanish gourmet eatery and food store in Princeton, N.J., offers a valuable lesson. The owners of the venue had already operated a successful business of the same name, *Despaña*, in New York City's fashionable Soho neighborhood before they planned to open a new store. They wanted the new site to echo the feel of the original, and both locations were former industrial spaces. Yet, the Soho shop occupies a space dating back to the 19th century, while the new space, on Princeton's popular main drag, Nassau Street, was built in the 1980s.

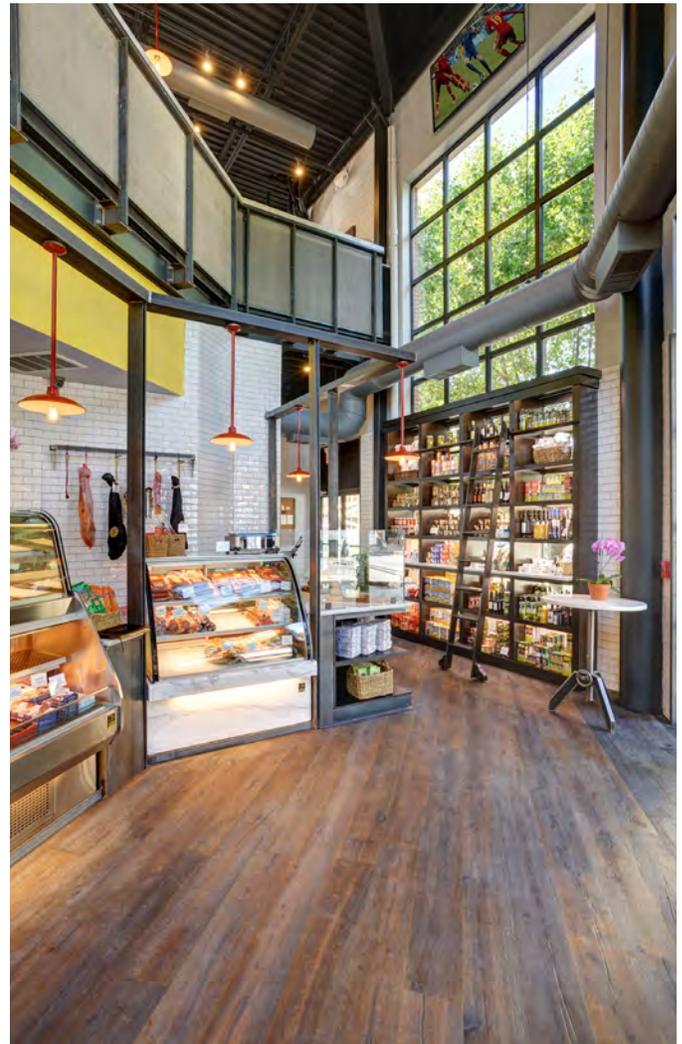
EXPOSED STRUCTURE AND METAL

Architects and interior designers at Princeton-based Joshua Zinder Architecture + Design conceived of utilizing as many of the existing building's raw elements as possible by exposing previously hidden elements, which the owners agreed would be ideal. First, contractors would rip out the hung ceiling and existing sheet rock to expose not only the structural brick, but also the steel deck and structure, heavy joints connecting the brick and steel, and a shelf channel supporting the roof.

The exposed metal structure at *Despaña* Princeton stoked our desire as designers to create a holistic metal architecture design—the creation of a complete system of exposed metal elements, from structural frame to salt shakers. The structural elements helped us to shape the experience of the space for the occupants, and the

raw steel became the inspiration for the interior finish selections. The new hospitality fitout incorporated metal railings and panels, steel counters, and a range of metal components and hardware. The finish on much of the existing steel was blasted or painted in key places to match the modern, blackened steel finish; the rest was left raw. Strategically placed chrome accents catch the light pouring in through the massive metal-framed windows of the building's frontage.

The team at JZA+D also custom-designed a new family of tables from stone, wood—and of course, raw exposed steel—including adjustable-height tables that quickly transition from counter service to table service. The new furnishings perfectly complement the architectural experience and heighten the raw industrial feel that the restaurant owners envisioned.



Despaña in Princeton, NJ

*Despaña in Princeton, NJ*

RESIDENTIAL FEEL

The key design challenge for a hospitality project like Despaña Princeton is to make the patron experience intimate and personal. To that end, the incorporation of residential detailing, wood accents and wood floors, and bold colors to create warm contrasts to the steel went a long way toward softening the industrial aesthetic.

But in many ways, the industrial look has its own personalizing aspect, creating a memorable space as much as anything else. The exposed metals and custom furnishings offer the patrons a tactile experience as they come into direct contact with the architecture itself, not just the décor.

The lessons learned from designing Despaña Princeton have broadened our firm's approach to new projects, adding important new tools and expanding our design palette. For example, JZA+D is now designing a new juice bar, and the project will take the custom-designed tables one step further. At the same time, JZA+D is completing a new, Asian-themed food court for Las Vegas Sands, which includes the blackened-steel finishes that generated such immediacy and intimacy in the Spanish eatery's interior. In fact, the design team sees an international trend toward the use of blackened and bronzed steel finishes, with several hospitality clients now requesting them.

Underlying the trend is the fact that patrons of hospitality and retail establishments prefer to feel connect-

materials have proven to successfully deliver this connection.

This fact has inspired work in other building types developed by JZA+D. The firm's office interiors work for new corporate headquarters and workspaces, for example, draw on these elements. This shows the power of cross-pollination: The new office interiors incorporate successful elements from hospitality projects that create more enjoyable lobbies, conference rooms and even huddle spaces the areas for casual interaction and collaboration among coworkers. Intimacy, immediacy and connection to built environment make these spaces more vital-and metal makes the difference. Beyond just the finishes themselves, metal panel systems and metal-and-glass storefront systems can be adapted to interiors for use as partitions in office settings to increase light permeance and aid in transparency.

It's a blessing that an architecture-and-interiors firm can have a project portfolio with such a wide variety of sectors and building types. Not only does this make a design firm flexible and nimble, but it also creates opportunities for the cross-pollination of metal architecture.

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