

SYBARITE



YEN

High-quality restaurants in a building with such high ceilings are a rarity. We had seven metres to play with which allows greater freedom if a few challenges.



Client

Yen

Restaurants

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Brief

A very simple brief to create a traditional Japanese soba restaurant in London with a western twist.

The first idea was to create a bamboo forest – using the timber craft and screens that you see in traditional Japanese architecture and elevating it, as a play on a tree-scape. We did a model of our own kind of walk-through. From all the structural columns we built up this structural language – a series of rafts and canopies in the ceilings – above that we stained the timbers in five different colours to create a depth and layering, above that we painted the ceiling in a dark chocolate brown.

For the walls we referenced traditional Japanese paper screens, layering them using a handmade Japanese paper and that was backlit with LED lights.

It immediately set this stage for the dining experience. Then it was simply about putting the right things in the right places, the open kitchen, the private living room under the mezzanine, then creating this journey from the restaurant to the bar with these dark corridors and a very ornate staircase which is crafted to create this transitional process between the bar and the dining area.

The result was spaces that emphasised verticality and light, a coherence of Japanese materiality, design cues and construction techniques, and a "tree canopy", inspired by bamboo forests. The use of Japanese maple wood, in various thicknesses and tones, created

a play of light and shadow for depth and intimacy contrasting with the theatre of the open kitchen. The lightweight timber staircase added to the drama on entrance before guests are immersed in an authentic Japanese experience.

