



Flying Fish

Arthouse Architecture's Brendon Monk on hospitality design at Sachi Sushi. Photos: John-Paul Pochin.

Now part of Nelson's CBD, New St was once a residential area. Only a few old houses remain, all of which are now used for commercial purposes. One of these is Number 19: built in the 50s it had been the home of an appliance repair shop for the past 25 years.

The challenge was to breathe new life into this tired little art deco building and convert it into a traditional Japanese sushi and seafood restaurant. The new owners wanted to provide an authentic Japanese dining experience so the makeover needed to support this aim on a limited budget. The approach taken was to work within the existing building envelope, keep the services in their original locations, but to otherwise gut the interior.

In Japan, eating establishments are traditionally non-descript, almost hidden, at their street frontage. For this reason a recessive palette has been used for the

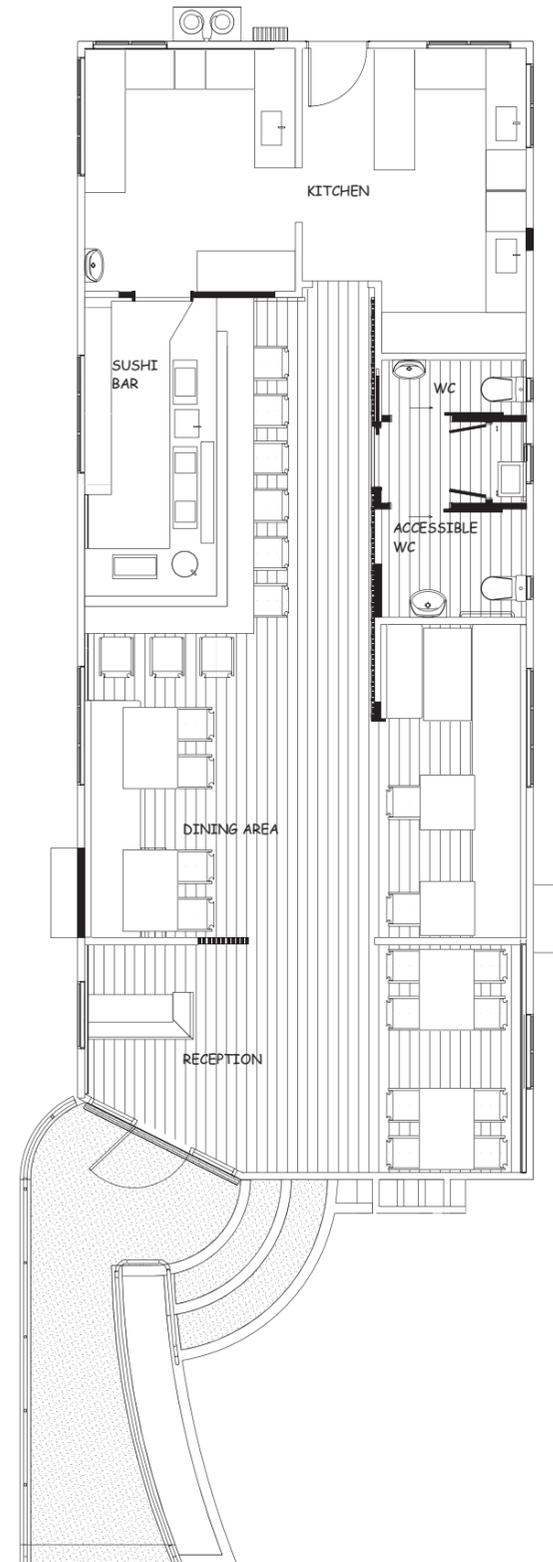
exterior. Because this building stands alone, however, and also required an access ramp, it was necessary to make more of its street presence. The curved ramp, subtle lighting and spare but stylish exterior graphic acknowledge the building's art deco style and provide a welcome entrance.

Once inside, a formal but relaxed scene is set. Timber slats are used to separate the reception from the main dining area, allowing visitors a glimpse in without impinging on the privacy of other diners. Apart from keeping the original timber floor, all the surfaces are new. A combination of dressed timber finishes, shoji screens and subtly textured paint surfaces complemented by discreet LED lighting creates a quiet, relaxed ambience. Particular care has been taken to integrate services and to align trim, lighting and built-in joinery.

The sushi bar is modelled on a counter in an old Tokyo restaurant and allows diners to be part of the food preparation experience. The direct lighting and plain surfaces mean that the food and its preparation takes centre stage.

The soft ochre walls, deep brown upholstery, richly coloured timbers, black and terracotta joinery units, and shoji screens glow under the black ceiling, creating a completely interior environment. Original windows are concealed behind sliding screens meaning they can still be used for ventilation.

It has not taken long for Sachi to gain a reputation as one of Nelson's preferred Japanese dining venues. While the quality of its food must surely be a major factor in this success, the owners believe that the quality of the design plays an important part in the smooth operation and customer enjoyment of the restaurant.



Selected credits

Client Angela and Tosh Kondo
Architect Arthouse Architecture
Project manager Arthouse Architecture
Fit-out contractor A J Brown Building
Window/door Joinery Ruby Bay Joinery
Graphic design visuals Arthouse Architecture
Window Treatments Ruby Bay Joinery
Paint Resene
Lighting Weka Electronics
Signage Arthouse Architecture Ltd
Interior joinery Brendon Monk

Sachi Sushi, designed by Arthouse Architecture, won an interior architecture award at the recent Nelson Marlborough NZIA regional architecture awards. The sushi preparation bar is based on a counter in a restaurant in an old Tokyo restaurant. Soft ochre walls and richly coloured timber add to a formal yet relaxed atmosphere.