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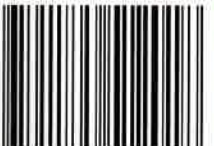
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john mills architects



SENSE OF PLACE

Outdoor connections, honest materials, and an eclectic array of furnishings and fine art make visitors to the reinvented Southern Cross feel welcome

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Perhaps the two most important goals of a hospitality fit-out are to attract patrons in the first place and then encourage them to return. For the refit of an iconic, long-standing hostelry, this meant ensuring past clientele responded to the fresh design, newcomers took interest, and everyone felt immediately at home.

Making the clientele, new and old, feel at home was central to the agenda when architects John Mills, James Warren and graduate Emily Reich revamped the historic Southern Cross Hotel in downtown Wellington. Reich and Mills largely worked on the exterior of the

venue, while Warren focused on the interior and the architecture. Mills says that the fit-out is intended to stimulate people visually, and at the same time make them feel connected.

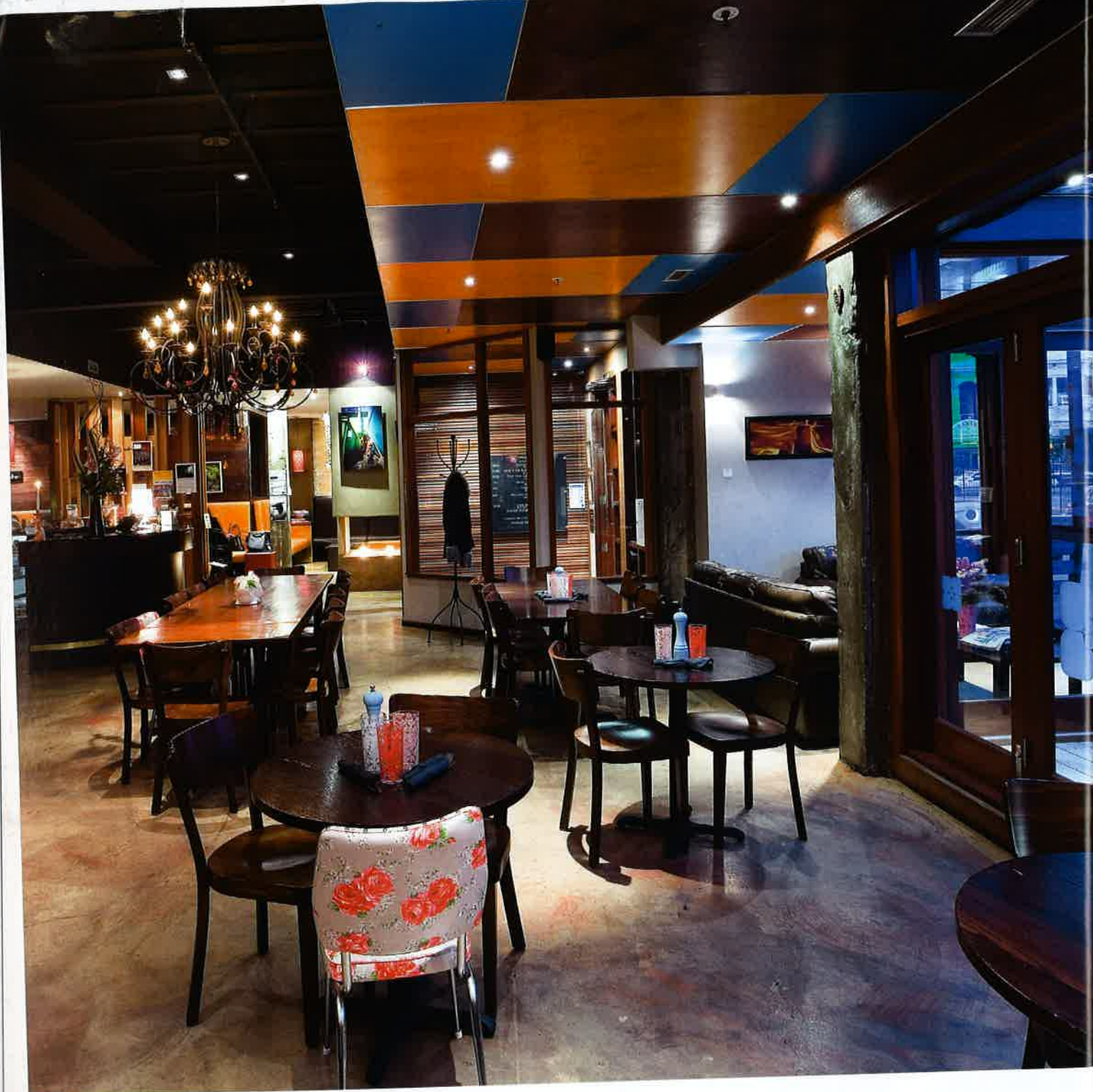
"We created an eclectic, vibrant set of spaces that are indicative of the variety and exuberance of the city beyond the hotel's front door," says Mills. "The Southern Cross has been in existence for nearly a hundred years and locals from all walks of life patronise the bar – from artists and students to office workers."

In structural terms, the refit included a new timber

Below John Mills Architects gave Wellington's Southern Cross Hotel a new street presence together with a comprehensively revamped interior. The frontage links the bar to the street via a connecting patio. Leaf sculptures over the entrance hint at the emphasis on local artworks found throughout.

Right The hotel's signage combines the Southern Cross constellation with the iconic Pacific frangipani flower.





entranceway and frontage that opens up the hotel to the street. Other elements included were a feature ceiling, a realignment of interior spaces, the introduction of new toilets and a completely new garden area at the rear of the hotel.

The architects looked for points of commonality that would connect with the venue's diverse patronage.

"One thing that Wellingtonians love is indoor-outdoor flow, and this is integral to the Southern Cross ambience," says Warren. "Completely reinventing the front of the hostelry was central to this. Now wood doors open onto a small patio that brings a direct connection to the street. The extensive glazing also allows daylight

to flood directly into the interior."

Two metal sculptures, each in the shape of a leaf, over the entrance reinforce the outdoor theme and serve as a gentle reminder of the new garden bar, set to the rear.

"An outdoor fireplace, mature trees and the introduction of large boulders in the garden bar all add to this connection with nature," says Reich. "Much of this area is covered, and the addition of a roaring fire makes it a welcoming spot all year round."

The journey from front door to garden bar is a tapestry of texture, colour, form and diverse seating options.

"We wanted to create interiors with the comfort and

Above Like much of the interior, the hand-painted concrete floors reflect a personal touch. Everything from the table seating to the ceiling treatments reflects an eclectic design agenda.

Above right An original brass counter surround was retained and rejuvenated. Brass is also found in touches on the front door, and on the outdoor seating in the garden bar.



detail that a private house might have," says Warren. "The central space that greets visitors, for example, has a variety of chairs, a large feature ceiling representing traditional Pacific woven ceilings, and a chandelier hanging alongside this. Everywhere you look something different catches the eye."

As you would expect, creating harmony from these disparate elements wasn't easy. However, by selecting simple, honest materials, and following a practical and painstaking methodology, a cohesive result was attained.

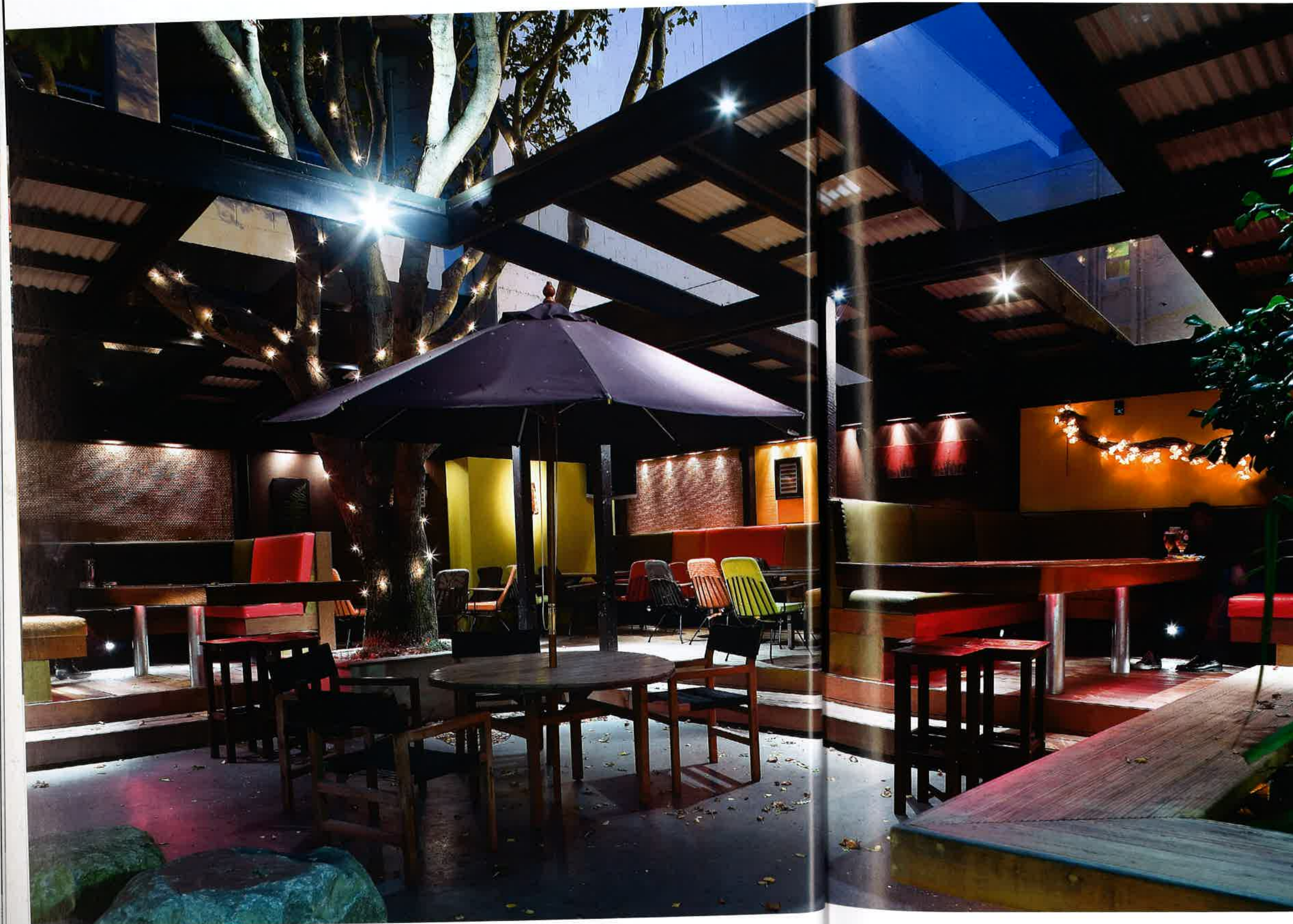
"Basic materials such as brass, timber, vinyl and rock predominate in the fit-out. These down-to-earth

materials make patrons feel at ease, and are also low maintenance," says Warren. "Colour also links the interiors – subtle colour accents wash through the spaces, with reds, oranges, and greens used extensively."

Today, the completely refurbished venue really is all things to all Wellingtonians, says John Mills.

"Artworks on most walls, generous outdoor spaces, fireplaces, café-type seating and private niche spaces all offer something different," he says. "Given the hotel's current patronage – from the old-timers, to the fresh young things – the Southern Cross' iconic reputation is only likely to gain momentum over the coming years."

Below The partially enclosed garden bar makes the most of sun and shade. In the evening, spotlighting highlights the woven texture of the walls.



Location Southern Cross Tavern, Wellington
Architect James Warren, John Mills, Emily Reich, John Mills Architects
Interior decoration Liz Clarke
Project manager Gary Clarke
Exterior builder Dallas Brown
Interior builder Sam Janes
Engineer, fire engineer Spencer Holmes
Branding DNA
Joinery Wood Joinery Company
Electrical Topline Electrical
Sound engineer Bel Acoustic Consulting
Sound installation Buzz Audio
Audio Automated Music Systems
Lighting Riel Lighting Wholesalers
Hardware Sopers
Awnings Meredith Webster
Fireplaces Paragon Fireplace Specialists
Rocks Leon Kiel
Paint Resene
Painter S Gerrie Decorators
Concrete finishing Donny Clark
Entry sculpture John Calvert
Booth seating Geoff Fiebig
Refrigerators Harbour City Refrigeration
Heating and ventilation Envirogroup

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