

## DESIGN AND BUILD



Artwork at the rooftop bar of The Governor, North Ryde



The Governor's rooftop bar

Photo credit: Kai Leishman

# CHOOSE YOUR OWN *Adventure*

MOMENTO HOSPITALITY HAS BROUGHT A WORLD-CLASS DRINKING AND DINING VENUE TO ONE OF SYDNEY'S FASTEST GROWING AREAS, AS VANESSA CAVASINNI REPORTS.

**W**ith a focus on north-west Sydney, the directors of Momento Hospitality have been keeping an eye on Macquarie Park for quite a while – a decade in fact. The suburb has grown exponentially in the last 15 years, home to one of the most significant corporate business parks in the country – housing some of Australia's biggest businesses – as well as a major shopping centre, university and attached hospital. The area is now also starting to see an influx of residents on its periphery. All of these groups combined have made it an attractive area for the pub group, and in early 2017, it finally found the right location for the suburb's first pub offering.

"We like the area and we think it has good demographics similar to what we've done before with Bella Vista Hotel. So we looked there for quite a while and then we found a site which

was an old office block, and it worked out perfectly," explains CEO Marcello Colosimo.

### DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Due to the variety of amenities within the area, there are plenty of different demographics to cater to – and very few F&B offerings available to the local population.

"It's a pretty large, pretty substantial business park, with a lot of residents moving into the area. You've got the university there, you've got the hospital there. There's a lot of development, so there's quite a bit of activity and different markets. From our point of view, we like the fact that there was a more mature crowd as well that was probably under-represented by food and beverage," states Colosimo.

To create a single venue that would appeal to so many different people – from corporate workers, to university students and staff, to

construction teams and families – Momento Hospitality engaged Archebiosis Architects to help create a pub that would have broad appeal without being generic.

In order to create such a venue, director Edith Clark and her team began some pretty thorough research that would capture the local market.

With no similar F&B offerings in the area, the fundamental part of the brief was to ensure that The Governor would be a venue that locals would treat as a must-visit.

"We had to make it a destination that people would come to, as there aren't many venues in the area and residents aren't used to looking locally to go out for a pub meal or a drink after work – they tend to hop on the train and leave. So we had to make sure it was attractive enough to make them stay," states Clark.

The first thing the Archebiosis Architects team did was look into the future development





The ground floor bistro area



The ground floor locals bar area

of the area. The master plans for the suburb were sought from Ryde Council to see what the area would look like long term. In many ways it was similar to North Sydney's corporate atmosphere, with the addition of a residential component. The team was then able to analyse offerings in North Sydney to see what attracted the locals there.

## INTIMATE BUT SOCIAL

With the two main spaces of The Governor being the ground floor offering and the rooftop bar, Momento's initial brief was a basic one.

"It was twofold. The rooftop bar was to be an area that people felt that they didn't have to go into the city to find – so it's an option that satisfies the needs of the locals. The ground floor was all about intimate areas while also creating atmosphere. The idea of those spaces is to create a certain ambience when it's combined with the lighting and the decor. And then the actual layout, or flow of the premises creates quite a comfortable feeling," suggests Colosimo.

With so many different markets to target, it was important that there was a variety of different spaces and offerings within the venue. The absolutely critical component of the design was to be able to infuse the venue with as much intimacy as possible.

"There's a lot of different areas – areas where two people can go and feel comfortable, or 100 people can go and feel comfortable. So it's really

broken up into small parts," explains Colosimo.

"Aesthetically, intimacy is really where I think it comes through – with the idea of having your own private areas but still being social."

To create an atmosphere of private, friendly spaces, everyone involved in the project took trips to the city that does those kinds of spaces best.

"We did some trips to Melbourne to do some research into how to successfully create various atmospheres within pubs, as they do that quite well down in Melbourne – better than we do it in Sydney. Then we applied those principles to what Sydneysiders might like," states Clark.

Clark has nothing but praise for Momento Hospitality's directors, stating that they were bold in their decision-making for The Governor.

"I love the fact that these guys weren't afraid of small spaces, because lots of publicans shy away from them as they're not as easy from an operational point of view."

## A CUSTOMISED EXPERIENCE

With so many different offerings, The Governor is like a dozen venues in one, where you can have a different experience every time you visit.

On the ground floor, you first walk into a lobby space more reminiscent of an accommodation hotel than a local pub. From this entry point, you can veer off to the right into the 'Locals Bar', the more masculine-looking public bar. The design of the space creates a slightly darker, more moody



## LIGHTING IS KEY

On the ground floor, where texture makes the space so vibrant, Clark says lighting was crucial in ensuring that the variety of textures were highlighted, and in creating the mood of intimacy.

"The lighting helps with that a lot. The lighting was significant in terms of the investment in it and the amount of effort that went into it."



*“I love the fact that these guys weren’t afraid of small spaces, because lots of publicans shy away from them as they’re not as easy from an operational point of view.” Edith Clark, Archebiosis Architects*

ambience, with a timber-cladded bar front stained black and a marble bar top, black and white mosaic tiling, dark walls and plenty of dark steel joinery to create private areas within the public bar. There is also fixed furniture and high-tables with leather-upholstered seating to reinforce the masculine look.

To the left of the foyer is the light and breezy bistro dining area. This area interplays feminine and masculine components to create a relaxed space for all. The space is all about a variety of textures. Blond timber cladding is used on the walls and on the bar front, in different patterns, while light tiles are used on the floor and columns of the space. Other walls make a feature out of exposed brick. Furniture is a mixture of blond timber tables and chairs, and upholstered booths in pastels. Out the back is a courtyard for those who prefer some sunshine.

Between the two spaces is what is known colloquially as the ‘intimate bar’: a more elegant space with train carriage booths that essentially create private dining areas for groups. There is also a fireplace and piano area, to cap off the more refined cocktail experience.

In all of the ground floor spaces, greenery is present to create an oasis from the corporate environment of the suburb.

“There’s elements of greenery in most of the spaces, because the suburb lacks it so much. We really wanted people to step into the space and forget that they are in Macquarie Park,” states Clark.

There are two floors above the ground floor that are currently unused, but a stairwell gives direct access to the rooftop above. Melbourne graffiti artists 90 Degrees were commissioned to cover the stairwell in graffiti pieces that give it a laneway vibe, but uses imagery connected to the history of the area.

On the rooftop – named Ess – the vibe is much more relaxed and casual than downstairs. With views of the surrounding area, a Japanese-focused menu, 40 beer taps and a cracking cocktail menu, Ess is the spot for an afternoon or night out, without having to venture into the city or further afield.

The décor is a mixture of being hip and relaxed. The highlight of the space is the oval bar located in the centre of an impressive steel framed, Asian-inspired structure with exposed beams and suspended lighting. It also has some of the homely feel of the downstairs courtyard, with timber and exposed brickwork finishes, garden walls and retractable awnings.

Having been open only a month, Colosimo is overjoyed with the way locals have taken ownership of The Governor and Ess, with feedback being exceedingly positive.

“Everyone is loving it. They’ve been watching it for a long time and now they don’t have to travel, so they can fulfil their needs without having to go into the city or into other areas.”

The consensus is that it’s about time this world-class business park had a food and beverage option of the same quality. **AH**



Greenery features throughout



The courtyard area



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