



Libertine

Opulence was key for Brisbane architect Angela Layton of Arkhefield when she converted a heritage building into a French-Vietname-inspired restaurant

“**L**ibertine is situated in The Barracks development at Petrie Terrace in a heritage-listed building [a former jail and police depot in the 1800s, and now on a number of heritage registers]. The original room was a well-appointed function room that was situated at the front of The Barracks. It was an impressive civic building that had been derelict for many years; in fact, the building was occupied by squatters. The precinct was redeveloped in 2007, and now has restaurants, a cinema and boutiques. Libertine is based upon the original Libertine restaurant in Sydney’s Kings Cross with a French-Vietnamese menu. The owners, Jamie Webb [who left to run Peasant and Cabiria, also at The Barracks] and Andrew Baturu [who also runs Popolo], were very hands on during the project.

“The nature of the old building meant there was quite a rich palette with which to begin, and creating a French-Vietnamese aesthetic was all about layering texture and opulence into the grand room. As it was such a dark internal space, we wanted to add atmosphere through the use of colour. The timber screening, the fabrics, wallpaper and the timber patterning have a very Asian aesthetic whereas the chandeliers and the deep colours were more French. The wallpaper from Funkis [funkis.com] and Eijffinger [available from The Ivory Tower, wallpaperaustralia.com.au] add pattern and texture, highlighting that feeling of luxury. The custom-made flower screens are transparent to maintain the feel of one big room, even though they are dividing the space. The main dining area and the bar are on one side, and a function space is hidden by the transparent screen on the other. The crystal chandeliers were found in second-hand stores and the fabric lanterns were custom-made in Vietnam. The lighting is kept low so pools of light are created rather than washing out the entire space. By concentrating light over the tables, focus is retained in the space where you are dining.

“While Libertine works beautifully as a nighttime venue, there’s also outdoor seating with a timber pergola, offering a more casual feel. Being able to sit outside among the

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garden and allowing the internal area to spread to an external space is a distinctly Queensland aesthetic.

“The kitchen is quite separate due to the nature of the heritage Barracks. It’s positioned in the back of the building and isn’t seen from the restaurant. We worked with Procook (www.procook.com.au) for the fit-out and equipment.

“There are big communal tables in the restaurant and it’s a lively, vibrant setting rather than a place for fine dining. I’ve eaten there on many occasions and the food is awesome. They also have a popular cocktail menu that’s also well crafted. When you think about French-Vietnamese cuisine, it can be a little difficult to imagine, but it has the flavours of the Vietnamese with the finishing of the French. It’s beautiful.” ○

WORDS: KERRYN RAMSEY