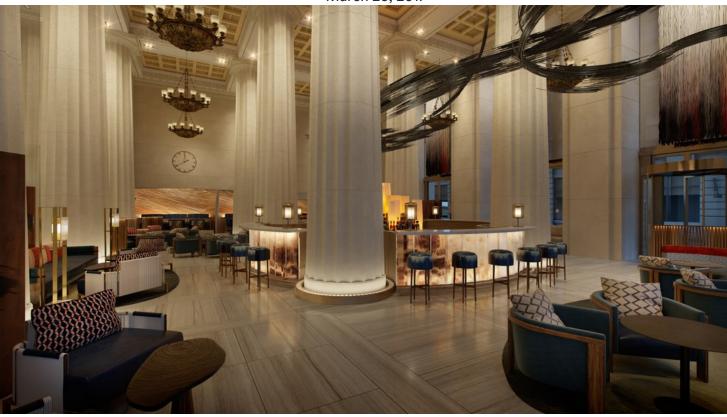
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A Peek Inside the New Nobu Downtown's Historic NYC Home

http://www.cntraveler.com/story/a-peek-inside-the-new-nobu-downtowns-historic-nyc-home

by Christina Ohly Evans March 26, 2017



Courtesy Rockwell Group

A site-specific, ash-wood sculpture mimicking the swirl of sumi-e ink is suspended above the colonnade lounge. The installation was designed by Rockwell Group and created by New York artist John Houshmand.

Reservations are available starting April 6.

It's hard to believe that it's been 23 years since the opening of the first Nobu in New York's TriBeCa neighborhood, and so, its quasi-relocation to 195 Broadway marks the end of a certain era. Fans of chef Nobu Matsuhisa's inventive Japanese/Peruvian cuisine can take heart, however, with the opening of Nobu Downtown—a 279 seat, 12,500-square-foot space that's set across two floors in the former American Telegraph & Telephone (AT&T) building, in the heart of the city's Financial District.

Much like the iconic original, all architectural and design elements in the new space are courtesy of David Rockwell and the Rockwell Group. Fans will delight in familiar touches: an undulating wooden canopy with abstracted ash trees, for example, and a rock wall—both reminiscent of the former Hudson Street space. The duo's continued collaboration comes as no surprise, as Matsuhisa explains, "David is part of the Nobu family. From the very beginning, he understood me, and my style of cooking. He was able to translate my vision into a beautiful restaurant, and 23 years after we opened the first Nobu, he is still finding beautiful new pieces—by local artists, using interesting materials—that make Nobu special." There are many things that make this particular location a stand out, but chief among them is the landmarked building, built between 1912 and 1922, housing the restaurant. Occupying the ground floor and the cellar level of this limestone space—complete with original, massive Doric columns, and soaring 30-foot ceilings—Nobu Downtown is the perfect fusion of old and new, as well as a melding of Japanese and Peruvian aesthetics that mirror such perennial menu favorites as yellowtail sashimi with jalapeño, and crispy rice with spicy tuna.

Upon entering the upstairs space, visitors to the new restaurant (reservations are being accepted starting on April 6) will be immersed in a series of "serene" spaces: the calligraphy-inspired colonnade lounge designed for informal dining, sake sipping, and sushi sampling, for one. A site-specific, ash-wood sculpture by John Houshmand mimicking the swirl of sumi-e ink is suspended above the room, and an eight-foot long digital display composed of LED tiles depicts brushstrokes and cherry blossoms in bloom, highlighting the bronze and glass finishes throughout.



Courtesy Rockwell Group

On the cellar level of the former American Telegraph & Telephone building, Nobu Downtown features a sushi bar, sake room, and more.

Moving downstairs, the elegant chamber dining area ("crafted in a former office cafeteria space," says Rockwell) is a study in light woods and plush banquettes with colored fabrics that evoke flowing kimonos. The 35-seat private dining room featuring hand-cast blue glaze tiles, a 13-seat sushi bar, and an intimate sake room —complete with exquisite, handmade carafes by Canadian artist, Pascale Girardin—rounds out the restaurant's Zen offerings.

While there are many references to the original location, there is a strong focus on new dishes (and creative cocktails) at Nobu Downtown. The Bar & Lounge menu will now include bigeye tuna tataki with eryngii mushrooms and Holland hot peppers; fluke sashimi with ume wasabi; and grilled octopus with choclo salsa, while the dining room menu has added uni oil yaki—a rich sea urchin dish—and grilled omakase preparations from the new griddle.

Cleaner eating will take center stage, too, as monk fruit is used as a replacement for sugar in everything from sushi rice to the soy crème and black sesame cheesecake. Craft cocktails such as the fig-infused, vodka-based "105 Hudson" will pay homage to the restaurant's roots, while newer additions such as the "Fulton Street Sour"—a piquant mix of bergamot vodka, Amaro Montenegro, pear, honey and lemon—herald a new era.

"Each location, from the first Nobu on Hudson Street to this new Nobu Downtown, is an exploration of Japanese craft influenced by Nobu's personal history and his inventive, non-traditional cuisine," says Rockwell. "Using simple, honest, and hand-crafted materials wherever possible, this restaurant is a continuation of the craft story that began more than two decades ago."