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STARCK REALITY

French design legend Philippe Starck brings his brand of witty minimalism to the interior and lighting design at the new Japanese restaurant Katsuya.

By Nancy Robinson



Casting a clean white light on the sushi bar below are hidden monopoint MR16 track heads on 10-foot stems sandwiched between the red and black curtains.

One year after the debut of Katsuya Brentwood, SBE Restaurant & Nightlife Group has expanded the Katsuya brand with the opening of Katsuya Hollywood. A continuation of the creative collaboration between Master Sushi Chef Katsuya Uechi and French designer Philippe Starck, the aesthetic of the new Katsuya Hollywood perfectly sets the stage for modern Japanese cuisine.

While the food at Katsuya is pure Uechi, the interior design and lighting is pure Starck—chicly minimal with poignantly placed dashes of wit and whimsy.

Although one might expect to find references to traditional Japanese lighting, such as the ubiquitous paper lantern, Starck refrained from using decorative fixtures. In fact, the lighting at Katsuya is so subtle it's almost non-existent. That was essential to the Starck aesthetic, says Kyllene Jones, principal of Lighting Design Alliance, which assumed the role of lighting consultant on the second Katsuya project.

"We knew the concept that Starck was going for in the Brentwood location, and the idea was basically to improve upon that in Hollywood and follow the Starck design standard (as far as lighting) as much as possible," Jones explains. "His philosophy is about keeping things clean and minimalistic, but fun and whimsical. He likes glowing sources, which is where all the fun happens, not a sea of downlights in a room. He wants to light only what needs to be lit and do that in the cleanest, smallest way. He really wants to make sure that it's the lighting effect, not the source, that you see."

Perhaps the most striking examples of this aesthetic in action are the light-box graphics. In the main dining room, which is topped with a 20-foot-high sloped ceiling and lined top to bottom in blond wood, Starck employed a white-on-white palette punctuated by huge photographs of provocative geisha. Each one is backlit with T5 dimmable fluorescent strip lights for an overall diffused glow. A Katsuya trademark, these larger-than-life close-ups of cherry red lips and fluttering eyelashes are a direct reference to the iconic Japanese woman, but with an edgy, modern sensibility.

Starck's interest in the effect of light rather than the source itself is also evident in other design elements throughout the restaurant. On the ceiling above the bar, for example, stretched black fabric printed with

images of a kimono and shoes is neatly backlit with T5 dimmable fluorescent strip lights. Below, resin drink stands with fiber optic panels on the bases create a warm glow on the white sushi knives suspended within the resin. Metal halide illuminators in sake display cases along the walls go unseen, as well.

Lighting Design Alliance also took great pains to make certain the ceiling didn't look like a sea of downlights. To this end, the apertures on recessed spots were reduced to 2-inch pinholes in contrast to the larger openings employed at the Brentwood location.

"It makes a big difference because your eye doesn't go directly to the source on the ceiling, but rather to the objects being lit, which are the tables below," Jones says. Moreover, the light cans were installed without any trim. "Essentially the ceiling becomes the trim," Jones continues. "We wanted to keep it as clean as possible."

Achieving a consistent quality of light was another on-going challenge in this project. For the most part, that was achieved by limiting choices to infrared MR 16s and 3,500K T5 dimmable lamps, supplemented by daylighting when available.

"The concept was to bring in natural lighting during the day via the light boxes," Jones says. "Anywhere we can take advantage of free natural light and save energy, the better it is."



In the dark gray and white Dragon Lounge, Starck used a backlit graphic of a dragon on an acrylic sheet to provide a steady, glowing source of light. To the right and left of the light box are washes of fluorescent color that come from recessed 5-inch compact fluorescents. Between the two sofas is a custom-made, hard-wired fixture made to look like a long rectangular metal tray filled with wax candles.

STARCK REALITY

WHO'S WHO

ARCHITECT: DesignArc

INTERIOR DESIGNER: Philippe Starck

LIGHTING CONSULTANT: Kyllene Jones and Bryan Klammer, Lighting Design Alliance

PHOTOGRAPHERS: James Merrell; Kyllene Jones and Bryan Klammer, Lighting Design Alliance

LIGHTING MANUFACTURERS/

SUPPLIERS: RSA, Birchwood, Elliptipar, Erco, Lutron, Visual Lighting Technologies, SCI and White Assoc.



(Above) In this private dining room, Lighting Design Alliance used Elliptipar T5 dimmable fluorescent uplights (recessed in the floor behind each graphic) to create a warm glow. "The space was tight behind these walls, so we used Elliptipars in lieu of strip lights to achieve extra throw via the reflectors," Jones explains. A single trimless downlight accents the table below.

(Below) The blond wood-lined main dining area features a 20-foot-high sloped ceiling. Within this setting, Starck used a white-on-white palette punctuated by huge photographs of provocative geisha, backlit with T5 dimmable fluorescent strip lights for an overall diffused glow. A Katsuya trademark, these larger-than-life close-ups of cherry red lips and fluttering eyelashes are a direct reference to the iconic Japanese woman, but with an edgy, modern sensibility.

