



# INVERTED TOPOGRAPHY IN THE SKY

*Lalita and Mujib of Collaborative Architecture transform a restaurant from casual to mod, through ethereal halos and glowing walls.*

Located within a business hotel in the small bustling city of Calicut in Kerala, Mezban was an already popular restaurant. As the last phase of a repositioning exercise of the hotel, the client decided to renovate the restaurant to award it a new identity. Redesigned by architects Lalita Tharani and Mujib Ahmed, of Collaborative Architecture Mumbai, it soon became a new, trendy destination for dining in the city.

The design intent was to develop novelty through an invigorating approach to the interior architecture of the space. The client's demand for a distinguished flexibility of the layout was addressed by maintaining a highly efficient use of the floor area. This resulted in substituting large tables with smaller ones; six and eight seat tables were replaced by two

and four seat tables, which catered to the possibility of joining them for larger groups in a linear layout.

Another imperative factor in the design of the space was to create an ambience conducive to diners enjoying their culinary fare. While the space was to be used for fine dining during lunch and dinner, it required to be transformed into a lounge area for early evenings. Therefore, the restaurant needed to seamlessly straddle the dichotomy of serving a sophisticated banquet, as well as accommodating a more informal and casual space.

The design in Mezban derives strength from an innovative architectural lighting scheme. The focal point of the space lies in the bespoke light fittings that are suspended from the ceiling to create an undulating topography. While the

remaining area is rendered in simple forms and minimalist arrangements, the magic lies in the light that shines down on the guests through a series of inverted glowing white boxes. These delicate light boxes hang overhead as sensual and poetic halos, reminiscent of an ethereal moment in time.

Bathed in a velvety warm light, the ambience can be interpreted as indulgent and soft, yet structured and defined, embracing the guests in a soothing and somewhat utopian environment. While the ceiling is springing with custom made, white light boxes, the space is flanked on the edges by a series of bespoke light fittings, aptly named 'Thousand Moons' by the designers. The façade is washed in a milky glow, resonating an unmistakable romance. With geometric



'Thousand Moons' custom designed lights by the architects set the tone for drama within



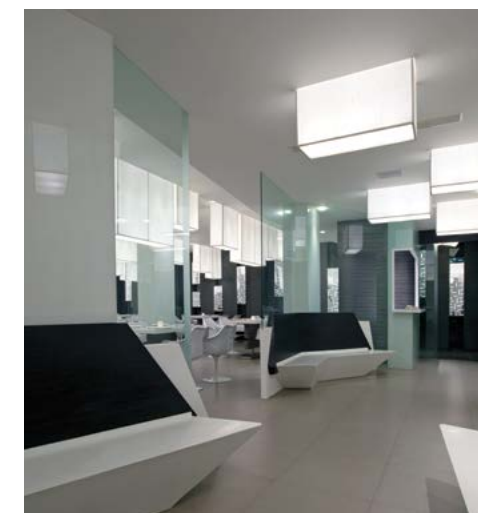
cut outs in a highly reflective surface, the 'moons' add a sense of surreal contemporary longing. During the day, judicious glazing integrated into the facade allows for natural light to indulge the interiors, while the 'Thousand Moons' ensure a sense of discretion and privacy. All bespoke light fixtures are fitted with LEDs. The use of such light sources throughout the project, integrated with dimmers and motion detectors, makes the restaurant environmentally compassionate. The biggest challenge for the design team was to achieve a suitable standard of execution for the project. Located in a small city with limited access to resources and a bizarre mix of local as well as international logistical teams, the process was not only formidable, but also laborious and grueling.

While Mezban has been given a face-lift

through an astute architectural design intervention, the lighting design and customized fixtures are what outline its enchanting character. The refurbishment of the premises has transformed the restaurant into a chic new dining space in Calicut, and has resulted in heightened clientele and much enhanced business for the hotel.

The client was not aware of or exposed to the idea of 'design as a tool to transform business.' However, a close collaboration of opposing ideas, converging at the right junctures made for an immensely satisfying and successful project. It also initiated an immense dialogue among the general public of the city, about the advantages of a well-designed space, and how it has tremendous potential to influence business in an affirmative manner.

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## LIGHTING DETAILS

FOYER / WAITING AREA: 5W LED + Customized fabric lights with LED light sources  
 FAÇADE: Thousand Moons - Polished Aluminum, customized fixtures with LED strips as light sources.  
 RESTAURANT: 5W LED + Customized fabric lights with LED light sources

## Mezban - INVERTED TOPOGRAPHY

Area: 3,000 Sq ft  
 Client: Mohamed, Hotel Asma Tower, Calicut, Kerala, India  
 Completion: 2011  
 Design Firm: Collaborative Architecture, Mumbai  
 Lighting Design: Collaborative Architecture, Mumbai  
 Website: [www.collaborativearchitecture.com](http://www.collaborativearchitecture.com)  
 Principal Architects: Lalita Tharani & Mujib Ahmed  
 Project Team: Lalita Tharani, Mujib Ahmed, Muneeb, Vineeta  
 Photography: Lalita Tharani + Manish