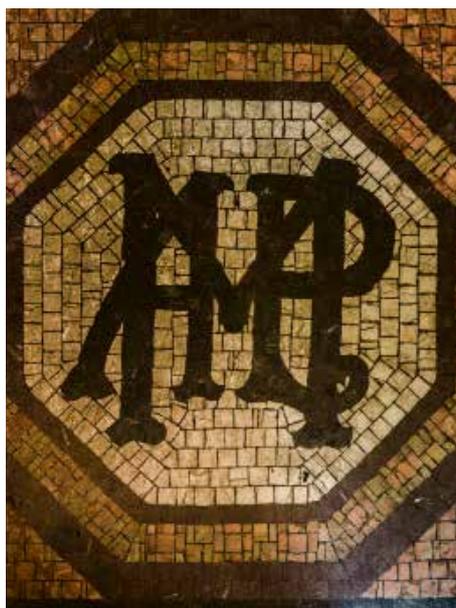


Deconstruction



SILK ROAD

Daniella Casamento

Behind the conservative 1929 façade of the heritage listed former AMP Building on the corner of Collins Street and Market Street is the opulent Silk Road, which opened back in 2008. The function venue is renowned for its interior, the focus of which is a pair of enormous chandeliers with Swarovski crystals overseen by a statue of Marco Polo on horseback, the centrepiece of the Venetian Bar. But clues remain of the building's former life.

An inscription in stone on the Collins Street façade, a three figure statue above the arched entry and a brass plaque all contribute to telling the corporate history of the building. But most fascinating is the original wrought iron security

door at the threshold which descends into a void concealed by a narrow metal trap door. A Latin inscription in the highly detailed mosaic tiled floor at the entry lobby reads 'AMICUS CERTUS IN RE INCERTA', the motto of the AMP Society translated as 'A sure friend in uncertain times' and which is also engraved below the three figure statue.

This former corporate head office is now an entertainment venue with private bars that can be reserved for high end corporate events and celebratory drinks for all occasions. Asian and European artefacts sourced for Silk Road reflect the lavish culture of the historical trade route across the continent to East Africa and north to Europe. Drawing on the theatrical elements of these cultures and the decorative features of the historical building, Silk Road is an elaborate design that befits the philosophy behind the name.

Dark and moody large scale reproductions of paintings by the Italian Baroque artist, Caravaggio, overlook the entire ground floor chamber which retains much of the original detail. The voluminous space allows for a largely self-supporting structure, no doubt a requirement of the building approval to protect the heritage value of the site, resulting in the ground floor,

mezzanine and private suites which allow Silk Road to cater for a capacity of 900 patrons.

The atmosphere of the St George Wine and Cheese Room, located on the corner of the ground floor, is entirely different to the main bar and mezzanine level. Large windows with low level glazing film retained from the time of AMP provide patrons with a degree of privacy from Collins Street and add to the desired New York lounge bar appeal. Wall mounted metal wine racks take full advantage of the lofty space and deep recesses in the perimeter wall provide for secure display of premium wine. Club style leather armchairs are appropriate for the lounge which also has a private bar.

Also on the ground floor, the Dynasty Bar with red and gold décor has a particular focus on Chinese culture and is considered the lucky room for business deals and celebrations. Here, the large arched window is finished in gold leaf and features shelves that exhibit aged cognac and Chinese artefacts.

Between the ground floor and mezzanine is the Mediterranean Tapas bar, efficiently elevated to conceal underfloor services while providing an opportunity for dining in a semi-

concealed space located behind the Venetian Bar. The dark stained timber floor and dark finishes here contrast with the illuminated golden translucent quartz stone top.

Upstairs, Caravaggio's 'Judith Beheading Holofernes' flanks the wall behind the Champagne Bar, normally an incongruous feature in an entertainment venue but entirely suitable within the realm of this space. This vantage point takes in the entire room with views to the Gold Bar opposite and into the VIP rooms which sit at the top of the arched windows.

It is the constant transition between the light of excess and dark theatricality that is the essence of Silk Road.

INFORMATION

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