

Lilker Engineers NYC Home for Upscale Zuma, a Global Dining Destination



Robata charcoal cooking grille serves as focal point in the dining room. Photo by Pablo Enriquez

New York, May 20, 2015 Globally renowned modern Izakaya Japanese restaurant Zuma has arrived at 261 Madison Avenue in New York City. Lilker Associates Consulting Engineers helped convert half of the first floor and the entire second floor of this Sapir-owned office building into an ultra-luxe, elegant restaurant that combines New York style and sophistication with Zuma's world-renowned, signature aestheti.

Zuma's extraordinary NYC space features design on a grand-scale throughout. The ground floor has a double-height main dining room with solid pieces of quarried rock in their natural form stacked to the ceiling. There is a sake bar, sushi counter and centrally located Japanese-style charcoal robata grill topped with a glass-clad surround. Privacy is achieved via a screen of interior stone pillars at street level and tubular stamped metal columns above. Spanning the entire block from 38th to 39th streets, the restaurant's second floor comprises a large kitchen, a bar and lounge, and numerous private dining rooms, some of which cantilever the main dining room with floor-to-ceiling glazing. The dramatic use of natural materials creates a bold yet warm ambiance in the space.

Lilker's engineers were called on to essentially design a "building within a building" featuring all new and independent mechanical, electrical, plumbing, fire protection and low-voltage systems to accommodate the restaurant's voluminous kitchens and dining areas. "The HVAC system had to be completely isolated from the rest of the building to accommodate the restaurant's

extensive hours, and separate ductwork was required to bring the solid-fuel exhaust from the robata grills up the building to an outdoor setback,” says Gregory Socrates, an Associate at Lilker.

To ensure the restaurant and its guests were protected from smoke build up, Lilker innovated a unique, redundant two-fan exhaust system for the grill. A new chiller plant, hot water distribution system and a state-of-the-art building management system (BMS) provide year-round temperature control for changing occupancies in the various spaces with continuous remotely accessible monitoring and control capability.



Seamless dining experience

To achieve a high-style, finished look throughout, all elements had to fit together perfectly. Designed by Zuma’s long term designers Studio Glitt of Japan, with GKV Architects providing local architectural direction, a unique New York sensibility was created for the restaurant’s interiors. “While the theme is consistent with creator and co-founder Rainer Becker’s global vision for Zuma, the Manhattan location has more of a strong urban feel, a feeling of connection to the location which appeals to our local clientele,” says Garrett Ronan, Zuma’s Vice President of Development & Operations USA.

“To achieve the Zuma New York look, we used a lot of blackened steel, iron, glass, stone and resin materials. The effect is very polished. Every inch, down to the furnishings, is custom,” says Michael Fontaine, GKV Principal.

Lilker's ductwork, piping and wiring infrastructure had to be invisible to diners. "All supply air emanates from behind the decorative wooden slot walls and ceilings. The angle of the vent hood for the signature robata grill had to perfectly align with the cantilevering dining area above, while discreetly accommodating the mechanicals sandwiched between. This was a massive coordination effort for the design and construction team," says Fontaine.

In addition to MEP engineering services, Lilker's Technology Solutions Group (TSG) designed security, data and telecom systems for Zuma.

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Founded in 1985, Lilker Associates is an award-winning MEP engineering, technology, lighting design and energy services firm headquartered in Manhattan with offices on Long Island and in Falls Church, VA. Licensed in many states, the company provides services for new and renovated commercial, institutional and retail facilities as well as high-rise and luxury residential buildings. The firm has two wholly owned subsidiaries: Technology Solutions Group (TSG) serves IT cabling, audio visual and security design needs; Lilker EMO Energy Solutions provides comprehensive energy auditing, modeling, commissioning and LEED consultation services.