

heart and seoul

1. The dramatic three-story high Kioku, the Four Seasons Hotel Seoul's Japanese restaurant, is punctuated by a collection of lacquered red leaves.

2. A pavilion-like structure crafted from woven panels of metal wire hanging from the ceiling and surrounded by standing solid timber beams marks the lobby's welcome area.

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Three firms craft South Korea's first Four Seasons

By REBECCA LO
Photography by MICHAEL WEBER
(public spaces and guestrooms); JASON LEE (Boccalino, Charles H, the Market Kitchen, and the Market Larder); and courtesy of AFSO (Kioku and Yu Yuan)

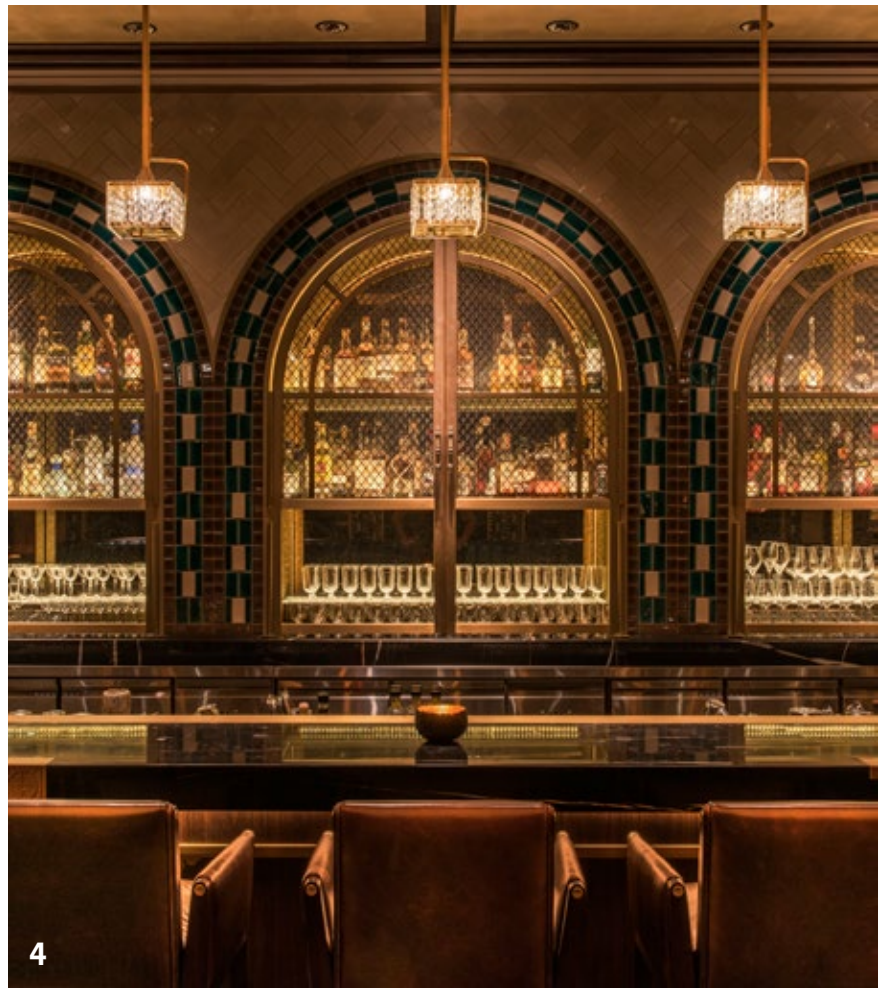


Seoul is a city that marries past and future with dignity—the South Korean capital is home to both the 14th-century Gyeongbok Palace and high tech companies such as Samsung and LG. Its historic central district, Gwanghwamun, is the point from which all distances are measured in the country, so it's no wonder that Four Seasons' first foray into South Korea would be a luxury property in the heart of the area.

With a team led by partner Teo Su Seam, Singapore-based LTW Designworks studied the site's location to incorporate layers of Korean architectural elements and artistry



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into the design of the hotel's public areas, guestrooms, and suites. New York- and San Francisco-based AvroKO worked on four of the property's F&B outlets—Italian restaurant Boccalino, speakeasy Charles H, all-day dining the Market Kitchen, and takeout joint the Market Larder; while Hong Kong's AFSo designed Japanese restaurant Kioku and Chinese offering Yu Yuan.

Early excavations for the hotel unearthed remains of a large number of neatly organized 16th-century ondols—ancient underfloor heating systems. “Having the brand new Four Seasons literally built on centuries of Korean architectural tradition enthralled us,” Su Seam says. The team also reinterpreted Korean elements from traditional houses called hanok, combining time-honored building features with inspiration drawn from nature. In the spacious guestrooms that all translates to gemstone color palettes, carpet patterns that nod to the traditional bamboo blind and the

3. Inspired by the methods of early excavation techniques, rough chiseled limestone walls held back with brass bracing create a dynamic backdrop for the Market Kitchen, reminiscent of an active archaeological dig.

4. Speakeasy-style Charles H nods to New York's subway system with its use of tile, including behind the bar.

5. Boccalino contrasts blackened steel and brass with a white coffered ceiling and marble.

6. Black and white patterned flooring and dramatic art pieces create the feeling of a grand Milanese residence in Boccalino.

7. A large stone table in Charles H has a built-in champagne well, while a 23-foot-long fabric and rope tapestry mimicking traditional hair plaiting hangs on one wall.



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shape of a turtle shell (“which symbolizes long life and luck,” Su Seam explains), panels and wood frames with groove lines constructed from timber wall paneling, and headboards that reference hanbok, Korean traditional costume. “Overall, the hotel has a timeless aesthetic and a sensibility of local culture,” she says.

The main lobby/welcome area is one of the designer’s favorite spaces. Here, the team crafted a pavilion-shaped structure where woven panels made of metal wires done

8. In the presidential suite, gemstone hues complement a dramatic handblown glass chandelier that references the brushstrokes of a Korean calligrapher.

9. Guestroom carpet patterns allude to bamboo blinds and turtle shells, while headboards are inspired by traditional Korean costume.



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10. Reception desks are made from gold-colored metal and wrapped with textured cast-bronze detailing.

11. The penthouse’s luxurious bathroom, swathed in black and white marble, overlooks the city.

in varying degrees of density and in two tones—warm gold and coffee brown—hang from the ceiling and are encircled by solid timber beams rising from the ground “as if it were lifted up delicately to allow visitors to enter a privileged area,” she explains. “[The panels are] a modern feel to the traditional silk screen technique.”

AvroKO developed a subterranean vibe for Charles H that references Manhattan’s subway system. “Prohibition is about mystery, secrecy, and danger,” says partner William Harris. An unmarked door leads guests into a dimly lit antechamber and through another set of doors that open to the sumptuous bar, where a 23-foot-long art feature inspired by traditional Korean hair plaiting comprises twisted ropes with hand-knotted and beaded metal strands.

Over at Bocalino, AvroKO partner Kristina O’Neal says the design is more Giò Ponti than Italian farmhouse, with black steel and brass contrasting with white marble and Venetian plasterwork. “Dramatic art, bold patterned rugs, lush furniture, and deep white coffered ceilings evoke a grand Milan residence,” she adds.

AFSO founder André Fu’s two destination dining Asian restaurants are based on strong traditional concepts. Kioku is akin to a modern bamboo theater with its dramatic three-story height. Here, Fu didn’t adopt Japanese references in a literal manner, instead celebrating the silhouette of the maple leaf—common in both Japan and Korea—with an installation of a collection of lacquered leaves that “appear to dance across the venue,” he says.

For Yu Yuan, Fu was inspired by the formality of Suzhou’s classical gardens. The silhouette of rocks—a fundamental feature—dominates the scheme through a special marble that has a cloud-like quality, he explains. “Meanwhile, a wall-mounted branch installation and the occasional highlight of bonsai trees are key accents for a garden spirit.” hd

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Four Seasons Hotel Seoul

Owner

Mirae Asset Global Investment

Management Company

Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts

Architecture Firm

Heerim Architects & Planners, Seoul

Interior Design Firms

LTW Designworks, Singapore; AvroKO, New York and San Francisco; and AFSO, Hong Kong

Interior Design Project Team

Teo Su Seam, Pusit Chamnankijmongkol, Yanarat Somkitroongroj, and Teresa Wu, LTW Designworks; William Harris, Kristina O’Neal, Greg Bradshaw, and Adam Farmerie, AvroKO; André Fu, Lewis Lo, Naka Chan, and Fanny Ho, AFSO

Contractors

Kesson, Doo Yang, Kukbo, and P&A Engineering

Purchasing

Parsons Brinckerhoff and Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts

Lighting Consultants

Tino Kwan Lighting Consultants, Alto Lighting, and Preciosa

Art Consultant

D’art, the Specialist Art

RECEPTION

Wall Paneling Fabric

Matsu

Table Lamp

Global Views

Reception Counter

Muse Design

LOBBY

Fabric

Donghia and Giorgetti

Leather

Moore & Giles

Coffee Table

Studio Roeper

Fireplace, Floor Lamp, and Table

Lamp

Muse Design

Floating Screen

Sophie Mallebranche

Carpet

Tai Ping

Mural

Kim Jong Gu

Lounger and Barstool Leather

Whistler Leather

Lounge Fabric

Lelievre

Lacquer Feature Wall

D’art

STANDARD GUESTROOM

Feature Panel Fabric

Armani/Casa

Bedframe Upholstery

Carnegie

Armchair Fabric

Europa Interiors

Carpet

Brintons

PRESIDENTIAL SUITE

Chandelier

Lasvit

Sofa and Bench

Minotti

Armchairs

Poltrona Frau

Center Table

Studio Roeper

Carpet

Tai Ping

Dining Chairs

Potocco

Vase Artwork

Ko Young-Hoon

BOCCALINO

Dining Chair

Mater Design

Dining Table

Designed by AvroKO; fabricated by Sohome

Chandelier, Banquette, and

Private Dining Light

Designed by Goodshop; fabricated by Alto

Lighting

Mirror and Private Dining Screen

Designed by AvroKO

Tables

Designed by Goodshop; fabricated by Sohome

and Gold Phoenix; leather by Moore & Giles

Banquettes and Dining Chairs

Designed by Goodshop; fabricated by Gold

Phoenix; leather by Moore & Giles

Casegoods

Sohome

Upholstery

Gold Phoenix

Heat Lamps at Bar

Hatco Corporation

Artwork

Matteo Montani

CHARLES H

Arcade Ceiling and Walls

Ann Sacks

Stone Table

Designed by AvroKO

Seating and Banquettes

Designed by AvroKO; fabricated by Gold

Phoenix; leather by Moore & Giles

Lounge Tables

Designed by AvroKO; fabricated by Sohome

Casegoods

Sohome

Upholstery

Gold Phoenix

Fabric and Rope Tapestry

Goodshop

MARKET KITCHEN

Dining Chair

Designed by AvroKO; fabricated by Gold

Phoenix; leather by Moore & Giles

Dining Table

Designed by AvroKO; fabricated by Sohome

Casegoods

Sohome

Upholstery

Gold Phoenix

Bar Wall Tile

Ann Sacks

KIOKU

Artwork

Jun Kaneko, Muramoto

Shingo, and Choi Tae Hoon

Lighting

Preciosa

Seating

Designed and fabricated by AFSO; fabric by

Altfield Interiors, Richie

Decoration, Sankon

Interiors, Essenza

Interiors, Carlene

Cheong, Coil Interior,

and Spring Collection

Roman Blind

Spring Collection