

The image shows a modern diner interior with a curved bar. The bar is illuminated with warm lights, and there are several glowing spherical lamps on the counter. In the background, there are neon signs that read "FRESH SHAKES LUSCIOUS". The ceiling is decorated with red and white striped patterns. In the foreground, there are two black chairs with orange seats. The overall atmosphere is bright and colorful.

PHILIPS

Technical
case study

Welcome to The Diner

The Diner
by David Rockwell
+ Surface with 2x4,
Ventura Centrale,
Milan, Italy

To celebrate the 25th anniversary of Surface magazine, David Rockwell and LAB at Rockwell Group united visitors to the 2018 Salone del Mobile around a quintessentially American concept: The Diner. During the furniture fair, the pop-up restaurant and bar invited guests to relax during the day and party at night.

Combining a clear design vision with the right products, materials and technology, a historic vault under the Milano Centrale railway station transformed into the ultimate gathering space.





BUTTERY
BRIT

A journey from east to west

The design comprised four distinct environments – the classic Roadside Diner, the monochromatic East Coast Luncheonette, the cotton candy-inspired Midwest Diner and the tropical West Coast Diner – that also needed to work together as one space. The 14-meter-long bar and prominent neon lighting above connected all four environments.



“It was critical to find colors that worked well together”

Rockwell Group developed the project for Surface magazine with lighting consulting by Focus Lighting. Signify contributed fixtures and lighting systems to the project, and its value added partner Arkilux in Italy assisted with installation and programming. With a tight deadline and limited budget, interdisciplinary teamwork was critical at every stage of the project.

The designers spent their limited time available onsite finetuning the lighting. Because color was an integral part of creating and harmonizing The Diner’s four distinct personalities, they chose Color Kinetics

PureStyle IntelliHue Powercore fixtures capable of mixing a palette of RGBA LED color channels at the source, which helped to achieve subtle color variations that brought out the sophistication of the space.

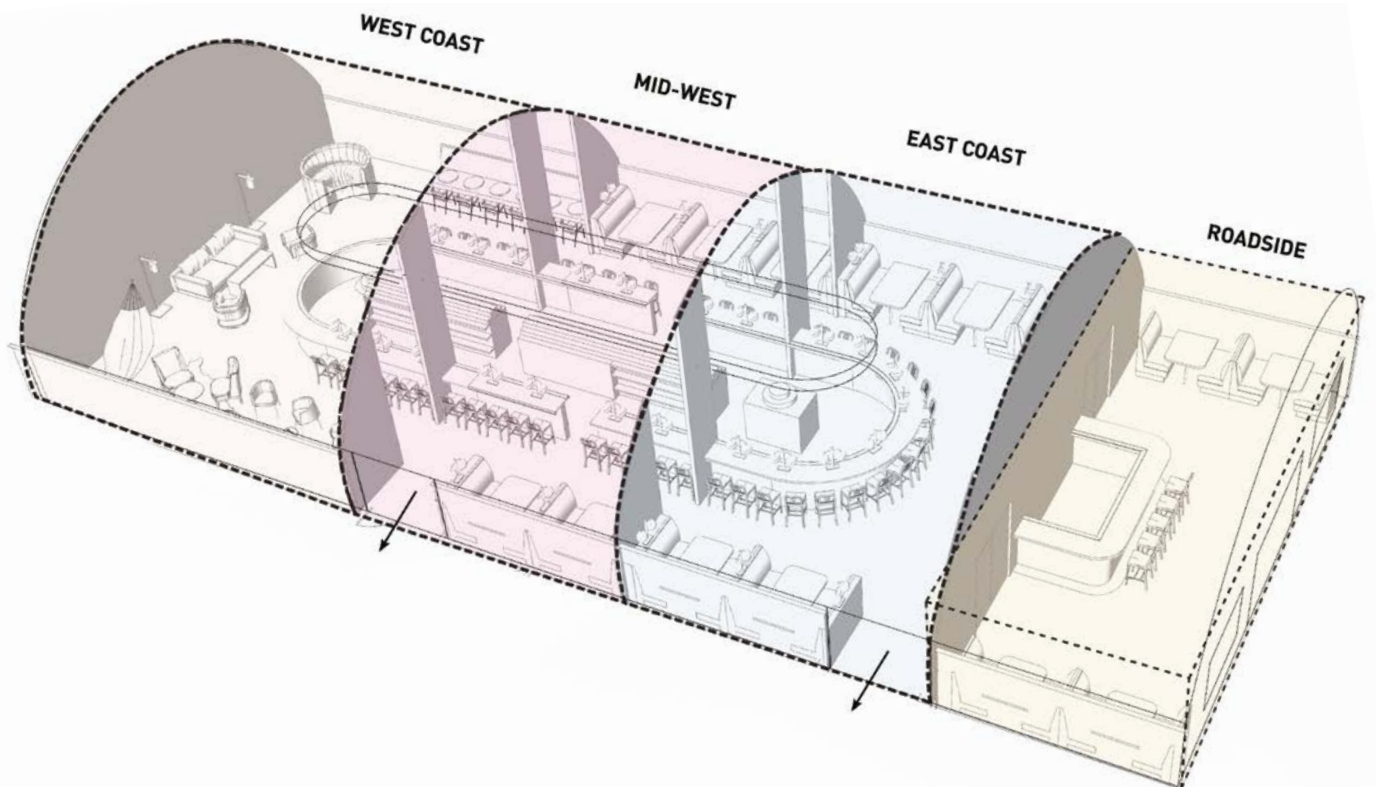
Architect David Rockwell then worked with Focus Lighting to assess every color and cue to ensure that the space’s overall look, feel and emotion was just right. Finally, the lighting was programmed to astronomical time clock triggers so that, when the pop-up was open for business, its operators could focus solely on the guest experience and the lighting scenes would change automatically.



“

We wanted to create an environment that was eclectic enough to make anyone feel comfortable.”

Dan Marino, Project Manager, the LAB at Rockwell Group



The lighting played a crucial role in creating a distinctive feel in each area and was pre-programmed to change at different times of the day using the Color Kinetics Color iPlayer 3 controller.

Restaurant by day, lounge by night

“We focused on the function of the space,” explains Christine Hope of Focus Lighting, a lighting designer on The Diner. “We tried to tailor the look and feel of the lighting to the task of what was happening in the space at any given time.”

Daytime required a business-oriented lunchtime environment, using higher levels of light and white tints to achieve a polished look. As the dinner service starts in the evening, the preset scene transitions into a more saturated color scheme. To reduce saturation in certain areas, pendants were placed overhead to provide concentrated table-top white light. Come nighttime, a multicolor crossfade adds a new energy, particularly in the back area where the DJ performs. This helps the transition from a restaurant to a nightclub vibe as diners linger after their meals.



“

Our goal is to capture the restaurant’s inherently **optimistic and democratic spirit** that draws people of all backgrounds to create a welcoming, lively, engaging, and fun environment.”

David Rockwell, President, Rockwell Group





Fast facts

Client
Surface Magazine

Architect
David Rockwell and LAB at Rockwell Group

Graphic Identity
2x4

Lighting design
Focus Lighting

Value Added Partner
Arkilux

Luminaires
Color Kinetics PureStyle Intelligent Color
Powercore, RGBA
Philips FlexCove G3
Ilti Luce LUX 42 gen.2

Lighting system
Color Kinetics Color iPlayer 3

Photographers
Michele de Candia for Surface Media

Emotional impact

“The Diner was as much an emotional success as it was a visual success,” observes Christine Hope. “That’s what I feel most proud of with this project: you walk in, you feel good, you want to hang out there. That’s exactly how a real diner is supposed to feel.”

Showcasing design and products

In addition to creating an immersive world with a unique ambience for visitors to enjoy, the lighting design beautifully highlighted products and materials, truly capturing the spirit of this world-famous reference point for the furnishing and design sector.

Architectural integration of light

The perimeter wall served as an outer shell that grazed light to bring out the texture and wash the space in color. Track lighting accents on the ceiling formed a line down the center bar and back bar area, which accented the marble counter top and the liquor display to provide a focal point in the center of the room.

Maintaining intimacy

No matter what time of day, The Diner’s lighting could provide visitors with a sense of intimacy and warmth thanks to certain details and treatments. Beautiful soft-glowing incandescent globes on top of the bar counter, for example, cast a warm light on people’s faces as they sat at the bar, while pendants above each table provided an intimate focal point for diners.



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