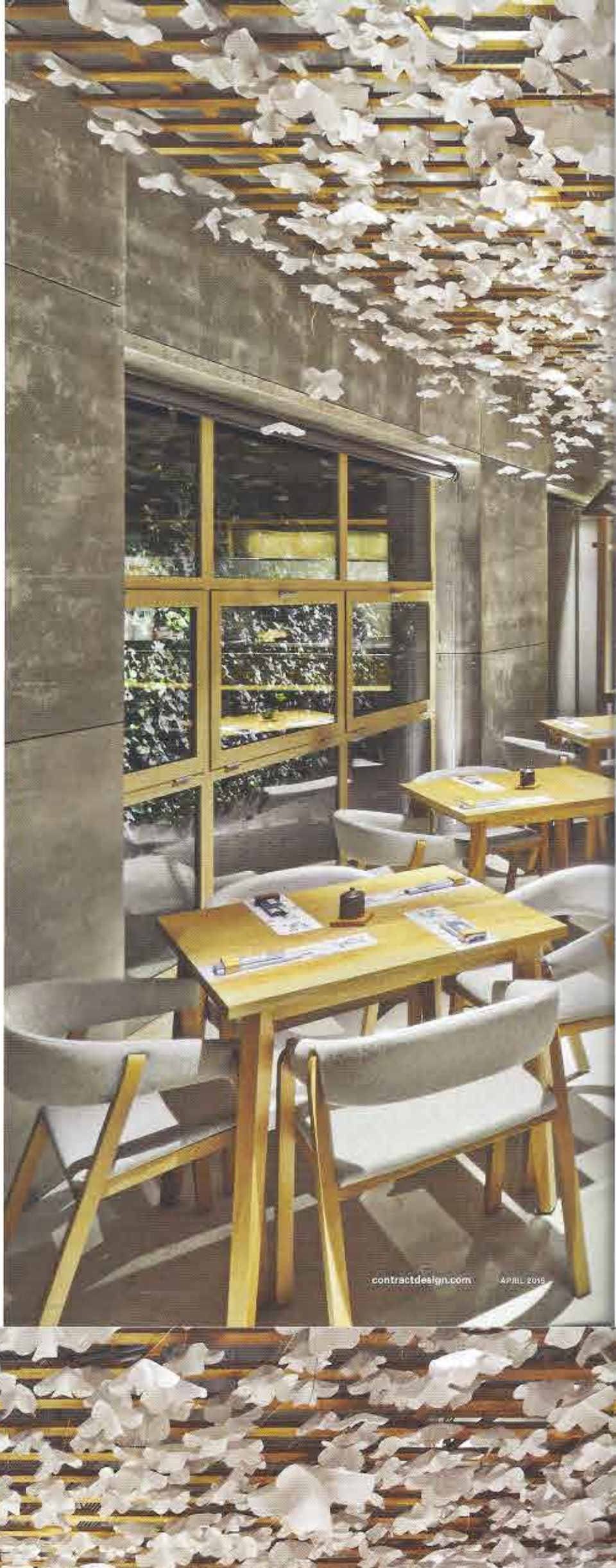




## For a sushi restaurant in Valencia, Spain, design firm Masquespacio blends influences and themes from two historic time periods in Japan

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A cloud-like formation of white fabric cherry blossoms defines the ceiling of the main dining area. Past the main dining area, the kitchen is fully visible to patrons. Masquespacio designed logos and other branding elements (opposite) for the restaurant.

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Nozomi, a sushi bar in the Spanish city of Valencia, combines eras of Japanese architecture, both beloved and shunned. In the foreground is rich, warm Japanese woodwork, screens, lattices, and delicate ceiling beams harkening to Japan's 17th century and further in the past. In the background, stark concrete floor and walls recall an extremely rapid midcentury modern Japan, perhaps even military spaces.

With the 2,500-square-foot Nozomi, design firm Masquespacio reconsiders these two design traditions as elements of Japanese history. Valencia-based Masquespacio—led by Ana Milena Hernández Pelacios and Christophe Perasse—is focused on branding and interiors. They began this project with an intensive study of Japanese culture and the origin of sushi, and focused on the duality of the two eras of history.

From the restaurant's wooden pitched-roof entrance, which recesses into a concrete wall, diners walk past a discrete wooden structure—a freestanding, pitched-roof building within a building that contains restrooms and storage—in the center of the restaurant. This entrance sequence is the first cue to the project's overriding atmosphere—an outdoor Japanese streetscape. Corridors are akin to a narrow medieval Japanese street before opening into the airy main dining room. This rhythm of narrow streets opening into courtyard-like open space is inspired by the 400-year-old Gion neighborhood of Kyoto—the city's historic Geisha district—an international symbol of pre-war Japan. Kyoto is also a frequent travel destination for Nozomi proprietors José Miguel Herrera and Nuria Morell. Framed receipts from their travels to Japan hang on the Nozomi restroom walls.

This emphasis on creating an informal streetscape atmosphere unites two very different culinary traditions—the Japanese sushi peddler and the venerable Spanish tapas bar—in which conversation and activity spills out onto the street. “We wanted to have the essence of a bar in the street,” says Masquespacio founder and Creative Director Ana Milena Hernández.

### Detailed design from custom woodwork to branding

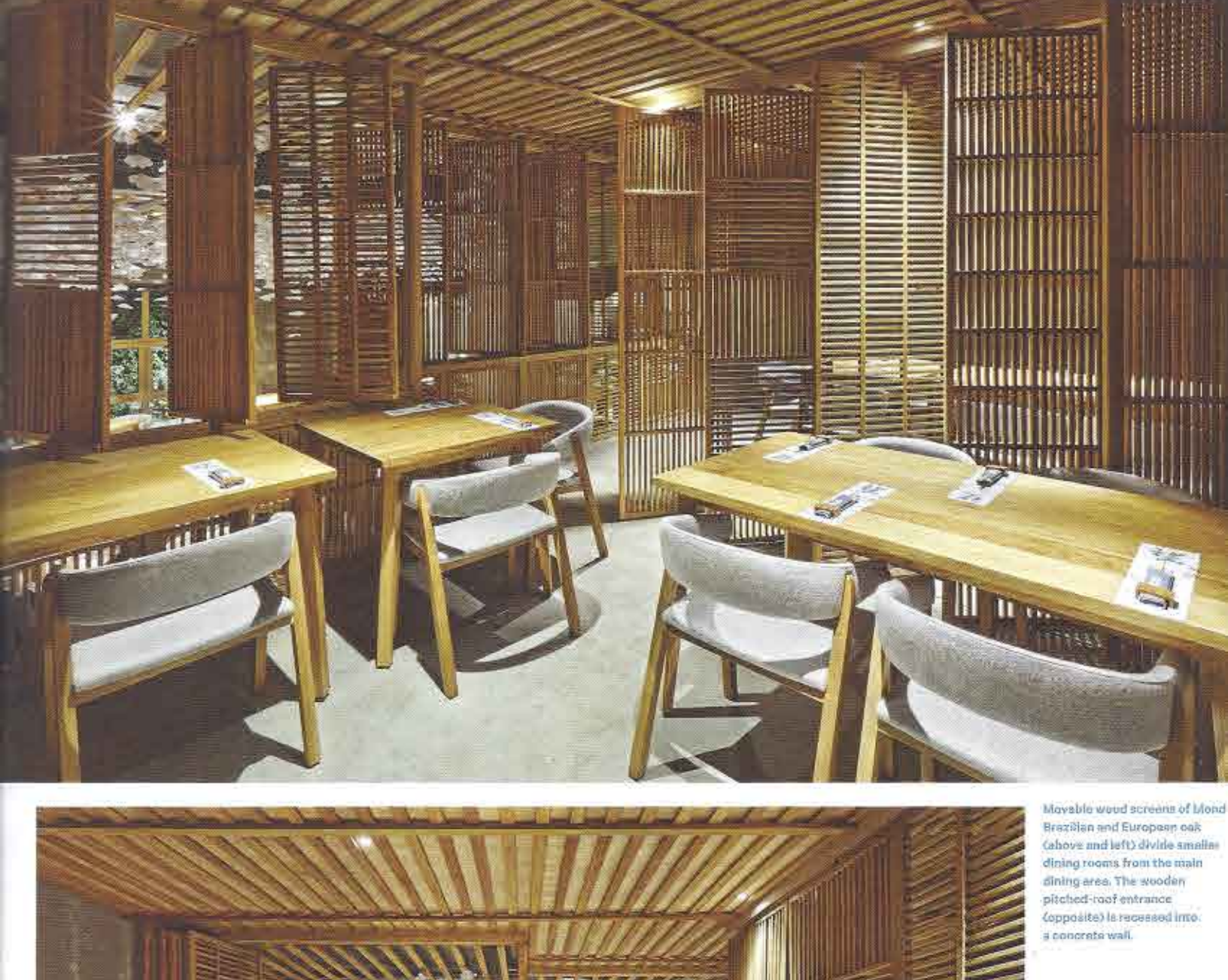
The sensation of entering outdoor space is accentuated by the main dining room's flat ceiling covered in white fabric cherry blossoms—a suspended, fluffy cloud over diners that obscures the exact height of the room. With no clearly visible limit to the ceiling plane, diners' imaginations can drift upward. “You feel [like you are] outdoors, but you're inside,” says Herrera.

With the fabric flowers as the primary purely decorative element in an interior with concrete walls, Nozomi's presentation of details is minimalist and almost austere. Hernández says this approach was taken to draw attention to the craftsmanship of wood, which is mostly blond Brazilian and European oak. Movable wood screens easily divide smaller dining rooms and define window openings into the main dining area. The screens alter their orientation both horizontally and vertically, and the custom woodwork has varied patterns and textures for a handcrafted ambiance—an enigmatic contrast to the gray anonymity of the concrete walls. “The details of the carpentry are those that should be in the spotlight,” Hernández says. “That's the way the design is minimalist, but it still contains many details and imperfections.”

**Nozomi Sushi Bar**  
Interior designer: **Masquespacio**  
Client: **Nozomi Sushi Bar**  
Where: **Valencia, Spain**  
What: **2,500 square feet on one floor**  
Cost: **Withheld at client's request**  
For a full project source list, see page 106 or visit [contractdesign.com](http://contractdesign.com)

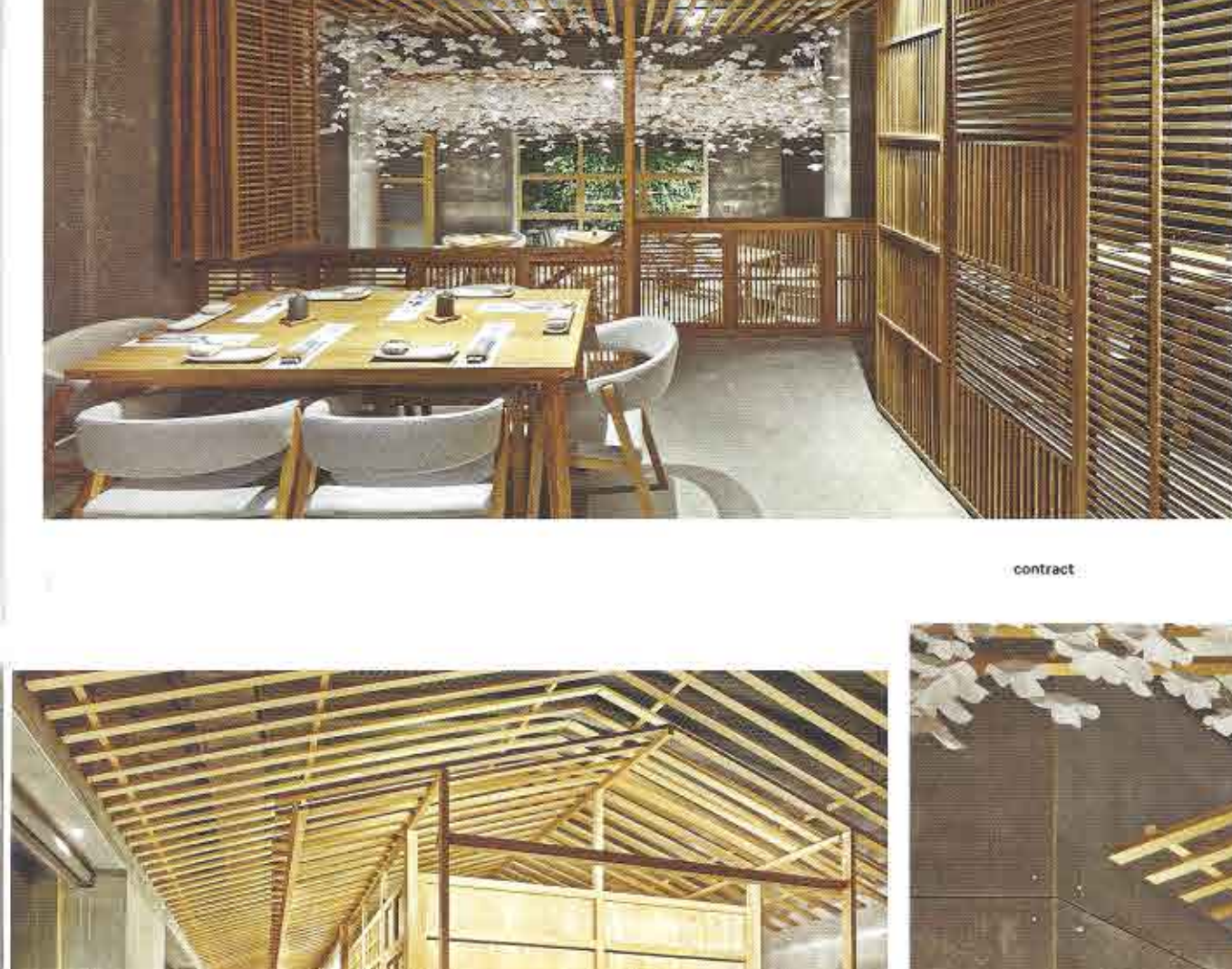


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Movable wood screens of blond Brazilian and European oak (above and left) divide smaller dining rooms from the main dining area. The wooden pitched-roof entrance (opposite) is recessed into a concrete wall.

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A freestanding, pitched-roof structure within the restaurant conceals restrooms and storage (above). The designers created the full graphic identity for the restaurant, including chopstick holders and a Koi fish illustration (right) that appears on menus and other place setting elements. Custom woodwork wraps a bar and serving station (opposite) and concrete gray concrete walls.



Herrera and Morell wanted a traditional presentation of Japanese design elements for their restaurant, in which an open kitchen at the rear of the main dining room allows all to see Nozomi's sushi chefs at work. Masquespacio's design also recontextualizes traditional Asian design with modern forms and materials in a way that separates these familiar and timeworn tropes away from stereotypical clichés. “We don't like to appeal to common topics in our projects,” Hernández says. “If we appeal to them, we try to reinterpret them.”

In a comprehensive approach, Masquespacio also designed the complete brand identity for the restaurant, including logos for all place

setting elements, menus, chopstick holders, and even the owners' business cards. An illustration of Koi fish, a symbol of good luck and perseverance in Japanese culture, is seen on menus and other place setting elements. Masquespacio also commissioned calligraphy in the Japanese writing style hiragana for the brand identity.

The Spanish designers effectively infuse Japanese sensibilities and blend two distinct time periods. The restaurant is thoroughly Japanese. “In this case,” Hernández says, “the project gave us the opportunity to tell our own history and vision of Japan.”

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### Key Design Highlights

- The restaurant's design combines influences from two eras of Japanese architecture: the 17th century and midcentury modern.
- A compressed entry sequence leads to an open main dining area, evoking a Japanese streetscape and courtyard.
- The ceiling in the main dining area is covered in white fabric cherry blossoms.
- Custom woodwork, including screens and movable walls, creates a handcrafted ambiance.
- The Japanese developed brand identity for the restaurant, including place setting elements.

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Floor Plan

- 1 Entrance
- 2 Main dining
- 3 Private dining
- 4 Kitchen
- 5 Sushi bar
- 6 Restrooms/storage