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TORI TORI

MEXICO CITY, MEXICO
ESRAWE STUDIO

Photography by Cesar Bejar or as noted

There are five branches of the Japanese restaurant *Tori Tori* in Mexico's capital. The latest iteration is a 720 sqm space located on the ground floor of an office tower in the city's Santa Fe district. Completed only this year, the restaurant's interiors were designed by local atelier *Esrawe Studio*, which was also responsible for all of *Tori Tori*'s previous incarnations.

The restaurant has glass walls on two sides, but otherwise everything is mostly dark. The sober scheme features dark ceilings, floors and solid walls, with pale wood details. The main wall, adjacent to where the sushi bar is situated, is swathed in low-reliefs embossed with geometric graphics designed to be abstract

stylisations of *kanji*, Chinese characters used in the Japanese language. Above a circular teriyaki station, where patrons can watch their food being prepared, is an enormous timber structure composed of overlapping rows of holm oak wood panels. It is intended to bring to mind images of a Samurai warrior decked out in his bamboo war-gear. "Of monumental size and expression, their texture evokes Samurai armour; above all, the breastplate known in Japanese as *dō*," says *Esrawe Studio*.

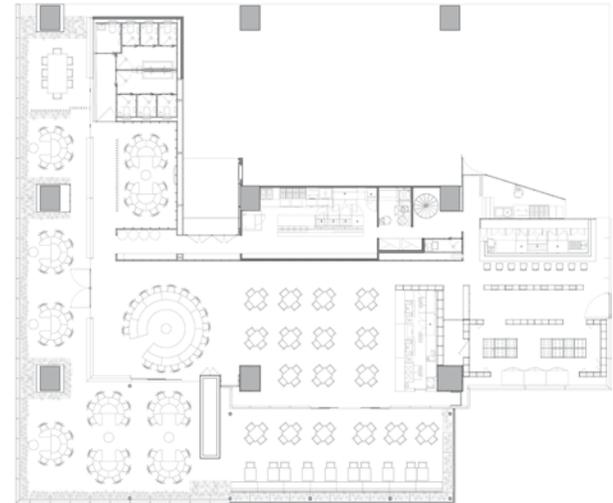
There is another large timber structure, though this one has a more practical application. A section of the restaurant has rows of tall, pale wood bookcase-like storage units, which hold Japanese snacks, sake bottles, and other restaurant accoutrements. The structure is designed to resemble scaffolding.

All the furniture in the restaurant was custom-designed by *Esrawe Studio*, and there are a number of different styles present, but all conform to the monochrome programme: dark stained or painted wood, or natural pale wood.



The restaurant is capacious, with high ceilings and large decorative features, and really nothing like the small, understated eateries that dominate the restaurant scene in Japan. And yet Tori Tori Santa Fe, despite its size and bombast, manages to create a sense of the country whose cuisine it specialises in. The colour palette and materials used by Esrawe Studio match the profile of a typical Japanese establishment.

Once the pandemic is over, the cavernous Tori Tori Santa Fe will no doubt hope to attract customers from the entire tower of corporate offices above it. After all, it is a Japanese restaurant on a corporate scale.



Photography by Genevieve Lutkin

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