

Photos: Courtesy, Landini Associates



### MCDONALD'S CHICAGO

The design of the McDonald's Riverside in Chicago won the 2019 IES Lighting Awards—Award of Merit—Best Lighting Design.

## THE REINVENTION AT MCDONALD'S

The fast-food icon is reenvisioned to play in the fast-growing, fast-casual space.

By Vilma Barr, contributing editor

### McDonald's, arguably the inventor of the fast-food

category, is preparing to enter the fast-casual dining scene through its "Project Ray." Named for Ray Kroc, who initiated the chain's worldwide growth in 1955, the program is initially aimed at 8,000 restaurants in the U.S. and major international urban areas.

The McDonald's name currently identifies over 38,000 food service establishments in 100 countries. To cash in on the growing fast-casual appeal, McDonald's has targeted the 19- to- 39-year-olds, collectively categorized as millennials. "Our brief was to re-attract millennials to the brand by challenging their expectations and to create a Global Flagship Model," says Mark Landini, design director of Australia-based Landini Associates. Landini and his team developed an environment that is less quick in-and-out and more refined-and-quiet in a classic contemporary setting for on-site dining.

Landini's program, as installed at 45th and Broadway in New York City, was structured around an open plan layout, upholstered banquettes, and LED lighting. Ceiling heights were raised to accommodate parallel rows of black track lights over the kiosk ordering space. Perforated dropped ceiling elements were fitted with flush-mounted downlights and black can fixtures over grouped and community dining tables.

Three signature lighting fixtures lend style and visual appeal throughout the 11,200-sq.-ft., three level restaurant. They include ceiling-suspended white illuminated tubes, grouped to form a rhythmic pattern and lower the sightlines in the restaurant. Extending outward on black metal brackets from spaces between windows are decorated red-shade fixtures that accent the red wire-frame dining chairs. Behind the banquettes are minimalist wall-mounted fixtures reaching to the dropped ceiling and punctuating the expanse of patterned panels.

At Sydney Airport's Terminal 1, McDonald's glowing yellow glass box has become its own tourist attraction. Here, the objective was to counter the grab-and-go of typical airport fare. "Our brief here," Landini reports, "was to create an iconic, memorable customer experience, unlike anything in an airport terminal. The solution was to combine an electronic ordering system, the kitchen on top of the stacked preparation platform, and vertical transportation to create a unique spectacle," he indicates. Rows of LED strip lights highlight the structure's top level that appears to float above the concourse.

Customers enjoy the scene from surrounding seating areas. "For us, this meant an innovative challenge, to demonstrate how McDonald's continues to push boundaries in design," Landini says.

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### MARK LANDINI

Founded Landini Associates in 1993 and offers a full roster of design services, including architecture, interiors, product, graphic, lighting, and digital design. Located in Surry Hills, a section of Sydney, Australia, the firm works internationally, with specialties in hospitality and retail. In addition to McDonald's, described here, projects include: Loblaws, Marks & Spencer, Walgreens, Glassons, Hilton Hotels, LVMH, Burt's Bees, Unilever, Dunkin', David Jones, and Selfridges.



## Q+A WITH MARK LANDINI

Mark Landini, Landini Associates, and Contributing Editor, Vilma Barr dive into the next design phase of the brand's focus on re-attracting the Millennial clientele.

### How long have you been designing McDonald's restaurants and how many have you created?

Landini Associates has been working with McDonald's Global since 2014. Our design format, "Project Ray" has rolled out across every territory globally. Project Ray restaurants are everywhere. In Chicago, both the McDonald's Headquarters Global Menu Restaurant and the Rock n' Roll Restaurant embody Project Ray designs, as do restaurants in New York's Times Square, San Francisco, London's Oxford Street, Moscow, Madrid, Milan, Germany, Vienna, Poland, Buenos Aires, Seoul, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Beijing, Dubai, Tokyo, Singapore, and Sydney.

Project Ray applies classic materials and design that won't date, using minimal "embedded energy" by extending the expected lifespan of the restaurant. Concrete, glass, stainless steel, and oak form a palette of stylish simplicity with a backdrop of "recognizable neutrality" promoting the service, the product, and the people who come to enjoy it.

Mix these ingredients one way to tell an urban story, then another to localize. Project Ray is about understanding the location and customer profile so that furniture, materials, and layout can be adjusted accordingly. Either way, it's one brand and one vision talking: a holistic toolkit of parts that is able to be fine-tuned to suit the sensibilities of a location.

### When did Project Ray get underway?

#### Was lighting defined in the objectives?

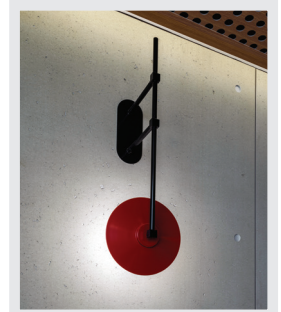
Project Ray first launched at Admiralty Station, Hong Kong in 2015. The energetic environments that have been the signature for McDonald's are now replaced with a simpler, calmer, and more classic feel. As with all our projects, lighting, and as importantly shadow, play a significant role in the design and can be adjusted by time of day and by location.

"MCDONALD'S IS INVESTING MORE THAN \$10 BILLION IN RESTAURANT TRANSFORMATIONS ACROSS THE U.S., MAKING THIS THE LARGEST CONSTRUCTION PROJECT IN THEIR HISTORY."



### ▲ TIMES SQUARE, NYC

The lighting is designed to create a more energized atmosphere during the day and a calmer, more intimate setting at night.



### SYDNEY AIRPORT

McDonald's glowing yellow glass box has become its own tourist attraction.







### ▲ HONG KONG

New seating types have been designed to accommodate families, groups, and individuals.



### Has lighting design always been part of your firm's services?

Yes, absolutely. "Get the lighting right" is one of our core design principles. Landini Associates' scope of work includes concept design, brand positioning, master planning, architecture and interior design, graphic design, uniforms, and global design standards, as well as roll-out guidelines.

### Please discuss lighting design trends.

The world is becoming louder and is getting louder, still. It's time to step away from the fray and allow food and services to convey an inviting sense of peace, as expressed by the simplicity of Project Ray. Lighting is a crucial element in creating an environment of calm simplicity and allowing the focus to hero the food, the service and the people who come to enjoy it.

In Landini Associates' work to "reinvent normal," norms are questioned, taken apart and sometimes cast aside. We

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have created something noticeably new—a quieter ambience, kitchens wrapped in glass, eye-catching graphics, and a material palette of concrete, stainless steel, and oak.

The same is true for seemingly subtle changes, like softer lighting and sophisticated materials, which add to the newness of the experience, but are classic and will last.

### You indicated that your mission for McDonald's is to "re-attract millennials to the brand." Please comment as related to your work with McDonald's.

Ray is an exercise in simplicity and a study on how to attract Millennials back by challenging their expectations.

The best meals are a celebration of family and that's an intergenerational thing by definition. I think everyone understands that "cool" really means self-assured and self-contained; not really trying too hard or self-possessed. It's a rare and often iconic state, in this noisy, attention-seeking world. We decided to interpret it that way. It's hard to fake being composed and in control of one's feelings. So, that's what we try to do. Provide a quiet place for people to eat tasty food and share company in a warm inviting place of respite. We like to design places for people where they feel good about themselves and their immediate environment. ●