

# Enigma, the most extravagant project of Neolith has set a benchmark

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Enigma is one of the most extravagant projects of Neolith. An ambitious collaboration with RCR Arquitectes, it is the realization of a vision of the world renowned Catalan chef Albert Adrià's dream to create a 'frozen and enigmatic' restaurant project that was to reflect his cuisine as well as his career. His vision took shape when 2017 Pritzker Prize winners RCR Arquitectes drew their design idea in watercolors and decided to bring it to life with the help of Neolith by TheSize, manufacturer and designer of Sintered Stone. Through

an incredibly creative and close collaboration, as well as Neolith's expertise and technical know-how, the enchanting, out of this world interior of ENIGMA was created.

Chef Adrià had worked with the design proposal for three years and wanted to ensure the perfect outcome for his passion project. An iconic chef well-known for his experimental cuisine and surprising menus, the chef wanted to create an immersive environment to captivate his guests.

The pivotal moment in terms of design came when RCR in collaboration with architect Pau Llimona drew a watercolor painting in the size of two A3 papers, which was to be applied to the floors, walls, bathrooms, kitchen worktops, cabinetry and air extraction systems. However, a watercolor design has not been done on Sintered Stone before, thus posing an unprecedented challenge. Carlos Garcia, Product Designer at TheSize explains: "We had to expand the original design, all the while trying not to lose the quality of definition offered by the original drawing. Each pixel was equal to two meters of final floor." Through R&D, Neolith developed the technology to re-create the design onto slabs, producing a perfect replica of the drawing.

Once this was achieved, an exact color match had to be sourced, as the required green and blue tones are unusual hues for sintered surfaces. The intensity of the colors had to fit in with the other materials and decorations throughout the restaurant as to achieve a unified environment, fully submerging diners. Using Neolith's proprietary digital printing decoration technology NDD (Neolith Digital Design), the architect's design brief was fully met.

The architects wanted every slab to be of irregular texture like Neolith's River washed, but with a subtle shine to provide a surface that is multisensory – interesting to the eye and inviting to touch. "Neolith is a contemporary material with many properties. We have been so surprised by its possibilities that we are now using it for other projects", RCR explain.

The floor presented the biggest challenge because of its sheer size. Each slab is unique and had to be perfectly put together in order to deliver a continuous design. However, the only way to get a full picture of the puzzle required some creative problem-solving and a change of perspective. Neolith initially installed the entire floor off-site and used a drone to take images from above, thus ensuring that there were no inconsistencies.

RCR Arquitectes/P. Llimona designed an organic space full of curves and narrow aisles and required the slabs to be cut down into six smaller pieces, the

smallest being only 3 cm wide. Absolute precision was crucial to guarantee the uniformity of the watercolor design. Taking inspiration from a map, a coordinate system was put into place, uniquely labelling every single slab to know its exact position in the project. This way, the installers on location were able to piece the interior together like a puzzle.

Albert Adrià, RCR Arquitectes and Neolith are all award winners within their respective industries and are considered to be titans of excellence. Together they created a project that is truly spectacular in terms of design, material quality, food, and fashion. ENIGMA truly is full of surprises the architects say: “We like the idea that it is an Enigma, which is difficult to explain. It is an enveloping space that melts, disappears, almost like a labyrinth. Between materiality and conformation, a whole series of organic movements is created. There are shadows, transparencies, and a watery presence which is almost enigmatic yet luminal.