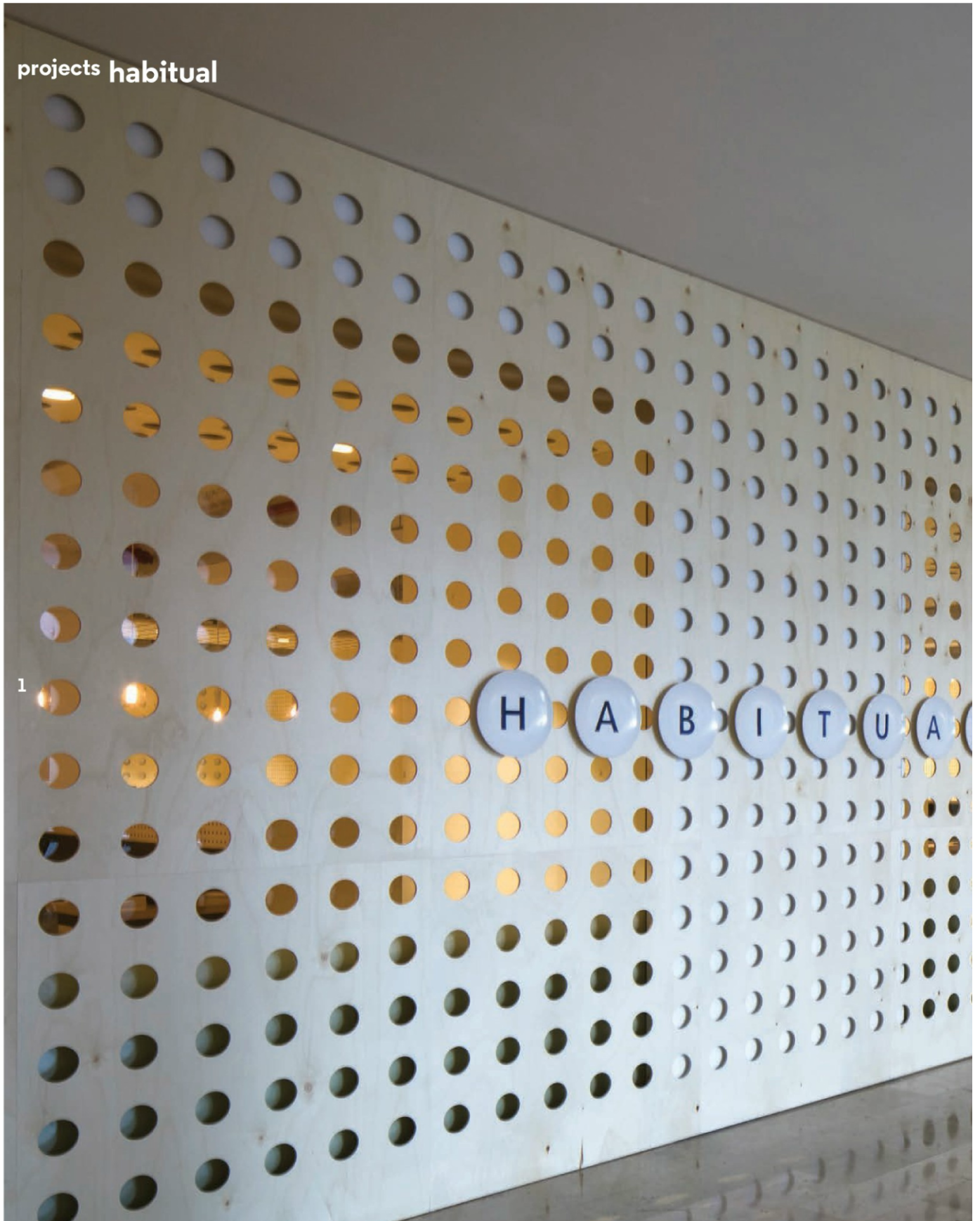


projects **habitual**

1

H A B I T U A



# ace in the hole

A modern addition for a Spanish market

By ALIA AKKAM

Photography by FERNANDO ALDA

1. Habitual's name is spelled out on plates stretching across the restaurant's hole-filled façade, while wine bottle corks form the letter "H."



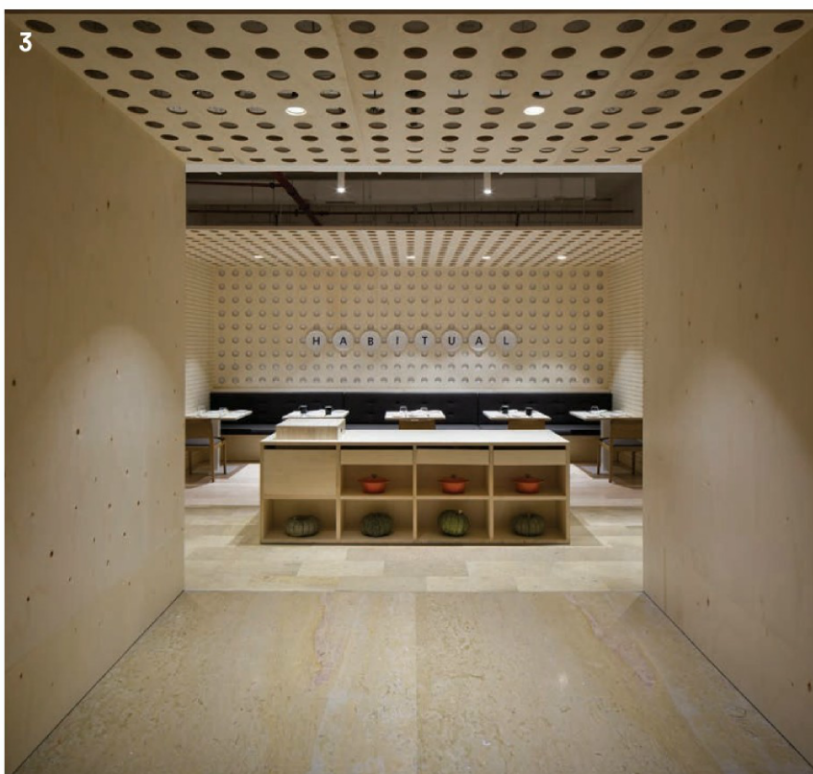


2



**At his newest Valencia** restaurant Habitual, lauded Spanish chef Ricard Camarena—of the city's Canalla Bistro, Central Bar, and his eponymously named flagship—puts farm-fresh Mediterranean cuisine in the spotlight. Located inside the nearly 100-year-old Colón Market with its Gaudí-esque façade, the restaurant, then, is a visually modern juxtaposition. Like Camarena's other establishments, it bears the design imprint of Barcelona-based Francesc Rifé Studio.

Capturing the soulfulness of Camarena's cooking was paramount to founder Francesc Rifé. To ensure Habitual "stands out as a place of comfort and warmth," he embraced light-colored wood throughout the cozy 120-seat restaurant. "We wanted to generate a dialogue between the space and the chef's new approach to food," he says. Undoubtedly, the most striking features of the dining room are the poplar walls perforated with holes in a range of sizes, carefully positioned. Some offer views into Camarena's kitchen, while others allow diners to peer outside and passersby to look in—creating a



3



4



mysterious peekaboo element. Some of them are plugged with wine bottle corks to create shapes—the letter “H” at the entrance, a fish across one wall, and red male and female figures denoting the bathrooms—while small black pots fill other holes to create a sense of movement, almost an art piece on one wall, and white ceramic pieces of produce such as artichokes and carrots hang from the orbs in another room.

This spherical motif, which pervades the space, is a philosophical ode to the chef, Rifé points out. Its repetition is symbolic of all the plates, coffee cups, and glasses Camarena weaves into his daily repertoire. (In fact, Habitual is spelled out on white plates on the restaurant’s façade and on a wall inside.) The circles also double as stylish utilitarian measures, conducting sound and alleviating noise.

While white marble flooring and suspended incandescent lighting add both sophistication and conviviality to Habitual, the ceiling is an industrial-inspired departure, flaunting a mix of original and intact exposed red tubular pipes. “The

concept of ‘local field’ is used throughout. We didn’t want to create a typical fashionable New York restaurant; we wanted to do something more honest and intimate while avoiding excess,” explains Rifé. “Habitual reflects the chef’s personality and his love of simplicity.” **hd**

[rife-design.com](http://rife-design.com); [habitual.es](http://habitual.es)

**2.** A view to the front of the restaurant, where diners get a glimpse of passersby outside in the market through the holed poplar wood wall.

**3+4.** The perforation motif continues in another dining room where the Habitual plates are repeated, while in another space, corks filling the holes form the shape of a fish on one wall, and small black pots create a pattern on another.

**5.** Incandescent bulbs contrast with the space’s white marble flooring, while a red figure made of corks designates the men’s restroom.



## Habitual Valencia, Spain

Owner and Manager

**Ricard Camarena**

Interior Design Firm

**Francesc Rifé Studio, Barcelona**

Contractor

**Ricard Camarena**

Lighting

**Designed by Francesc Rifé Studio  
for Trasluz**

Graphics

**Estudio Menta**

Ceramic Elements

**Studio Menta**

Bench Seating

**Designed by Francesc Rifé Studio;  
manufactured by CoArco**

*\*Designers did not provide sourcing for other  
furnishings shown.*