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Judy Shepard
and the editors of *Retail Design International*

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DUCE

Fort Worth, Texas

The Michael Malone Studio at WKMC Architects
Dallas, Texas

DUCE is the second restaurant concept developed by noted chef and restaurateur Tim Lore, owner of Lonesome Dove, also in Fort Worth. For DUCE Lores wanted a less formal concept based on lighter Mediterranean style fare and specialty drinks. The menu Lores developed emphasizes multiple, smaller courses, conducive to a longer dining experience.

The Michael Malone Studio at WKMC Architects was asked to design a space that was fresh, innovative and sophisticated, but still comfortable and casual. Michael Malone explains, "With the increasing recognition of Lonesome Dove as one of the nation's most innovative restaurants, Tim and his wife Emily wanted this restaurant to reflect their success and maturity as business people and set a new direction for Tim's exploration and reinterpretation of a whole new type of cuisine. DUCE was to

be a vehicle for that activity, as Lonesome Dove had been for Southwestern cuisine. Tim described it as a place people would eat every week, if not more as opposed to Lonesome Dove which was a more special meal or business dinner environment."

The designers broke up the seating into multiple, smaller spaces that incorporate a variety of seating configurations, including banquettes in alcoves, conventional two and four top tables and several shared seating areas with low tables. Also included in the design, and considered an integral part of the DUCE experience, is an outdoor seating area. In deference to the variable Texas climate this area is covered with an elaborate trellis structure that incorporates infrared heaters for chilly evenings. A central feature of the outdoor area — one that emphasizes relief from the often hot Texas



ABOVE: The curving interior bar is the central gathering space and heart of DUCE. The base alternates douglas fir bands with strips of stainless steel and the top is cast-in-place concrete finished to match the floors. The douglas fir screen behind the bar is actually in front of a glass window that looks into the kitchen. A curving soffit overhead reinforces the shape of the bar. OPPOSITE: The facade incorporates the standard shopping center tower element and finishes with the signature DUCE wood and glass storefront.

On the other hand, the design team itself designed and timed the process to succeed: the store signage,

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weather — is a curving fountain wall with mosaic tile in a pattern designed by the architects.

Two large, full-service bars, one inside, one out, and two fireplaces, also interior and exterior, are vital to the relaxed atmosphere of DUCE. Seating around the fireplaces is casual and relaxed and, as with the bars, are intended as informal meeting places.

Natural cherry and douglas fir finishes are used throughout DUCE, in wall panels, tables, banquet and millwork. Stainless steel accents are incorporated into the bar, table tops and various custom metal items fabricated for the space. The floors are stained concrete and a curved, climate-controlled wine storage unit is placed above the bar, accessible from a rolling ladder.

As with most projects, the design had to be realized within a stringent budget, including the creation of a full-service gourmet-style commercial kitchen, two new sets of rest rooms for interior and

exterior use and the building of the outdoor dining area from scratch.

To meet the challenges of the project, says Malone, "the design was pared down to the essentials and each element was studied to determine how best to execute it as economically as possible. Further, it was determined which areas would be developed in the most detailed and expensive manner to assure the maximum impact. It was decided that the two bars, the fountain wall and the fireplaces with their associated seating would get the most attention and budget resources. The rest of the finish out was accomplished as economically as possible, with the floors being sealed and stained concrete, the walls painted gypsum board (except for areas that received paneling accents) and the ceilings left open and painted a dark color to camouflage the ductwork."



ABOVE: The interior dining room is loosely organized around three elements: the curving bar; traditional table seating; and an enclosed seating alcove. Ceiling forms define various focal points in the restaurant and stand out against the darkened ceiling structure. **BELOW:** This seating area in front of the interior fireplace is enclosed in a Douglas fir surround with cream leather upholstery. Low tables and stools allow the area to be organized informally for as many groups and individuals as can fit comfortably. Food can be served here, but the main emphasis is on cocktails and conversation.



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The outdoor seating area, sheltered under its trellis, includes a full bar to ensure patrons have the same beverage options as those indoors. The variable Texas weather is countered with both a fireplace for chilly evenings and a fountain for hot summer days. The doors to the interior dining room can be opened on nice days to allow the two spaces to flow continuously together, and a stage at one end is perfect for live music.



DESIGN: The Michael Malone Studio at WMC Architects, Dallas, TX
PHOTOGRAPHER: Steven Vaughan Photography, Dallas, TX