

HOSPITALITY

While the restaurant's subtleties may be lost on outsiders, EL EQUIPO CREATIVO gives Barcelonians a fresh spin on nostalgia

After entering Bellavista del Jardín del Norte, visitors encounter food stations with seating, each formed by a metal-framed *cabina*.



Bellavista
del jardín del norte





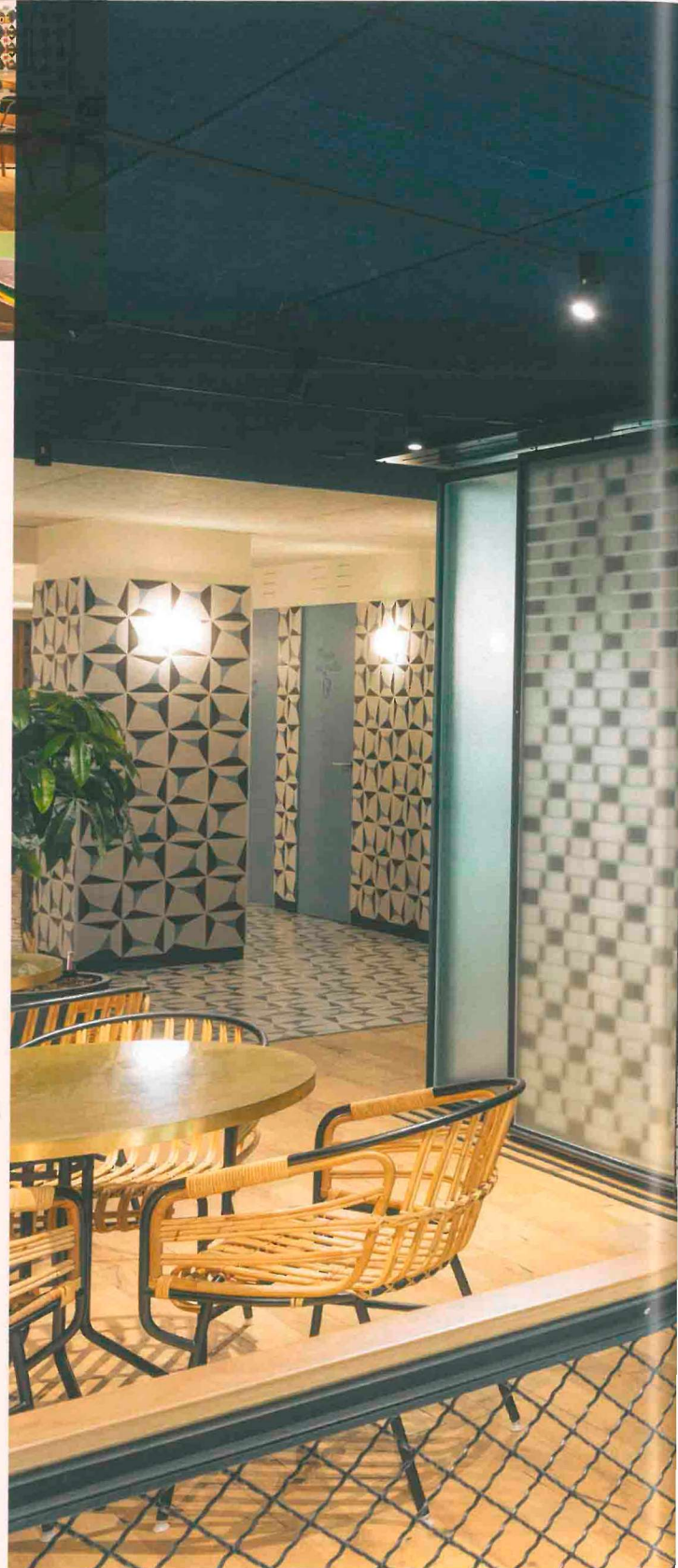
Small structures within the restaurant mimic establishments found in a typical Spanish village, such as a local bar and barbershop.

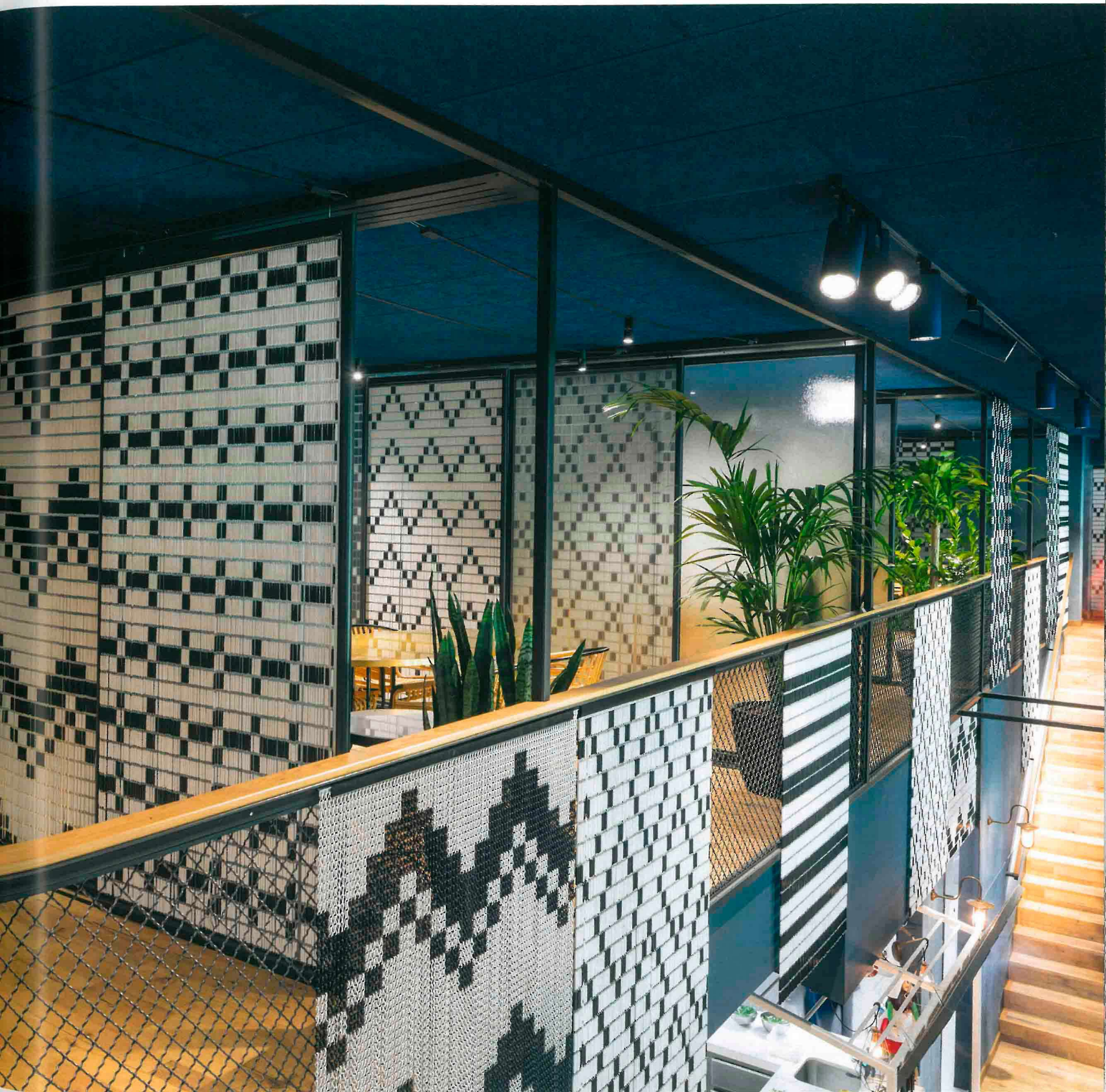
BARCELONA — To avoid confusion when catching a taxi to Bellavista del Jardín del Norte, ask the driver to take you to *el restaurante del Messi*. The star of FC Barcelona partnered with the Iglesias brothers to develop a new city hotspot. The footballer and his associates, top restaurateurs, entrusted local studio El Equipo Creativo with the design.

The designers typically use a restaurant's cuisine as a starting point. Their vivid, playful style acts as a counterpoint to the established, often pedestrian codes of cool and chic that proliferate in the city's famed dining scene. In this case, the clients wished to repeat the success of Casa de Tapes Cañota, an eatery whose interior features cartoonish graphics, bursts of hanging flower arrangements and an updated interpretation of the vernacular wooden-chair-and-terracotta-tile decor found in many of Spain's family-run restaurants.

Cañota's winning formula has been copied all over the city. It's equally popular with locals looking for a rebooted version of the classic mom-and-pop establishment and with tourists, who feel as if they're experiencing something friendly and authentic, yet without the grittiness that often accompanies traditional tapas bars. At Bellavista del Jardín del Norte, the designers carried the idea a step further, re-creating not one bar, but an entire village.

The nostalgia and pride triggered by one's birthplace is very strong in Spanish cultures around the world. Lionel Messi wanted to honour Rosario, Argentina, with his restaurant. Spanish-speaking people on both sides of the ocean return to their *pueblos* during fiestas that transform the streets with colourful ephemera, old-fashioned carnival attractions and kiosks churning out hot dogs and *churros*. This joyous 'homecoming' »







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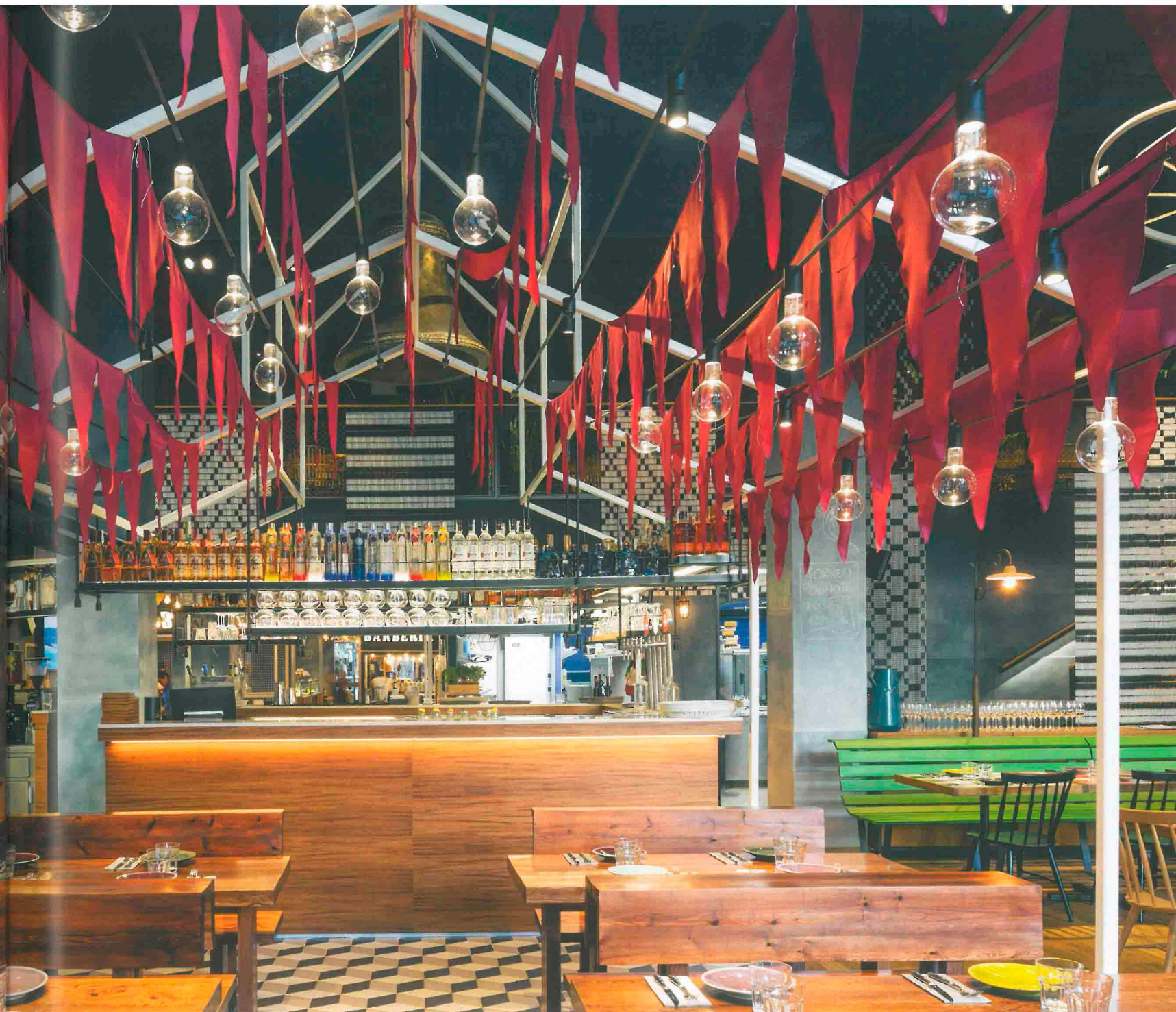


Surrounding the *plaza mayor* – the largest seating area – metallic-bead curtains represent buildings, while spiky pendants symbolize a fireworks display.

Bellavista del Jardín del Norte's size and layout facilitate the sensation of strolling through a village



The spatial experience culminates at the *plaza mayor*, complete with its own 'church'.



event is celebrated in the design of Bellavista del Jardín del Norte. 'Barcelona is experiencing a gastronomic explosion,' says Natali Canas del Pozo, cofounder of El Equipo Creativo. 'We think that most restaurants are trying to differentiate themselves from others through more specific food concepts and designs.'

Canas del Pozo admits that the project's biggest challenge was its sheer size: 1,000 m² spread over ground floor and mezzanine. Formerly an office for an advertising firm, the restaurant is in a bland 1980s building. The site's saving grace is a rare (for Barcelona) rear garden, which despite lending the restaurant its name is unsuitable for outdoor dining, owing to its location amid residential apartments.

Size, however, as well as an unusual layout, facilitates the intended sensation of sauntering through a village – a stroll that takes patrons along narrow streets to an

open-sided main square. From the entrance, visitors move through a series of food stations with seating, each formed by a metal-framed *cabina*. These little structures imitate establishments found in a typical Spanish village: a *colmado* (grocery store), barbershop, local bar and so on. The trajectory ultimately leads to the *plaza mayor* – the largest seating area – complete with its own 'church'. Surrounding the plaza, metallic-bead curtains at varying heights exemplify buildings, while spiky pendants, made in conjunction with Spanish lighting firm BMLD, signify a fireworks display: the finale of hometown fiestas.

Revealing the kind of flexibility usually restricted to hotels, the mezzanine offers space for meetings and events. Complete with all the technological bells and whistles, Bellavista del Jardín del Norte's entresol attracts a business crowd in search of a less corporate environment. — SW

elequipocreativo.com