

Designers: URBA & EJTECH

Project team: Márton Lengyel (URBA), Liza Natasa Rakusz (URBA), Judit Eszter Kárpáti (EJTECH), Esteban de la Torre (EJTECH)

Client: ONYX Restaurant Budapest

Area: 128 sqm

Year: 2024

Location: Budapest, Hungary

Photography: Matti Varga

Lighting design: LUMO Concept

Seating: Multifelt Factory and Viaplant

Text: Lidia Vajda

ONYX ÆTHER

After four years of experimentation and evolution, ONYX, the hallmark of Hungarian fine dining reopened with a groundbreaking concept: ONYX ÆTHER. This new restaurant merges art, science and sustainable gastronomy to explore yet uncharted narratives of fine dining. Its multi-sensory experience unfolds through an 11-course menu that integrates centuries of innovation, from the first established restaurant, to the Industrial Revolution, and onwards to the speculative culinary landscape of 3016, featuring dishes inspired by themes such as Petri dish-grown meat, martian farming colonies and the non-human intelligence of mushrooms. ONYX ÆTHER offers a transformative dining experience — a journey where taste, sound and light interweave to redefine what a restaurant can be.

The core concept of ONYX ÆTHER—developed by URBA and EJTECH in close collaboration with the client—was to create a dynamic, ever-evolving space. A timeless, multi-layered environment, poetically weaves together universal themes around transience and impermanence. As the evening unfolds, the space morphs seamlessly, guiding guests on an immersive journey from plate to palate, engaging their senses and intuition in a continuous flow of experience. At its core stands a soft monolith—a striking, large-scale textile sculpture animated by a six-motor resolution, unfolding into fluid, rippling compositions. This dynamic centrepiece shifts the spatial atmosphere, engaging the senses and intuition, while offering a new way to experience the dinner's themes and narratives.

The walls and ceilings, preserved in their raw, untouched state, serve as a living testament to the venue's historical past. The trails of time on the surfaces have been preserved as a humble nod to the origins of the building.

The design philosophy of material usage centres around ONYX Műhely's Michelin Green Star. Reflecting on this ethos, ONYX ÆTHER was designed with a strong focus on sustainability, prioritizing thoughtful material selection and environmentally conscious solutions. In the centre of the space, lies a sunken area with a long communal table. Surrounding it is a bespoke sofa system crafted from surplus wool sourced from the Multifelt Wool Mill. With its uniquely textured edges, this dense, machine-cut pressed wool was originally a manufacturing surplus—now reimagined to introduce warmth and tactile richness to the design. Mixed with Viaplant's natural resin, this sofa system invites guests to use the space as they please, whether sitting or lying around between meals. The layering of the felt is reminiscent of the stratification of earth layers during the millenia. Casting from melted aluminium construction waste (such as scrap wires and drywall ribs) and pouring into damp sand beds without moulds allows the partition screens and all custom-made tables to highlight the sustainable approach further. The resulting organically textured blocks shimmer with imperfections, proudly showcasing their reclaimed origins and embodying a sense of movement and adaptability. The space is fitted with an unapparent

quadraphonic sound system for spatial sound events. Lighting technology was delicately crafted by LUMO Concept.

ONYX ÆTHER's creation is the result of a collaborative process led by the six-member design team. This included architects Liza Natasa Rakusz and Márton Lengyel from URBA, art and strategic directors Góg Angéla and Fekete Marcell from the ONYX team, and the artist duo Judit Eszter Kárpáti and Esteban de la Torre from EJTECH. Together, they brought a democratic and fluid approach to the project, crafting an exceptional fusion of design and storytelling.

From the rolling gravel reminiscent of the Danube's banks to the deliberate use of Hungarian materials and techniques, the design roots itself in local identity while embracing a global vision of sustainability. It invites guests not just to dine but to engage deeply with the space, making each visit personal, inventive, and profoundly meaningful.