



UNCLE JOHN'S UNVEILS REFRESHED LOOK DESIGNED BY SPATIAL AFFAIRS BUREAU AND NEW EVENING OFFERING IN THE HEART OF DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES

Classic American-Chinese Diner Celebrates Contemporary Setting Created by the Award-Winning Design Studio and Introduces Louisiana-style Seafood Menu with April 7th Grand Opening

Los Angeles, CA (March 31, 2017) – Los Angeles-based [Spatial Affairs Bureau](#), an award-winning architecture, landscape, and product design studio, created an inviting dining experience for the nearly 50-year-old Uncle John's diner, which is located in downtown's vibrant historic core neighborhood at 834 S. Grand Avenue. The designers developed a contemporary diner that plays with the historic backdrop while working with a modest budget—construction costs topped out at under \$15,000—and closely alongside proprietors Shirley and Petrina Ng who recently took the helm at Uncle John's. The redesign of the interior space coincides with the launch of the local institution's evening Louisiana-style seafood menu whose highlights include communal-style Cajun-spiced crawfish, shrimp and clams among other bayou-inspired dishes.

“This has been a really fascinating project for us. When I first went to Uncle John's, I loved the team and the food, but was struck by the starkly lit and drably colored interior that the Ng sisters had inherited,” said Peter Culley, founder and creative director of Spatial Affairs Bureau. “In search of a balance between more comfortable surroundings that would sustain the diner's longstanding diverse clientele and something more contemporary to attract downtown's evolving residents, workers, and visitors, we had many interrogating discussions about appropriate ways to proceed: *not too trendy, but not too stiff or refined or not museum-like* for example. Sometimes, a highly practical, limited-budget project like this where you can't just start again with everything new is a great back-to-basics high-impact design exercise.”

Accommodating up to 60 diners, the sleek, yet homey, restaurant offers a mix of cafe-style and countertop seating that balances the new nighttime mode with the ongoing classic American-Chinese diner that will continue to operate in daytime hours. Spatial Affairs Bureau's design approach creates a slightly elevated mom-and-pop feel with a few twists that reference the long-standing downtown Los Angeles history of Uncle John's, such as utilizing the original logo to create a large illuminated neon sign at the rear of the restaurant to draw the eye in. Throughout, carefully considered color and lighting strategies add moments of interest without being “colorful.” Existing light fixtures were re-lamped with dimmable low-energy bulbs to add warmth and flexibility for the dual mode requirements, providing a more theatrical mood for the evening.

Creating a richer atmosphere, the designers utilized many existing components of the diner and opted to apply new color in unexpected hues: painting the walls and ceiling with warm-gray tones to frame the brightly-lit flurry of activity in the kitchen while opting for a complimentary pale yellow

hue on the dining tables. Custom red vinyl wall graphics wrap corners of the main dining space to reinforce the Uncle John's brand and help to bring the eye down to the diners' level. To frame and extend the central dining area, the designers added new custom off-the-shelf furniture elements.

“When my sister Petrina and I were given the opportunity to acquire Uncle John's last year, we jumped on it,” said Shirley Ng, co-owner of Uncle John's. “I was just returning home to LA after living abroad and had roots in the hospitality industry. There were so many great things going for the restaurant: a rich history, a long-standing customer base that represents the melting pot of Los Angeles, and an opportunity to put our own stamp on the menu and brand. Refreshing the interiors in order to modernize in a nostalgic way to create a more inviting dining experience was one of the first areas where we wanted to make our mark. We were thrilled to work with an international architecture and design firm like Spatial Affairs Bureau to help us to bring our vision to life. We instantly had a connection with Peter and his team—their Los Angeles office is also in downtown. They understood the energy of our vibrant neighborhood and we wanted to feed off of that energy and bring it into the dining experience here at Uncle John's.”

Since 1968, Uncle John's has been a go-to for a fusion of traditional American-diner comfort foods, like its legendary steak and eggs, and Chinese-style dishes. While the core menu and spirit of the restaurant remains in place, the Ngs—the third owners of Uncle John's—have introduced new flavors to the daytime service that include a more authentic approach to the Chinese dishes. On April 7th, the diner will expand its hours into the evening with the launch of an exciting seafood-driven dinner service that is inspired by the flavors of Louisiana and sense of community ignited by traditional crab and crawfish boils.

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About Uncle John's

Uncle John's was first opened in 1968 on Olive and 8th Street. Shirley and Petrina Ng acquired the 60-cover South Grand Avenue business in summer 2016 in the newly thriving historic core area of Los Angeles' downtown. The daytime menu continues to feature a fusion traditional diner-style fare with updated, more authentic Chinese-style offerings.

Address: Uncle John's 834 S. Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90017

Phone: (213) 623-3555

Hours: Diner: Monday - Saturday 6:30am - 3:00pm

Evening Louisiana-style seafood service: Monday-Saturday 5:30pm - 10:30pm

About Spatial Affairs Bureau

Spatial Affairs is an award-winning architecture, landscape, and product design studio founded by creative director, Peter Culley with offices in Los Angeles, Richmond VA, and London. Among the other current and recent Spatial Affairs Bureau projects are: parasols, benches and utility buildings for the Metropolitan Museum's redesigned 5th Avenue David H. Koch Plaza and digital ticket kiosks for its Met Breuer building; Richmond BridgePark, a two-mile long linear park to reconnect the city across and down to the historic James River that places pedestrians and cyclists in priority over automobiles; a 40, 000sq ft interior fit-out for Crosstown Arts inside the until now-abandoned 1.5m sq ft Sears Distribution Center in Memphis, TN that will provide galleries, studios and art-making facilities; a 5000 sq ft house, gallery and workplace for London artist Rana Begum; ongoing interior

remodels for top advertising agency TBWA\Chiat\Day's 122, 000sq ft 'Walled City' big box office, including developing new working typology account spaces, custom furniture that could be fabricated in-house, a new central 'piazza', and a coffee / kombucha bar; AIA honor award winning *Round Hill Pavilions*, a contemporary take on the picturesque with 3 'dissected' owner-built pavilions framing views on a farm in Orange VA; and various Passive House-standard private house projects in Los Angeles that will be amongst the first registered in the city.

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