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# classroom chic

A new Atlanta design firm creates buzz on the local restaurant scene with its first project

By Danine Alati  
Photography by Lance Davies

While a chalkboard, a globe, and a library could imply that this venue is an educational facility—as can its proximity to Georgia Tech—The Globe is actually a new midtown Atlanta restaurant by Govantez Lowndes with sleek, modern interior architecture by local firm ai3.

Set in the Centergy Building in Technology Square, this bustling eatery proves as diverse as the clientele it serves. It's a spot for young intellectuals to meet for coffee, a hip luncheonette for a business meeting, a high-energy happy hour scene for post-work cocktails, or the ideal dining experience for that first date. "It's one of the best spots in the city because of the central mix of people," says Lucy Aiken-Johnson, principal at ai3. With an office, hotel, and conference center, Technology Square attracts professionals, students, alumni, and families, alike.

Lowndes sought a modern reinterpretation of a Euro café or bistro—a mod public space where academia meets town square. Aiken-Johnson says that ai3 "managed to incorporate classroom elements in abstract ways." Green tones reference old-school chalkboards, and the private dining room is a library of

ai3 designed The Globe to be at once modern and sleek with a long zinc bar, yet warm and inviting with plush soft seating in the front lounge area (right).



design

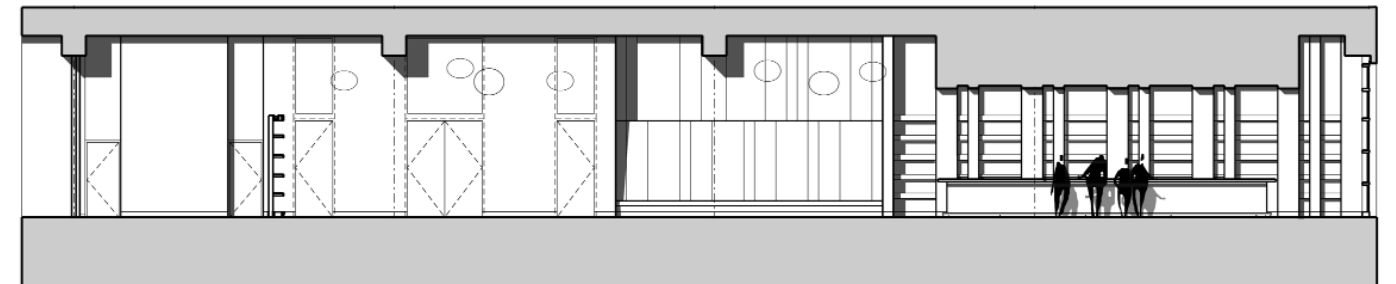


books. A loungy front bar area gives way to banquettes and dining tables in the dining room with a back library appropriate for small groups and private parties. Outdoor seating can accommodate 80 patrons who might like to take in the sites of events in the square. "It was important to have a casual quality, and yet be elegant and contemporary," Aiken-Johnson says. "Govantez has created a wonderful, community-based place. It's a cool destination." (The Globe offers happy hour tapas/wine tastings on Tuesdays and in the summer features a film series on Wednesdays and jazz on the patio on Thursdays.)

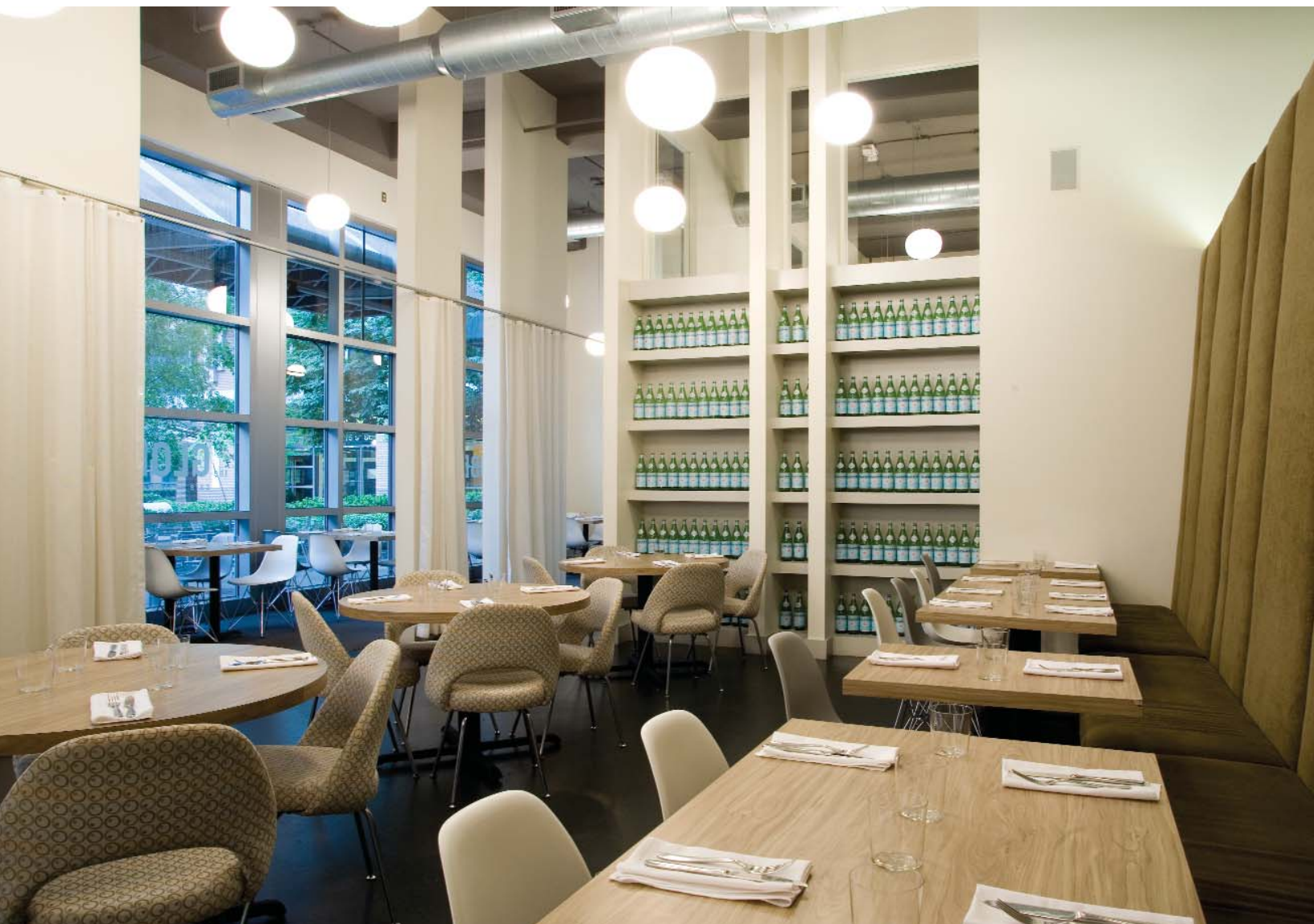
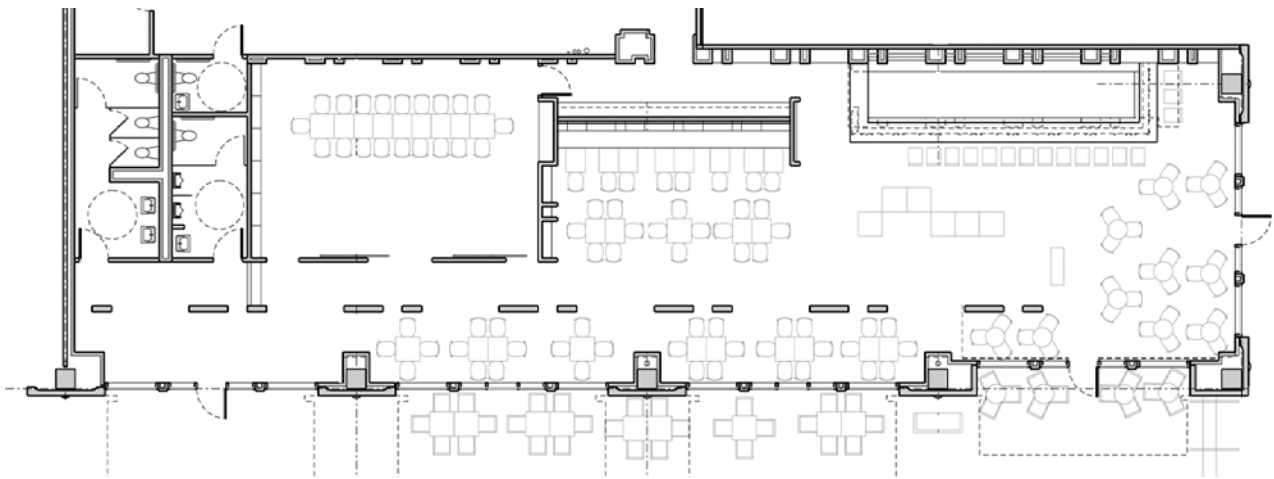
A very involved client, Lowndes says, "I wanted to create a progression of spaces to propel people to come back. But the design is quite simple. The menu [by chef Joshua Perkins] isn't layered with five or six different ingredients. And to reflect that, the design is simple; it's classic, redefined in modern ways."

Frequently traveling to London, Lowndes feels inspired by a British sensibility. "Jasper Morrison was the first modern designer who I thought got it," he reveals. Morrison designed the bar stools as well as the globe pendant lights. "We make classic modern by hanging 54 of these lights from thin wires to form a constellation," he says. Aiken-Johnson surmises that this is one of the largest installations of these Flos fixtures, which provide the majority of illumination with some complementary recessed cove and natural lighting. A main character in this space, the lighting has the power to set the tone, create the vibe, and transform the Globe from a bustling café to a sexy nightclub. "The space is a backdrop for how people gather," Lowndes notes. "It's very easy to change the mood with drapery and lighting."

According to Aiken-Johnson, menu offerings sketched on a large chalkboard (above left) reference a classroom in an abstract way. The vibe changes throughout the space as one progresses back to the library room (above), which can accommodate group dining or private parties.



design



Lowndes adds that ai3 had no qualms about dealing with a client with such strong ideas. “They embraced it and ran with it,” he says. “This was a young team, jumping off from a major corporate environment, and I was impressed with what they could accomplish with no support structure or resources. They had a sense of technical solutions I didn’t expect, and their problem-solving skills were amazing.”

But Lowndes should have anticipated ai3’s level of design savvy after his first meeting with the team. Linked through a mutual acquaintance, they met for a 40-minute lunch that lasted almost three hours, with conversation that meandered from travel to music to design influences. “The designers caught on right away,” Lowndes says. “They understood how to make the restaurant mod yet inviting through the palette, furnishings, and lighting.” And in the end ai3 accomplished a space that reflects the ideology of its name: According to Lowndes, The Globe is a place of social inclusion for a diverse population, where people converge and converse, exchange ideas, food, and drink, where everybody belongs. 🌐

*who*

*Project:* The Globe Restaurant. *Client:* Govantez Lowndes. *Architect, interior designer:* ai3, Inc. *Concept design:* Mark Cottle. *General contractor:* Nicholson Contracting Services. *Food service consultant/restaurant supply contractor:* Peddler’s Two. *Photographer:* Lance Davies.

*what*

*Paint:* Benjamin Moore, Martin Senour. *Flooring:* Armstrong. *Carpet/carpet tile:* Bentley Prince Street. *Lighting fixtures:* Capri Lighting, Flos, Lightolier. *Window treatments:* Designtex. *Dining chairs:* Herman Miller, Knoll Studio. *Cocktail/dining tables:* Falcon. *Lounge/cocktail seating:* Custom by Corn Upholstery. *Banquette/built-in seating:* Custom by Nicholson Contracting. *Upholstery:* Maharam. *Occasional furniture:* Vintage Barstools. *Architectural woodworking:* Zinc Bar by Custom Steel, Kevin Farmer. *Cabinetmaking:* Nicholson Contracting.

*where*

*Location:* Atlanta, GA. *Total floor area:* 5,660 sq. ft. *No. of floors:* 1. *Total capacity:* approx. 120 seats indoors.

Employing the owner’s British sensibility, ai3 outfitted The Globe with a reinterpretation of classic Jasper Morrison pieces like the bar stools (right) and globe light fixtures hung by thin wires throughout the space (above). By manipulating lighting levels and drawing the drapery to allow in varying degrees of natural illumination, it’s easy to alter the mood of the restaurant at any given time of day or night (opposite).





### **ai3**

Lucy Aiken-Johnson, Dan Maas, Joe Remling, and Patrick Johnson have taken their experience working on high-visibility projects and added a transforming energy to the Atlanta design scene with the founding of their firm ai3. In the past two years ai3 has quickly built a reputation for creating energetic and memorable designs that reflect the entrepreneurial spirit of its firm, while integrating the distinctive personality of each individual client. ai3 offers full-service consultation, and conceptual development in architecture, interior design, and product development. The Globe restaurant in midtown Atlanta was ai3's first completed project.



### **ai3**

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