GRANDS RESTAURANT

Architects: Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates, Inc.

Location: Philadelphia, PA

Client: Grands Restaurant

Completion: 1967

This project involved the renovation of two adjacent dilapidated row houses into a modest neighborhood restaurant that catered to students. In keeping with its purpose and the very modest budget, we used conventional means and elements throughout, but in such a way as to make the common things take on new meaning in their new context. For example, for the main lighting fixtures we used large-size white porcelain R.L.M.'s -- an old fashioned industrial fixture that is solid but cheap and, in the context we gave it, elegant. The booths were designed not as the more common exaggeratedly low, upholstered types that expose the sitter, but as the more traditional, high kind with comfortable but modest padding and an appropriate sense of privacy. The wall ornamentation consists of painted patterns on the plaster above the wainscoting of the booths. On the exterior the porcelain-enameled sign at the level of the second floor boldly concludes the play of duality and unity. The cup similarly attracts the eye by evolving from two dimensions to three so it can be seen by pedestrians as they approach parallel to the facade. It was dramatically lit at night, with the letters becoming translucent white light and the cup outlined in neon.

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