



**DAMIEN FOLLONE, ASSOCIATE AND SENIOR DESIGNER, RESTAURANTS + BARS
WIMBERLY INTERIORS**

Damien is an associate and senior designer of restaurants and bars at Wimberly Interiors' London studio. Originally from Australia, Damien moved to the UK in 2012 following the completion of his master's degree in Architecture from the University of Technology Sydney. A core member of Wimberly Interiors' expanding global entertainment practice, Damien is at the forefront of experiential design, exploring how F&B concepts and brands come together with products and personalities to deliver enjoyable and authentic guest experiences. Damien is also a current member of 'Fortis' – WATG and Wimberly Interiors' annual leadership programme, which recognises the firm's brightest stars in a year-long programme to learn, collaborate and develop strategic initiatives that will have a lasting impact on our industry and firm.

What do you enjoy most about your work?

Interacting with people – from the concept design team through to our development partners and, ultimately, the guests and visitors that experience our spaces. Holistic hospitality experiences are built on personalities and stories, particularly in the entertainment environment, which is all about energy and human interaction.

What's your hottest topic in design currently?

I believe that there are three enduring elements to great design: authenticity, responsibility and provenance. I feel privileged to work in an environment that places great importance on these – not just in the entertainment sector, but in hospitality, residential and mixed-use design more broadly.

In your opinion, which area in a hotel has the biggest design impact?

Without sounding biased... F&B! Italian in heritage and hailing from Sydney, I have fond memories of my family's annual sauce-making day and believe that my fascination in this process is one of the reasons I am so passionate about F&B experiences – likewise coming to the realisation that not every kid growing up in Australia was lucky enough to experience the same thing. Designing spaces that have a strong and honest identity, and can tell a personal story or transport guests to another time or place, is really a privilege.

Which projects are you currently working on?

Three restaurants opening in Taghazout, Morocco in June 2020. I've been working on these projects since their inception, and it's always exciting as we edge closer to grand openings when guests will be able to experience our concepts.

If you could take the credit for having invented anything in the world, what would it be and why?

As someone who is often on the move for work, I'd have to say the travel hairdryer. Or the travelling pasta maker and boiler combo, although come to think of it has that been invented yet?! Who doesn't want fresh pasta on the go?