

Beijing In Las Vegas

Vibrant colors bring Asia to America at the Lucky Dragon Hotel and Casino

By Leonora Desar

The Lucky Dragon Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas has it all. In addition to the 27,500-sq ft casino, one will find a spa, tea garden and five restaurants, not to mention over 200 Asian-styled rooms and suites. It's the perfect marriage of East meets West.

"The property is unique in that it's geared toward Chinese clientele," says Janelle Drouet, director of Lightswitch SF, Inc. in San Francisco. "With that in mind the idea was to create a must-see space reminiscent of what you'd find in China, but also with a Las Vegas nod—a very energetic design that would create a lot of sparkle and visual interest and excitement."

The excitement starts with the exterior. On the boutique hotel's façade, linear asymmetric LED fixtures in a custom-mounting bracket (Emerge Architectural Lighting and DECOLights) wash the hotel's red glazing with red illumination. The light highlights the hotel's architectural elements and horizontal bandings, accenting the mullions and capturing the eye. The light is vivid, saturated. "We really wanted to emphasize the red, which is important in Chinese culture and to the Lucky Dragon brand," Drouet says.

The casino facade is also lit dramatically. The designers worked with the architectural team EdVance and Associates to create a custom-curved metal channel with low-profile linear LED fixtures in two runs on both sides of the channel. The fixtures turn on and off at different times. They change abruptly, creating movement and visual interest. "It's very striking in the Las Vegas skyline," Drouet says. "It's a precursor for the level of excitement that will be in the space inside. We wanted to create something that would create curiosity—it feels festive, like there is something exciting going on behind these doors."

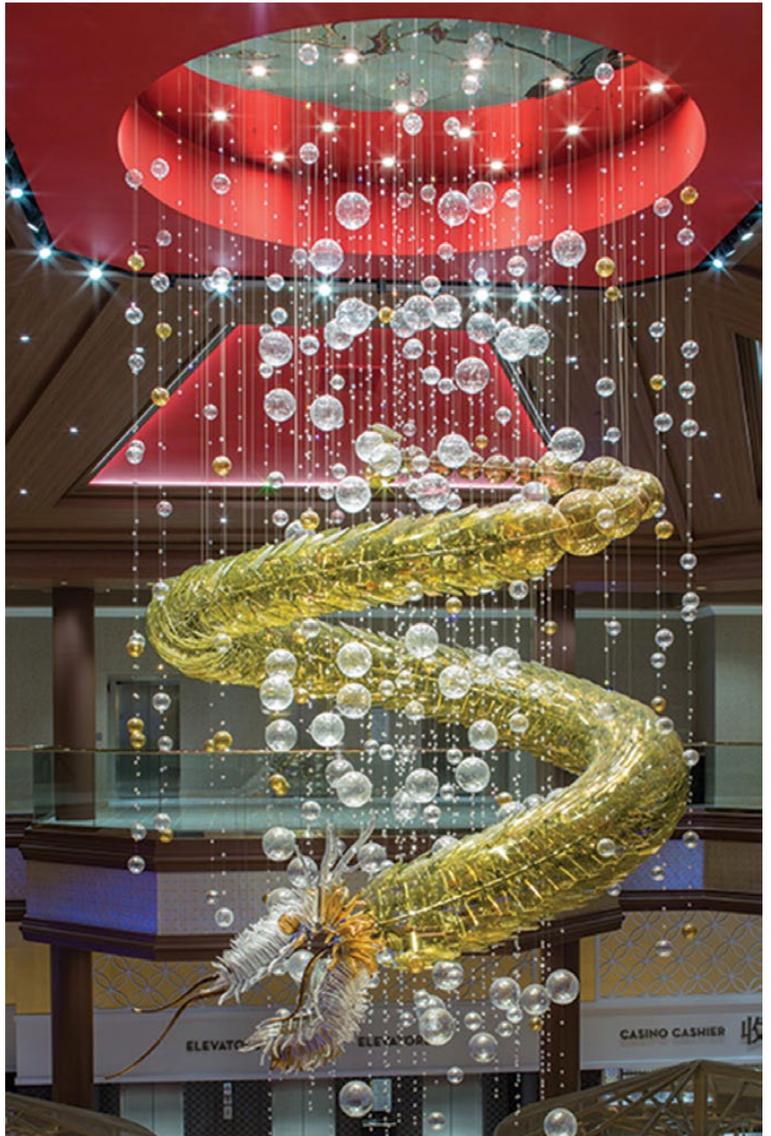


Linear fixtures turn on and off rapidly a different times for maximum drama.

Inside, visitors are greeted by a 1.25-ton glass dragon chandelier (Preciosa) in the heart of the casino. The chandelier spirals down several stories and is composed of cascading hand-blown clear and amber spheres. Directly above are recessed LED fixtures in a mirrored canopy. The fixtures feature a custom color filter that provides warmth, filtered to about 2600K. "The dragon scales that spiral up are amber," Drouet says. "We really wanted to make sure that popped and felt warm, that you could look up at the chandelier with minimized glare."

In an architectural channel in the ceiling, the team recessed adjustable track lighting to spotlight the chandelier and create additional focal points. The light homes in on the dragon's face and whiskers while accentuating the details of the scales, picking up on the amber hues in the face and eyes. "It was about being able to move the sources along whatever orientation the dragon required," Drouet says. "They had to re-orient it to optimize the direction it faced, and we needed to create a lighting system that would be flexible."

The team accented the red coffered ceiling with perimeter cove lighting (Duralamp), creating a decorative glow. Small, pinhole high-output fixtures around the perimeter of the ceiling (Specialty Lighting Industries) increase general illumination on the gaming floor. The lights are minimal in appearance, keeping the chandelier the focal point, with everything else playing second fiddle.



A dragon chandelier stands out with spotlights on its unique details—whiskers, scales and cascading hand-blown spheres. Photos: Terry Mahanna, Mphoto7



Lanterns create a riot of color in the Dragon's Alley eatery.

INSPIRATION ABROAD

The interior designer, Lee Cagley, visited China and came back inspired by the vibrant Chinese night markets. An emporium called Dragon's Alley drew its vision from Cagley's trips abroad. Guests can watch chefs making dim sum and stir fry in the market's fully open display kitchen. The fixtures highlighting the kitchen have a cooler, crisp color temperature of 3500K. "It's like a jewel box," Drouet says.

Recessed LED downlights (Specialty Lighting Industries) are mounted outside the kitchen along service counters, allowing guests a clear view to the chefs inside. The luminaires feature a pinhole aperture, which creates a starry ceiling and minimizes the opening in the ceiling, reducing glare.

Throughout the buffet line, more than 400 lanterns are mounted closely together from a custom canopy. The lanterns create a riot of color—purples and greens, golds and oranges and reds.

"It's a colorful experience to be in a street market in Asia," Drouet says. "We're trying to replicate that feeling of organized visual chaos. You're transported to a market environment where things are close in proximity—the physical ceiling plane is lower and dropped to an intimate level, like the environment is reaching down and touching you. We wanted the liveliness of that—to condense the architecture and all the elements so that they're intense and vibrant."

Once through the buffet line, guests transition from organized chaos to a calmer open seating area. A bicycle sculpture captures attention in the center. Spotlights on a custom curved track (Solais Lighting) highlight its form. "We used narrow spots to create more drama," Drouet says, "a higher intensity of focused light for highlights and shadow. We wanted shadow within the metalwork of the bicycles themselves."



A bicycle sculpture is highlighted by spotlights on a custom curved track.

Red pendants made of wire and acrylic hang from above. They are reminiscent of the lanterns, but spaced farther apart, contributing to the feeling of openness. "They encourage relaxation," Drouet says. "It's like moving from higher energy to an open feeling where you can take a breath and enjoy your meal."