

Text
Sora Subrata

Images
Liandro NI
Siringoringo

Facing page
The latest addition to Semarang's happening food and beverage scene, The Bowery occupies a lofty warehouse-like space trimmed in dark leather, brass, wood and marble

Night and Day

Despite being Central Java's capital and largest city, Semarang still manages to fly just under the international tourism radar. Blame this on the city's blue-blooded sisters Yogyakarta and Surakarta (better known as Jogja and Solo), who have been hogging the spotlight. Next to these two genteel cities, the port of Semarang comes off as a business hub and industrial centre. But it's not without its charms and a vast cultural offering, from its UNESCO-listed Old Town to delectable cuisines to exquisite batiks. And more recently, a thriving cafe culture and dining scene.

'Semarang's local food and beverage scene has really flourished in the last three years,' says architect Chrisye Octaviani of Bitte Design Studio. The Jakarta-based practice was founded by Octaviani and fellow architecture graduate Agatha Carolina in 2013 after a two-year stint at luminary architect Andra Matin's studio. In a mere handful of years, Bitte has amassed a sizeable portfolio filled with some of the most happening new eateries and drinking holes in the Big Durian and beyond, including Semarang's latest and hottest hangout joint — The Bowery.

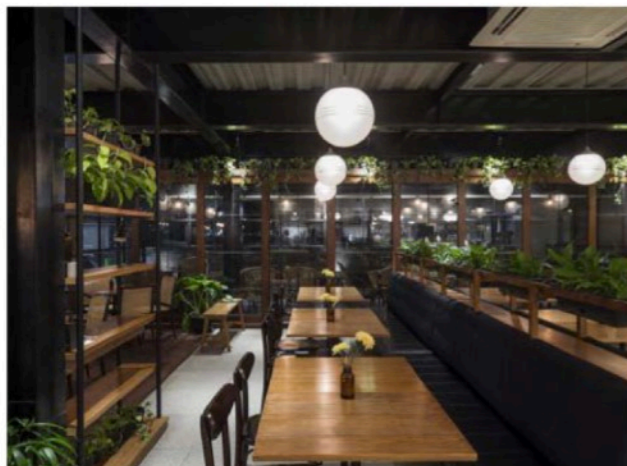
Occupying a prominent plot in the city centre, The Bowery is a four-in-one drink-and-dine destination comprising a coffee shop, The Bowery restaurant, Wishbone Bar and a function hall. 'Restaurants and coffee shops that turn into a bar with live music or DJs at night are quite popular in cities like Jakarta and Bandung. But the concept was still novel in Semarang,' says Octaviani.

In an area populated by pitched traditional Javanese *joglo* roofs, The Bowery paints a curious picture with its red brick facade, a nod

to its Manhattan neighbourhood namesake. Eastman Coffee, a local family business established in 1930, occupies the ground-level storefront and offers a casual setting that pairs wood and unfinished surfaces with a low ceiling and plenty of greenery. Above it sits the function hall, trimmed in herringbone parquet flooring and boasting a five-metre-tall ceiling with an exposed steel structure that reinforces its warehouse feel. Wishbone provides a counterpoint to the function hall's whitewashed walls with its quilted leather, dark wood panelling and low lighting.

The entrance to The Bowery restaurant is placed on the side of the building. Here the concept of dark and light continues. Diners are received into an intimate bar and wine cellar handsomely clad in leather and wood. The three-metre-tall ceiling soon gives way to a lofty double-height space that is the restaurant's dining area, also opulently dressed in dark leather, brass, wood and marble. Taking centre stage is the restaurant's open kitchen, entertaining diners with the theatrics of food preparation. A carefully crafted vintage look highlights the space throughout, with details such as glass-block partitions, bespoke furnishings and brass lighting.

Aside from the tight delivery time (the 1,200-square-metre project was constructed in just six months), Octaviani shares that the biggest challenge in the design process was creating a balance between the restaurant and the bar experience. 'The ambience should transform from day to night,' she says. As the sun sets down and night sets in, The Bowery dims the light to a golden glow and provides delighted Semarangians with a sultry setting worthy of international fame.



Top
Designed by Jakarta-based Bitte Design Studio, the interiors showcase a carefully crafted vintage look that channels the spirit of its Manhattan neighbourhood namesake

Middle
A touch of green and delicate lighting soften the structure's otherwise angular edge

Bottom
Designer Chrisye Octaviani aimed to create a balance between restaurant and bar to transform the ambience from day to night