

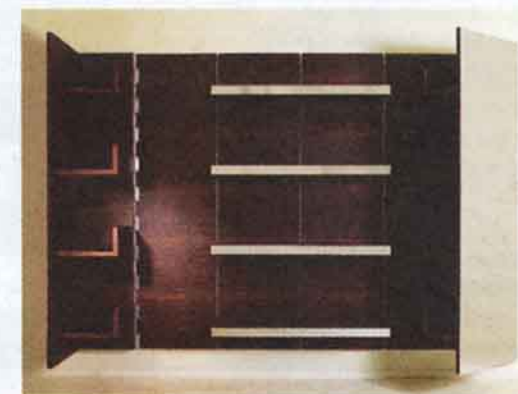


The new impressionists

Letting it all hang out with Hong Kong's Art Jammers

design by Anna Koor annakoor@netvigator.com

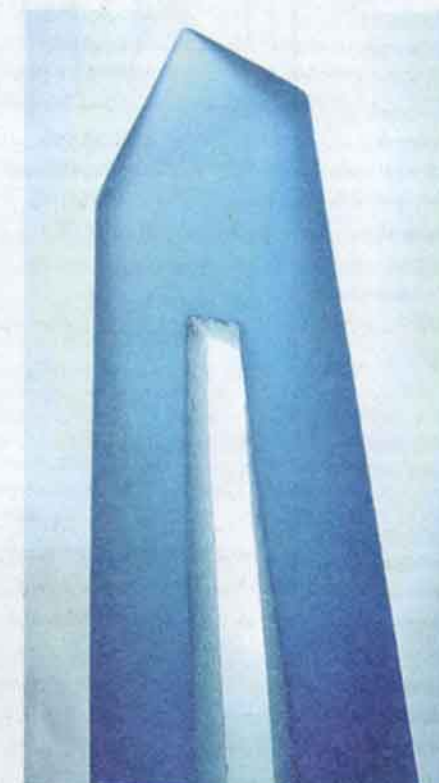
Feast the eyes Kitchen king Strato (www.stratocucine.com) of Italy has unveiled a feast of mouth-watering furniture described as a balance between sculpture and architecture. The company's trademark large geometric volumes and monolithic forms have been taken to extremes by designer Marco Gorini, working in titanium, rippled maple and mirror-polished stainless steel, with rosewood, crystal and sandstone details. The work surfaces are set at different heights for food preparation, cooking and eating. The company makes just 300 kitchens a year, and is building only 20 each of the limited-edition Marco Gorini 020.02, 020.03 and 020.04 models, meaning they will become collectors' pieces. Available from Design and Distribution Link (tel: 2838-8299).



Little buddha A new hole-in-the-wall bar called Baby B is stretching Lan Kwai Fong in a new direction. Marginally off the beaten track at 18 Wo On Lane (tel: 2167-7244), the minuscule, 20-square-metre bar was designed by Bobbie Cornell of Icebox (tel: 9133-9666; e-mail: design@icebox.com.hk). Its original name, Baby Buddha, was a reference to a small shrine nearby and this spiritual theme informed the colour palette of reds and golds. A sensuous copper-leaf wall creates a focal backdrop to the bar counter while sheathing irregular structures. Similarly, timber decking levels out the original sloping floor while providing an outdoorsy atmosphere, emphasised by park-bench style seating — appropriate because the building site next door is due to become a public park linking Lan Kwai Fong and SoHo.



Art of glass Koru (www.koru-hk.com) is a Hong Kong-based online gallery that carries contemporary design and art collections from New Zealand. The name Koru is derived from a Maori term that emphasises the relationship between design and nature: its logo depicts a young fern leaf about to unfold. The website divides the collections into "wood", "glass" and "tiny treasures", a section containing small accessories such as candle-holders, trinket boxes and coasters. One rising star on the site is glass-maker Emma Camden. The British-born artist and designer emigrated to Auckland in 1991 and has since developed a following in Australia, Malaysia, Britain and the United States. One of her pieces, the 47-centimetre-tall, cast-glass sculpture Gatehouse (pictured), captures and plays with light through its faceted surfaces and skewed angles.



Mucky duck The recently opened restaurant Bebek Bengil 3, BB3 for short, celebrates Balinese traditions in both menu and decor. It is the third in a line of successful restaurants that started in Ubud, Bali, and the concept has been imported to Hong Kong by Paul Hsu of Elite Concepts (tel: 2521-0804) in tandem with the Balinese owners. The name means "dirty duck", a reference to a flock of ducks with mucky feet that invaded the site of BB1 when it was being built. Bebek Bengil's founder, Mande Sudarta, created a Balinese atmosphere in BB3 (5/F, The Broadway, 54-62 Lockhart Road, Wan Chai, tel: 2217-8000) through the use of terracotta flooring, ornate timber screens and hand-carved furniture. Traditional *lesehan* seating has been created on the terrace, where a timber deck supports raised pavilions with thatched bamboo roofs. Diners kick off their shoes, climb onto the platforms and recline on soft upholstery and scatter cushions around low tables.

BIG BEN



What? Big Ben

Which is? The 13-tonne bell that chimes the hour at Britain's Houses of Parliament (not the clock tower itself).

When? Big Ben was cast on April 10, 1858, and first tolled in the tower on September 7, 1859. But its story begins earlier.

Why? In 1834 a fire at the Houses of Parliament destroyed most of the existing structure. An architectural competition for the new Parliament building was won by Charles Barry's Renaissance-style design featuring neo-Gothic details by Augustus Pugin. It was decided to add the clock tower in 1844, while the new buildings were under construction.

And it took a decade to build? Not quite. The Astronomer Royal, Sir George Airy, specified the clock had to be correct to within one second on the hour, but clockmakers at the time thought such accuracy was unattainable for a large clock with heavy hands exposed to the elements. It wasn't until 1851 that a designer was found who said he could do it. **Who?** Edmund Beckett Denison designed the clock; E.J. Dent & Co made it.

Did Denison make the bell too? He would have liked to. At first he insisted on a bell made to his own shape and metal recipe, but it cracked while being tested. So he turned to master bellfounder George Mears, owner of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, to create a new one.

How? The old bell was melted down and a new one cast to Mears' design. It took 20 days for the metal to solidify and cool before it could be tested, then transported to Westminster on a trolley drawn by 16 horses.

Where did the name come from? Legend has it that during a long session in Parliament to come up with a name, commissioner of works Sir Benjamin Hall, a large man, stood up and made a lengthy speech on the subject. One wag shouted out, "Why not call him Big Ben and have done with it?" The house burst into laughter and the name stuck.

Success then ... Not quite: two months after its instalment in the tower, Big Ben cracked. Again, it was Denison's fault because he had specified a hammer too heavy for the bell. Big Ben was out of service for three years until a lighter hammer was fitted and the bell turned slightly so that the hammer hit an undamaged section. The crack accounts for Big Ben's distinctive, but not quite perfect tone.

katygreaves@aol.com