

**Samples of
Published Work:**

and drink

Food





SUSIE BURGE TAKES A TRIP INTO THE MYSTERY OF PHILIPPE STARCK'S WILDLY WHIMSICAL BEIJING NIGHT SPOT

IT'S ALMOST 11pm in Lan club. I'm here with a party of eight and we're ordering champagne, fabulous cocktails and bar snacks. It's been a long day in the Olympic City and we've missed dinner. Pity, as I've heard the Sichuan food in the restaurant is good and I was looking forward to some slow-roasted duck. I'm completely passing on the snacks (all fried). I'm happy with my evil drink (part vodka, part lime, part unknown spirit element) and a wander through the amazing phenomenon that is Philippe Starck's Lan.

How to describe it? It's a maze of dark corridors linking a cocktail bar, a lounge, a restaurant, an oyster bar, cigar room and four dozen tent-like private dining spaces. Each section flows into the other and makes a strangely integrated whole. A long hallway lined with a litany of cabinets of curiosities and ultra-long sofas (in pony skin and in buttoned velvet) forms an entrance corridor.

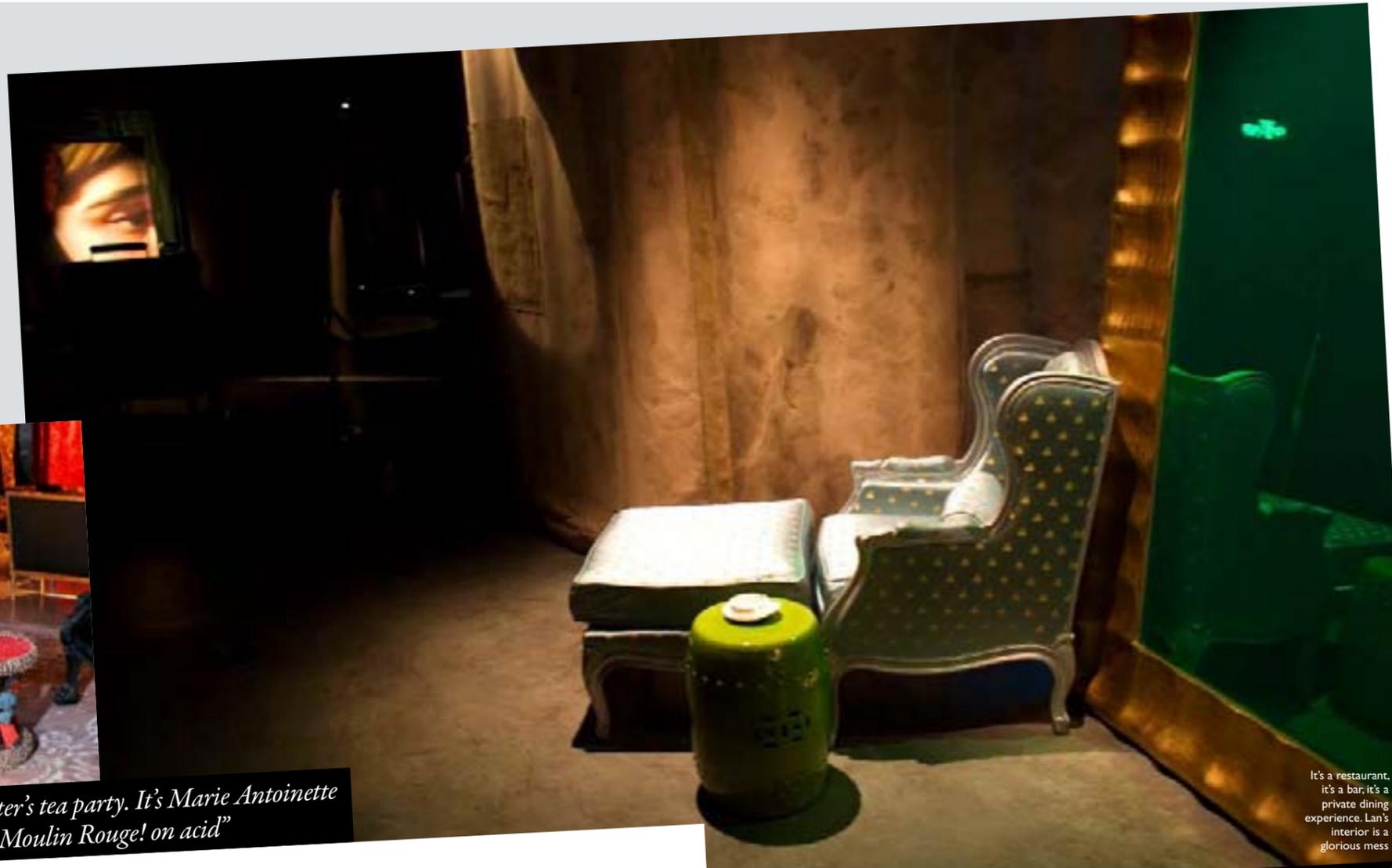
There are deliciously familiar Starck touches, such as elongated versions of Louis Ghost chairs along the bar. But it's the private rooms that intrigue me. They are created by drop cloths of thick canvas in the round, distressed and painted to look like old worn frescoes in an Italian villa or French chateau or the backdrop for an opera or a play.

Dine intimately a deux or join a sumptuous table of 20. Furnishings and place settings seem to follow no rhyme or reason or style or era, or perhaps it's the opposite – that eras and styles co-exist and confer. A spotlight makes a large pale disc on a canvas wall, illuminating nothing. It shifts to a different place as I watch and catches the gilt edge of a painted hand.

Some rooms I can't see into because ►

Curiouser and curiouser... French designer Philippe Starck's provocative style is alive in Beijing's Lan club

Drowning in decadence



"It's a Mad Hatter's tea party. It's Marie Antoinette in delirium. It's Moulin Rouge! on acid"

It's a restaurant, it's a bar, it's a private dining experience. Lan's interior is a glorious mess

the circle of cloth is drawn. Some I can peep into and catch glimpses of laughing groups of expatriates, slender glamorous women, men smoking cigars. Some have rich, deep red velvet drapes like theatre curtains. Back in the Lan club I watch a frame containing not a painting, but a revolving abstract image on a computer screen.

It's a circular experience exploring Lan: circles within circles, cycles of repetition, reinvention, revelation. Cycles of deconstruction, desecration, decay. There are echoes within echoes. Rooms within rooms. Mirrors within mirrors. Frames within frames. There is an awful lot that is theatrical – spotlights, curtains, fake objet d'art and furniture and paintings as if part of a set. There's much that is dreamlike about the decor too – an opium dream? A postmodern dream? A fictional one? Or as Starck says in the publicity release: "The dream of an eccentric art collector." (Gone mad?)

For me, it's like stepping through the looking glass. I'm Alice, in Wonderland

territory. Here is an enormous chair, all gilt with an eagle on the top. There is an onyx rhino's head emerging from a wall. A chandelier is made of mussel shells. Another features the taxidermied wings of pigeons. There are cabinets of blue and white china. Cabinets of cakes. Cabinets of books and cabinets of fake books. Of Catholic votive candles. Of crystals and stuffed animals and strings of replica pearls.

The more you look the more you see. There are cabinets of teapots. It's a Mad Hatter's tea party. It's Marie Antoinette in delirium. It's *Moulin Rouge!* on acid. Why are there pictures on the ceiling? What is the story behind the row of organic ceramic mushrooms blooming on a side table in the Lan restaurant?

Lan is owned and was commissioned by Zhang Lan, a super glamorous, super smart businesswoman in her early 40s, founder and head of the multi-million dollar South Beauty chain of restaurants. Rumour has it Starck visited the space for just three days in 2006, drew up the design, then sent

Lan off shopping, providing a thick booklet of exactly what to get and where to get it from around the world.

Fast forward to 2008 and it's been announced Starck is to front a reality TV design show on BBC2. He's also in the process of designing a string of hotels and apartment blocks and restaurants across the globe.

I wonder what Starck thinks of China today? There's more than a touch of Vegas in the new Beijing and Lan is a cultural phenomenon. Even without alcohol, it does very strange things to your head. It's a university essay; it's an entire prose piece about nothing. It's art speak, it's postmodern culture, it's vulgarity veiled in hip irony. Strip away the veils and what do you have? Is it crass or is it theatre? Isn't trashiness the point, then? Isn't that the very essence of theatre? All smoke and mirrors? Fake gilt, velvet and the moving spotlight?

Like it or loathe it, for random inventiveness and sheer mischievous opulence, you just can't beat Lan. ■



PHOTOS: NATALIE BEHRING, PATRICIA BAILEY, JASON HAMILTON/ACF



Drop dead gorgeous!

LET THERE BE LIGHT! THESE CHANDELIERS RANGE FROM OLD-WORLD EXTRAVAGANCE TO CONTEMPORARY CHROME



1. Barovier & Toso Domo, from \$9935 (Space, 02 8339 7588) 2. Cafe Lighting Reign, \$499 (02 9756 0863) 3. Lucci Luxe, \$295 (Beacon Lighting, 03 9368 1000) 4. Studio Italia Fenice, \$3329 (Exhibit Interiors, 02 9357 2977) 5. Flos Taraxacum, \$5080 (Space, 02 8339 7588) 6. Studio Italia San Marco, \$4799 (Exhibit Interiors, 02 9357 2977) 7. Lucci Claudia, \$189 (Beacon Lighting, 03 9368 1000) 8. Papaya Versailles, \$3799 (02 9386 9980)

The Persian rooms use lattice dividers to create intimate booths

I dream of genie

SUSIE BURGE TAKES A MAGIC CARPET RIDE THROUGH A GLAMOROUS NEW MELBOURNE NIGHTSPOT

PHOTOGRAPHY TIM JAMES STYLING SIBELLA COURT

PASSING through the rare antique Ceylonese Jaffna doors at the end of Melbourne's Beane Lane is to enter another world. Here is Spice Market, extravagant new bar/nightclub and a subterranean dream. Fifty bronze Burmese Sramasa monks with flickering tea light candles stand sentinel at the base

"We want people to have a glamorous experience, we want them to feel they're not in Melbourne anymore"

of the stairs. A few paces on, life-sized sensuously beautiful Thép Pha Nom Ladies from Thailand – traditional guardian spirits – line a keyhole-shaped corridor.

The journey continues through south-east Asia into China, as curtains to the side invite one into the louche realm of Shanghai deco, complete with crushed red velvet couches. From there, we reach the private booths – the Persian rooms, with unusual slatted curved walls, lounges and masses of cushions. In the centre, the large, exotic main

space is designed to resemble a Moroccan courtyard, a traditional place of communal gathering, with ottomans in richly textured fabrics, and a Moorish fountain.

Spice Market is a venue like no other in Australia. "We want people to have a glamorous experience at Spice Market, and we want them

to feel they're not in Melbourne anymore!" says co-owner, restaurateur Dean Lucas with a grin.

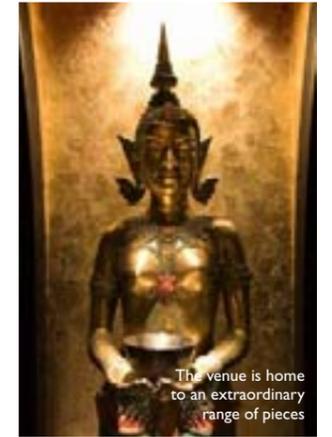
Lucas and his brother Geremy, long-term business partners, travelled extensively to Singapore, New York, Bangkok, LA, Las Vegas and Moscow to look at big venues and gather ideas on style. Once the ethos of their new bar was determined – a fabulous concept of a magic carpet ride along the old spice route from south-east Asia to the Far East and northern Africa – the brothers and business partners Robert and Victor Zagame

made trips sourcing antiques and objects. The venue is now home to a range of fascinating pieces. There are 18th-century period windows from southern Mongolia, huge copper cauldrons from Burma and brass temple urns from Tibet...the list goes on. It's hard to take it all in. Everywhere you look there's unusual details – real gold leaf, intricate carving and polished timberwork, special mosaic inlay, lovely jewel-coloured tiles, luscious rugs on the floors, textured silk upholstery.

In terms of glamour, the piece de resistance is the premium private booth that seats 12, a Perrier Jouet Belle Époque Lounge, the first in Australia. It's designed to look like the inside of a genie bottle, a la *I Dream Of Jeannie*. The "bottle" isn't quite finished in time for my visit, but on my next trip to Melbourne I can't wait to take a peak inside "the private jet of private rooms", with its own dedicated waitperson and a \$1500 a night booking fee (bottle of Belle Époque included).



Welcome to the world of Shanghai deco, complete with a red velvet couch



The venue is home to an extraordinary range of pieces



Life-sized traditional Siamese guardian spirits line the keyhole-shaped corridor



Co-owner Dean Lucas



VEAL PIE

This recipe makes 1 family-sized pie, or 6 individual ones (as pictured). Excess dough can be frozen and used again.

PASTRY

750g bakers' flour
150g salt
325g butter, cut into small pieces
285g water

1 egg, for glazing pie before baking
Sift flour and salt together. Gradually mix in butter, working each piece into the mixture using fingers. Add water. Knead until it forms a lump-free dough. Refrigerate for at least an hour.

Roll out dough to the length and width of the pie tin you wish to use. Roll another piece for the top of the pie (it needs to be about 1cm thick and slightly larger so you can twist the top piece and bottom together after adding the filling later).

FILLING

Splash of olive oil
500g diced veal shoulder
3 eschallots
250ml red wine
1.25L beef stock
Sprig of fresh thyme (optional)
Heat oil in a hot pan and add the veal. Once meat is sealed and browned, add eschallots and fry for 5 minutes. Add wine and stock. Simmer for 40 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Add thyme if you wish. Let mixture cool in the fridge.

Preheat oven to 180°C. Spray pie tin with non-stick oil spray. Line with pastry, then fill with veal mixture. Top with second pastry piece and twist the two pieces of pastry together to join the pie edges. Make a hole in the top and wash with whisked egg. Bake for 20 minutes or until golden.

INDULGENT, MUCH?



Filled with all things nice, Leanne Beck's new Sydney store is simply irresistible. Want to try her recipes at home?

SINCERE apologies to anyone on a diet. But succumbing to the temptations of Sweet Infinity at least means you're eating real food – all-organic, handmade, super-fresh. There's nothing owner Leanne Beck hates more than artificial colours and flavours. Her decadent pink macarons are coloured with real raspberries and filled with chocolate ganache made with real cream. The ducks for the pies come straight from a farm near Kempsey (Leanne is a part-owner). The jam is made from apricots from her parents' orchard.

"Had breakfast?" Leanne says when we arrive. "Come on," she urges when we nod our heads, planning to stave off a sugar rush

til our shoot is over. "Here, have a profiterole, they're freshly made!"

Leanne is a genius with pastry, both savoury and sweet. Just 28 years old, she's a veteran of top restaurant kitchens – think Est, Glass, Wildfire – and has experience in London and Paris. These days, she's an entrepreneur as well as a pastry chef, running a busy catering service plus retail, bringing her creative skills to bear on the challenge of devising something eye-catching and delicious for high-profile clients like Chambord (innovative canapes for their Shine awards) and Berlei (macarons in every colour to match a new range of bras).

Her new store in Sydney's historic Strand Arcade looks good enough to eat. In the window, striking display plinths patterned like blocks of dark and white chocolate show off their wares. A feature wall of hot raspberry pink is garnished with flan tins, their shape echoed in the two huge pendant lights. The counter runs atop two display cases, one stocked with the most perfect pies I've ever seen, the

other with mulberry, blueberry and raspberry tarts, and gold-wrapped chocolate cones. At the back, a wall of timber and glass shelves hold brown paper bags of pistachio biscotti, hazelnut shortbread and homemade jams. The entire shop is reflected in a giant mirror, creating an illusion of light and space.

It's a retail showcase, a smart boutique filled with pastries instead of jewellery or dresses, designed by architects Group GSA in conjunction with Leanne, plus some hands-on input from her customers. Before the space was renovated, Leanne put up a blackboard with three possible designs and

customers were encouraged to comment and choose their favourite.

The result is warm, contemporary, enticing. "It was clear that Leanne had to make a strong presence," says Group GSA director Steve Pearce. "She's about hands-on and handmade. She's very much about a crafted product and joyous decadence in the colours... that feeling of a good cake, a good party."

Leanne loves the result. She seems happy as a clam bustling around the shop, unpacking trays of fresh-baked brownies, introducing her manager Deborah, who has made the move from Collette Dinnigan. "Bit of a change," she grins.

But Sweet Infinity doesn't stop here. There are plans to move the original bakery from its current Woolloomooloo premises to a larger inner-city site next year, one with space for a cooking school. "I want six shops in two years," says Leanne, laughing. "My aim is to conquer the world with pies and cakes!"

www.sweetinfinity.com.au

WORDS: SUBIE BURGE PHOTOS: CHRIS COURT



CHOCOLATE TART

This recipe makes a 20cm chocolate tart that will serve 6-8 people. If making individual tarts instead, be aware that baking times will vary.

SWEET PASTRY

6 egg yolks
1 egg
600g butter
300g icing sugar
900g plain flour

Whisk together egg yolks and egg. Set aside. In a separate bowl, mix butter and icing sugar. Be careful not to overmix (don't use an electric mixer, just mix by hand). Add egg mixture to butter mixture and stir to combine. Gradually add flour, and knead to create a doughy bundle. Store in fridge, preferably overnight.

Preheat oven to 180°C and coat a 20cm tart/flan tin with a non-stick cooking spray. Roll out your dough so that it is about 1cm thick and lay it in the tin. Top with baking paper and baking weights, dried beans or rice and blind bake until golden brown.

FILLING

350g double cream
200g milk
500g chocolate (dark buttons are best)
3 eggs

Bring cream and milk to the boil. Put chocolate in a heatproof bowl. Pour cream mixture into bowl and whisk until smooth. Whisk in eggs. Pour mixture into cooled tart shell. Bake at 160°C for 15 minutes.

"It's a retail showcase, a smart boutique filled with pastries instead of jewellery or dresses"



NOUGAT

(Makes about 50 pieces)
"Confectionary is like chemistry – the exact measurements and temperatures are important for getting the nougat just right," says Leanne.

1.5kg sugar
450ml water
450g honey
450g glucose
170g egg whites
230g each of whole hazelnuts, pistachios and almonds

Heat sugar and water in a saucepan. Bring to 105°C (use a sugar thermometer). Add honey and glucose and bring to 135°C. Put egg whites in the bowl of an electric mixer, then add the sugar mixture and whisk. When thick, replace whisk with paddle and beat for 4 minutes. Heat nuts in the oven to warm, then add to the mix.

Lay mixture on greaseproof paper. Allow to cool. Do not put in the fridge.

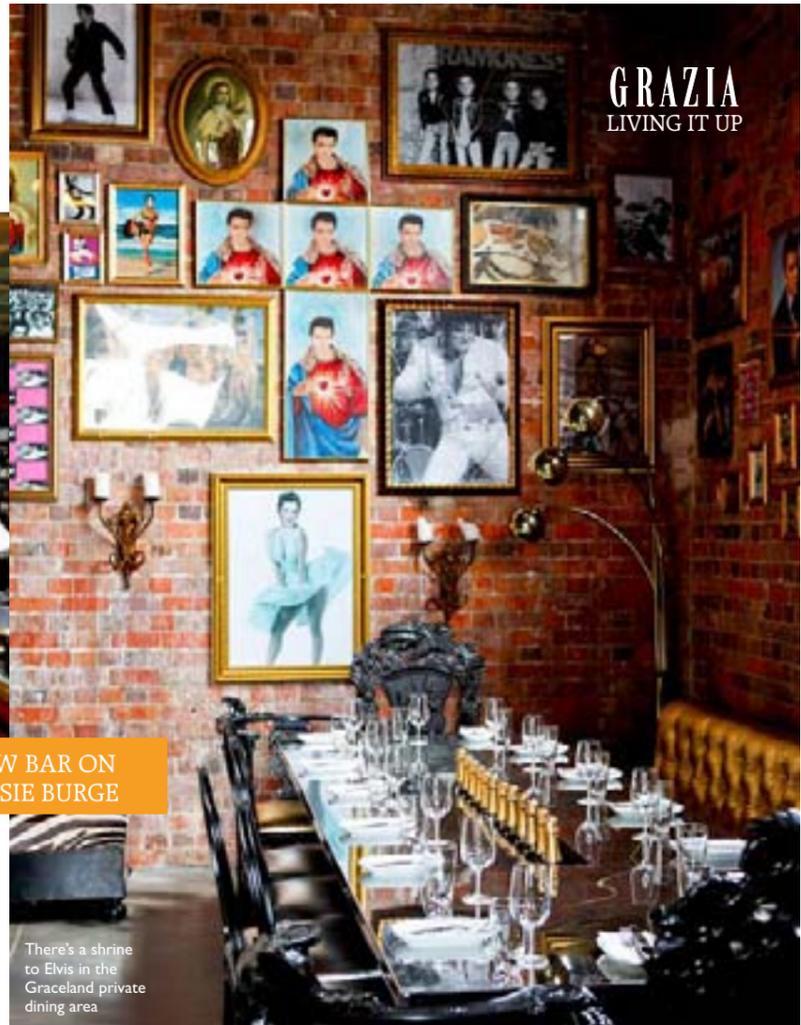
When set, cut into 2cm squares. Nougat will keep for two weeks in a container.



Welcome to the FUN PALACE



The upstairs bar is filled with customised antique chairs and chandeliers



There's a shrine to Elvis in the Graceland private dining area

OOH WE LOVE IT WHEN THERE'S A HOT NEW BAR ON THE BLOCK AND THE WINERY IS IT, SAYS SUSIE BURGE

PHOTOGRAPHY CHRIS COURT STYLING SIBELLA COURT

TO WALK into bar-restaurant The Winery is to leave the real world behind. There's a pervasive sense of escapism. I can see the urban landscape of Sydney through the large open windows, but reality seems distant, something "out there". It's too easy to settle on a madly decadent textured gold leather sofa, order drinks from an upstairs bar hung with mismatched pink chandeliers and idle away the hours.

"An amazing amount of people come for lunch and then stay for dinner," says owner John Duncan, one part of the three-man team behind the venture. There's seduction in the mix of glam-to-the-max furnishings, a kooky sense of humour (why does the private dining room have an Elvis theme? Just because!) and a raw industrial aesthetic in the bones of the stripped-back, heritage-listed building.

Co-owners Duncan, Fraser Short and Paul Schulte are, respectively: former builder, former interior designer and interiors stylist ("king of fashion" to his mates). "Put the three of us in a jar and I think you come out with a pretty good product," jokes Short. He and Duncan are partners in Keystone Hospitality – think The Sugarmill, Cargo and The Loft. This is their second venture with Schulte – the first was the Gazebo Wine Garden in Elizabeth

Real life can be glimpsed from The Winery, which is the work of Paul Schulte, Fraser Short and John Duncan (below, from left)



Bay. The similar combination of eclectic interiors and reasonable prices without compromising quality (nothing over \$25 on the restaurant menu, lots of share plates and a really good wine list) seemed a perfect cultural fit for edgy, arty Surry Hills.

The site of the 1889 former Sydney Waterworks is unique. The renovations included adding a second floor and architects Humphrey & Edwards kept the sense of history with generous proportions and use of recycled timbers. Remnants of the past, such as exposed brickwork, pulleys and steel girders, are put to creative use. During the day, the building is flooded with sunlight. One doesn't often associate boudoir glam with beautiful natural light and airy indoor-outdoor appeal. The Winery is full of surprises.

Enter Toby Osmond (ex-Will & Toby's) as consultant. He's focusing on marketing and was brought in for his social contacts, fresh ideas and networking skills. The team speak of the "unpretentiousness" of the venue; the aim to be accessible, relaxed, fun.

And it is fun. There are upside down 80s desk lamps on the ceiling,

flamboyant 19th-century French chairs, customised curved booths, fluffy gold cushions and wheatgrass on the mirrored bar in the Graceland private dining room.

The boys were inspired by a visit to the extraordinary Lan Club in Beijing (like a trip down the rabbit hole into Wonderland), and have adopted some of designer Philippe Starck's tricks – such as making chandeliers out of random objects, and stretching antique couches to surreal dimensions by adding a middle section and reupholstering in pony skin or velvet. Schulte sourced many items from auctions and customised the rest. "We'll pretty much add to it forever!" he says.

Natural woods act as a foil for the frivolity of the furnishings and have a grounding effect. A key feature is a living, breathing green wall of plants. There's a Yin-Yang balance: feminine-masculine, old-new, raw-glam, urban-escapist. It's a bit like the fairytale involving a girl with golden hair and three bears. Too hot? Too cool? We reckon The Winery is just right.

www.thegazebos.com.au/winery

BLOSSOM AND BAMBOO

STEP INTO A NEW JAPANESE DINING EXPERIENCE – WITH DECOR AS EXQUISITE AS THE FOOD. SUSIE BURGE BOOKS A TABLE

PHOTOGRAPHY GRANT HARVEY STYLING SIBELLA COURT

IT'S AN experience just getting to Koi, one of Sydney's newest Japanese restaurants. A friend and I take the ferry from Circular Quay in the heart of the city. It's a cold clear night and the harbour glitters and glimmers with reflected reds and golds and electric blues and the silver trail of a half moon. We are in Kenneth Slessor territory, passing beneath the great arc of the bridge, heading north-west, where *deep and dissolving verticals of light* give way to inky water at the end of the line. At Valentia Street, Woolwich, we disembark and walk through sleepy suburban streets. I grew up here, at the tip of the Hunters Hill peninsula, messing about in boats, fishing off the jetty, tearing around the neighbourhood with my brothers on pushbikes followed faithfully at high speed by two reckless, leashless Dalmatian dogs.

The peninsula is home to wide leafy streets, old colonial sandstone buildings, expansive waterfronts, some newer mansions and in recent years Cate Blanchett. The thing is, although times have changed, one essential fact hasn't: Woolwich has never been synonymous with fine dining.

Koi is hoping to alter that perception. The executive chef is Kenji Nishinakagawa, ex-Unkai (once a business crowd favourite at the top of the old ANA hotel), his senior sushi chef Takashi Sano is ex-Tetsuya's and the sheer level of understated glamour of the fit-out raises the bar.

Simply put, the interiors are luminous. De Gournay wallpapers create an effect of contemporary luxury meets old-world chic, while reflecting a Japanese aesthetic. In the entrance hall, a design of gold bamboo on a bronze background flickers with the light of the "candle wall", created by beeswax tealight candles in little porcelain cups set floor to ceiling in open box shelves. The ceiling itself is papered with a cherry blossom motif. In the dining area, pale green fronds of weeping willows float feather-like over a background of liquid silver. The wallpapers are hand-painted, imported from London. Clearly there has been no expense spared. Owner Robert Frost agrees. "I've blown every budget in the world to do this," he says over the telephone from the UK where he's currently based.

Frost is a banker by profession but his role in Koi is by no means purely financial. A long-time resident of Woolwich, it seems a pity he was posted overseas just as his restaurant was opening! Frost has been involved in every stage of the conception, design and realisation of Koi, from the sourcing of recycled beams and the installation of antique temple doors, to the selection of Asian antiques and ▶

Koi has the feel of a traditional Japanese inn, with timber beams, antique temple doors and handpainted wallpaper



Koi's sashimi platters are works of art, as are the glazed ceramic dishes and blossoms adorning the tables

individual ceramic plates and dishes ordered from Japan. The fact that chef Kenji became available was the impetus to create the restaurant and a top-notch team including kitchen head Tom Martinovic and dessert chef Meagan Edwards was put together. What was originally planned as a three-month fit-out became an absorbing realisation of a dream, extending day by day to 15 months.

The attention to detail is what gives Koi the edge. "Creating the space was as important as creating the restaurant," explains Frost. The interior remodelling and design can be likened, perhaps, to a plate of sashimi, where only the finest quality ingredients are carefully chosen and then arranged like an artwork. What was once an average looking room has been transformed into something akin to a luxe Japanese ryokan (boutique inn) by the use of fabulous chunky recycled ironwood beams, timber panelling on the ceiling and antique cabinets from Edo Arts that act as serving stations. The verandah was enclosed creating a serene

"I want Koi to be a destination, rather than a location. The destination is as important as the food"

zone complete with stone lantern, water garden and a black bamboo pole ceiling. The screens on the windows are exact replicas of 15th-century Chinese screens. These took three months to make. The various shoji screens in the restaurant are handmade by an expert in the traditional manner without nails, the pieces slotting together.

The more you look around Koi, the more you see: a branch of blossom drifting in a stone basin, a verdigris bronze bell; an oversized mirror made out of an old Japanese fire station sign, positioned to reflect candlelight into the dining area.

On the night of our visit, the candlemaker is in. As we order, Jeffrey from Northern Light in Byron Bay wanders around, chatting to the diners, bending the base of narrow beeswax drippless tapers and placing them directly on tables. It adds a romantic theatrical touch to our evening. He's

candle royalty – supplier of 220,000 tapers for the recent papal visit.

Our sashimi arrives, pink and white slivers of raw fish and sliced fresh ginger presented deliciously on a narrow glazed ceramic platter that spans the table. We are dining with my brother and his fiancé; the meal is punctuated with toasts to their upcoming wedding and ends with blood orange granita in tear-shaped vessels and dark chocolate fish dusted in gold.

Frost told me: "I want Koi to be a destination, rather than a location. The destination is as important as the food. Koi is not just a restaurant, it's an experience." As I exit through the antique temple doors, holding a paper scoop of gold-dusted fish in one hand and a Northern Lights "Poet" candle in the other (we won the Happy People Award), I completely agree. ■

Koi, 102 Woolwich Rd, Woolwich, Sydney (02 9817 6030)

