

STEVE THOMAS

BIG

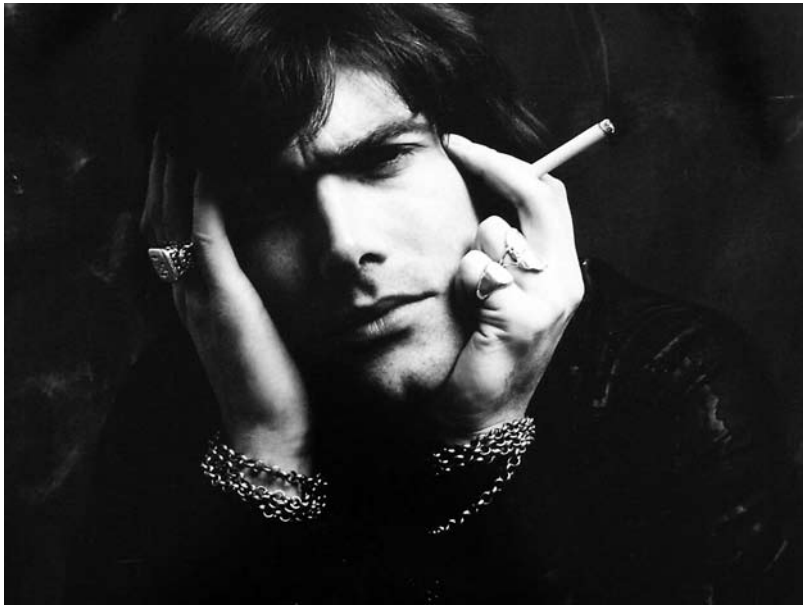
BIBA

AND OTHER STORIES



**STEVE THOMAS
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AND
OTHER STORIES**

CHELSEAspace
16 SEPTEMBER – 17 OCTOBER 2008



Marlboro country, 1965;
Chad Hall's studio in the
badlands of London W8.
They wanted cool for
Europe, Chad was – he
always was, I wasn't. But
they liked the result

STEVE THOMAS

by Alwyn W Turner

'Steve, I really dig your artwork, man' – Mick Jagger, 1969

Male model, artist, designer, rock and roll manager, King's Road roué and teller of tall tales... Steve Thomas is one of the few survivors of the 1960s who can still remember it all. He's the man who designed the legendary Big Biba store, who went on to work as Paul McCartney's personal designer, who created the livery for Formula 1 teams (and for a London bus-route), and whose style helped define the restaurant and club environment of the '80s. When he was first approached to do this exhibition, he wanted to call it *Jammy Bastard**, but wiser counsels prevailed and – rather more sensibly – it's now named after his most celebrated single piece of work. In fact, that's pretty much been the story of his life: having to be talked out of the consequences of his own flippancy.

But he still insists that *Jammy Bastard* sums up his career. As he once pointed out, he has 'managed by luck, pleading and bribery to work on some truly iconic projects around the world, and have a thoroughly wondrous time.'

To begin near the beginning: he spent his schooldays at Latymer Upper School in Hammersmith, and his nights hanging around Eel Pie Island and the Station Hotel in Richmond, where the London r&b scene was just getting into its strides. Lacking any better ideas, he then confused his already confused family still further by deciding to study painting at the Chelsea School of Art. Amongst his teachers were the likes of Allen Jones, John Hoyland and Patrick Caulfield, from whom he must have learnt something because he emerged with a fine art degree.

Equally important, being a student at Chelsea put him in pole position on the King's Road just in time for London to start swinging and to become the hippest place in the world.

*The word 'jammy', meaning 'lucky', originates in the early-19th century sporting slang expression 'real jam' – something of exceptional quality. 'Jam' then mutated into general slang to refer to a profit, and thence to something that was easy. Or alternatively, as they say on *Call My Bluff*, it comes from the French phrase 'jamais de guerre', a time of prosperity and peace. Either way, it works.

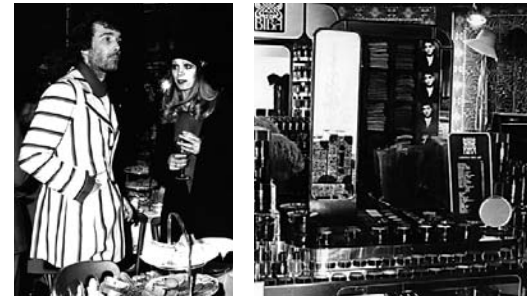
After graduating, he took full advantage of the opportunities offered by this brave new world. Or, at least, he inhabited the fringes of rock and roll, hyping records into the charts for Peter Frampton's band, the Herd (who he'd discovered), while he indulged in the clubs, drugs and groupies that had recently become accessible. If you listen carefully to 'Zabadak', the 1967 hit for Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick and Tich, you might just hear him banging out the rhythm on a glass ashtray with a screwdriver – but only on the first half, because then the ashtray smashed and he had to sit out the rest of the session. Meantime he was also working as an occasional waiter, and as a male model (he was invited to audition for the role of James Bond, but he declined the invitation, and his fellow-model George Lazenby got the gig instead). Towards the end of the decade, he began to combine his art school training with his rock and roll experience and designed a series of album sleeves. Mostly these were by long forgotten bands like the Amazing Blondel, the Family Dogg and Judas Jump ('rather ornately designed,' comments the All Music Guide, accurately), but they also included P.J. Proby's Three Week Hero. And then came an invitation to contribute to the Rolling Stones' new album Get Your Ya-Yas Out – 'the equivalent,' he points out, 'of being promoted from the Conference League to the Premiership in a single season.'

The most significant contact during the late-'60s, though, was Barbara Hulanicki. Together with her husband, Stephen Fitz-Simon (always known as Fitz), she'd founded a fashion-label and boutique called Biba back in 1964 which had grown rapidly as the '60s boom took hold of London. Steve increasingly became involved in various design projects for the company and, with things getting more serious, teamed up with another Chelsea graduate,

Tim Whitmore was my exact opposite and thus possibly my perfect partner; he was withdrawn, but had no doubts. I was envious, not of his huge talent but of his irritating certainty! For two such differing people this sequence shows an uncanny similarity



Tim Whitmore, to form Whitmore-Thomas Design Associates – a practice which basically amounted to two blokes working out of Steve's bedroom. Together they restyled the children's department at Biba in Kensington High



The beautiful Eleanor Powell, manageress of the Biba store, and I in our enforced party mode for the national launch of the cosmetics range in 1969. Part of the Biba mini-store that we designed within the hallowed walls of Bergdorf-Goodman in New York 1970

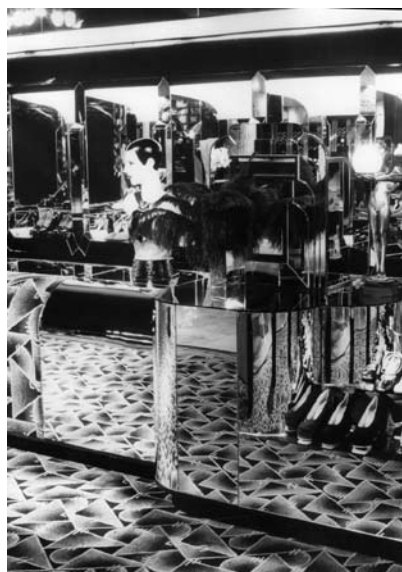
Street and, with the launch of Biba Cosmetics in 1970, designed the display units that took a new attitude towards make-up around the country. These cosmetics units also appeared in key locations around the world, including Au Printemps in Paris, Fiorucci in

Milan, Tekano in Japan and Bloomingdale's in New York. And a mini-boutique designed by Whitmore-Thomas was set up in Bergdorf Goodman in New York. In 1971 all other projects were put on hold (including, sadly, the never-to-materialize Biba car with matching luggage) when the company bought the old Derry and Toms department store on the opposite side of the road, and announced that Biba was going to make a huge leap forward – into premises twenty times the size of the current shop. Whitmore-Thomas were offered two of the floors to design, but with absurd self-confidence Steve replied that they wanted the whole building, all seven storeys of it, or they weren't interested. Despite the look of shocked horror on Tim's face, it was an act of bravado that somehow paid off; they got the job and had to move out of Steve's bedroom and take on some staff.

For the next twenty-two months, they worked on designing the interiors of what was to become a retail legend. And indeed on stocking it as well, because the whole point of a Biba store was that it was all own-brand; here the dedicated shopper could buy everything



The Derry & Toms building on Kensington High Street 1961, which ten years later became the big Biba store.



Clockwise from top left; the fabulous Rainbow Room where we spent more per square foot than any other area, and were endlessly complimented upon leaving it as it was in 1935 – subtle us! The Boots unit in the centre of the ground floor. Our sign-off for the entire job; a modest 'Whitmore's Frankfurters' and 'Thomas's Baked Beans'. We continued the Biba tradition of never having stock-filled windows, just sofas, customers, tramps, palm trees and litter

she needed from fashion to fridges, from playing cards to pet food, from baked beans and baths to baby clothes and boots, all of it Biba. And part of Whitmore-Thomas' brief was to design the packaging that it all came in. Oh, and the advertising to promote it.

Given a virtually free hand by Barbara and Fitz, this was a dream job for a designer, just about as good as one could ever wish or hope for in a career. Steve was not yet thirty years old. Jammy, as he says, bastard.

When Big Biba, as it became known, finally opened in September 1973, it was an instant hit. 'The most beautiful store in the world,' reported the Sunday Times; 'more like a Busby Berkeley film set than a department store,' added the Observer; while the New Yorker acclaimed it as being 'what a department store should be ... a unique synthesis of promenade, living theatre, movie palace, gallery and classroom of taste as well as marketplace.'

You can't argue with notices like that, and the public didn't. In fact they were even more enthusiastic than the press: the store attracted a million visitors a week, and became one of the tourist destinations of the capital, an essential stopping-off point for coachloads of sightseers.

The appeal was the sheer excess of the place, as documented in Steve's book *Welcome to Big Biba* (ACC, 2006). The ground floor included a massive cruciform cosmetics-unit draped with feathers, a T-shirt counter that stretched away into the far distance, and an art deco library, all set on 26,000 square feet of apricot marble. The first floor boasted an 85-foot wide raised gallery dressed out in leopard-skin luxury, and Egyptian-themed changing rooms ('We'd always wanted Egyptian changing rooms, so we had Egyptian changing rooms.') And the children's department was a riotous theme-park of the Wild West, fantasy toadstools and mediaeval castle, together with a roundabout in the shape of a record-player.

At a time when glam rock was providing escapism for a nation mired in

economic decline and three-day weeks, Big Biba became the place to hang out, 'the hallowed Mecca of the near-decadent,' as the Melody Maker put it. Up in the Rainbow Room on the fifth floor (an art deco masterpiece lovingly restored to its 1933 grandeur), bands like the New York Dolls, Cockney Rebel and Kilburn and the High Roads played to the glitterati. Liberace even had a birthday party there, with a cake designed by Steve in the shape of a grand piano – nice idea, but it required so much structural support that it couldn't be cut.

Best of all was the food hall. Deco had already been added to Biba's mix of art nouveau and Victoriana; down in the basement Steve now threw in Warholian pop art as well. Indeed the man himself got a direct reference: the tinned soup was stocked in a giant display unit shaped like a soup can and labelled Warhol's Condensed. Not to be outdone, other over-sized display units, also in the style of food-packaging, included Whitmore's Frankfurters and Thomas' Baked Beans.

Big Biba lasted for just two years before it fell victim to the property slump of the mid-'70s, but its critical, even if not commercial, success was the making of Whitmore-Thomas.

For five years they were the in-house designers for Paul McCartney, creating his headquarters in Soho Square (complete with a recreation of his favourite Abbey Road studio in the basement), as well as recording studios in Sussex and on the Mull of Kintyre – where he recorded, er, 'Mull of Kintyre'. And then there were the private residences in London and Liverpool, Sussex and Scotland. 'In the '60s you had to be either Beatles or Rolling Stones,' says Steve, 'and I was Stones. Even if I had



Unused ticket for the New York Dolls at the Rainbow Room (Alwyn Turner Collection)



France doesn't drink tea, but does buy my Thé Elephant tea pot. Odd init?

The blessed minstrel Sir Paul, showing a clean pair of white gloves in front of our fabric for his offices in Soho



been Beatles, I would definitely have been Lennon. But sometimes you have to let go of prejudice...'

Other projects in the period included two department stores in Mexico City under the name Pixie Fashions, a silver-paint overhaul of the London buses on the 25 route for the Queen's Silver Jubilee (fortuitously it went past Buckingham Palace), and an elephant-shaped teapot for O&M Paris. The latter went on to become one of the longest running and most successful sales promotion in Europe, having sold over 350,000 pieces – not bad for France, a country seldom celebrated for its addiction to drinking tea.

Whitmore-Thomas also made inroads into advertising, at a time when the industry in Britain was entering its most extreme and creative phase. Amongst their clients were Courtaulds, Benson and Hedges, Levi's, Kronenbourg and Perrier. The successes and excesses of the marketing world were

matched only by its follies, including Pepsi Cola's Italian campaign under the slogan: 'The Great Taste of Semen'. Lost something in the translation, that one. But the invoices still got paid and, as New Labour were later to discover, things could only get better.

'The early-'80s,' remembers Steve, 'when chefs became the new hairdressers, and restaurants were the theatres of the high street.' In the age of conspicuous consumption that descended on London in the Thatcher years, Whitmore-Thomas were responsible for the look of restaurants of Mon Plaisir and Antony Worall Thompson (Steve was the best man at his wedding), as well as one-offs like the Restaurant in Dolphin Square and the Pheasantry and commissions for the Roux brothers. Abroad there was also the Roof Gardens Club in Miami and the revolving restaurant 1300-feet up in the CN Tower in Toronto.

The design philosophy that motivated Biba remained intact. 'Theatre matters,'

insisted Steve; 'the architecture, the style, the set-dressing and the cast. That's not just the cast as in them, it's us too. We all have to contribute for the tableaux to succeed.' Of course, it helps if the cast is as classy as the one that accompanied the opening of JC's, a bar set up by the former world light-heavyweight champion, John Conteh, where Steve got to meet Muhammad Ali. The jammy bastard probably hasn't washed his hand since.

Not everything was so public. When Esso was suffering a run of poor publicity (something about the Exxon Valdez tanker spilling ten million gallons of oil into the Gulf of Alaska in 1989), it decided to go for a more friendly image by pitching for the gas concession at EuroDisney, then under construction. So bad was their reputation that they were even prepared to ditch their own mascot, the Esso Tiger, in order that Mickey, Goofy and Dumbo could take over the forecourts. Whitmore-Thomas' proposal for the new look came in sixty A2 pages of lavishly detailed imagery, bound in black gloss metal covers, using chrome Mickey-headed studs and encased in a black velvet travelling shroud. Only one copy was ever made, to be hand-delivered to the mighty Michael Eisner himself, but it seemed to do the trick and they got the commission. At which stage they put the Tiger back in his rightful place – you don't throw away a marketing legend like 'a tiger in your tank' lightly. However many seals you've killed.

Other slightly controversial clients? Well, there was a lengthy association with British American Tobacco that saw extensive work on the Lucky Strike and 555 State Express brands. Nothing as overt or mundane as cigarette-packaging, obviously, but brand extensions: colognes, clubs in China, men's fashion in South-East Asia. And, of course, cars. Very fast cars. Like the Subaru World Rally team, sponsored by 555, and the BAR Formula One team, sponsored by Luckies. Part of the marketing for the latter



Timothy Gordon Whitmore. 1944-2000



My most recent project, April 77, the store for stylish Parisian Punks

involved taking a F1 car, mirroring it and fitting it into a giant-size Luckies pack – this to promote the brand in Duty Free shops. On a similar scale there was the work for Harrod's, for the rebranding of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and for the Kodak exhibition at the Athens Olympics...

But by this stage, it would probably be easier to list the big names that were never clients, together with the handful of commissions that have yet to arrive in the post. (If there's anyone out there who needs a hotel designing...)

Over the years, the personnel in the practice changed. Chris Angell, who joined in 1972, became a partner in the newly renamed Whitmore Thomas Angell. And Tim Whitmore died. Eventually Steve decided it was time to retire, though it doesn't seem to have stopped the work coming in. Most recently he's returned to shop-interiors, designing the cult store April 77 for Parisian punk Brice Partouche. The name of the shop reflects the month in which the proprietor was born, i.e. some eighteen months after the closure of Big Biba. But still it was the legendary status of the most beautiful store in the world that caused him to approach Steve.

So, just to recap, for the last forty-five years he's been there, done that and designed the T-shirt. His life has been populated by everyone from Pete Townsend to the Kray Twins, from Otis Redding to Lionel Bart, from Kingsley Amis to Michael Crawford, and from Bond girls to Likely Lads. And now he gets to design the book on Big Biba and, on the fortieth anniversary of the founding of Whitmore-Thomas, to curate an exhibition of his work. There's an expression for people like him.



BIG BIBA AND OTHER STORIES

by Steve Thomas



THE BIBA NEWSPAPER. Opening day, 10 September 1973, was chaos – but only chaos, not complete bloody mayhem, perhaps due to the newspapers that were handed out to customers as store guides; a subliminal persuader to discourage using the vintage lifts, and to direct people to the magnificent stairways, where there was a billion decibels of the ‘Hallelujah Chorus’ to waft one heavenward. **THE OPENING ADS.** The national press was blitzed with the small Biba teaser ads a week prior to opening. The large composite ads, a graphic representation of the total store,

Graphic design and typography: Chris Angell and Mick Partlett; illustration: Kasia Charko

appeared on the day itself; they obviously worked – the place was heaving. **LOGOS & TYPEFACES.** Each floor, and in some cases each area of each floor had its own identity, and thus its own logo, typeface, letterhead, swing-ticket, (shown Babies, Mens, Mistress Room*) letterhead and gift voucher (Mens, Ground Floor).

Details, details, details, the devil’s in the detail.

We designed typefaces to suit the logos, to be sympathetic to the areas they identified; except for ‘Fitz’s Face’ which was specifically designed for staff recruitment press ads in the London Evening Standard.

THE RAINBOW ROOM. The former 750-seater restaurant and cabaret venue hosted London’s glitterati with events as diverse as Thai kick-boxing, Liberace’s birthday party, and Kilburn and the High Roads. (shown; the menu, the ticket for the New York Dolls concert and the wine label and necklet.)



FOOD PACKAGING. The food hall, as the rest of Biba, was generally own-brand. From baked beans to soap flakes, we produced over 1500 pieces of artwork for the product lines. We introduced a variety of graphic identities in order

From the top l-r: me as a blond, James Traill, our studio on the Roof Garden, Mick Partlett and Chris Angell as teenagers, Chris’ 10th anniversary party with Sheena and Alan Mowbray, Alan’s 30th birthday, me as art student, ‘Chateau des Artistes’ with Chen Ling

to preserve our sanity, using which ever seemed most appropriate to the product.

COSMETICS PACKAGING. In addition to the famous black-and-gold packaging for the main Biba cosmetics range, we designed many others for scent, health, men's, sun-sea skincare, and babies. On Wednesdays we occasionally took an afternoon off.

By 1973 the cosmetics range had worldwide distribution, from Bloomingdale's in New York to Au Printemps in Paris, but continued its non-advertising policy, which placed a huge responsibility upon in-store promotion. Such as this poster, which won the British Council of Design award, although one judge apparently thought it was 'far too visual'. Whatever. Photographer; Sarah Moon. Model; Ingrid Boulting. Designer; me.

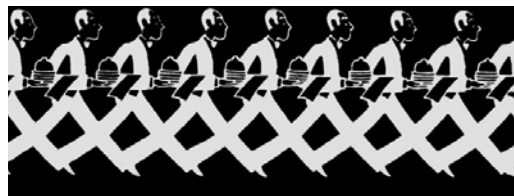
THE GROUND FLOOR. 28000 sq ft of marble-floored retail space selling fashion accessories – and all own-brand. Every season Barbara Hulanicki designed roughly 700 permutations of T-shirt hence the enormous size of the pigeonholed unit.

The fan-shaped back units of the two symmetrical jewellery units, were based upon a design found on the external decorative bronze work. The carpet-pattern for the boots unit was based on an old remnant I found in a Kilburn wood-yard in 1968 and kept, believing it would come in handy one day.

The library girls wore short academic gowns and horn-rimmed glasses; however they weren't so keen on the mortarboards.

The curved tights unit, in peach and silver mirror. Spot the one upside down tights pack. Crap art direction – I do apologise.

FOOD & KIDS. The kids had their castle, as well as café, saloon and general store, in their village



on the second floor; the foodies had their pop art supermarket, returning Warhol to his role of soup display and poor Othello, Barbara and Fitz's Great Dane, suffering the indignity of being the model for the dog food unit. The least we could do was to provide a suitably giant-sized fig leaf.

THE FIRST FLOOR. All dark brown and marble, art nouveau and Hollywood-Egyptian communal changing rooms. Bras 'n' knicks were sold from an

85-foot long bed platform with beaded curtains, enormous tassels and mirrors.

THE RAINBOW ROOM. Originally designed in 1933 by Marcel Hennequet, the art deco classic was revamped, restored, relamped and possibly even improved 40 years later. We transformed it from a banqueting facility to an open-all-day restaurant and by night the cabaret venue, much admired by the glitterati of London. The Rainbow Gallery exhibited Bert Stern's photographs of the last session with Marilyn Monroe as its inaugural show, followed by Guy Peellaert's original paintings for his book Rock Dreams. It was a constant round of Roxy, Bowie, Mick and Adam.

The loudspeaker boxes, like the computer cash registers (the first installation in the UK), were huge

and ugly, so we designed 'cosies' to disguise them, sometimes as mirrored jukeboxes, sometimes gnarled tree stumps.

The Biba phone boxes were just what you'd expect – restrained minimalism.



...and OTHER STORIES

1 THE ELEPHANT TEA POT – France 1977. Designed as a one-off for this ad campaign, our teapot became the longest running and successful sales promotion in France; sales to date: 350,000. Not bad in a country that doesn't drink tea...

2 LUCKY STRIKE – Global 2002. Luckies go F1. If you're competing in the most attention-grabbing environment in the world (no, not Formula One Grand Prix racing, international duty-free), you have to win, even if your cars don't.

3 ROUX LAMARTINE – UK 1982. The Roux brothers are fine French restaurateurs who import fine French food which they exhibit each year at the Restaurant Show in our 'Tom and Jerry do Provence' model village square. Which shows you can cook and still have a sense of humour.

4 THE DESIGNER OF THE YEAR AWARD – France 1978. The statue is based upon the well-known Grecian myth of Ariadne, the girl with the golden thread – which makes some sense since the client was Courtauld.

5 JOHN PLAYER SPECIAL RESERVE – Global 1991. A fading international tobacco brand, remembered for the black and gold plastic tub and the JPS Lotus Formula One team (Ayrton Senna's first drive). Our brief was to create the ultimate tobacco gift range, to appeal to oriental businessmen who are required by their etiquette, to return home with suitably expensive gifts.

6 'DEEP FRIEZE' – UK 1989. To celebrate our 21st anniversary we held the best-ever birthday bash at the Roof Gardens Club (our studio whilst designing Biba in 1973), where we gave away this limited edition print to our guests.

7 BENSON & HEDGES – UK 1980. CDP, the finest of London advertising agencies in an era of the best,



JOHN PLAYER SPECIAL
RESERVE



commissioned us to design B&H wallpaper for one of their series of surreal ads. Beautifully printed by Osborne & Little, and photographed by Adrian Flowers. Art direction by Alan Waldie
8 BOOTS THE CHEMIST – UK 1985. Our range of Christmas gift packs for Boots No 7 cosmetics.
9 LEVI STRAUSS – Europe 1981. 'The Leader of the

Pack', the 1960s hit for the Shangri-Las, was the inspiration and the theme-music to a 90-second TV commercial directed by Ridley Scott. This item is one of several graphic designs that we produced for the movie and POS. All Wurlitzer jukeboxes, chrome fins and petticoats.

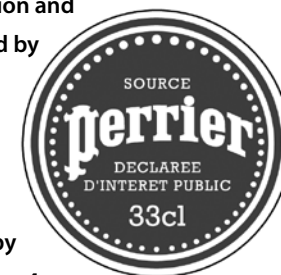
10 FISON'S – France 1979. Corporate brand advertising on a grand scale for the agrichemicals giant. Produced by enamelling on sheet-steel in nine colours, these 4m

long ads are enormously expensive but last for 100 years. The previous artist commissioned by Fisons was Toulouse Lautrec.

11 PERRIER – Europe 1977. The label design.

12 ROWNTREE – UK 1979. If Black Magic is lust, Dairy Box is fondness – a gift for aunts. This design was never used, considered by the brand managers to be way too radical, and yet it was included in the book 'The Best of British Packaging'.

13 PENGUIN – USA/Global 1995. The complete text of the complete works of William Shakespeare had never been recorded, until production company Arkangel were commissioned. We designed the packaging for the 38-part set. Apologies to Archemboldo.



14 ZAPATA – South America 1979. The graphic identity for a chain of mucho macho Argentinean diners – not one for the vegans

15 VIN NICOLA – France 1978. Our modernisation of the traditional brand mascot 'M. Nectar', for Nicola, the chain of French wine shops.

16 TIGER RAG – UK 1993. The identity for a small importer of Indian carpets and fabrics with a sense of humour – cute paws, huh?

17 GAVIN FILM – Global 1981. Bill Gavin, one of our existing clients at Goldcrest Productions, left to start his own film production company and thus needed something suitably cinematographic from us.

18 LLOYDS BANK – UK 1987-90. We worked with ad agency Lowe Howard Spink to create concepts for over 150 financial products from Lloyds. We commissioned the finest artists who employ high production values to visualise them, using gentle self-deprecating humour to move Lloyds away from the Marbled Halls of Banking to being the best bank on the high street. 'Swings and Roundabouts' was our concept for the Budget, whilst the 'Flying Bulldogs' illustrated the UK Growth Unit Trust (it was the most oversubscribed – must be the Brits and Dogs syndrome).

Illustrators: Swings, Dogs, Cogs: Adrian Chesterman / Plums: Michael Mundy/
Students: ???/ Skyscraper, Collage: Me

19 BRITISH AMERICAN RACING F1 TEAM – Global 1992. Top left are my original thoughts for the test car livery for BAR, which along with BAR-B-Q for the hospitality trucks, would have generated incredible press attention. The concepts came very close to becoming reality... however

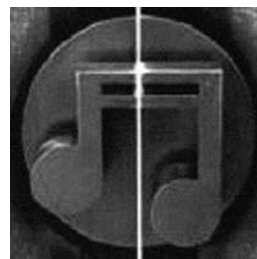


sense prevailed, sadly, and all the usual clichés surfaced – engineering, hi-tech, speed – so that's what you get, a very big truck and Jacques Villeneuve in his test car.

20 SUBARU WORLD RALLY TEAM – Global 1990. Colin McCrae was the ultimate rally driver, and showed his thanks for the new livery that we designed for the team by inviting me to take a ride with him, and just failing to kill me.

21 TYRRELL F1 TEAM – Global 1999 To get a spot on the grid in Formula One you have to buy an existing team. BAR, our client, bought Tyrrell and we were honoured to design the last of their livery.

22 FACE OFFICES – London 1991. The Smithfield offices were stashed with original art deco details, discovered under layers of hardboard, which we



introduced into our design proposals, based upon visual puns on the brand name. Hence the doors that smile. I love the simplicity of this solution – design is a good idea.

23 McCARTNEY PRODUCTIONS – The Galaxy 1974-78. Our task was to create the balance between Macca the mop-top muso and McCartney the Corporation. To achieve this we would have to design and commission every item, from

to the lavatory handles to the Wings carpet, the carved door panels and the bronze door handles.

Sir Paul maintains our interior assiduously, which is a great compliment; we continued the relationship by designing his homes, farms and recording studios. Well someone had to.

24 THE ZEN GROUP – London & Hong Kong 1984. Before starting this project I was given an intensive three day course run by an American with a ponytail and a piece of red string round his wrist given to him by the Dalai Lama. He was an expert in geomancy and feng shui. I passed with honours, apparently

being a Monkey was a great asset. I owe it all to my father. Thanks Dad.

Our concept was not only reflective of the marine trade between China and the British, porcelain for opium, but of apposite opposites. Cold intense blues against hot copper; it worked, but the chef didn't. Straight back to Hong Kong – bad chi, sell site.

Antony Worrall Thompson was convinced of the site's location and felt that he knew the market – Mediterranean – and the state of his bank balance – empty. But you don't have to destroy all the old to create a new sensation: same site, same structure, same furniture – but add new colour palette. Result: Zoe - different ambiance and success.

25 TEXAS LONE STAR – London 1989. A complete corporate revamp for this chain of Tex-Mex diners – new logo, menu design, signage, external frontage, the whole bit. But how do you get brand stand out in the flutter and clutter of the urban retail jungle? Just add an eight-foot Indian, that's how!

26 MON PLAISIR RESTAURANT GROUP – London 1989.

Alain Lhermitte bought Mon Plaisir from his retiring boss, Madam Violla in 1971, which she had begun in 1943: one restaurant, two families in 65 years – must be unique.

A more contemporary member of the group was Mon Plaisir du Nord, the errant teenage son born in Islington. More drink than food, more boulevardier than gourmand.

Tim Whitmore and I also designed the extension of Mon Plaisir proper, since I'm not showing it here, go and visit it yourselves – c'est tres bonne, vraiment!

27 THE RESTAURANT DOLPHIN SQUARE – London 1981. Where Parliamentarians and courtesans live cheek by cheek, a perfect symbiosis.



I have diverse memories about this project, I loved the job, working again with M. Lhermitte, I loved the interior and the food, but I also loved the receptionist, and got stabbed by an Algerian chef – her boyfriend I gather. Properly kebabbed, as you might say.

Another project of restaurant archaeology, behind 1950's panels of avocado hessian and false ceilings, we discovered the original deco features, such as the sprung maple dance floor, copper columns and doors, light covings and vaults of pre-war silver service – which helped the balance of payments a bit. 28 SMOLLENSKY'S AMERICAN BRASSERIE – London 2000. The American Brasserie? A curious cross-cultural invention; our interpretation was inspired by New York Cool, by Miles Davis Kind of Cool, by the Merry Pranksters' Acid Kandy Kool, dropped into the deepest, darkest sub-basement on Piccadilly.

29 CAFÉ SPICE NAMASTE – London 1989. A unique



colour palette, combined with classical Indian structural and graphic motifs, gave our client an ownable set of brand tools to use in replication to develop a national chain of restaurants.

30 CHELSEA FOOTBALL CLUB – London 2002. Our logo for our fish restaurant. Name generation by Ken Bates, ex-chairman of Chelsea.



31 OXeau – London 1999. Part of our Oxo Tower restaurant proposal, pitched with Antony Worrall Thompson.

32 VIRGIN MEGASTORES – UK 1983. The logo for a chain of Megastore Cafes, based on our Oxford Street prototype.

33 KRONENBOURG – Europe 1974.

Packaging for a beer aimed at women. Chic sophistication with a hint of lousy bottle specification. However, look at the sandwich makers' logo; I would love to know who 'borrowed' our typeface.

34 BENSON & HEDGES – Global 2001.

The old gold box – 'the fags my dad smokes' – hardly suitable for today's movers. Our idea is to maintain a degree of gold

reassurance until the outer wrapper is removed to reveal its true colours.

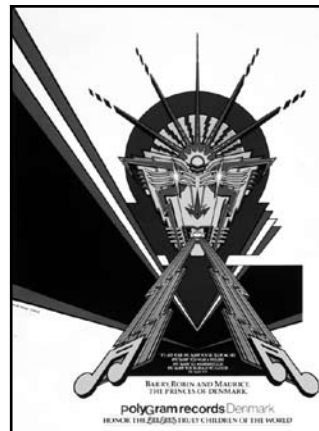
35 NESTLE – Europe 1988. We were asked for ideas on how to reduce the European tomato pyramid; our solution – red bombs of spicy Killer Tomato.

36 LONDON TRANSPORT – 1977. The silver bus designed to celebrate the Queens Silver Jubilee in 1977, twenty-five no. 25 Routemasters, a route that luckily runs past the Palace.

37 STUDIO IDEFIX – Paris 1978. The logo for a radical French animation studio.

38 VAPEURS – Paris 1976. The logo for an erotic gay Parisian patisserie. The concept, the product and the signage so incensed the locals, particularly the Church, that it opened and shut on the same day. Vive la Revolution!

39 APRIL 77 – Paris 2008. Apparently when you publish a book of your work, you always get nutters writing to you on rather too intimate terms. I received an e-mail from one informing me that I had in fact designed Biba for him but since he wasn't born then, could I design it again? Please.

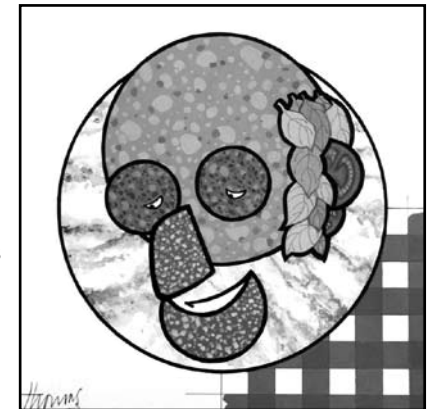


I had always vowed never to do another retail project – why bother? I've been lucky enough to do the best. However out of intrigue, I met my nutter, the excellent child of 1977, punk drummer and fashion designer Brice Partouche and his hideously youthful team and immediately vowed to break my vow.

40 JUDAS JUMP: Scorch – 1971. A rock and roll combo comprising the remnants of Amen Corner and the Herd, and all too damned handsome by half. Enviously, I decided to gild the lot of 'em. It was a very hot summer's day in the even hotter Vogue studios and wonderful rivulets of sweat were forming under the gilding. It could have killed them, of course, but someone has to suffer for me to win design awards.

41 THE BEE GEES – Global 1984. Billboard magazine commissioned fifty illustrators from around the world to produce a visual of one of their tunes, in our case 'Jive Talkin'.

42 INSALATA ENZO 2006. My portrait of old friend, bon viveur, architect, designer, illustrator, political cartoonist, and restaurateur Enzo Apicella. With that amount of talent, he deserves to be caricatured as a meat salad.



STEVE THOMAS: BIG BIBA AND OTHER STORIES

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