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BRIEFING
Design

Fancy ferry

Melbourne [NEXUS DESIGN]

The humble passenger ferry is a vessel not typically associated with luxurious design. But in Melbourne, where hospitality ventures are treated with utmost seriousness, a plan to turn a busy coastline carrier into an upmarket retail-and-dining destination has inspired a classy result. *MV Sorrento* is Searoad Ferries' 2001 700-capacity ship, which has been reimaged by high-end firm Nexus Design.

"The client had a strong vision of where he wanted to take his brand," says Nexus Design creative director Sonia Simpfendorfer. "Rather than using naval architects they chose us because they believed a unique approach would generate a unique result."

Nexus's striking fit-out references the glory days of seafaring through bold sailor stripes and sea-rope detailing. The design draws on a soft, neutral colour palette and a sparse mix of materials, creating a calm environment. While an elegant finish has been achieved, every fitting – from inbuilt raw plywood joinery to Scandinavian furnishings from Artek and Hay – is remarkably hardy. "This vessel gets a beating so every element needed to be practical, durable and hard wearing," says Lucy Marczyk, Nexus's lead designer on the project. "We took practical function to another level and were lucky to work with Tasmanian boat builders, whose unbelievable level of craftsmanship meant the detailing was flawless." — NSG nexusdesigns.com.au



PHOTOGRAPHER: JAMES OBER

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Art of shopping
Kyoto [D & DEPARTMENT]

Tokyo designer Kenmei Nagaoka has been enlightening the nation with once-forgotten Japanese design that is still relevant decades after the release (see his essay on page 58). Partnering with the Kyoto University of Art and Design, his practice D&Department chose Kyoto's Bukkoji temple to open its 10th design shop.

The team assembled 400 items, including design books, food, drinks and homeware from across Japan – and especially Kyoto. The shop comes with a gallery space and the firm has also opened a café next door that serves seasonal foods and *hoji* and *genmai* teas. — JT d-department.com/jp



Bright spark
Sweden [RUBN]

Swedish lightmaker Rubn has always kept a low public profile but this unassuming attitude hasn't stopped designer Niclas Hoflin's talent from shining bright. "It is just glass, wood, a cable and a bulb," he says of this sleek smoke-grey Velvet table lamp.

Hoflin, who founded the company seven years ago, oversees the production of 50,000 lamps a year. From the sleepy village of Vittsjö in the south of the country where his products are handcrafted, he explains his illuminating philosophy: "The only goal I have is to make the best I can every day to make people happy. Without light there is no life." — CHR rubn.se



Perfect finish
Tokyo [SIMPLICITY]

Design company Simplicity reinvented paper tableware with its Wasara range. Now it has turned its attention to one of Japan's finest crafts: lacquerware, or *nuri*. Its Nuri Wasara line features 12 pieces from the original paper range, including bowls and saké cups. They are all lacquered in three finishes: *kuro*, a lustrous black; vermilion *tame*; and *akebono*, which combines the two.

Lacquer is a robust technique that works perfectly on thick paper. Layers of sap from the *urushi* tree are applied and dried to a surprising level of durability – proof that old techniques have their place in the modern design world. — FW simplicity.co.jp



Crafty approach
London [NATIVE & CO]

Opening late last year, Notting Hill's Native & Co sells a handpicked selection of craft and design pieces from Japan and Taiwan. Set up by two product designers, Taiwan-born Sharon Jo-Yun Hung and British-Japanese Chris Yoshiro Green (pictured), the shops stock includes linen, stationery and even a dog range.

Londoners are increasingly spoilt rotten for Japanese craft shops (Momosan Shop in Hackney is also a gem) so it is Native & Co's rare Taiwanese finds that make it special. "Taiwanese craft has great potential and one of our goals is to promote Taiwan as a culture of high-quality craft and good taste," says Hung. — TM nativeandco.com

Top table
London [ARAM]

After searching in vain for a well-made solid-wood console table, Ruth Aram, a trained landscape architect and a director at her family furniture shop Aram, took it into her own hands. Working with a set-builder she developed a collection of Aldwych tables. "I designed the console to be dependable and understated," says Aram. The table is available with either drawers or brass hooks. — MKA aram.co.uk



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Section D

TUESDAY 19.00 UK TIME

Section D is Monocle 24's weekly show hosted by Design editor Tom Morris. No other radio show covers so much ground in the multifaceted world of design: each week it offers a view across all sectors, covering everything from furniture to fashion.