



SNAPSHOT

British musician Sam Smith must have been chuffed about putting on his best suit for the 88th Academy Awards at Hollywood's Dolby Theatre. The 23-year-old was dressed in Alfred Dunhill, pairing a black three-piece mohair peak lapel tuxedo with a white pleated evening shirt and black grosgrain bowtie. The sharp suit stood out well onstage, where Smith performed *Writing on the Wall* — the theme song for James Bond movie *Spectre* — written by Jimmy Napes. Later that night, Smith and Napes were invited onstage to collect the Oscar for Best Original Song to thunderous applause. Other notable winners that night included Leonardo DiCaprio for Best Actor, Alejandro Iñárritu for Best Director and Brie Larson for Best Actress. *Spotlight*, a true story about the *Boston Globe's* uncovering of a massive child molestation scandal and cover-up within the local Catholic archdiocese, won Best Picture.

people+places

Newsmakers & hotspots

BY PETRINA FERNANDEZ



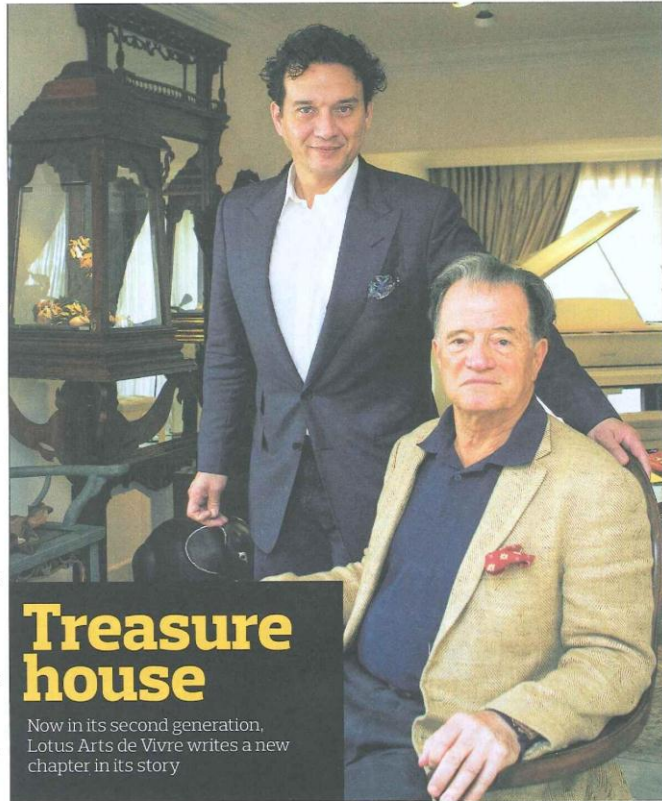
Described as a latter-day Jim Thompson by *Forbes* in 2010, the most apparent similarity between Rolf von Bueren and The Thai Silk Company founder is their affection for their adopted homeland. Rolf's company tasked him with setting up operations in Thailand in 1962, a move that forever changed the trajectory of his life.

"I was coming out of post-war reconstructions in Germany, and Thailand offered smiles, fun and good food," recounts the former industrialist. Thailand's greatest merit, however, came in the form of his Thai-Scottish wife Helen, whom he spotted at the swimming pool of the Royal Bangkok Sports Club. The two were wed soon after and while they had a happy home life with sons Sri and Nicklas, Helen sought a creative pastime to occupy her time when the boys moved overseas to study. Her inherent eye for design and detail translated beautifully into Lotus Arts de Vivre, today an internationally renowned purveyor of all things exquisite.

Home décor, cutlery, travel accessories, antique and contemporary furniture, sensual Kashmir fabrics expressed in plush carpets and rugs — Lotus Arts de Vivre advocates the art of living, natural materials and traditional handcrafting techniques among the pillars of its philosophy. An emphasis on exclusivity sees its collection boast numerous one-of-a-kind and semi-repeat pieces. In recent years, the 34-year-old brand has earned the title of being among the largest single-piece jewellery producers in the world.

Asian exoticism and flora and fauna cues inform most designs, from oiled ebony Buddhist prayer beads to dragon rings glittering with precious stones. The limited production Scarab Parrot Handbag is an icon, set with 676 scarab wings and a gilded silver frame studded with diamonds and lined with silk. Putting in frequent appearances in the home décor range are medleys of wood, mother-of-pearl and silver in the form of serving bowls and ornaments, at once classic and contemporary.

"Our designs are unique, extraordinary things you wouldn't be able to find anywhere else — ivory toothpicks adorned with a single ruby, for instance, or a carved horn with a sewing set inside it," says Rolf. "Luxury has nothing to do with price points. Rather, it often refers to rarity. Some of our items are made from coconut shell, a very common



Treasure house

Now in its second generation, Lotus Arts de Vivre writes a new chapter in its story

material. We discovered out-of-work carvers in Bali after ivory was banned and showed them how to work coconut, which was too hard for wood carvers. We then had the shells lacquered and gilded. It's not expensive but it is special, like something right out of a medieval Indian palace. Friends helped greatly in setting up connections and display spaces to showcase our products, and we soon had people flying in from around the world to see us."

Immersed in an environment that celebrated art and culture, it was only natural that Sri and Nicklas inherited their parents' passion for both. "Our parents frequently entertained and travelled, and we were always a part of that, whether in the background of parties or enjoying adventures like rolling in the grass of the palaces in India," says eldest son Sri. "Family trips always involved buying or selling materials, picking up objects and asking craftsmen to make pieces here and there."

Nicklas' interest veer towards finance, with a background in banking and security before he joined the family business, but Sri had always

been drawn to craftsmanship, enjoying the poetry and physicality of working with his hands. He studied goldsmithing, learning to work metal and cut stone. The von Buerens realised they would do better to make their own products, so Sri opened a workshop within the business. A distinctive trait is that materials — stingray leather, jade, liana wood, seashells and bamboo included — precede the design, a strategy rarely employed by other large market players. Lotus Arts de Vivre, however, does not concern itself with common practices, preferring to focus on the original artistic endeavours that established its name.

It was this very quality that endeared the company and its founding family to Antoine Balchache, managing director of Balchache Luxuries, which represents global leading luxury brands such as jeweller Mouawad and French silversmith Christofle. He first encountered Lotus Arts de Vivre at the



Asian elements as dragons with exquisite materials and

Silver accents on natural wood are as common then as seen in this candlestand



The limited production Scarab Parrot Handbag





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House of Lotus Arts de Vivre in Bangsar

Asian elements such as dragons are paired with exquisite natural materials like ostrich and emu eggs



Silver accents on natural wood are a common theme, as seen in this candlestand



Rajvilas in India a few years ago and began noticing the family around the city when they flew into Kuala Lumpur for business. Bakhache and Nicklas were officially introduced last year and immediately began discussing a possible collaboration, made natural thanks to their overlapping clientele.

The fruit of that conversation proved to be House of Lotus Arts de Vivre. The stately home in Bangsar was formerly House Mousaad, preferred by high-profile clients for private browsing of fine jewellery. Today, it juxtaposes the best products from both Bakhache Luxuries' comprehensive portfolio and Lotus Arts de Vivre in a welcoming setting. While small treasures and jewellery are displayed in showcases, sculptures, ornaments and Christofle silverware are arranged around the split-level interiors "to give you an idea of how they would look at home", says Sri, who is credited with the layout.

Set to court long-time and new customers of Bakhache Luxuries and Lotus Arts de Vivre, the House of Lotus Arts de Vivre marks a new chapter for both entities and it is constant developments like this that keep Rolf active in the business. At 75, he wouldn't be faulted for retiring. "I work harder now than I did 20 years ago but I enjoy it immensely," he says. "I garden, golf and trek when I have time. Three years ago I took Sri's family around Mount Kailash in Tibet — my grandchildren are still complaining about it until today. But trying new things, it keeps you young." The same can be said of his high-flying brand, which is still relevant over 30 years later.



A SPORTY SNOW SHOW

The synergy between Hublot and Ferrari thrums with adrenaline in a partnership of shared qualities — high performance, innovation, state-of-the-art materials and the constant pursuit of greater achievement. This recently translated into a new first for both brands at the Scuderia Ferrari on Ice.

In the Italian alpine town of Livigno, Maranello's red car met Livigno's white under the fervent gaze of spectators. Giancarlo Fisichella represented the Italian team, descending the slopes of the Lombardy ski resort to reach the track on the snow set up specifically for the event in the town's main square and through the streets of the town centre. It was the first time the team raced on snow and as the event's official timekeeper — having partnered Scuderia Ferrari for over four years — the Swiss company honoured the milestone with three limited edition timepieces developed in partnership with Ferrari. These include the sporty Big Bang Ferrari Carbon in king gold and titanium, the 25-piece Big Bang Ferrari Speciale Grey Ceramic with the emblematic prancing horse on the dial, and highly complicated MP-05 LaFerrari Sapphire, a 20-piece timepiece with a three-dimensional case to create the impression of a suspended movement.



THE LIVING HISTORY OF AN ICON

A proud history informs the design cues of Rolex's new Oyster Perpetual Day-Date 40, a fitting tribute to its predecessor launched in 1956. It was the first wristwatch to display the date and the day of the week spelt out in full in a window, a feat that endeared it to world leaders. As a nod to its prestige, the President bracelet was specially created, comprising semi-circular three-piece links that fuse into one another elegantly.

The new generation of this timepiece juxtaposes a stunning icy blue dial against striking platinum or 18-carat gold. The highest standards of chronometric performance are guaranteed with the Calibre 3255, an in-house movement with 14 patents and significant progress in precision, power reserve and resilience to its name. As a finishing touch and to reflect its global appeal, a wide choice of languages is available for the bespoke day display.

To celebrate the rich legacy that colours the Oyster Perpetual Day-Date, an immersive stroll through its past is on display at the Cortina Watch boutique at Starhill Gallery, KL from March 7 to 20. Included in the exhibition are information panels presented on an impressive structure inspired by the President bracelet, as well as 3D videos, stories, archive photographs, an exploded view of a movement and models from the new collection.