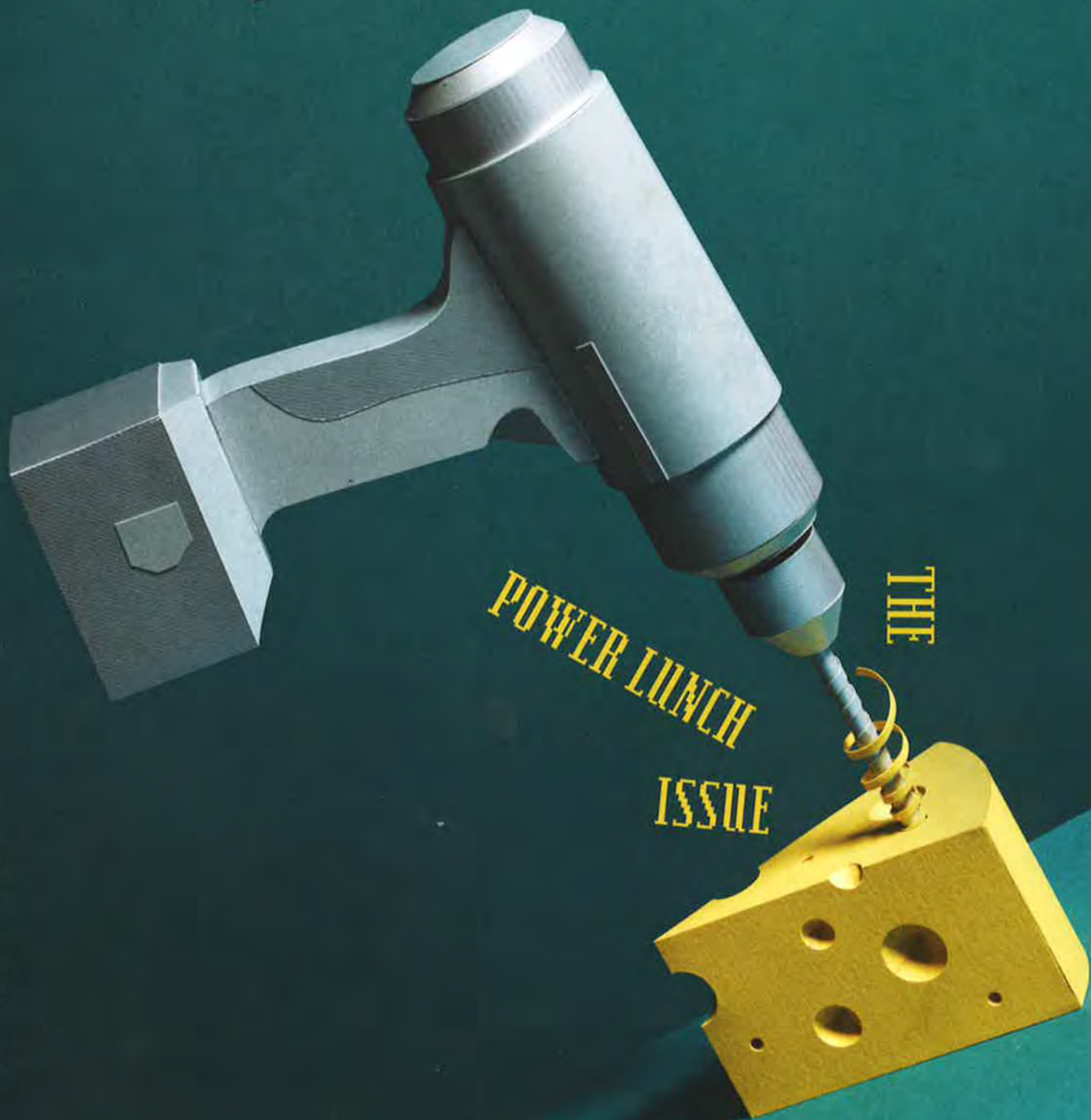


Discipline

A Blink Journal



ISSN 2051-2848 / 9 772051 284005 01

Celebrating the most interesting makers of Film **Marc Gomez Del Moral**,
Art **Bob Lawrie**, Fashion feat. **Kindness**, Design **Inventory Studio**,
Interiors **Shed**, Music **Diederik Idenburg**, Dining **Rita's** and more...

Dead hippies and dreamscapes with interior architects Shed

You'd be forgiven for thinking that a world famous luxury department store and a back street burger joint have nothing in common. In the lavish surroundings of Harrods' shoe room, affluent customers shop under a colonnade of chandeliers, surrounded by only the finest marble and wood. A few tube stops away at MEATliquor, hipsters queue for hours to crowd into a low-lit, wall art-emblazoned dining room where tattooed waiting staff serve them "dead hippie" burgers and grease-slicked fried pickles.

But look a little deeper and you'll see the connection. As well as enjoying equally cult-like reputations and dedicated followings, with visitors traveling from afar just to bask in the atmosphere, both spaces were given their unique character by the same London interior architecture firm, Shed.

Shed's founders, Nick Stringer and Matt Smith, both graduated from Nottingham University's groundbreaking Interior Architecture course before independently winding up on the other side of the world in Hong Kong and becoming fast friends despite supporting Sheffield's arch-rival football teams. Years later, the pair re-connected in London. Both had earned their stripes working with big brands – as director of projects for Prada in Asia, Nick was involved in establishing the label throughout the continent, and Matt had worked for prominent brand consultants Wolff Olins and FITCH. But as Matt says, both found limitations to the scope of their work. "We did some beautiful pieces of work but nothing ever got built, which was frustrating creatively." They soon came up with the idea of starting their own company, one focused on seeing its projects come to life. "It's a metaphor for a small workplace, a masculine place where your dad would retreat on a Sunday afternoon and tinker around making things," explains Nick. They had the quintessential start-up origin story, working out of a bedroom in their shared flat with no outside financing, keeping track of their business costs on a roll of wallpaper.

Shed's big break was an extensive, global branding project for luxury telecoms company Vertu. They had scored the project over some of the biggest names in the industry and the brand's success gained them a firm foothold in the retail sector. It did wonders for their confidence too, says Nick. "At that time, Shed was three people. We punched well above our weight and it restored some faith in the idea that design can win you work, even if you don't have the weight of a big company behind you. It put us out there in the world of luxury."



Fast forward a few years and Shed are flourishing. Their office is filled with talented young employees, so many that they will soon all move to a new, bigger office. Since their founding, Shed have been responsible for shaping the retail experience of leading luxury brands like a flagship Mayfair store for bespoke menswear brand Spencer Hart and two departments inside London's most idiosyncratic monument to opulence, Harrods. Brought in to update the store's 15,000 square foot shoe emporium in 2011, Shed created a

dramatic, luxurious, art deco-inspired space, intricately detailed with brass and lacewood elements and furnished with handmade one-off pieces by furniture maker George Smith. But what's most impressive about their treatment of the space is their attitude towards working with such an iconic and historic brand. For Shed, striking a balance between honouring tradition and imprinting their own aesthetic values was crucial. "We always had one eye on the fact that Harrods is an institution. We were trying to create something that felt at home there but was also a little different and still had a piece of Shed in there. We weren't just trying to design something for Harrods – we like to design for our own satisfaction as well." This year, Shed were invited back by Harrods to overhaul the store's 15-year-old toy department, the Toy Kingdom. They designed a space that plays with exaggerated scale, bright colours and fantastical motifs, creating distinctly themed zones called 'dreamscapes'. Shed were given total creative freedom with the project, and their influence is clear in the unexpected details arising from their combination of tradition and unrestrained imagination. "We knew that we could play off the heritage of Harrods and deliberately allow it to jar against something we thought would be exciting as a piece of design."

But perhaps what really put Shed on the cool list is MEATliquor, their first foray outside of the luxury retail sector into the vast arena of food and beverage. MEATliquor is a collaboration with Meatailer,

the legendary food mini-empire founded by Yianni Papoutsis and Scott Collins after the success of Papoutsis' burger truck, the MeatWagon, in 2009. Arguably responsible for igniting London's boutique fast food explosion of recent years, the team were looking to expand into their first fixed home after a brief pop-up spell in New Cross. As Matt notes, fate played a considerable part in Shed's involvement. "I've never known a project with so many coincidences." Although they had already crossed paths with Collins (who runs the Capital Pub Company) via his