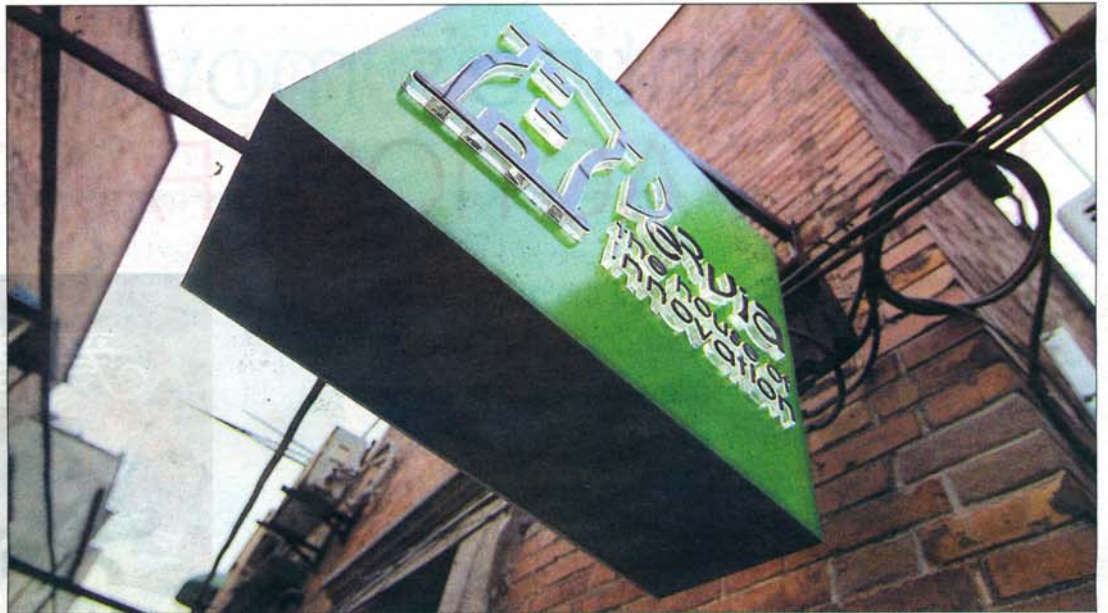


A new lifestyle design house in Taikang Road has set its sights high with a range of unique products that defy stereotypes, as Yang Di reports



Design concept all about lifestyle

As Taikang Road attracts an increasing number of art lovers from Shanghai and beyond, the booming popularity of the area has encouraged more handicraft stores and the like to set up shop. Among the latest newcomers is Vervia.

Nestled in Lane 248, this is the kind of shop to excite the senses with its intriguing shapes, dazzling colors and enhancing sounds. With an emphasis on the unusual, aficionados of the esoteric and extraordinary will feel right at home here.

A purveyor of art and design ware, Vervia's handicrafts and other fashion and furniture products represent a fusion of European and Asian styles. The shop aims to invigorate homes across Shanghai while at the same time, wanting life at home to be as beautiful and as pleasurable as possible.

"Vervia is not just a shop," said Iris Hreinsdottir, one of the founders. "It's a lifestyle concept. We wanted Vervia to have the atmosphere of a home rather than just a shop."

"The idea is that people should come to enjoy the 'Vervia experience' while feeling energized, refreshed and inspired after shopping. Vervia stands for an inspirational fantasy land waiting to be discovered."

Taikang Road has retained some

of its original building structure to create a natural and organic look. The combination of the raw and the basic together with the stylized and designed, creates a perfect balance for the shop interior.

"Inside, you will find another integral part of our concept — the Vervia coffee lounge that offers a space to relax from the stress of everyday life," Hreinsdottir said. "The intricate network of lanes at Taikang Road fits perfectly with our vision of challenging people to explore a hidden path before they discover Vervialand."

Vervia creates products which seems to spring forth from another world. It strives for a range that enhance lifestyles, transcending boundaries of mind, body and home. In using color, light, form, texture and pattern in unusual ways, Vervia calls forth a hidden meaning in the hustle and bustle of modern life.

All items feature the brand's very



A customized Vervia-designed teapot

own in-house designs and patterns, often blending European and Asian shapes and symbols, thus reflecting the heritage of Vervia's designers. Its experienced team includes Icelandic designer Iris Hreinsdottir, Italian designer Viviana Scala, Swiss furniture designer Marc Vincenz and contemporary art designer Joyce Jiang from Hangzhou.

Together they draw on images from their homelands — Chinese ancient imperial architecture, the piazzas and colonnades of Rome, Iceland's moonscapes scenery and mystical Viking culture and Swiss alpine meadows and icy glaciers — to create contemporary, stylish pieces.

Jiang said: "For me, Vervia is an entirely new concept where traditional patterns are used in many exciting new ways."

Furniture comprises one of the more valuable parts of the Vervia collection. Many of the single items are handmade by a family of artisans who have been making furniture for generations.

Popular items include the cube seats, the sculpture shelf and the furry butterfly chair. Crowning the furniture range is the magnificent "Magik" chest of drawers, available as multicolored or in stained elmwood, and something that would look superb in any home. This fabulous piece was designed by Vincenz.

If you like wooden things, there are plenty of pieces to keep your appetite whetted. Wooden model cars, fine wooden saucers and plates and wooden creatures are just a few of the collectibles from its range of the unusual and exotic.

For something with a softer edge, the cushions are the perfect accessories to go with the furniture. Any pattern from Vervia's extensive

"color book" can be placed on the cushions.

The prices are medium to high-range, yet among the many pieces everyone will find something they can afford.

"To recreate the feeling of the natural and the organic, we like to use pure sources such as wood, linen, recycled glass, Thai silk, gemstones and stainless steel. We even use seashell for some products," said Hreinsdottir.

She added that the tailor-made solutions include customized patterns and prints on any material.

"You can expect to see Vervia patterns on any product and material, soft-furnishing cubes, butterfly chairs, oleographs, glassware, lamps, homewares and any other item and material you can imagine."

Vervia also features its own line of trendy fashions as Joe Phat, Konkrete, Red Star, Elemental and ArTeA are all part of its collection of brands with a special edge.

"As a full-service design company, we naturally don't limit ourselves to the retail of our product," Hreinsdottir said. "We see ourselves more as a design consultant for graphic and interior design, as well as other tailor-made design solutions."

Further projects include a restaurant with an integrated shop, a wedding catalogue, a jewelry workshop and an online shop where customers can put together their own designs.

"Besides retail we also engage in export of design ware to international markets such as Australia, Belgium, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Spain and the UK," Hreinsdottir said, adding that Vervia

was negotiating a franchise shop in Holland and South Korea.

It will increase its presence by opening further outlets in Beijing, Hong Kong and another two shops in Shanghai — one of them on Yangshupu Road.

"Our new office and shop is currently being built by the famous Taiwanese architect Deng Kunyan," Hreinsdottir said.

Visitors to Vervia can enjoy browsing through the extensive array of fashion and furnishing pieces, whilst sipping a coffee or nibbling on a snack from the shop's coffee lounge and listening to the ambient music.



Candle holders shaped like traditional Chinese qipaos



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