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Escher-inspired elements
inform a Hong Kong chain's
Beijing outpost

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Photography courtesy of OUT-OF-BOX CREATIVE

1. Fairwood Café's
main dining area opens
to the mall and can be
expanded for additional
seating thanks to steel
framed folding glass
doors.

2. White oak cabinets
are filled with miniature
jumping man sculptures
and other kitchen items.



→ For Hong Kong-based fast food chain Fairwood Café, developing a new brand identity made sense in 2004. Its home city was still reeling from the country's SARS outbreak and was in need of some optimism, which Fairwood was more than happy to deliver. The company enlisted the creative juices of local graphic designer Alan Chan, who created the now-iconic "jumping man" as the brand's symbol, which is what Danny Chan of Hong Kong design firm Beige was charged with retaining when he crafted Fairwood's first location in Beijing. "The bright orange jumping man represented a happy, carefree Hong Kong; seeing it made people smile," notes Danny Chan. Soon the color and jumping man image became part of Fairwood's DNA. An



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added bonus: The jumping man looks like the Chinese character for “big,” which is the first character in Fairwood’s Chinese name.

The 2,600-square-foot, 130-seat restaurant is located in a contemporary shopping mall off the capital city’s first ring road. “Hong Kong’s fast food concept wouldn’t work for Fairwood in Beijing,” explains Chan. “People take their time at meals in the capital, and young people

have the spending power to demand higher quality dishes with table service.” But creating something unique in the new location would be a challenge. For one, the floorplan consisted of a large rectangle angled off a smaller one as well as somewhat restrictive ceiling heights of more than seven feet in some areas.

Chan looked to Dutch graphic artist M.C. Escher’s drawings for inspiration. “I’ve

always admired his work,” he says. “The unusual shape of the plan led to a furniture layout with many partitions between booths and round tables in the corners.” Fairwood Beijing’s menu, unlike its locations in Hong Kong, is predominantly made up of Western dishes such as steaks, pasta, and sodas. “That dictated how closely we positioned tables as well as how large they needed to be,” Chan explains.



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The restaurant’s façade opens to the mall and can be expanded for additional seating thanks to steel framed folding glass doors. The main dining area is dominated by a backdrop of white oak cabinets filled with bric-a-brac such as miniature jumping man sculptures, cast iron frying pans, and tall pepper grinders. “This wall is intended to be life abstracted—Fairwood broken down into its essential elements,” Chan says. “The hexagonal floor patterns resemble Escher’s drawings, along with the feature lighting above the space—it looks like a series of hexagons on plan.”

Chan toned down the brand’s signature bright orange color and added gray to create a more sophisticated aesthetic. Seating is upholstered in weathered synthetic leather for a vintage feel, while plastic laminate on tabletops mimics unfinished woods. He also intentionally selected a range of materials that will age organically over time, such as black chrome for the reception flooring and textured wood paneling along walls. “This is really a testing ground for the image that Fairwood now wants to project,” Chan says. **hd**

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3. Partitions between booths and M.C. Escher-inspired hexagonal floor patterns and lighting mark the main dining area.

4. In the dining area near the kitchen, white plastic laminate on tabletops mimics the look of unfinished wood, while walls are covered with textured wood paneling so they age organically over time.

5. In the booths, Danny Chan toned down the brand’s signature orange hue and added gray for a more sophisticated feel.

Fairwood Café Beijing

Owner
Fairwood Holdings Ltd.
Interior Design Firm
Beige Design, Hong Kong
Interior Design Project Team
Danny Chan and Marco Lam
Contractor
BBMG Group Company
Purchasing Firm
Fairwood Holdings
Lighting
Hip Hing Lamps Manufactory
Engineering and Kitchen
Fairwood Holdings
Graphics
BBMG Group Company; design by Beige Design
Art
M.C. Escher
Furniture
3 Mart; design by Beige Design
Soda Fountain
Fairwood Holdings

*Designers did not provide sourcing for other furnishings shown.