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FAIRWOOD

Beijing, China
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The year 2004 was not a happy one for Hong Kong. The city was still reeling from the SARS outbreak that had claimed 299 lives locally. Hong Kong-based fast-food chain Fairwood seized the opportunity to inject much-needed optimism into the city, by enlisting the creative juices of Alan Chan to develop for it a new brand identity. Chan came up with the now-iconic jumping man as the symbol for Fairwood, and the logo had to be retained by Hong Kong-based Danny Chan of Beige when he designed Fairwood's latest restaurant in China's capital earlier this year.

"The bright orange jumping man represented a happy, carefree Hong Kong; seeing it made people smile," notes Chan. "The colour orange and the jumping man have become part of Fairwood's DNA." An added bonus was that the jumping man looked like the Chinese character for 'big', which constitutes the first syllable of Fairwood's Chinese name.

The 2,600sq ft restaurant seats 130 people in a contemporary shopping mall off Beijing's first ring road. "Hong Kong's fast-food concept wouldn't work for Fairwood in Beijing: people take their time at meals and young people have the spending power to demand higher-quality dishes with table service," explains Chan. With a plan that consisted of a large rectangle angled off a smaller one, plus somewhat restrictive ceiling heights of just over seven feet in some areas, he had his work cut out for him.

Chan looked to Dutch graphic designer MC Escher's drawings for inspiration: "I've always admired his work," he states. "The unusual shape of the plan led to a furniture layout with many partitions between booths and round tables in the corners. Unlike in Hong Kong, the menu is predominantly Western dishes: steaks, pastas, sodas. That dictated how closely we positioned tables as well as how large they needed to be."

The entire facade of the restaurant opens to the mall and, facilitated by steel-framed folding glass doors, can be extended for additional dining covers. The main dining hall beyond is dominated



by a backdrop of white oak cabinets with bric-a-brac such as mini jumping man sculpture, cast-iron frying pans and oversized 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 bright orange and added grey to ease the brand's identity down a more

sophisticated route. Seating is upholstered in weathered synthetic leather for a vintage feel, while plastic laminates are used to mimic unfinished woods. The entire materials palette, including the black chrome reception flooring and the textured wood panelling along the walls, is intended to age organically over time.

In Chan's own words: "This really is a testing ground for the image Fairwood now wants to project."

