

London leads the way in contemporary crafts. **Corinne Julius** previews the internationally acclaimed Collect 2006 exhibition

Art of crafty

BRITAIN is one of the major centres of the contemporary art market, but in three short years the Crafts Council's Collect exhibition, held at London's Victoria & Albert Museum, has also put the capital firmly on the map as the world's best place to see and buy contemporary crafts. Collectors and gallery owners from around the globe flock to London not just individually, but in specialist buying groups led by curators and connoisseurs. Although the craft in Collect is at the top end of the market, compared with the price of works at fine-art shows such as Frieze, it is affordable and extremely good value.

Collect attracts not just foreign buyers but also international galleries, which this year make up half the number of exhibitors. This, combined with the fact that many of the substantial number of foreign-born makers who work in this country are being shown by UK galleries, gives visitors a global tour of contemporary applied arts.

Galerie SO in Zurich is one of the most adventurous. Owner Felix Flury has entered into the spirit of Collect by asking all his artists "to think about collecting things, to think about an aspect of collecting, obvious or not".

He says: "The idea of hoarding is very important to makers and all of them are working to a theme."



Julie Blyfield hammers silver until it looks like wood or woven baskets. Australian Contemporary (00 61 8 8414 7221; www.jamfactory.com.au)

Manon van Kouswijk has interpreted this with a series of butterflies cut from different household objects. "In an attempt to find the exotic in the daily environment of domestic life, I have started collecting butterflies," she says. "An important aspect of the entire working process consists of collecting the different objects out of which the butterflies can be cut. I find great possibilities in the ugliest things you can imagine."

Sally Marsland, another of Galerie SO's artists, has created a new collection of beautiful, almost black vessels in slate and resin. They work singly but Marsland sees them as a group. "I have used what I know about the character of these materials and what I have observed in vessels to make a group. I like relationships within groups," she says.

So, too, does Peter Bauhuis, who makes vessels in a range of colourful metals. Galerie SO is also showing shortlisted Jerwood Applied Arts silversmiths Hans Stofer and David Clarke.

Silver is a feature of Collect, with Six Danish Silversmiths offering a dazzling display of precious metal for daily use. All six have worked for Georg Jensen, which shows in their competence, simplicity, flowing forms and concern for function.

All have their own distinct style: Lone Lövschal makes bowls like blobs of mercury, Else Nicolai Hansen's containers also have the feel of a liquid trapped in mid-flow, and Allan Scharff's silver dishes look like rippling waves. Kim Buch takes a different



Alon Eliezer Meron combines porcelain and rubber in his tables, cups and saucers "to investigate the interplay between tables, dishes and man". Combination ceramic bowls, from £250 to £500, from AIDA. Call its UK operations director, Michal Cole, for more details (07887 553585)

approach, creating bowls from fine pieces of wire to make an outline tracery, rather like twigs silhouetted against a winter sky.

Across the continents in Australia, Julie Blyfield hammers silver into bowls that look like wood or woven baskets. There are several Australian galleries at Collect as part of Undergrowth, the country's UK Arts season. Blyfield is showing with Australian Contemporary, which also features the work of Prue Venables, one of the country's leading functional ceramicists. Her fine white or black porcelain tea artefacts, such as strainers, are beautiful yet usable. So, too, is Khai Liew's deceptively simple furniture, which combines a classical/modernist feel with Australian vernacular.

THERE is a lot of Australian ceramic and glass on show; from the delicate, black pierced vessels by Sandra Black at Raglan Gallery that look almost like metal, to Mel Douglas's softly coloured glass vessels at Narek. Australian glass artists such as Klaus Moje, who makes frenetic zigzag-patterned glass plates, are on show with the American Bullseye Connection Gallery.

Glass is a popular medium and Dafna Kaffeman mixes glass with foam and silicon to create strange, sea anemone-type containers. This mixing of materials seems popular, with several of the artists showing with AIDA (Association of Israel's

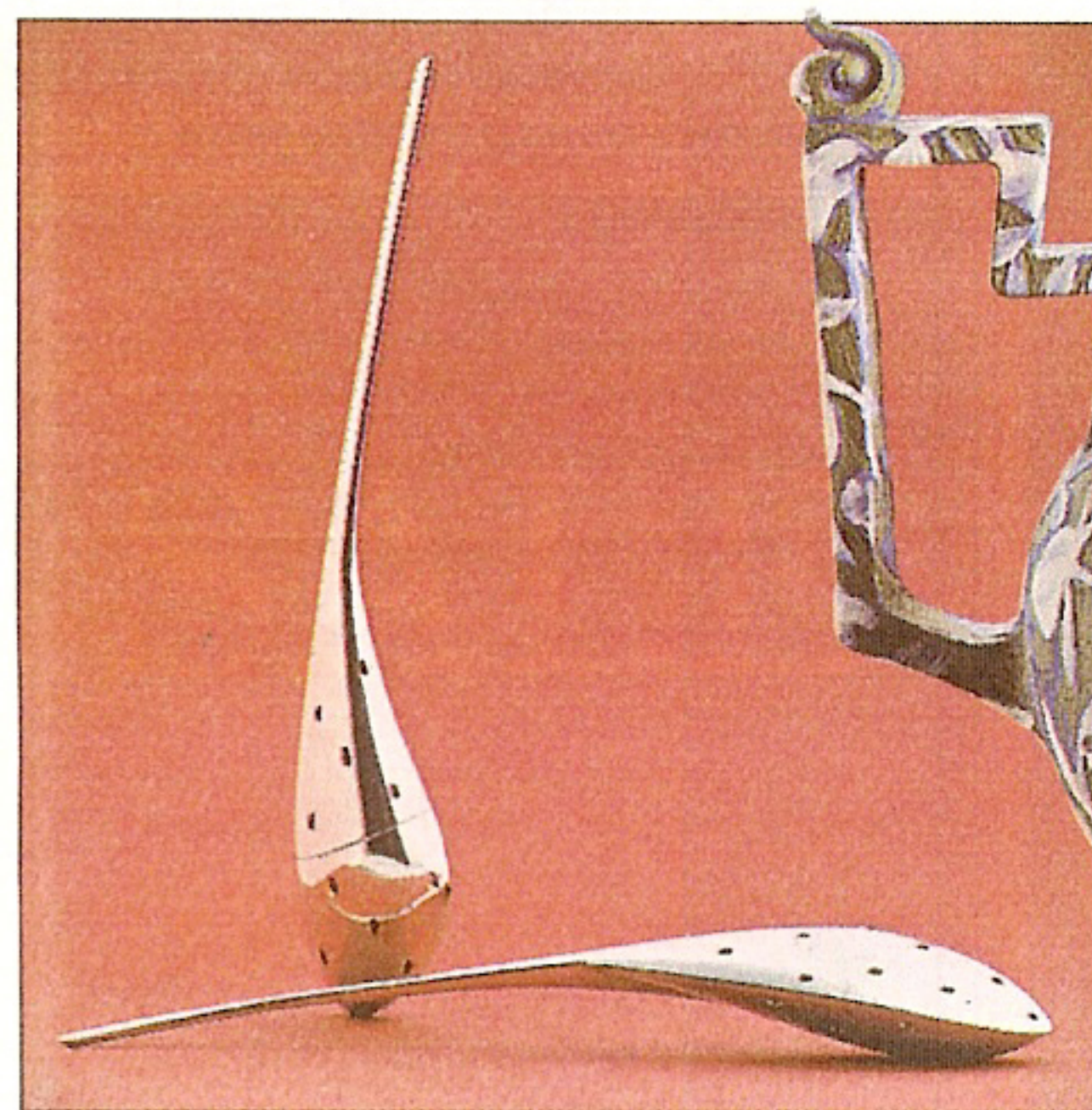
Decorative Arts). Alon Eliezer Meron combines porcelain and rubber in his tables, cups and saucers in order, he says, "to investigate the interplay between tables, dishes and man".

Strange combinations of materials are often a feature of the work on show with the Dutch galleries. Outside of British exhibitors, the Dutch have the largest presence, with a particularly strong showing by jewellery galleries. However, jewellery is a misleading category for the work on display at galleries such as Marzee, Ra and Louise Smit. Many of the pieces in their collections would look as good on walls and tables as they do on people.

Many of the British galleries are showing work by international makers and Sarah Myerscough Fine Art has an intriguing focus on wood, with fragmented vessels by Bud Latven and strong, almost metallic, containers by Liam Flynn.

It is always a sign of success when an event develops a fringe, and this year Collect has attracted a programme of external events, from lectures to shows. They include White Gold, an exhibition at the Flow Gallery of makers working in an innovative way with porcelain, and My Collection at Contemporary Applied Arts (CAA), where six craft collectors select their favourite pieces and explain why they have chosen them.

For anyone with an interest in contemporary objects, Collect is a good place to start.



Tea Infusers, in silver, £1,700, by Lasse Baehring. From Six Danish Silversmiths (00 45 33 239030; www.elsenicolaihansen.dk)

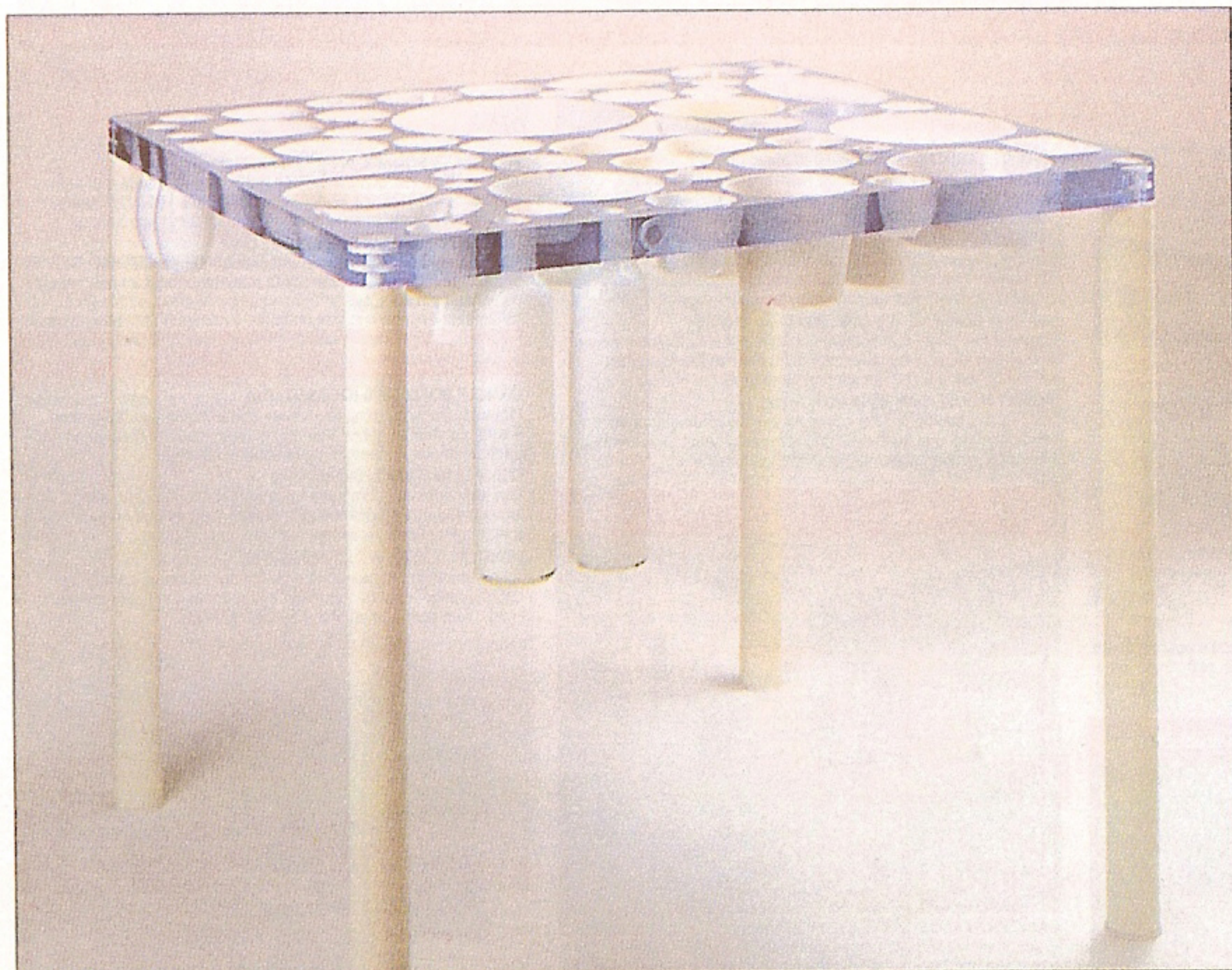


Bruce Nuske's Tea Ware 2 ceramic range, with extravagant decorative detail, available from Australian Contemporary (as before)

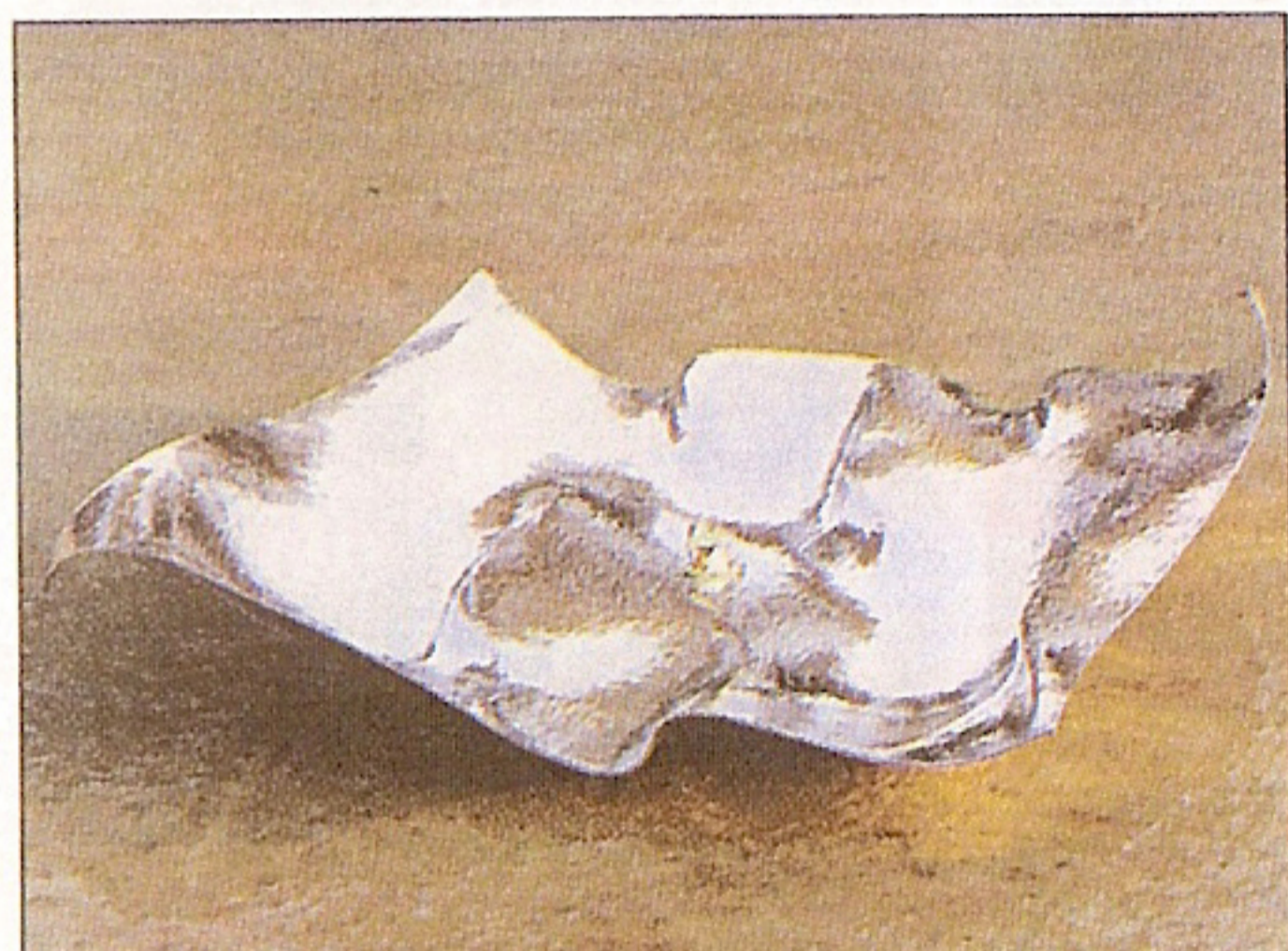


Mel Douglas's Loop is a sculpture in glass (from £2,700). Available from Narek Galleries (00 61 2 649 40112; www.narekgalleries.com)

collecting



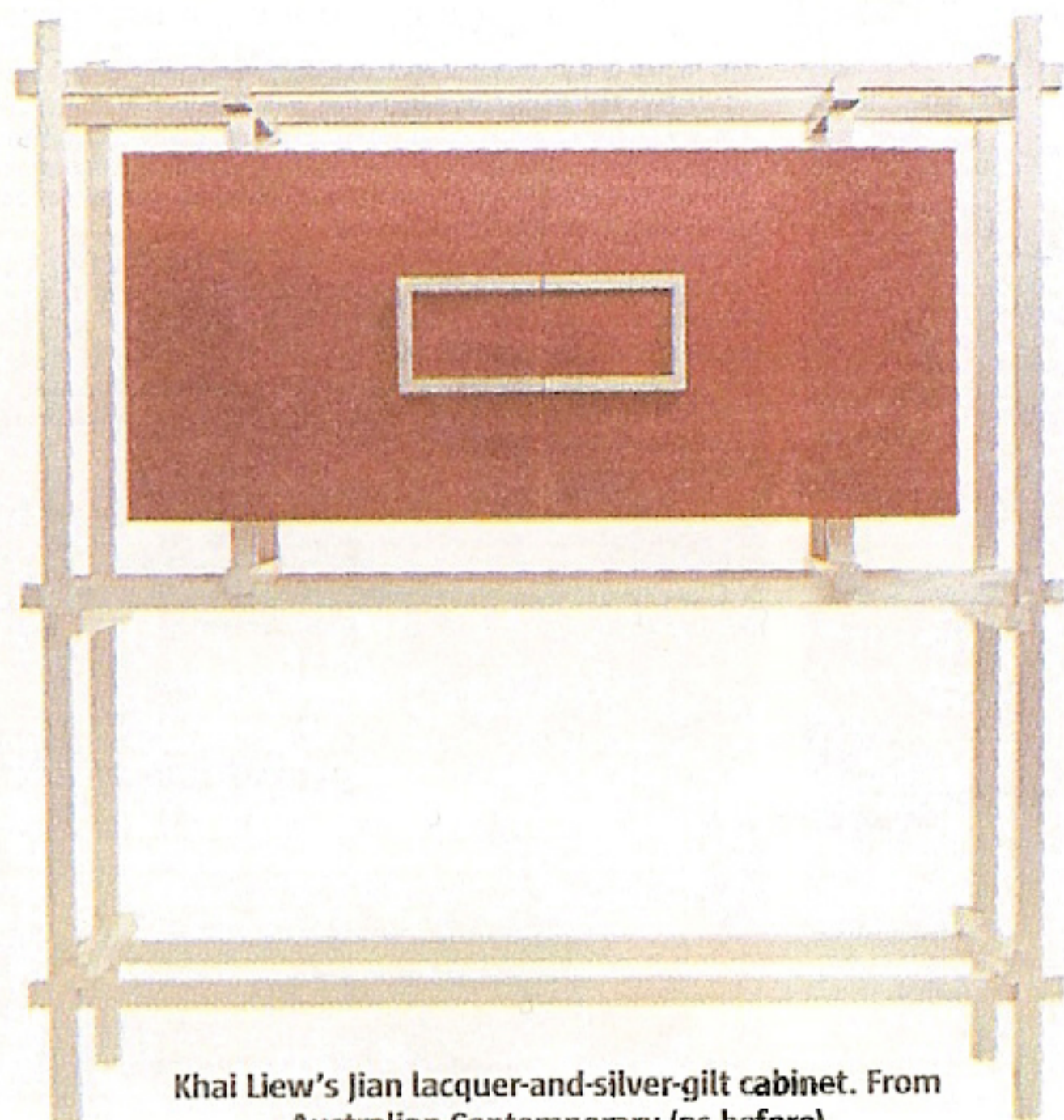
Alon Eliezer-Meron's Lucid Table in epoxy resin, with ceramic tableware and steel legs (£1,700), from AIDA. Call Michal Cole (as before)



Allan Scharff's large Pleats bowls, in fine silver, look like rippling waves. From £4,500 each, available from Six Danish Silversmiths (as before)



Sandra Black's ceramic Vessel is a perforated bowl with delicate leaf motif. From the Raglan Gallery (00 61 29 977 0906; www.raglangallery.com.au)



Khari Liew's Jian lacquer-and-silver-gilt cabinet. From Australian Contemporary (as before)



Manon van Kouswijk's Lepidoptera Domestica, mixed media, from £1,000. From Galerie SO, Switzerland (00 41 32 623 3544; www.galerieso.com)

READER OFFER



Dafna Kaffeman's glass-and-foam balls, in mixed groups, from £2,000. From AIDA, via Michal Cole (as before)

ORGANISED by the Crafts Council, Collect is the only international art fair of its kind in Europe. There is an unrivalled opportunity to see, buy and learn more about the best of contemporary crafts and applied arts.

With 42 of the world's leading galleries showing work from more than 300 artists, exhibits include works in glass, ceramics, textiles, silver and fine metal work, wood, furniture and art jewellery.

Homes & Property readers can obtain a £2 discount off the standard ticket price of £12 on production of this page. This offer runs for the duration of the exhibition.

For further information and a full exhibitor listing, visit www.craftscouncil.org.uk/collect.

Details

Collect 2006: The International Art Fair for Contemporary Objects, Victoria & Albert Museum, Cromwell Road, SW7 (020 7942 2000; www.vam.ac.uk).

The exhibition runs from 9 to 13 February, 11am to 5.45pm from Thursday to Sunday and 11pm to 4pm on Monday.

Tickets are £12 (£8 concessions, £20 for a season pass that is valid for the duration of Collect 2006).

■ My Collection, 10 February to 15 April, Contemporary Applied Arts, 2 Percy Street, W1 (020 7436 2344; www.caa.org.uk).

■ White Gold, until 8 March, Flow Gallery, 1-5 Needham Road, W11 (020 7243 0782; www.flowgallery.co.uk).



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