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Several years ago, when British twins Ian and Richard Abell organised a show of their work, they offered the public a diamond covered in rust called *Based Upon Priceless* and a golden urinal called *Based Upon Taking The Piss 100,000 pounds*.  
The saga continues.

BY CHAN KENG SIEW

*Eye on an icon: Based Upon's Pantan chair sprayed with liquid metal (opposite page).*



**COLLECTORS MAY HAVE PASSED UP THEIR TONGUE-IN-CHEEK CREATIONS,** but they opened their wallets for the duo's version of Kundalini's Hara Chair, the original of which *GQ* magazine deemed one of the "best 100 things in the world". The Abells, who founded the innovative Based Upon company in 2004, took the curvaceous fibreglass seat and worked their magic on it with an alloy of five different metals. The reproduction, 10 of which were made, sold for £4,995 (\$\$11,029.44).

These days the 34-year-old brothers continue to attract attention with their work but less so with shock tactics or by creating stunning replicas. Using a proprietorial process that teams liquid metal with lacquers and resins lay-

ered for unique finishes, they now focus on creating bespoke pieces with emotional content. "After the golden urinal ... we thought about how we could offer something that's more meaningful," says Ian Abell.

For the deep of pocket interested in acquiring one-off items that are keepsakes and collectibles, they produce everything from tables and doors to the surfaces that become walls and stairwells. They also create installations, which, like much else in their current portfolio, tell stories through textures and patterns. To celebrate the arrival of his first child, Abell made a 2.5-metre-square panel textured with casts of his wife's hand, his hand and their baby girl's hand.

They created a similarly personal work for a Hong

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*Alt identity: a bespoke table (top) tells personal stories of the owner and Garioli's Hara chair for Kundalini (opposite page) assumes a different guise from Based Upon.*

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Kong client, fashion designer Sonjia Norman, who commissioned a two-piece dining table for £33,000 (\$52,840.00) that is all about family. A river of resin that flows across the surface, connecting the two parts, contains precious items such as first teeth and love tokens. The tabletop also bears the handprints of her two daughters as well as casts of a letter to Santa and impressions of the girls' faces. "The idea is that each daughter will get one of these tables when they grow up," says Norman, who is awaiting the completion of

crucifix, the project, Abell says, went from being a landscape piece to a human piece. "This man had so much wealth but by the end his most treasured thing was this tiny wooden cross he kept by his bedside," says Abell. "So we took that and made a mould of it."

Insisting that the stuff of emotion has a place in art and design, Abell points to the table Norman will bequeath her daughters and adds that the aim was to create something precious that would be cherished. "You can get bored of art and design," he says. "With this table they're going to love it more as time passes because they've moved further and further away from the moment it captured." ■



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another piece of furniture by the brothers.

On a recent trip to Hong Kong, Abell visited Norman (with whose family he broke bread at the table) and a new client, who has asked Based Upon to create two wall panels for their house on the Peak. The work, inspired by Hong Kong's emblematic Bauhinia tree, had Abell foraging through the Botanic Gardens for leaves and flowers from the tree and smearing dental plaster over bark for impressions of its wrinkles and grooves. "We take casts and use them to make the textural marks in the pieces," he says. "The trees tell a story of the cycle of life."

Although it has been only five years since the birth of Based Upon, the brothers already have an illustrious list of clients including Nobu, Comme des Garçons, Donna Karan, Gordon Ramsay, Fortnum & Mason, Giorgio Armani and Vitra CEO Rolf Fehlbaum, who owns three Based Upon customized Pantone chairs. Not surprisingly the pair are not looking back at the desk jobs they gave up to start the venture, with their father, whom Abell calls "the backbone" (Ian was a management consultant and Richard worked for a branding agency and an Internet start-up).

A father figure was also the pillar for another of their projects, this time involving a castle in Scotland. Asked to craft a set of doors for a home in London, they were then commissioned to create a portrait of the client's father that will decorate the castle. From collecting samples of flora in the grounds, to gathering pebbles from a river flowing through the property, to taking a cast of a





