



WORLD WIDE WEAVE

Creating restaurant interiors

Woven metal wire mesh as a subtle interior design element for hotels, restaurants and clubs: „Taku“ in Cologne

Brand names should be instantly recognizable: restaurants, bars and clubs only make the grade as fashionable or cult meeting places if their concept credibly communicates a special lifestyle feeling. And this is exactly what Manfred Brennfleck, "Hotelier 2002", has achieved with "Taku" in Cologne. He has created a restaurant, discrete yet accentuated and planned to the last detail, which has achieved cult status within the space of just a few months. "Taku" has become a brand name, a "flagship" of international gastronomy, and has justifiably shot to No. 1 of the Top Ten "Best Foreigners" of the gourmet journal "Feinschmecker". The secret of success lies in the modicum of "more" which characterises the interplay of interior design, cuisine and service. It is the idea of Far-Eastern hospitality beyond superficial effects which "Taku" brings to life for all five senses - the possibility of immersing oneself in another world. And in this other world, woven metal mesh plays one of the leading roles.

Bronze mesh – an element of Far-Eastern minimalism

There had been many types of restaurants and numerous licensees in the cellar rooms of the Hotel Ernst before Brennfleck integrated these rooms into the hotel's portfolio and made a dream come true. He already had a concept clearly in mind which would reflect the exclusivity of the house while at the same time drawing in a younger, highly trend-conscious segment of Cologne's population beyond the conventional hotel clientele. The Japanese word "Taku" means "house" or "guesthouse". Brennfleck's



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aim was to create a guesthouse in the Asian tradition in the strictest sense of the word – simple, clear, and there for its visitors. The concept was realised by the team of architects Rainer Jensen and Ulrike Görgl from Mönchengladbach. As well as natural materials and other interior design elements discovered by Brennfleck himself in many countries all over the world, the hotelier chose woven metal mesh for the partial cladding of the restaurant walls. After the furnishing of numerous renowned clubs and restaurants – including the "Guess-Club" in Vienna, the club-disco "Privilege" in Athens and "El Japonés", one of the best Asian restaurants in Barcelona – "Taku" represents perhaps not the largest project for GKD - Gebr. Kufferath AG with woven metallic architectural and design fabric, but certainly one of the most attractive. "The increasing popularity of our wire mesh for the interior design of restaurants and hotels all over the world shows us that its textile-like yet extremely robust structure make it one of the most promising candidates in the further development of architecture and interior design in this sector", says GKD Director Stephan Kufferath. This is especially true with regard to the accentuation of brand name images. And the affinity to Asian-style interior design is obvious. The very names of some of GKD's weave types, like "Tatami" – a stainless steel carpeting named after its Japanese model, a rice-straw mat woven in the same way – or "Mandarin", the bronze mesh used in "Taku", are explicit references to this source of inspiration. The style is characterised by purism, clear yet reserved forms, unobtrusive, subtle transparency – a style which emphasises the Far-Eastern inclination to contemplation while reflecting the reduction to the quintessential.

Designing a “different world”

Brennfleck first came across the material in the fashionable New York venue "Tao". He uses every journey as an opportunity to "hunt" for ideas and inspiration for hotel and restaurant design. His motivation is a clear consciousness of his market and his target groups, of demands and trends. The Hotel Ernst, elevated in 2002 to the ranks of top international hotels when it was awarded the highest-rating American prize, the International Five Star Diamond Award, also rates as one of Cologne's gastronomic "Top Five" with its "Hansestube". The only thing that the hotel needed was an exclusive and at the same time market-oriented complementation to its portfolio.

Brennfleck decided on an opposite pole to the international and classic European styles of his house: Far-Eastern cuisine in an atmosphere characterised by natural materials and unique eye-catching features like a "river" and a "catwalk" form a harmonious ensemble with the subtle wall-cladding of woven metal mesh and a sophisticated illumination concept. It sets a genuine counterpoint to the concept of the house as a whole. "If you go down the stairs expecting some classic sort of "cellar" atmosphere, this is the last thing you will have reckoned with", says Brennfleck. Set into the floor, a river under glass populated by fish winds its way through the room, an idea inspired by the famous Restaurant Matsushiro in Beverly Hills. One crosses the room on a turquoise-illuminated catwalk made of special glass and bordered by a Japanese garden. In Brennfleck's words, one thus enters symbolically into another world.

Subtle light filters

The window-like openings on the walls, clad in woven bronze mesh, play an important role for the lighting and the perspectives of the room. Two mesh types – stainless steel and bronze – were overlayed and illuminated from behind in such a way that unique, ever-changing moiré effects are created through reflections of the lighting on the double woven structure. At first sight, these panels look like pictures, and yet they are not static but constantly changing. While stainless steel in interior design is spontaneously more associated with puristic, cool elegance, in combination with bronze it develops an extraordinary warmth and works almost like an illumination sculpture. In this way, the material enhances the peace and serenity of the atmosphere. The woven bronze mesh filters the light gently into the room, creating the impression of a pleasant dusk on a late summer evening. During the day, a light source in front of the door and the interior lighting suggest natural daylight. Every superficial, potentially irritating element has been avoided in this "place of life, mutual understanding and sojourn", as Brennfleck puts it.

Woven metal wire mesh as a style element:**Guess-Club, El Japonés, Privilege Club**

The installations in "Taku" are an interesting example of the atmospheric radiance of woven metal mesh in rooms with Far-Eastern ambience. However, the material itself is open to any style and is highly adaptable. The versatility of the material ranges from the blueish coolness of the stainless steel wire mesh types to the warm, golden colours and finer mesh types made of aluminium or bronze, like the "Mandarin" mesh used in



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"Taku", for example. Combined with other materials and enhanced by sophisticated illumination, an endless range of colour effects, reflections, optical patterns and moiré effects are created, with a free choice of design between transparency and translucency. This versatility gives the material its stylistic openness. Aesthetically, it fits into a wide range of contexts and at the same time has a robustness which is indispensable in highly-frequented places like hotels, restaurants, clubs, shops, cinemas, bars or airports.

Versatility and functionality in "transit spaces"

In functional respects, too, its non-flammability, its practically unlimited service life, and its low maintenance requirements make woven metal mesh the predestined choice for such transit spaces. In 2002, "Tatami" became a successful product of GKD - Gebr. Kufferath AG as a floor covering for the public sector. Optically attractive and at the same time robust, with excellent acoustic properties and very pleasant to walk on thanks to its slight spring effect, it proved to be ideal for shop design as well as in restaurants or hotel lobbies. "Tatami" can also be used as spectacular wall-cladding or wall-hangings. In the "El Japonés" restaurant, the relatively thickly woven structure was applied as cladding for the 24 meter long back wall and for parts of the side walls – here, too, in the service of Asian style. The combination with plain, massive wooden tables and benches creates a puristic interior style with no fancy frills. Another area of application of woven metal mesh for the structuring of rooms is as partition walls. The stainless steel mesh type "Lamelle" is frequently used for partitioning, for example in the "Privilege Club" in Athens. Here, the woven mesh curtains separate the kitchen from the public area. At the same time, the wire mesh



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is used as a projection screen for video clips and other multimedia effects. Such projection effects, or alternatively specific lighting of the partitioning through the integration of white or coloured light sources, transform the partitions into illumination sculptures or luminous walls. A highly appraised example for the third major area of application, "ceiling cladding", and for the instrumentalisation of woven metal mesh in the context of consistent styling is the "Guess-Club" in Vienna. Here, the interior design concept was realised using an aluminium wire mesh. The complete ceiling of the open room is clad in square tiles of the mesh which conceals the pipes and conduits through which spent air is drawn out. The metallic mesh ceiling, the black artificial stone floor, black granite on the bar and glass surfaces of all kinds – black plexiglass, transparent glass and panes of frosted glass illuminated from behind – work together to create the cool, casual atmosphere of the "club". Restaurants, clubs and hotels profit from the representative qualities of woven metal meshes. Their transparent structure stands for openness and space – values which are among the core image elements of the modern service industry. Unusual interior design concepts live no less from the exclusivity and versatility of the material used than do classic concepts. Robustness and a long service life reflect the values of a modern architecture dedicated to sustainability. For this reason, the popularity of GKD's woven metallic architectural and design fabrics has been on the increase for years now with respect to the architecture and interior design of representative buildings.

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As a privately owned technical weaver, GKD - Gebr. Kufferath AG is the world market leader in metal, synthetic and spiral mesh solutions. Four independent business divisions bundle their expertise under one roof:



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