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A mission to make out-of-this-world creations

By Ann Bronkhorst

Talbot Designs is one of the few remaining manufacturing companies in north London. Here acrylic, polycarbonate and other hard plastic materials are shaped into varied and beautiful objects, often custom-made. "Only limited by imagination" is their motto and for over 70 years their imagination and technical skills have solved some extraordinary challenges, *Star Wars* fighter craft among them.

Creative ideas

Behind the company's unassuming entrance in Long Lane are workshops, specialised machinery and huge ovens



Screen prince: Prince Harry laughs with actor Mark Hamill as he sits under a Talbot's plastic canopy made for a fighter craft in *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*.

for heat-forming the materials. Many of their products are functional, such as the

clear acrylic domes, dishes and spheres made for protective display uses, but their 'bespoke' fabrications are truly extraordinary.

In an office packed with way-out props from films and witty creations for the advertising world, father and son Charles and Richard Woolff, directors of Talbot Designs, have stories to tell about some of the wilder ideas they have made happen: Darth Vader's helmet; the biggest bottle in the world, holding 1,100 pints of Kingfisher lager; the lectern used at this year's BAFTA awards; the 2012 Olympic torch; the transparent cover for Pope John Paul II's Pope-mobile.

Artists and sculptors like Anish Kapoor and Sir Anthony Caro have worked with Talbot Designs and for his recent world tour musician Kygo performed on a startlingly beautiful transparent grand piano described by Richard Woolff as "less of a job, more of a mission."

Still here
When Charles Woolff's

father bought Talbot Designs in the 1960s a few manufacturers still existed in N3 and N2; older readers may remember Lucas and Simms, both large enterprises, but they and many other smaller firms have departed. Talbot Designs remains, employing local workers, giving work experience to local schoolchildren and liaising with local teachers of design and technology.

To see their innovative creations visit www.talbotdesigns.co.uk and to see the transparent piano go to The Kids in Love Tour on YouTube.

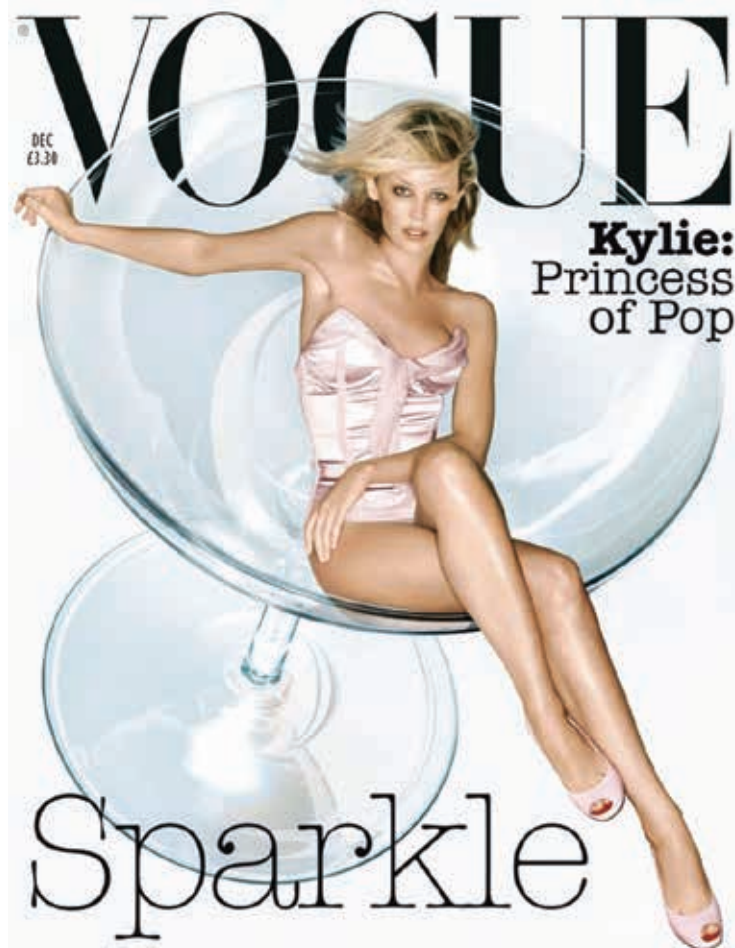
Take-off for Talbot donation units

By Ann Bronkhorst
Talbot Designs won the contract to design and manufacture ten huge eye-catching donation units, four for RAF Cosford and six for the newly transformed RAF Museum at Colindale, which officially reopened on 30 June to mark the RAF's centenary.

Entrance to the museum is free but the units, each proudly displaying the blue and red colours of the RAF, encourage visitor contributions. They are interactive yet noiseless, with giant propellers you can turn for free. Children are entranced!

Talbot's Richard Woolff, who designed the units from scratch, said they were particularly challenging because of the time-scale (seven weeks from start to finish) and because of the range of materials used alongside acrylic, including steel, Hi-Macs, fibreglass and vinyl. He is delighted with the results although he says it was "a baptism of fire".

To see the whole process, go to <https://youtu.be/wJHIBc-QfU38>



Champagne Kylie: The Australian singer reclines in a 4ft plastic glass made by Talbot's for the cover of Vogue magazine

Food market in the park

A new weekly food market has started in Victoria Park, off Ballards Lane, N3, running every Sunday from 11am to 3pm.

Finchley Food Market brings together a hand-picked selection of food producers and street food traders selling British fare, including bakery goods from Hackney Wick, tomatoes grown on the Isle of Wight, and soft cheese made in Bath.

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