

Tiger's Pad



As you will have already had a look at the photography, you will be well aware that the choice of the restaurant's name was significant. This engendered much debate with Steve Howie from the designers coming up with the chosen epithet. This was the starting point, indeed the pivotal symbol for the restaurant's theme. A design genre that Steve has plenty to say about, "Theming a restaurant is easy if the clients trust you. It is when the clients try to get too involved that things can get messed up."

The theme itself is subtle. Tiger's footprints (yes, left and right feet) were cast in plaster and stuck onto the wall in white on white, creating minimal

distraction. "Restaurants exist so that people can eat, drink and enjoy themselves" continues Steve, "An interior should not create too much of a stir but generally minimalist interiors are synonymous with untalented designers. You put in blank walls, ash floors and furniture that has been designed by someone else. It doesn't really demand a lot of ideas. Another problem with minimalist interiors is that often you can't remember where you have been. One restaurant looks very much like another"

In Sunningdale Steve was working with a budget of £100,000 which he spread around, keeping a close eye on each aspect of work. "NW80 were the main contractors but they had nominated contrac-

We have in the past drawn attention to the fact that Indian restaurants are changing. Fewer and fewer Taj Mahals are opening these days and more often we see the likes of Tiger's Pad, a modern, designed space in which high quality food is served. But there is little point in having an attractive restaurant if your food lets you down and Bashirul Islam knows that as well as anyone, he has been running Indian restaurants successfully for years.

Tiger's Pad is his fourth venture and for this one he has been joined by a financial partner in Richard Green who previously worked in the movie business as a locations manager and since his retirement has spent a good deal of his spare time eating in Bashirul's restaurants. The food side was already guaranteed. Any takeaway menu that lists 'Scallops Chilli Fry' as a starter deserves instant respect.

The chosen site was in Sunningdale. It had already operated as an Indian restaurant but was hardly in a respectable state of repair. Not that the new owners were coming in simply to give it a lick of paint. A major refurbishment was demanded and Howie Design of Camberley were called in to effect it.





Tiger's Pad continued

tors coming in next to them. This can often be difficult - the main contractor isn't being paid to be nice to the other contractors - so you have to work between them closely."

Without wanting to over-egg the theming, the Tiger's Pad motif presented a very strong image. In addition to being used around the walls, the design has been sand-blasted onto the large exterior windows while it also forms the focal point of the whole, room - the bar which has a huge Tiger's Pad looming above it.

All this, together with other embellishments such as the orange and black tableware, means that visitors will be in no doubt as to which restaurant they have visited, pitching the whole scheme into an area between minimal and the overtly themed. "The days of fibre glass have gone. People are getting a little sick of heavily themed places and they are looking for more quality in the food." He has had an opinion on everything else so far, so let's let Steve Howie sum up the food for us. "I believe there are basically two sorts of food : crap and really good. Their's is really good."

This really good food looks set to become available to a wider audience still. Richard Green readily admits that they are looking for more sites around London and the Home Counties. Although he insists there is no rush, Christies are keeping him constantly informed of potential sites. Hope there's one near you.

