

MY FAVOURITE THING HIROKO KOBAYASHI'S BEER BOTTLES



Fine design is typically associated with wealth and opulence. Beer brings to mind frat parties and Oktoberfest. To Hiroko Kobayashi, though, there is a crossover between the seemingly disparate camps. With her work, the Vancouver-based architect and jeweller is committed to the highest level of craftsmanship. For the last seven years, she has designed modern homes, restaurants and public buildings as part of the award-winning firm Nick Milkovich Architects. Since 2009, she has also run HK + NP Studio with her partner (both in life and work), Neil Prakash, making arrestingly minimal jewellery – thin bands of sterling silver that sensually fold and twist into bracelets, pendants and earrings. She draws inspiration from a va-

riety of sources (origami, water), but the collection of international microbrews she shares with Neil has been particularly valuable. Here's why.

"We started our collection of microbrews about five years ago, because of our love of beer, design and a good story. Our first purchase was a hard to find bottle of Trappist Westvleteren 8 from the Abbey of Saint Sixtus of Westvleteren in Belgium. Now, at any time we have up to 64 bottles from around the world, which we keep in stackable birch crates that were custom-made by a craftsman here in Vancouver. We love the taste of beer, so we always drink them, but if it is a special release batch, unique or expensive bottle, we take a photograph of the bottle before we

drink it, to keep for our records.

Whenever we are searching for a new beer to try, it is usually the packaging, graphics and branding that grab our attention first. This aspect is something that we have tried to embrace in our own design work. We realize that the first impression we make is usually with our packaging and graphic design, so we put a lot of effort into those aspects of our work, knowing that sometimes people make purchases based on presentation alone. If the quality of the beer doesn't live up to the quality of its packaging or brand, then generally it will be a one-time purchase. For us, this is an important lesson."

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*Matthew Hague,
Special to The Globe and Mail*

