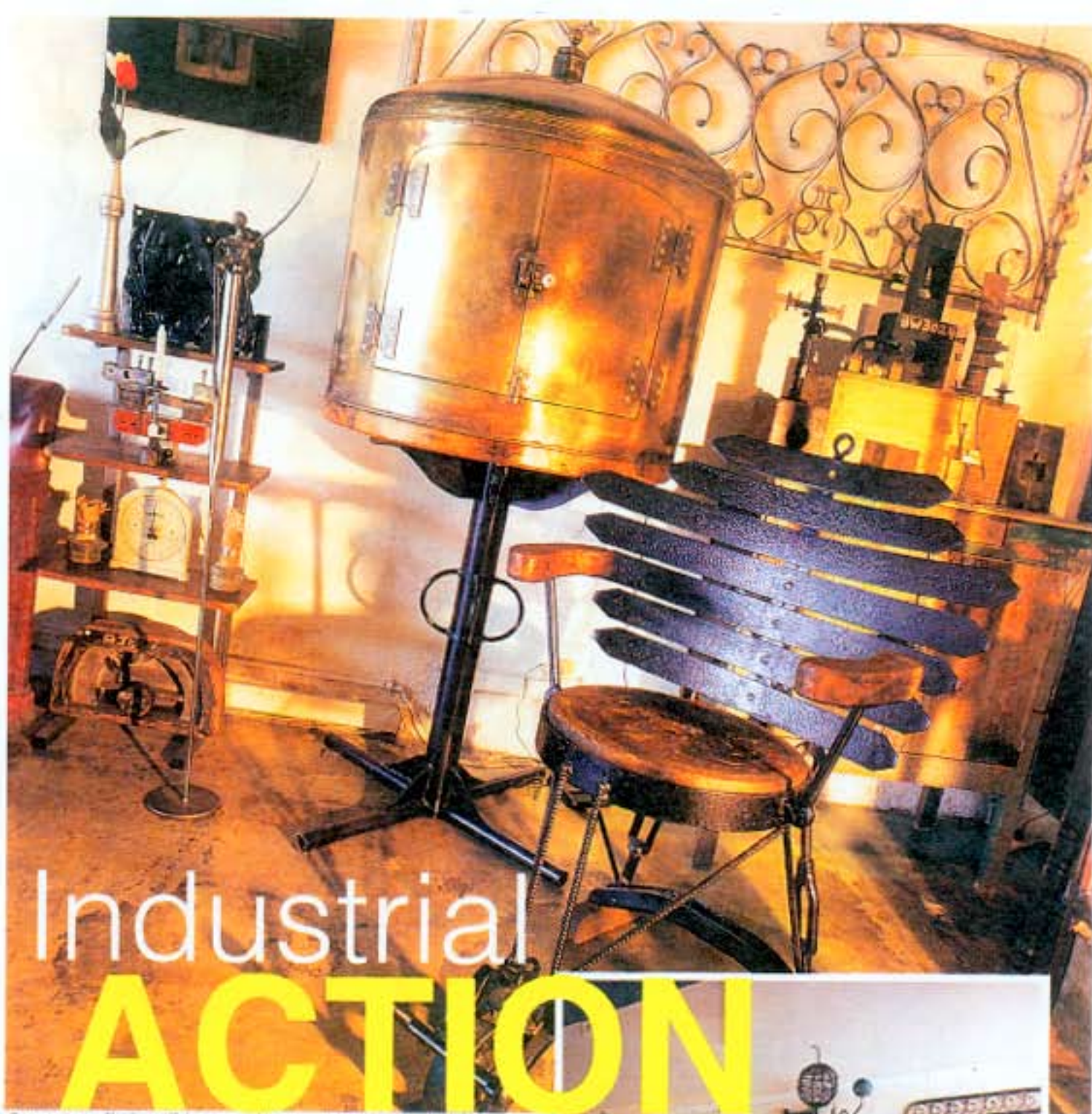




Escape valve Playful fruit bowl with valve



Copper tone The beautiful copper cabinet might have been melted down

Many bemoan the passing of a workmanship that gave industrial objects a strange beauty.

This couple salvages – and sculpts – it

It certainly needs an artistic eye to see the potential to convert a discarded set of old 44-gallon steel drums into a unique set of bookends simply by crushing them down to size.

Or what about salvaging a copper boiler which would otherwise be melted down, and instead using it to conceal a stereo, or maybe a home bar?

Yet the possibilities are limitless according to sculptor and designer

Joe Van Hulsen, who has a passion for digging up discarded objects and giving them a new lease of life.

Joe and partner Mary Long both share the same vision of recycling old materials and found objects for present day use. It eventually led them to starting their own business in 1995 called Post Industrial Design, where they salvage objects from the past which Joe later works into different sculptural designs.

The result is some outstanding – yet functional – works of art.

"Somebody once described what we create here as an 'unconventional elegance,'" says Mary. "These days you just don't find the type of craftsmanship that was put into a lot of these old industrial objects."

Some of the items date back to the 1920s and reflect part of our heritage and history.

"People come into our shop and find that they are able to relate the pieces back to things their parents or grandparents had," says Mary.

To which Joe adds: "What we are really into is taking things out of context, presenting them in a new light."

The couple find a lot of their materials at scrap metal and railway yards, and because they require a stockpile of objects Mary says their home's five bedrooms have been reduced to two – the other rooms being used to store various items they've picked up.

Even simple items like the three-armed candelabra have a sculptural twist, incorporating industrial elements such as a spanner worked into the body of the piece.

"I use a lot of found objects and industrial objects like nuts and bolts in my design, but I try to re-arrange them to create a softer impact, so that they are not too heavy or weighty," explains Joe.

One of his sculptures is constructed from barbed wire but has been worked with a basket-weaving effect to give a softer appearance. The sculpture is well suited to garden or courtyard areas, and by allowing some ivy to grow over the piece you can soften the look of the base material even more.

The designs can be slightly off-beat, like one of the chairs which Joe designed. A small wheel at the front of the chair means it can be picked up from the back and moved about in much the same fashion as a wheelbarrow. At \$1200, it uses old car springs and railway brackets in the design, with a wooden pattern forming the seat.

"We find a real beauty and honesty in the rawness of these industrial pieces," says Mary.

Playful themes are also very much a part of their designs – like the fruit bowl (\$295) where an old plough disc forms the bowl, with a valve used for the stand and a casting pattern is the base.

Old ceramic and glass insulators cap the hooks to the husband (\$750) with steel piping welded into twists and cuts to create an even stronger visual impact.

The main thrust of Joe and Mary's pieces is their sculptural designs and furnishings. But the couple also specialise in industrial furnishings in their original form, like workbenches or cabinets, where design and character speak for themselves.

Post Industrial Design is based at 262 Church St Richmond, and Joe and Mary can be contacted on 9429 5199.



Fruits of their industry Some of Joe and Mary's many designs

Noble salvagers Joe and Mary with some of their salvage turned art



"These days you don't find this kind of craftsmanship"