

INSIDER NEWS

THE INGENUOUS 'CONVERTABLE' TABLE, designed by Lee Sinclair, is perfect for people living in small spaces. It transforms itself in stages from a coffee table, to a small dining or games table, to a larger dining table for six people – and all this in under five seconds. 'Convertible' costs £395. Visit the website – www.endon-house.demon.co.uk – to enjoy an animated demonstration of this conversion.



IT TAKES CONFIDENCE TO CELEBRATE BRITISH POTATO WEEK by filling two ninety-centimetre-high glass vases with potatoes and placing them on the bar of Le Caprice. The result was strangely beautiful and typical of the style of florist Robert Hornsby and his firm, In Water. Robert recently set up the firm in partnership with Clare Garabedian, previously homeware director of Liberty. The combination of Robert's eccentric but beautiful arrangements of leaves, flowers and wood, with candles, glassware and vases sourced by Clair, unites wit, beauty and architecture. The firm specializes in contract work for such showcases as The Ivy and Le Caprice restaurants, but will also design and decorate private dinner parties, weddings and receptions. For details, call 020-7724 9985.

BRILLIANT BRITISH BRAINWAVES

Builder Bill Vasser suggested to an elderly client that she turn off her water mains when she left home for any length of time. However, when she located the stopcock behind the downstairs loo (one third of home owners do not know where their stopcock is) the owner found that it was too awkward for her. Bill suggested that a switch could do the same job and so Tapoff came into being. Battery operated to function in a power cut, it has a built-in thermostat so that it automatically switches off the mains should there be a possibility of frozen pipes. Prices start at around £150, depending on the size of valve. For further details, contact Tapoff, Ridgeway, Burnt Lodge Lane, Ticehurst, East Sussex (tel: 01580-200868).

TIME PAST

The Heritage Information Exchange is aimed at those responsible for the upkeep of listed buildings and gardens, and offers short lists of vetted consultants and specialists, a database of products and materials, specific information on building applications and grants, and an online book shop with details of relevant courses, seminars and lectures. From September 2000 it is open to registrants and for the gathering of information, and hopes to be open to the general public in October 2001. For further information, call 020-7243 5888; e-mail: info@heritage-exchange.org.uk.



TIME FUTURE

Designs which will affect the way we live in the future will be on display at the Royal College of Art's Summer Degree Show, between June 29 and July 10. Over 47,000 visitors visited the free-admission show last year. Over 4,000 objects, such as these balloon lights, will be on view, most of which will be for sale or can be commissioned. This is a show not to be missed. For further information, call 020-7590 4498.

POSSESSIVE CASE



In a *Desert Island Discs* vein, Insider asked **Michael Kaiser**, director of the Royal Opera House, which few inessential treasures he would take with him if he were cast away. He replied: **A costume sketch from a ballet, *Othello***, I commissioned for American Ballet Theatre. Ann Hould-Ward, the costume designer for *Othello*, gave me one of the costume sketches as an opening-night gift • **A chieftain's belt** given to me by a group of South African arts management students I taught in 1994 and 1995, when I spent a great deal of time in South Africa, helping the newly elected Mandela government set up its arts council • **The gold watch** that belonged to my great-grandfather with which my father emigrated to the US from Germany in 1938 when he was a teenager

• **The autograph books assembled by my maternal grandfather**, a violinist with the New York Philharmonic for forty years. Throughout his career, he collected signed photographs from composers (Prokofiev, Rachmaninov), conductors (Toscanini, Barbirolli) and soloists (Heifetz, Rubinstein) • **A Rodin watercolour** my grandmother left me – it is a miracle of simplicity • **A silk scarf that once belonged to Georg Solti**, former music director of the Royal Opera House. Lady Solti gave it to me to commemorate the reopening of the House □