

ALTERED PERCEPTION Tabcorp's chosen theme, "Another chapter in *Alice in Wonderland*", featured organic forms designed by Nicolina Kaia and Tania di Lizio, and Ross Lovegrove's 'Pods' wall lights.



CORPORATE AUSTRALIA WAS off and racing in the design stakes at the Victoria Racing Club's 2006 Spring Racing Carnival. Each year the design bar is raised to ever loftier heights as high-profile companies engage architects and designers from around the world to create marquees for valued clients (and some headline-grabbing celebrities) for the four days in November when Melbourne celebrates the "race that stops the nation".

In the Birdcage area of Flemington's track, it didn't get any more glamorous than Moët & Chandon's marquee, where Melbourne-born, New York-based decorator Emma Jane Pilkington recreated a modern version of the Palace of Versailles' famous Hall of Mirrors – in the confines of a tent.

"Melbourne can't do a party without the design overlay," says Amanda Henderson of Gloss Creative, who worked with Pilkington on Moët and was responsible for the design and execution of four other marquees there. "The city has a design focus, so it was only a matter of time before the fashion and interiors industries infiltrated the sports event."

It may have appeared picture-perfect to guests, but Pilkington says her latter-day Versailles wasn't without its more practical challenges. "The marquee is not perfectly square," she says, "and to create the illusion of a vaulted ceiling with an arched image, that would appear correct [in perspective] and stay perfect with the wind, made it a triumph of engineering."

Around the corner, Lexus opted for a two-storey structure designed by local architect Chris de Campo, while Myer's mid-20th century modern bar, by Gloss Creative, showcased Jacobsen chairs and 1950s glass.

It may look like an extravagant party, but the corporate marquees are a key part of an event marketing strategy. As Moët Hennessy's marketing director Jonathan Coles says, "Each year, our brief to the chosen designer differs in order to create a new interpretation based on their style and Moët's brand values."

But all these experiences are fleeting: "What's fabulous is that it's all temporary" says Gloss Creative's Henderson, "all people have is a memory of a moment in time."

THEMES AND VARIATIONS New York decorator Emma Jane Pilkington, **TOP**, in her Hall of Mirrors-inspired commission for Moët & Chandon. **CENTRE:** Emirates pampered guests in an opulent marquee which reflected the grandeur of Louis XIV-era Versailles. The ladies cloakroom provided French fragrances, a hairdresser and 'real' toilets (true luxury). **BELOW:** Picnic Luxe was the theme for NAB's chic black and white marquee, by Gloss Creative.

