

FORM

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Cindy Lee



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INTERNATIONAL DESIGN WEEK

Daniella Casamento

AgIdeas International Design Week, held in Melbourne from May 21 – 25, celebrates design excellence and promotes the value of design-driven innovation. The annual event, established in 1991, provides a platform for invited local and international designers to share their experiences at the International Design Forum.

Melbourne designers, landscape architect Jim Sinatra, home wares and lighting designer Cindy-Lee Davies, furniture designer Ross Didier and graphic designer Paul Marcus Fuog, will discuss how design-driven research and innovation informs their practice of design.

Jim Sinatra says that ecology, a sense of art and the contribution of multi-cultural experience form a triangle of philosophies that underpin the landscape architecture practice of Sinatra Murphy. As a student at the University of Pennsylvania in the USA, Jim Sinatra's mentors were world renowned practitioners Ian McHarg, who taught him about ecology, and Roberto Burle Marx "the great Brazilian landscape architect who taught me about the art of landscape". Their teachings continue to influence Sinatra's approach to design. He explains that it is through this fusion of themes and the information gathered through interviews with the community that landscape designs developed by Sinatra Murphy are tangible expressions of their clients' memory and feelings about the natural world.

Sinatra and his business partner Finn Murphy have worked extensively throughout Australia with indigenous communities. It is the profound inter-relationship with memory, culture and landscape of these communities which they have found contributes to a sense of place that is also



Ross Didier

evident in other cultural groups with whom they have worked on public, commissions. It is for this reason that Sinatra Murphy aim to "infuse a cultural identity within a public landscape setting", says Sinatra.

Sinatra Murphy recently undertook interviews with people of various ages and cultural backgrounds for a public landscape commission in Noble Park. "There was one indigenous

gentleman who said that when he touched a tree in Noble Park, an old red gum tree that had passed away but its remnant was there, that he felt he was home. And so what we try to do in our work is actually infuse the cultural side and also the ecological side and create a good sense of memory." In this case, youth groups also wanted Wi-Fi connectivity within the natural setting; an example of technology interwoven with culture and ecology.

Lightly is an expression of Cindy-Lee Davies' history and future. The marrying of traditional crafts with innovative production processes and new technology combined with memories of growing up in the Lightly Cottage in WA, named after her mother's family, is at the core of Davies' inspiration.

Lightly was launched in 2005 when Davies introduced her lace line which was designed "in homage to my grandmother and her bridge playing friends." As one of the first companies to manufacture laser cut home wares, Davies received international exposure for her lace and crochet inspired acrylic bowls dubbed 'nana technology'. Her range of boutique home wares and lighting has increased significantly and Lightly now supplies products to 160 stores throughout Australia. It is also important to Davies that a large percentage of her products are manufactured locally.

Davies' design of light fittings is informed by her background in lighting engineering and her experience as a lighting consultant which served as her introduction to the architecture and interior design industry. Her range of lighting is now also specified by the commercial design market.

The strong story-telling aspect of her home wares is central to the success of Lightly. Davies explains that products such as the Lace line have a historical influence based on vintage textiles and her more recent range of found vintage bone china plates have been shaped into ornamental butterflies and given new life as wall decorations.

"Modern technology has always been very important to me," she says. Her designs are "transformed through innovative processes. Marrying the aesthetics of new technology

and traditional craft, memories or history has definitely been a strong inspiration for a lot of my work."

Furniture designer and manufacturer Ross Didier says Australia is a "unique place to have a creative business of any sort". He says that European furniture manufacturers regularly employ designers to develop new products in a collaborative working environment but that it is rare for a designer to have the same opportunity in Australia.

Didier has exhibited furniture prototypes at trade events in Milan and as a result of the positive response he received from manufacturers at these

events, realised his designs were of an international standard. With confidence gained from this understanding, Didier began to manufacture and market his own designs.

"The idea is king," he says. "Seeing a great idea come to life is very stimulating." Second to the idea are attributes of determination, resourcefulness and inventiveness; qualities that Didier has developed through necessity. "I've learnt to become more stubborn... to stand up for the original idea and make it work," rather than complying with the limitations imposed by the production processes of other manufacturers.

In instances where Didier doesn't have the appropriate tooling, the knowledge he has gained from manufacturing his own designs allows him to talk to his suppliers in their own language. "If manufacturers realise that you know how to actually make things and understand the manufacturing process, they give you a lot more respect... it also means you know where to push the boundaries to make your designs work."

Didier's scope of work varies from one-off pieces, to small batch and volume production. His plastic moulded curved Elfin stool is a rare example of large volume production in the thousands and was designed at the same time as the Tiller chair. The Tiller range is "my first attempt to try to capture an Australian character in my designs." The chair with back upholstered in kangaroo fur was inspired by a rusty piece of farm equipment he had seen and is a feature of the Australian-themed Vue de Monde restaurant at the Rialto.

The inspiration for both pieces came at a time when Didier was thinking about "the idea of furniture as being utilitarian, well used and beautiful... the idea of it being a tool or peg or working companion."

Paul Marcus Fuog of graphic design studio COÖP applies the four cornerstones of his practice to each commission. Experimentation, positivity, collaboration and honesty lead to inspiration and give value to his business and his relationships with clients.



Jim Sinatra

Fuog maintains a small studio with one other designer and this provides opportunities to collaborate with local and international designers on small and large projects in the fields of arts and culture including art direction for fashion events. COÖP have worked with designers from Berlin, New York and Barcelona and Fuog sees the collaborative relationship as an opportunity to reflect on his own process of design and have his work critiqued by professionals he respects. This open discussion generates trust and results in better outcomes for both the project and his relationships.

The recent rebranding of the Victorian College of the Arts by Fuog and Axle Peemoller, a graphic designer from Barcelona, is a positive example of a trusting collaborative working relationship with a client who was open to the idea of experimentation.

As a "big believer of letting intuitive design and experimentation lead to play," Fuog explains that

"30% of our outcomes are based around that... it's hard to articulate that process. A lot of it is based on research but a lot of it is intuition."

He views design as an "inherently optimistic and problem solving practice" and has found that his relationships with local printers and specialised binders enrich the design process. The excitement of new ideas motivates the manufacturers to experiment and test the boundaries of what is possible.

INFORMATION

The AgIdeas International Design Week will be held at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) from May 21 to 25.

agideas.net
mcec.com.au



Paul Marcus



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