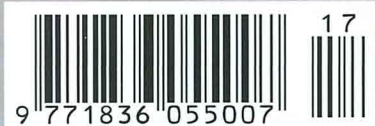


living in design



See how an Argentinian-born designer lives in his Brisbane apartment and how *material and colour* create inspiring spaces. *Cultural collisions* always stimulate creative ideas for living.



OCTOBER - DECEMBER | 2012

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Design journey

Director and designer **SHAREEN JOEL** engages her love for industrial process with an eye for elegant furnishings. These two focii have become the seams that bind her professional life and Caulfield home into one. **ALICE BLACKWOOD** visits.

TEXT ALICE BLACKWOOD | PHOTOGRAPHY SHANNON MCGRATH





Industrial designer, interior architect, director, specifier, stylist, blogger, homemaker, mother, wife and dog-owner – a veritable cyclone of skills, activities and responsibilities: this is Shareen Joel.

Founder of Shareen Joel Design – a multi-disciplinary studio well versed in interior architecture, product design and design strategy – Shareen has made it her life’s work to combine a myriad of influences, disciplines and active interests into her daily practise.

She studied industrial design at RMIT University 1988–1990 – and was one of the few women following this specialisation in what was, back then, an engineering degree. One of her first industrial design jobs was with global car manufacturing giant, Ford. Here she worked in the design of the interiors – a ‘pigeonhole’ applied to many young female designers in that period.

Still, the job served her well and saw her do stints in London and Detroit, where she developed a passion for chairs and “hard-core” manufacturing. “I started my obsession because I went on tours for Ford to the Herman Miller factories,” says Shareen. “I got really interested in Knoll and Herman Miller – brands from the mid-west, from that heart of manufacturing in America.”

PREVIOUS | SHAREEN JOEL WITH HER CHILDREN, SASHA AND NICHOLAS, FILL THEIR NORTH CAULFIELD HOME WITH PLENTY OF LIFE AND PERSONALITY. LEFT | SHAREEN’S LOVE FOR CHAIRS IN ALL SHAPES AND SIZES STEMS FROM TIME SPENT IN AMERICA’S MID-WEST. RIGHT | SHAREEN AND FAMILY LOVE TO USE EVERY ROOM IN THE HOUSE – PARTICULARLY THE LOUNGE WITH ITS ‘REAL’ OPEN FIREPLACE.

...passion for fashion, soft furnishings, elegant finishing touches and highly functional design.



“That’s what inspired me when I was very young as a designer living in Detroit. Since then, I’ve been really into hard-core manufacturing and tried to soften it in a way that it’s more accessible to other people.”

Time spent at Ford saw Joel work on automotive interiors, exteriors and conceptual designs. “It was amazing to work in that manufacturing [environment] – it’s the best apprenticeship you can have,” she comments. “Because you’re accountable for your mistakes, you’re designing something that costs millions and millions of dollars. It has to last and it has to sell.”

This appreciation for mass production is tempered by Joel’s love of fashion and branding. “I’ve never separated fashion from automotive,” she says. “But at the time I didn’t know quite how to express that.”

In 1998, Shareen moved back to Australia to start her own homewares company and to take on a range of re-branding projects with leading fashion labels, Witchery, Country Road and Becton.

It was at this point that Joel brought her many activities under the single banner of Shareen Joel Designs, producing products for the likes of Zip, Clipsal, Lockwood and Sheridan, while also working with companies to fuse product and retail into a full brand



LEFT | THE STUDY IS SHARED BY THE WHOLE FAMILY. ABOVE | SHAREEN PREFERS COSY ROOMS FOR DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES – EATING, COOKING, LOUNGING – OVER OPEN PLAN LIVING STYLES. BELOW | SHAREEN’S ‘LOOK’ IS CLASSIC, CONTEMPORARY AND WARM – AND HER FAMILY ARE RIGHT AT HOME IN THIS SETTING.



experience. Residential projects also make up a large portion of her business – although the focus is always on interior architecture. “We don’t do that much furniture specifying or decorating. We do interior architecture and fittings and fixtures,” she explains.

So where does the fashion-focused homewares connoisseur fit into all of this? Joel is very much about good taste and elegant presentation. She lives in a pared back 1940s Art Deco home in North Caulfield, in Melbourne. Here, her bright personality enlivens each living space and she moves between them frequently, animating them with energised activity: chopping baby tomatoes while simultaneously brewing coffee in the kitchen, actively conversing while also lounging on a spacious sitting room couch, rounding the dog up in the front yard before comically chasing it through the doorways that connect dining with living with kitchen.

“I never liked open plan living,” says Joel. “I find it loses its warmth and intimacy. Here we

use every room in the house. We love an open fire – a real open fire! We love cooking. We’re at home a lot.”

The living spaces themselves are a tasteful curation of natural finishes – linens, leather, timber – and everyday comfort. “My look is classic, contemporary but warm. And we’ve noticed through Shareen Joel Design more and more of our clients are struggling to find designers who can give them that look; it doesn’t feel like a show piece and I don’t want my family to live in a showpiece.”

When asked to expand on her personal aesthetic as opposed to her professional approach, Joel simply states: “Look at Share Design.” Yet another facet of Joel’s work-life-design, Sharedesign.com (which she co-directs with Miranda Lansell) is a virtual decorators’ dream. “It’s less architecture and industrial design, it’s more decoration and furnishing,” explains Joel.

A website, resource and blog, Share Design taps into Joel’s passion for fashion, soft



*There's nothing I would ever want to throw away.
I'd rather hand it down to generations...*



SHAREEN | DESIGNER AND RESIDENT



furnishings, elegant finishing touches and highly functional design. And also manages to encompass that ever-underlying passion for mass production. “I particularly don’t love driving around and finding one cushion for one house. I’ve always liked mass production. Rather than do it for one project, I’d prefer to do it for the masses and make design available for the masses.” Which Share Design achieves through weekly e-newsletters, and a very accessible website.

Joel’s own home interiors are on Share Design for all to see, and she breaks down her living spaces product-by-product, brand-by-brand, for her online followers, so they too can ‘get the look’.

Work is life is design, and everything you find on Share Design, or in Joel’s own home is “only what I would specify. It’s a specific style. Having a specific style and curation is what people really want,” says Joel.

One final note on personal taste and her North Caulfield home: “One thing I noticed at the Milan Furniture Fair this year, it’s all about bringing back the classics and reviving old traditions.

“Everything I have in this house, I’ve been collecting over many years” – here she points out a set of Cassina Cab chairs and a La Barca table. “There’s nothing I would ever want to throw away. I’d rather hand it down to generations – to me that’s sustainability.”

This, too, is reflected through Share Design. “One of the criteria for Share Design is, everything we upload we’d want as much in 10 years as we would today. My aesthetic on Share Design is how I live at home. Don’t you think it’s time for someone to do that sort of thing?”



Shareen Joel Design | shareenjoel.com
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