

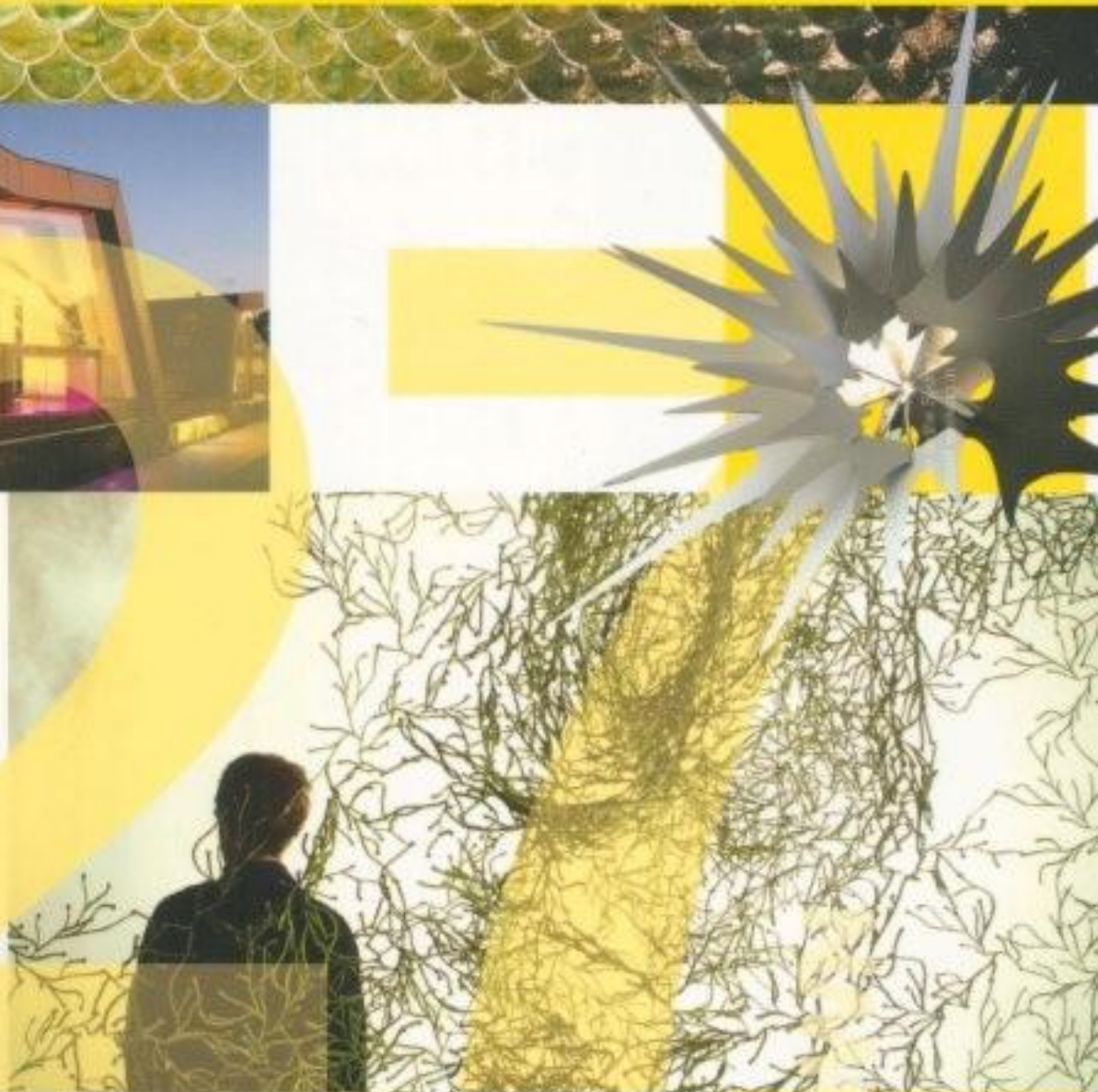
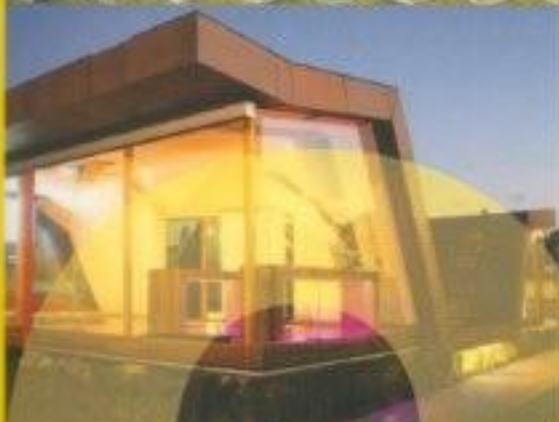
Vol.27

Indesign.com.au
November 2006

AUD \$16.00 (inc GST)
NZ \$17.50 (inc GST)
USA \$15.00 (inc GST)

Westpac's workplace revolution
Luigi Rosselli goes bush
Incorp cuts corners
Innovarchi's story
HASSELL lays down the law
Robert Woodward in profile
Montreal make-over
Design daze in Berlin

indesign®



POENIC JUSTICE

THE TO

Uncompromising

Text
Yvonne Angewill-Coyne



Her designs could be described as functional, contemporary and confident, but if you add to that passionate, determined and uncompromising, you would be describing Shareen Joel herself. The Melbourne-based designer is a bundle of energy – a trait apparent on meeting her and confirmed by her long list of achievements over her 15 year career.

Joel runs a small design studio in Melbourne's inner east. From high-end interior design for residential, corporate, commercial and retail fit-outs, through to product design, design strategy and marketing consultation, Joel has completed projects for companies such as Becton and Duxac. It is this multi-disciplinary approach that sets her apart from many other designers.

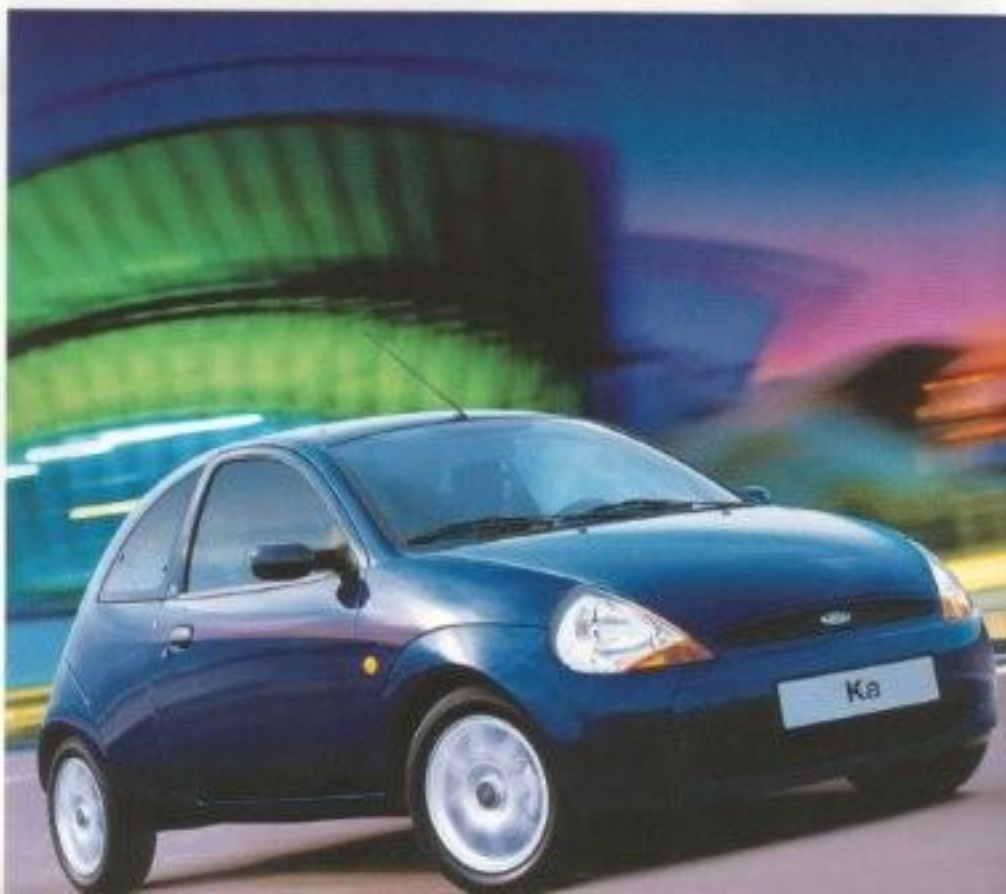
"I think of the different design disciplines as being very similar," says Joel. "I think the same principles of design apply whether you're developing a new product, or consulting on a brand, or even working on someone's kitchen. I love working on complete projects. I think if you believe in something, and you understand the project from the very beginning, it is very easy to execute it through to the very end."

Joel commenced her career with the Ford Motor Company. Fresh from product design studies at RMIT – during which she clocked up work experience with names such as Chris Connell and Mark Douglass –

Joel found work at Nylax, developing vinyl products for their automotive division. It was during this role that she came to meet with representatives from a number of car manufacturers, and before long was invited to present to a recruitment panel at Ford.

"I put together a marketing board of four car brands – Nissan, Ford, Mitsubishi and Toyota – and delivered a summary of what I believed to be each car's buyer profile and lifestyle, the materials I would use, and what the car would look like. Basically, Ford was blown away by my presentation, and I got the job."

Eighteen months after joining Ford, Joel's energy and enthusiasm was put to work at Ford UK where she was assigned to work on the 'KA', a trendy new production vehicle targeted at the young driver market. Four years later, she moved to Ford US in Detroit where she worked on a range of advanced vehicles and concepts, including a re-design of the classic 'Thunderbird', which fed her passion for bygone eras in design.



...where Drake had launched a plastic version of the legendary Eames chair, which was traditionally a fibreglass chair. I thought it was a fantastic example of taking a traditional concept and giving it a modern twist. So I took this and used it as a platform for my work on the 'Thunderbird'. One of the key features of the original 'Thunderbird' was that the door trim always had three-dimensional embossed metal, so I used this as inspiration in designing for the new car."

With eight years international experience under her belt, Joel returned to Australia in 1998 with a vastly different view of the design world.

"London was just mind-blowing from a design perspective, and coming back to Australia I felt at the time that there was a big lag in Australian design."

While she believes that Australian design has since made some significant advances, she also acknowledges that the industry faces some limitations.

"I think there is negativity towards production, and a perception that we can't compete internationally. But I truly believe that we can compete on an international platform. We have amazing designers, and fantastic companies, but I do feel that in the last few years a number of companies have lost their way (with respect to design investment). A lot of companies are reluctant to take risks. There are some incredible young Australian designers out there doing incredible work for international companies, yet I feel Australian companies are continuing to do what they've always done, and are unwilling to take a risk."

This said, Joel recognises that there are many local companies willing to take risks with design, and should be recognised for doing so. Most recently, she designed a range of door levers which was picked up by Lockwood (owned by Swedish company Assa Abloy) and are to be marketed as part of the Sharpen Joel signature range. Reading about the Lockwood door lever awards in the paper in late 2005, Joel discovered that designer Robert Watson had won the inaugural competition with an aluminium door lever.

"I love designing everyday items that are neglected. My passion is items that have been around forever, but need a facelift and can be reinvented. So, when I read about Robert Watson's lever, I thought - 'I've got this unbelievable lever that would be perfect for Lockwood.'"

So she proceeded to contact Lockwood's residential division in Brisbane to discuss her design. A cold call to the CEO of Lockwood - something that she is known to do with many of her clients - yielded delightful results for Joel.

"I told him about my design, and he said 'OK - I'm coming over to see it'. And so he came to my house." Joel's design made such an impression that the company immediately committed to the production of the lever, which was launched at DesignEx earlier this year.

"I think it comes down to companies having an attitude of being innovative. Companies such as Lockwood want to be seen as supporting Australian design and Australian manufacturing, which allows them to be at the cutting edge of innovation."

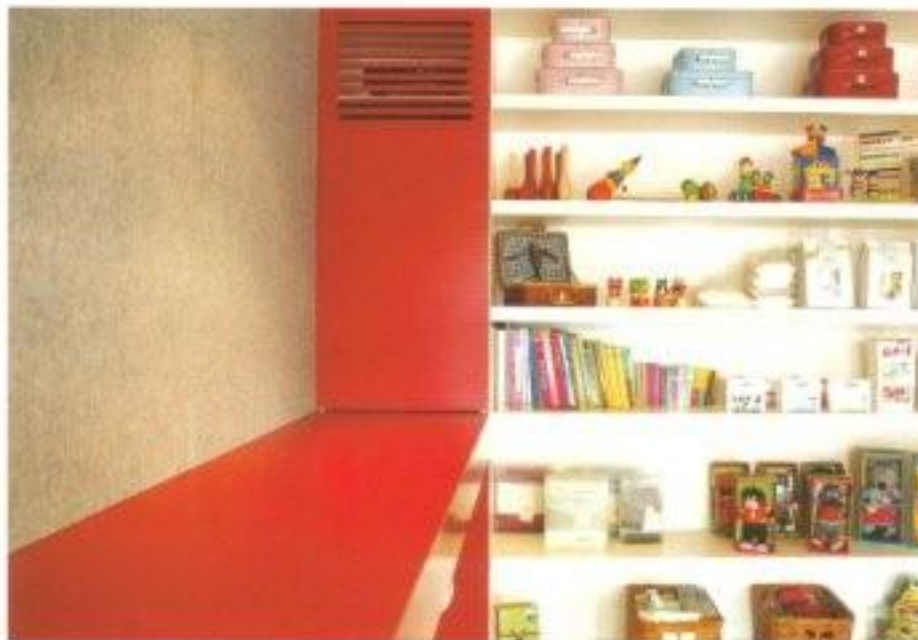
With a love of everyday items that are accessible and affordable, Joel recently applied her design skills to a range of items, including concept design for a set of touch-sensitive light switches, and a cooler bag design for the Melbourne Spring Racing Carnival.

Other major projects have included commercial interior re-designs for clothing retailer Metalicus. Commencing in 2004 with their Melbourne GPO store in the heart of Melbourne, Joel drew on themes of brand accessibility and versatility, while exploring form and texture as key elements. She has since been commissioned to re-work two other stores.

A common premise across all of Joel's designs is an appreciation for the materials and technologies being



Joel's approach to design is one which embraces a holistic view of the design process



embossing or perforating, which bring out the natural qualities and value of that material."

Pet hates aside, Joel's approach to design is one which embraces a holistic view of the design process and she uses her experience in interior design to illustrate this point.

"A lot of people believe that interior design is something that happens after the architect has done his work, and I often have to explain to clients that the best results occur when the interior designer, architect and landscape designer work together from the start so that they all share the same vision. It's so important for the interior to interact with the exterior, and not be completely isolated, and I think you can tell when this kind of collaboration has occurred between the various designers."

"One of the best examples of this is Federation Square. Many people have criticised the development, but I really love it. I love the relationship between the building and Berkeleys Mill. When you walk out into that beautiful parkland, and look back at Federation Square, it reflects the whole city (of Melbourne) beautifully."

"I'm always working on a multitude of things, and I tend to do a lot of development work on my own. I've just finished work on a children's clothing store in Melbourne, Chiquitos, which has been a really inspiring project to work on. But at the moment I'm working on

two retail stores for Metalicus, a lighting range, as well as a few objects for the Melbourne Design Festival, and also like to develop a bathroom range, as I believe there's a lot of scope to develop an affordable, yet beautifully-designed vanity units, and I'm also happy to work with a manufacturer to develop a new range of carpets, exploring colour and construction."

Yvonne Angwin-Coxon is a Melbourne-based design writer.

Sharon Joel Design
61 3 9510 3432, sharonjoel.com

