

## GAGOSIAN GALLERY

# The Telegraph

### Aficionado: Marc Newson

**Australian designer Marc Newson reflects on the destinations that have most influenced his work, and explains why he hates design hotels.**



*Australian designer Marc Newson*

When, as a young boy, Marc Newson discovered the space-age Jetsons – 1960s comic-book characters who zipped around in perfectly-formed aerocars – the Australian knew what he wanted to do: design futuristic products. Today, in addition to more static designs such as his Orgone Stretch sofa, he has created the highly mobile Kelvin40 personal jet (commissioned by the Fondation Cartier in Paris), the limited-edition Aquariva boat and the seats and interiors for the Qantas A380.

Since conceiving his beaten-aluminium Lockheed Lounge chaise-longue in 1986, he has spent about half his life travelling around the world, both as a designer and as a judge in international competitions such as the Cartier Concours d'Elegance in Mumbai. Although most of his journeys have been in first class, he says he yearns “to travel in the way I used to when I was younger. Then, there was always time to chill and explore the environment and do whatever activity was right for that place. I used to ski like a maniac for about 25 days a year, and go surfing, hiking and camping. Now ‘travelling’ means sitting on planes” – often, on the Qantas seats he designed himself.

Here he reflects on the travel destinations and experiences that have made the greatest impressions and shaped his approach to design.

"I love cars, and I have several: a 1950s Ferrari, an Aston Martin in a weird celadon green, an acid-green 1969 Lamborghini... The feeling of freedom, whizzing through beautiful countryside in a beautiful old car, is like nothing else.

My spiritual birthplace is Japan. Its food is connected to its Shinto temples, its engineering to its flower arranging. As a designer, I respond to that – that there's a thread linking it all makes sense. It gives it a soul. When I arrive there, I feel I'm home. There are a few hundred master craftsmen in Japan whose skills are so valuable the government has deemed them national living treasures. When you visit the temples in Kyoto, you realise why. One craftsman might do only a certain type of woodwork, another might make blades for a very specific type of sword, or tie-dye cloth in a very special way. The Japanese have retained ancient crafts and skills that we have lost.

When I was designing my Nike Zvezdochka shoe [a mesh bootie with a perforated outer shell], one thing that influenced me was a microscopic water creature called a radiolarian. The more you look at nature, the more you realise how perfect it is. Need a new pattern? Get out the microscope. Want a great green? Look at some leaves.

Nowhere do you get to experience colour in quite the same way as you do in India – except, perhaps, in Oz. The light enriches that deep blue of the skies and reflects on the sea, making you look at things in different ways. In Oz, the light brings out the beauty of the landscapes; in India, it brings out the beauty of the people: their saris, their food, their spices.

My pet hate is design hotels. I can't tell you how much I hate them. What their creators fail to realise is that, even if you are a designer, the design of a hotel isn't the most important thing. What matters is making guests feel like they are at home – that, and functionality.

In a new city, I'll often wander into a hardware shop; you can tell a lot about a culture from its hardware. Most things we use which have been "designed" are hideous. Yet, in a local DIY merchant's shop in Vietnam, you'll find a perfect little old tool that is beautiful as well as functional."