

# Communication Arts

## Design Down Under

Graphic Design in the Land of Oz

*Robert L. Peters, FGDC*

Peters shares his observations on graphic design in Australia in this 14-page feature. He has previously contributed CA features on design in Russia, Japan, Brazil, China, and Cuba, as well as congress reports from Portugal, Uruguay, Australia, Korea and Denmark.



by Robert L. Peters, FGDC

The name Australia is from the Latin *australis* (meaning southern) and dates back to second-century legends of *terra australis incognita* (an unknown southern land). Also known as “the land down under,” both monikers express Australia’s enduring reality—it is a long way away from the rest of the world, at least as measured by Eurocentric cartographers of the past.

Though the exact date of Australia’s first human habitation is in question, 50,000 years ago seems likely, following a period of massive ecological upheaval. The first Australians were the remote ancestors of the current Australian Aborigines, arriving by land bridges and sea from today’s Southeast Asia. Later immigrants descended from British penal colonies, as well as nineteenth- and twentieth-century free settlers from around the globe.

In 1788, when European colonizers first occupied the continent (the English envisioned Australia as the perfect prison island), an estimated one million Aborigine hunter-gatherers lived in wide-ranging clans, connected to the land through deep spiritual ties and tied together by oral traditions (and some 250 distinct languages). The immigrant intruders regarded the land as *terra nullus* (unowned) and its occupants as inhuman, an attitude that provided justification (in their minds) for the resulting decimation of the Aboriginal peoples they encountered—through epidemic disease, massacres and genocidal land appropriation.

### Big and rich

A massive, borderless land of just over 20 million inhabitants, today’s Australia is the sixth-largest country in the world, and the only one to occupy an entire continent. At 7.7 million square kilometers (3 million square miles) it is slightly smaller than the USA’s 48 conterminous states and with an average of 2.6 people per square kilometer (6.7 persons per square mile), its population density is among the lowest in the world. Most of Australia is desert or semi-arid (making global warming and resulting water shortages acute issues of late) and 40 percent of the land mass is covered by sand dunes. The southeast and southwest corners enjoy a temperate climate and moderately fertile soil, while the country’s north has a tropical climate with grasslands and rainforests. Formed as a nation in 1901, the Commonwealth of Australia is a federal parliamentary democratic state with the British queen as monarch (a public referendum to change to a republic was defeated in 1999).

Of late, globalization and high export prices for raw materials and agricultural products have been kind to resource-rich Australia, which is blessed with robust economic conditions, low unemployment, low inflation rates and a GDP per capita comparable with that of the UK or Canada. The country ranks third in the U.N.’s Human Development Index (after Norway and Iceland) and enjoys a well-earned and growing reputation as a tourism destination.

### Weird, wonderful and varied

Australian flora and fauna are as close to alien life as one might encounter on earth, the result of some 45 million years of isolation from other continents. The first Euros to land down under were shocked to discover unimaginably strange species of plants, animals and birds (including flightless wonders as diverse as the lumbering emu and the diminutive fairy penguin). Stars of “Oz’s zoological freak-show” include monotremes (egg-laying mammals)

Right: **Australian stamp designs** issued to coincide with international design congress Sydney Design 99, highlight the design process behind inanimate objects of everyday life: (from left) Australia Post symbol designed by Pieter Huvneers in 1975; the textile, *Possum Skin*, was developed by Euphemia Bostock from her cultural memory and her reaction to carved and natural imagery of her New South Wales indigenous people; Marc Newson’s *Embryo Chair*, 1998. Lynda Warner, designer; Australia Post, client.

**A Vision Unfurled**, proposal for a new national flag program that blends indigenous and non-indigenous Australia visually and conceptually—the kangaroo creates a unifying icon. Russell Kennedy, flag designer; Nigel Buchanan, illustrator.





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such as the platypus and echidna, and their marsupial cousins including the kangaroos, wallabies, koalas, wombats and bandicoots—notable for carrying their young in pouches. The majority of Australia's abundant snake species are venomous (including ten of the world's fifteen most poisonous), and the country is home to amazing reptiles such as the two-and-a-half meters long (eight feet) perentie monitor lizard (known to catch and eat small kangaroos) and the world's largest reptile, the saltwater crocodile ("saltie" to locals) that grows up to 7 meters (22 feet) in length. Also on the world-record fauna list and measuring a whopping 2,000 kilometers (1,250 miles) in length, the unique Great Barrier Reef is the longest coral formation on earth and the only animal community visible to the eye from space.

Traditionally (and stereotypically of course), tourists and outsiders have long associated "the wide brown land" with mobs of bounding kangaroos, the haunting sounds of the didgeridoo, boomerang-wielding Aborigines, glowing sunsets at Uluru

(a.k.a. Ayer's Rock, the massive red sandstone monolith), and rugged outback miscreants, outlaws and "white fella" swagmen. Mention Australia to an outsider today, and you'll conjure up images of the stunning Sydney Opera House, tanned bodies scattered on crisp white beaches and likely the Crocodile Hunter (the memorial service for Steve Irwin last year was taken in by over 300 million viewers worldwide). Since the advent of the media age (and accelerated by the successful 2000 Olympics in Sydney), vibrant Oz creativity has been rapidly gaining worldwide recognition as seen in films, music, theater, opera, dance, writing, architecture, wine-making and culinary arts (world-class!), crafts, painting and, of course, design.

With an unforgivingly harsh and almost uninhabited interior (some call it "flyover country") over 85 percent of Australians are city-dwellers, huddled mostly along the coastal perimeter in seven far-flung major cities. Mutually remote and unique (and sporting affable rivalries), each urban center has distinctive traits: the vibrant and "look-at-me boastful" Sydney (4

This page and next: Symbols of Australia: "Trademarks are a symbol of a culture...and a country's distilled history." So begins the introduction of the remarkable book *Symbols of Australia* by Mimmo Cozzolino and Fysh Rutherford. The symbols shown here provide "visual delights...quaint slices of life from the past...and (the hope for) confidence in our search for independence, and faith to determine our own future." From top left,

left to right: **White Way** (cleaning preparation), Nutt & Jones, Sydney, 1926; **Cooe** (manufactured tobacco), Dixon & Sons, Sydney and Brisbane, 1893; **Dingo Brand** (flour), The Great Southern Flour Mills Ltd, Narrogin, Western Australia, 1917; **Emu Brand** (pottery wares), James Allard, Melbourne, 1906; **Billy Tea** (wrapper), James Inglis & Co., tea and coffee merchants, Sydney, 1896; **Boomerang** (metal goods), F.A. Turner, 1921; **Unsurpassed**

**Australian Made** (footwear), J.H. Sharwood, Melbourne, 1917; **Gay Boy**, Shyne Mfg. Co., 1935; **Gum Tree** (flour), Crosby Mann & Co., Ltd, Adelaide, 1928; **Sharkol** (fish oil), The Producers' Co-op. Distributing Society Ltd, Sydney, 1941; **Diggaburra**, The Digger Tea Supply Co., Queensland, 1922; **Surfo Girl** (swimming costumes), Murdoch's in Park St. Pty Ltd, Sydney, 1928.





KANGAROO



million) has been described as “an exuberant, pleasure-seeking metropolis with a cosmopolitan vanity centered on its magnificent harbor” that “throws off style like a cat-walk supermodel on steroids;” arch-rival Melbourne (3.2+ million) is seen as the most “European” and “infatuated with culture and sport and gorging daily on outstanding ethnic food;” the serene and orderly capital city Canberra (population 320,000, diplomatically situated geographically inland between Sydney and Melbourne) is rich in museums and a thriving arts scene; Brisbane (1.5 million) is casual and languidly sub-tropical; Adelaide (1.47 million) is “lush and hedonistic;” Western Australia’s lazy, beach-rich Perth (1.38 million, also known as the world’s most remote city of its size) is “fascinated with its own tanned navel, beer and boats;” island Tasmania’s capital Hobart (population 130,000) is “colonial and stress-free;” and laid-back, tropical Darwin (population 72,000) is the capital of the Northern Territories (as well as Oz’s unofficial beer-drinking capital—and believe me, that’s no easy claim).

### Boomerang politics

Since the turn of the millennium, Australian politics have made a marked swing to the right—a trend welcomed by multinational business, but frustrating to many in the social, creative and environmental sectors who bemoan the resulting veer from the path of Aboriginal reconciliation, multiculturalism and openness. Of particular ire is the conservative Coalition’s (Liberal and National parties) ongoing support of the American-led war in Iraq and a growing anti-immigration stance. As Mary Kalantzis, a professor at RMIT University in Melbourne explains: “Our national leader, Mr. Howard, has managed to change our sense of ourselves—made us believe ourselves to be smaller and meaner than we are. The polls now reflect this narrow vision of Australia, manipulated by years of wedge politics and disingenuous talk-back radio gigs.”

At a conference I attended in Melbourne, Thinking the Future: Art, Design and Creativity, Labor MP Peter Garrett (of former fame as the activist lead singer of Midnight Oil,

From top left, left to right: **Kookaburra**, Kookaburra Cigarette Paper Tube Mfg. Co., Sydney, 1931; **QANTAS**, Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services Ltd. In late 1946, QANTAS developed the winged kangaroo to replace the QANTAS Empire Airways symbol. After the Government takeover of QANTAS in 1947, the flying Kangaroo was maintained and developed into the current international QANTAS symbol; **Gumlypta**

(chemical substances for agricultural and veterinary uses), Gillard Gordon Ltd, Sydney, 1919; **Vegemite** (vegetable and yeast extract), Fred Walker & Co. Pty Ltd, Melbourne, 1923; **Aussie** (jams), The Pikedale Soldiers Settlement Co-op. Canning, Jam & Preserving Co. Ltd, Amiens, Queensland, 1921; **PPP Annihilator** (rabbit destroyer), Rucker & Mackenzie, Melbourne, 1896; **Aussie** (pianos and organs), National Trustees of Executors

and Agency Co. of Australasia Ltd, Melbourne, 1924; **Platypus** (foods), C.E. Mann, Adelaide, 1921; **Dinkum Digger** (knitting wool), The Myer Emporium Ltd, Melbourne, 1939; **[umbrellas]**, Webster & Co., Melbourne, 1898; **Kangaroo** (velocipedes), Robert Lascelles & Co., Melbourne, 1896.

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and now federal shadow parliamentary secretary for the arts) referred to the Howard government as “obsessed with sports at the expense of the arts and culture” and “today’s philistines... who view the liberal arts as elitist,” decrying the country’s lack of national debate about the health of its creative industries.

U.S. comic Jon Stewart points out the surprising political similarities between Australia and the United States with the pithy analogy: “Imagine if American politics were a boomerang, and you threw that boomerang and it came back exactly like it was...except now it had a dark, leathery suntan and was wearing corduroy shorts and an orange Ocean Pacific tank top.”

### Sportive and keen

Australians are infatuated with sport, particularly the full-on variety as encapsulated in the adage: “It’s all fun and games until somebody loses an eye—then it’s sport.” The country goes crazy over Australian Rules football, cricket and rugby in particular, though events such as the Sydney-to-Hobart yacht race, the annual “nation-stopping” Melbourne Cup thoroughbred horse race, Australian Open tennis and the Bells Beach Surf Classic loom large both at home and abroad. As one might expect from a sun-soaked nation coast-lined by over 7,000 beaches, Australians are also avid surfers, sailors and among the world’s best swimmers.

Last year I had the good fortune to attend the Aussie Rules final (along with 97,000 singing fans) in Melbourne’s famous MCG cricket ground—an unforgettably moving experience, even for a non-fan like me, that helped me understand the seemingly irrational enthusiasm Australians have for sporting events. A week later, a visit to the design offices of Rip Curl in Torquay (a surfer’s paradise along the Great Ocean Road that is also home to brands Quiksilver, Roxy, Piping Hot and other Oz “exporters of cool”) convinced me of the importance of surf culture in Australia’s design vernacular.

This page: **Heide tea towel.** Gollings & Pidgeon, design firm; Heide Museum of Modern Art, client.

Right: **Brand identity for Deus Ex Machina Motorcycles Pty Ltd.** Carby Tuckwell, designer.

**Heavenly Creatures catalog and invitation.** Marianna Berek-Lewis, designer/typographer/finished artist; David Pidgeon, creative director;

### Good times, mate

“Creatively speaking, Australia is one of the most exciting countries to be living in right now,” enthuses Jen Clark, editor of *Designation* (from Ripe Off The Press). “Everywhere you look...you are almost guaranteed to find something to invigorate your creative senses. From the emerging stencil and graffiti-art scene of Melbourne’s streets to the funky quarters of Sydney’s inner suburbs, the profile of Australia’s design community has been lifted to new heights in the past decade. More than ever, people are seeking careers in the creative arts across a wide range of disciplines.” This optimism is consistent with Minister Garrett’s assertion that “Australia stands at the cusp of a creative renaissance...[and] our people thrive on creativity.” A spirited conversation with Richard Henderson of R-Co. (designer of identities for the 2000 Sydney Olympics, Melbourne’s 2006 Commonwealth Games, and a host of other high-profile sporting events) also underlined this positive stance: “In our new economy, ROI = Return on Imagination.”

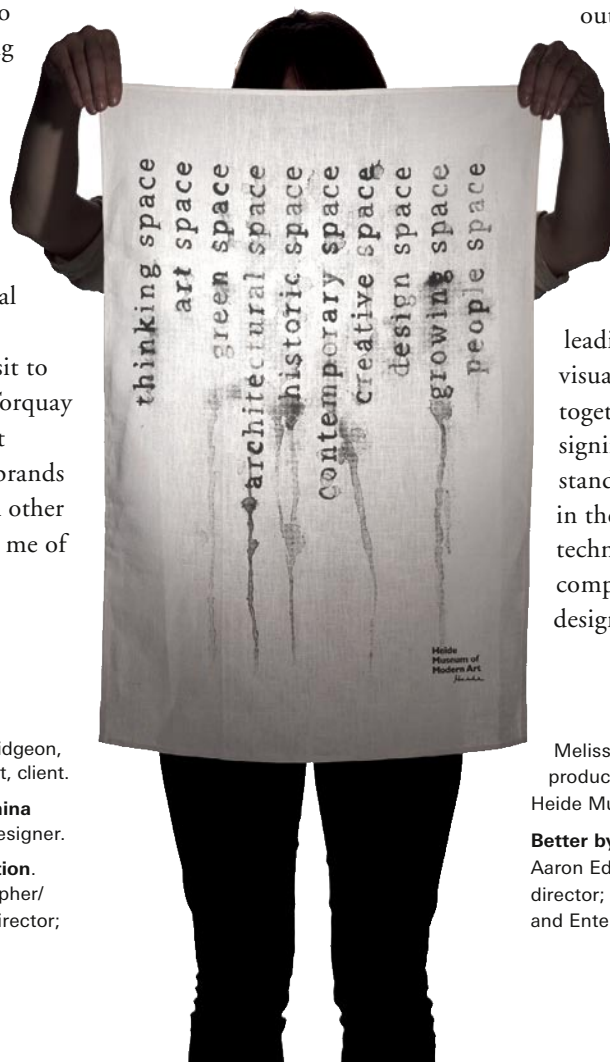
According to the 2006 Australian Census, there are over 22,000 graphic designers working in over 5,000 design offices. David Robertson, national president of the Design Institute of Australia (DIA), a multidisciplinary association that turns 60 this year ([www.design.org.au](http://www.design.org.au)) cites calculations of the Creative Industries Research and Applications Centre to point

out that: “Australia has a high density of designers...at 574 per 100,000 in the workforce, this is on par with many other developed countries and exceeds the 392 calculated for the USA.”

The Australian Graphic Design Association (AGDA), formed in 1988 ([www.agda.com.au](http://www.agda.com.au)), is the leading association representing the visual communication profession, and together with DIA, has contributed significantly to continually improving standards of design practice, as evidenced in the innovation, discipline, creativity, technical prowess and business comprehension visible in Australian design work.

Melissa Keys, writer; Kirstin Gollings, image production; Gollings & Pidgeon, design firm; Heide Museum of Modern Art, client.

**Better by Design conference signage.** Dean Poole/Aaron Edwards, designers; Dean Poole, creative director; Alt Group, design firm; New Zealand Trade and Enterprise, client.

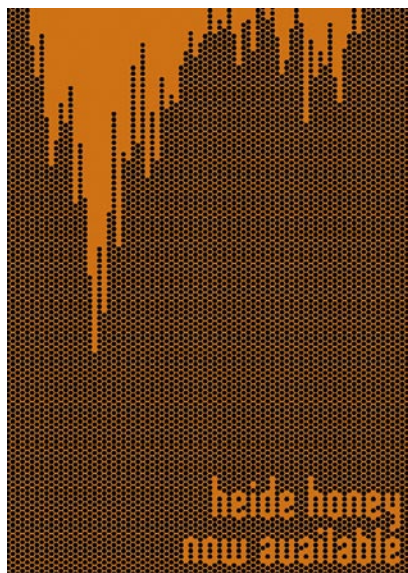








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There's no doubt that the Australian design landscape is flourishing, with design in the mainstream, and growing rapidly in stature and visibility. As Andrew Ashton of Melbourne-based Studio Pip and Co. puts it, "Graphic design has never been so diverse, wealthy, multifaceted and venerable...Designers have become chameleons...and are becoming art directors, artists, film directors, photographers, entrepreneurs, writers, producers, event consultants, business strategists, educators, publishers, parents, rock stars—they seem to be making impressions everywhere."

From my own observations, admittedly as an outsider, Australians appear to be very urbane and design-aware—to such an extent in fact, that some within the design community are beginning to lament the cliché of "designer living" with its "world of matching wardrobes, design courses, fit-outs, holiday destinations, suburbs, bottled beer, sexual and life partners, cafés and publications."

### Distinctively similar?

For a country with such defiantly unique and recognizable traits and notable "reverence of place," its design output seems remarkably homogeneous with global counterparts. Is there anything really distinctive about Australian design? Surprisingly little, I'd have to say, other than its overall degree of polish. At the risk of "painting with a big brush," I see Australian design as largely egalitarian, mostly minimalist and rationalist (sometimes out-Swissing the Swiss), occasionally Dutch-inspired (with reference to typographic prowess) and richly contrasting and colorful. That said, while the preponderance of work may be clean and sophisticatedly distilled, graphic style does of course vary broadly—from the predominantly

neo-Modernist "severely simplified and distilled dress code" (think sans serif stripped-down white-space showroom-clean), to the gritty/grunge graffiti-imbued anti-urbane, to expressive compositions that draw on local and period vernacular.

"About 80 percent of Australian design is anything but distinctive," asserts Russell Kennedy, a senior lecturer at Monash University in Melbourne. "That's not to say it's not of a high standard, but Australian design is moving more and more into a modernist-inspired international aesthetic. This is partially because of global branding and international trade,

This page: **Anna Finlayson, Circa poster.** David Pidgeon, designer; Anna Finlayson, artist; Dominic Guthrie, producer; Gollings & Pidgeon, design firm; John van Haandel Circa the Prince, client.

**Heide Honey point-of-sale poster.** Rachel Tonge, designer; David Pidgeon, creative director; Gollings & Pidgeon, design firm; Anna Draffin, Heide Museum of Modern Art, client.

**Hopscotch 2005/06 promotional poster.** Mark Gowing, designer; Sandie Don, writer; Richard Mortimer, photographer; Mark Gowing/Tim Rogers, sculptors; Mark Gowing Design, design firm; Hopscotch Films, client.

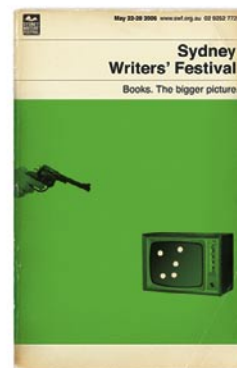
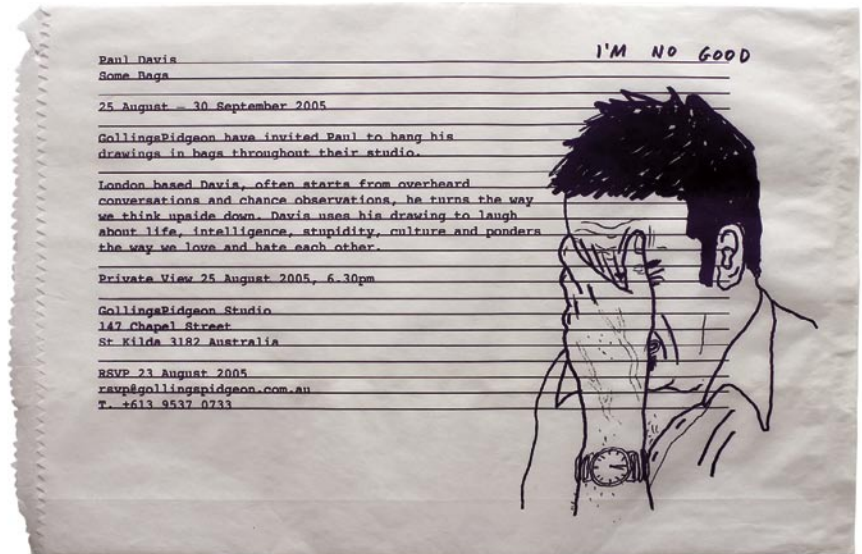
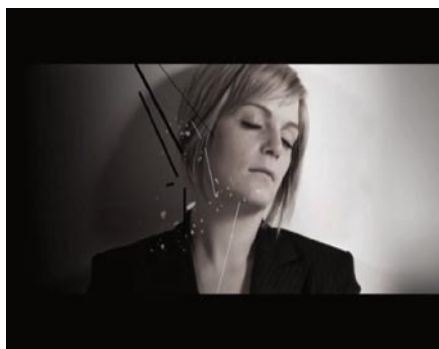
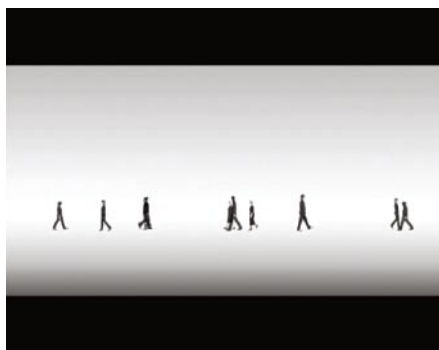
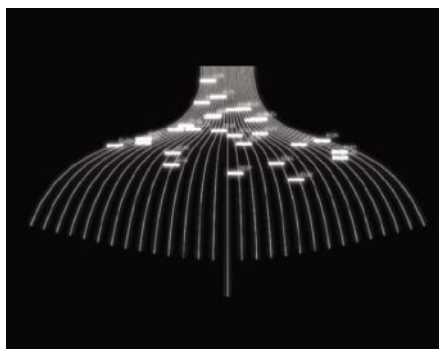
Right: **The Reality Project**, a short film by designer/director Domenico Bartolo. Domenico Bartolo, art director/typographer; Domenico Bartolo/Ryan Guppy, creative directors; 21-19, design firm; Museo d'Arte, Ravenna Italy, client.

**Some Bags invitation**, printed on lunch bags. David Pidgeon, designer; Paul Davis, illustrator/client; Gollings & Pidgeon, design firm.

**Sydney Writers' Festival 2006 outdoor posters.** Julian Melhuish/Chris Doyle/Alex Normanton, designers; Julian Melhuish, photographer; John Rumbold, retoucher; Saatchi Design, design firm.

**Sydney Writers' Festival 2003 outdoor poster.** Chris Doyle, art director/typographer/finish artist; Kevin Finn/Julian Melhuish, creative directors; David Nobay, executive creative director; Julian Melhuish/Andrew Pippas, writers; Kerry McElroy, retoucher; Saatchi Design, design firm.





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but also because Australian designers tend to feel a need to design in a global style in order to be taken seriously.”

“Australian designers would sooner smash their G4s than resort to clichés such as kangaroos, koalas and bush hats hung with bottle corks,” wrote Rick Poynor five years ago in the in-depth, Oz-themed Winter 2002 issue of *Eye*, referring to the “cultural cringe” anxiety expressed by many that “Australian culture might not catch up with standards elsewhere.”

According to Garry Emery of Emery Vincent Design (in *Design Down Under*), Australians aren’t purists—and given broad plurality, they ask themselves just what their own culture entails. “Australian culture is constantly under negotiation as we collectively grapple with establishing broad consensus of what defines us as a people.” He suggests that Australians recognize themselves as a “multi-ethnic stereotype” reflecting the nation’s migrant intake (as well as its citizens’ legendary taste for international travel), and that such difference is accepted as natural, “...most obviously seen in the way that hundreds of different ethnic groups have been naturalized while still maintaining much of their own cultures.”

Emery also suggests that designers in Australia constantly match their work against that of their peers, and against international design standards. “It’s the question that Australians invariably want to ask...Perhaps we might look longingly to Japan or Denmark for clues about establishing design as a central plank for national culture. Or perhaps we can positively appreciate that Australian culture will never have a central core. Our history of migration leaves us with a fundamentally disparate legacy. Heterogeneity is the basis of our national character and also the reason for what most of us admire as a tolerant, phlegmatic approach to life.”

Clark expresses a similar viewpoint. “Historically, Australia’s design community has been its own worst enemy. Many Australian creative professionals have habitually turned to their overseas counterparts, particularly in North America and Europe, in search of benchmarks.” She suggests that, for a long

time, a collective inferiority complex jeopardized Australia’s ability to forge a confident, independent creative community on par with designer peers elsewhere on the globe—a situation that is finally changing. “What is emerging today, however, is the reverse—overseas designers are starting to look Down Under for inspiration and insight.”

### Sun-baked fun

“The most distinctive design is being done by those who look internally for inspiration and focus on Australian’s differences rather than our similarities to the rest of the world,” says Kennedy. “We see this in the youth markets of fashion and music where designers tend to use irreverent Australian humor to put a unique spin on what is primarily American/International popular culture...what we do best is laugh at ourselves.” Examples of such distinction include David Lancashire (featured in CA #240 May/June 1993), the prolific and outspoken typographer Stephen Banham (publisher of *Qwerty* and founder of the Melbourne studio Letterbox) and the leftish, Brisbane-based studio Inkahoots (known for their evocative social and cultural design work).

Humor, particularly of the self-deprecating sort, is big in Australian culture and is often seen in Australian design—perhaps nowhere more evident than in the output of the “taboo-busting artists” of Sydney-based Mambo, who have been exporting their eclectic, irreverent, brand of “scatological wit” for the world’s amusement since the mid 1980s. As Poyner describes so well, “Mambo’s love of unhinged word play, outrageous puns and provocative agit-prop messages...[along with] lowbrow and highbrow influences—from cartoons, radio and TV comedy to politics, film, religion, philosophy and literature...has taken Australia’s blunt approach to everyday communication, turned up the volume, and glorified it.” Poynor defines the Mambo vision as “...based on Australian principles of openness, directness, irreverence, democracy and a dislike of institutions and pretensions—in short, no bullshit.”

Right: **Logo for Sydney** (consumer brand for the city). Mick Thorp, art director/designer; Billy Blue Creative, design firm; Tourism New South Wales, client.  
Fun-loving identity for **Lynton Crabb Photography**. Grant Davidson, art director/designer; Davidson Design, design firm.

**The Good Starts** identity. “A layering of hands forms a bird in flight, signifying the coming together of individuals on a journey of liberation, growth and discovery.” Katherine Chadwick, art director/designer; Designland, design firm; Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, client.

**VH2 Music Channel** identity. Domenic Bartolo/Ryan Guppy, designers; 21-19, design firm; MTV Europe, client.

Identity for entrepreneurial creative consultancy **Activist**. Grant Davidson, art director/designer; Davidson Design, design firm; Barry Robinson, Activist, client.

**Designland** identity. Eponymous identifier with attitude combines the high-tech (LED light matrices) with the handcrafted (needlepoint). Andrew Budge, designer; Designland, design firm.

**Everything in Between**, identity for design-driven education program and creative bridge for students. 3 Deep Design, design firm.

**Billy Blue School of Graphic Arts doors**. Danielle De Andrade/Paul Garbett, designers/illustrators; Paul Garbett, creative director; Naughtyfish, design firm.

**Billy Blue mural**. Justin Smith/Mick Thorp, art directors/typographers; Justin Smith, designer; Mick Thorp, creative director; Billy Blue Creative, design firm; Billy Blue Group, client.





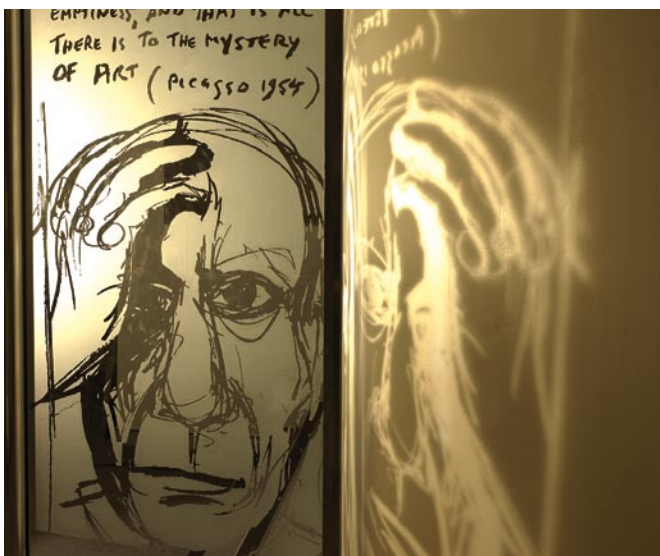
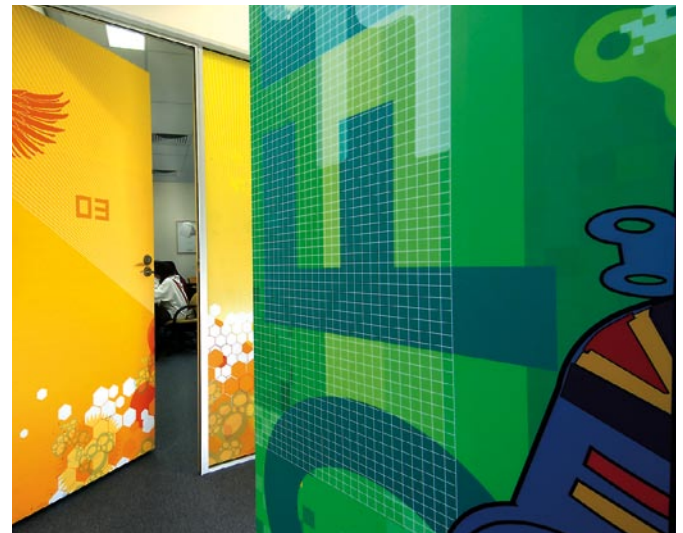
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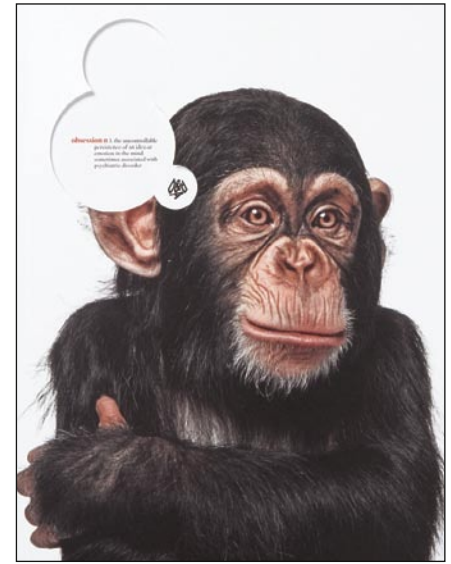
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## 'Strine design futures

While Australian design's future certainly seems to hold great promise, the broader issues facing this vast southern nation, its people and its environment will inevitably provide both significant challenges and opportunities for design professionals. Key issues are likely to include Aboriginal reconciliation and land rights, immigration and multiculturalism (an inevitable issue for a sparsely populated land so near to overpopulated Asia), climate change (drought has already hit hard with the worst brush-fires in recent memory and an onslaught of farm bankruptcies) and Australia's growing role and influence in a globalized sphere.

The majority of designers that I encountered expressed enthusiastic optimism for the years ahead. "From out of nowhere small practices are skating between the gaps between big and small client work, producing television commercials, moonlighting as music acts, jumping across to fashion and writing, or throwing themselves into design craft," states Ashton. "The next decade, like the last, promises to be productive, engaging and full of extremes beyond our wildest imagination... an exciting time for creative thinkers. The challenge of making our way of living sustainable, and sustainable quickly, will require a solution beyond the cause of buying and selling things. It will be another decade calling for more eclectic

approaches, and the rewards will be there for those willing to take risks."

To the question regarding design's future, Kennedy also offered a positive response: "One of the upsides of globalization is that the general public is becoming more design literate. State governments are also just starting to realize the contribution design can make to culture, economic prosperity and the environment. Our federal government will eventually catch on."

During the past decade, the Internet has certainly helped in raising the profiles of Australian designers, and in elevating the level of design dialogue—through effective design studio Web sites of course, as well as interactive resources and online publishing such as *Australian INfront* ([www.australianinfront.com](http://www.australianinfront.com)), *Design is Kinky* ([www.designiskinky.com](http://www.designiskinky.com)), *Designwire* ([www.designwire.org](http://www.designwire.org)), *Open Manifesto* ([www.openmanifesto.net](http://www.openmanifesto.net)) and *DG* ([www.designgraphics.com.au](http://www.designgraphics.com.au)) to name a few.

Clark foresees that "With continued growth and the continued promotion of its various industries and practitioners on a global scale...the international design community will increasingly look to Australia for new ideas as to how it can better its understanding and application of creative thinking. The ongoing development and promotion of Australian talent will ensure that the country is no longer perceived as

Left: **Evo Lookbook brochure** (brand implementation). James Brown/Dominic Roberts, designers; Dave Kalucy, writer; Daniel Noone, photographer; Mash, design firm; Evo, client.

**Brochure/catalog for the Billy Blue School of Graphic Arts**. Paul Garbett, designer; Paul Garbett/Simon Pemberton, writers; Naughtyfish, design firm.

**Woods Bagot Public #1, Spatial Tactics brochure**. Olivier Kowald, designer; Steven Cornwell, creative director; Cornwell Design, design firm; Woods Bagot, client.

This page: **Amperсанд** (issues 1–3 of newsletter). Vince Frost/Anthony Donovan/Ben Blackhouse, designers; Vince Frost, creative director; Frost Design, design firm; D&AD, client.

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an artistic backwater, but as an outstanding contributor to the global design community.”

What are my own conclusions? I have certainly never seen the “land down under” as an artistic backwater—quite the opposite in fact; I’ve been amazed by the prodigious creativity and intelligent design expression that I’ve encountered there on several visits. That said, I’ll predict that whatever inward-looking introversion this formerly isolated island nation may have suffered in the past will continue to morph into a fresh and imaginative source of inspired innovation for the rest of the globe—and I have no doubt that Australian design’s contribution to the future will be significant. So, keep your eye on ’Strine design, mate! **CA**

*Author’s note: Robert L. Peters has visited Australia several times since first attending the Icofrada World Design Congress in Sydney in 1999. In 2006, he spent a month as designer in residence with the Faculty of Art & Design, Monash University, Melbourne. Peters would like to express thanks to the numerous designers, writers and organizations that contributed their viewpoints and work for this article, with special acknowledgement to Russell Kennedy, Mimmo Cozzolino, David Pidgeon and AGDA for their collaboration, assistance and support (many of the works shown here are from recent AGDA award shows).*



This page: **Silly Mid On wine labels.** Matthew Remphrey, designer; Danny Snell, illustrator; Parallax Design, design firm; Jim Barry Wines, client.

**A Box of Roos postcard set.** David Lancashire, designer/illustrator/creative director; David Lancashire Design, design firm; Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, client.

One poster from the **Van Heusen outdoor campaign.** Mark Moffitt, designer; Carby Tuckwell, creative director; Max Doyle, photographer; Moon Design, design firm.

Right: **AGDA 2006 calendar.** Chris Doyle/Julian Melhuish, designers; Julian Melhuish/Chris Doyle/Kevin Finn, writers; Saatchi Design, design firm; Australian Graphic Design Association NSW, client.

**Jim Beam Small Batch packaging.** Melonie Ryan, designer; Annette Harcus, Y&R, creative directors; Harcus Design, design firm; Y&R/Maxxium Australia, client.

**Southpaw Vineyard wine packaging.** Matthew Remphrey, designer/creative director; Parallax Design, design firm; Sellicks Foothills Wine Company, client.

**No.6 wine packaging.** Matthew Remphrey, designer/creative director; Parallax Design, design firm; Brothers In Arms, client.





The Australian Graphic Design Association  
2006 Calendar

Who the fuck  
designed this?

