Design Lines

for an
exclusive
reader event
See inside for details



DAVID CAON HENRY WILSON NEALE WHITAKER

Trends come and go but what makes great design stand the test of time? We asked three of Australia's leading design experts to share their process, the influence of legacy and where they go to be inspired.

By Noelle Faulkner





If you fly often, chances are you've experienced the elegance of David Caon's designs. One of Australia's leading industrial designers and the founder of Sydney-based studio Caon, his practice spans interiors, objects, architecture, furnishings and aerospace, including the refurbishment of the Qantas A380 and the new First Lounge in Singapore.

How does the past inform what you do?

A lot of my favourite designers and architects are historical. I often think back to when designers had less available to them, what they could do with a product or the manufacturing process and how it forced them to think. For me, that's almost become a kind of design language and something I appreciate.

Many objects you create, such as the Qantas glassware and tableware, are used by hundreds of people every day. Can you share your thought processes around this?

The glassware took us years to design. You put yourself in the shoes of the person who's going to be picking up the object and ask yourself, are they going to want this? Are they going to want to use it? Are they going to enjoy it? Is it going to be a memorable experience?

What do you define as good design?

When something is designed poorly, it might look gorgeous but work horribly. And you're going to remember it for the reasons it didn't work, particularly if it was unpleasant or uncomfortable to use. An indicator of good design is that it has to work with you – it phases into your life, does what it's supposed to do and then phases out.

How does travel inspire you?

I like to immerse myself and try not to be a tourist. Part of that is spending time just being in another place, especially places that have a long history of making architecture and art. Australia is a young, evolving culture and I don't think design has firmly found its place here yet. If you visit Italy or Japan, where craftsmanship and beauty have always been cherished, then you see how it is really appreciated. It tends to form a bigger part of the discourse.

caonstudio.com

What is one current trend or design that you believe will endure?

"I think our aerospace flatware will stand the test of time. I was very careful when I designed that collection and studied many different products from the past, focusing on designs from many years ago that are still in production. If the quality is high, the product is beautiful and it works well then it stands a chance of being in existence for a long time."





Having studied woodwork, fine art and industrial design, Sydney-based Henry Wilson straddles the line between maker and designer. One of Australia's most in-demand artists – creating exquisite furniture, objects and lighting using sand-casting, stone, bronze and more – he has also collaborated with brands such as Aēsop and Google.

How does the past inform your work?

I'm hugely drawn to nostalgia as a technique. I always think about when you're emptying your grandfather's shed. You might throw out 60 per cent of it but you wouldn't throw out anything that was sand-cast – and not because it's precious. There's some kind of attraction to sand-casting; something nostalgic that people respond to. Carved stone and bronze are like that as well. It's something culture has taught us.

Can you share a design inspired by the past but reworked for modern life today?

"The oil burner I designed for Aēsop takes ancient traditions of burning oil for both light and scent and is reimagined as a sculptural and functional object."

What is one product designed for today that you believe will leave a legacy?

The A-Joint [Wilson's multi-use joinery system] was the first product in my catalogue and continues to sell due to the flexibility it offers customers and architects. It applies ancient techniques of solid timber joinery updated in a relatively modern sand-cast joint. It's about doing more with less – it uses fewer materials, has reduced parts and can be employed to make all sorts of furniture. I think this type of less-is-more, or more sustainable approach, will soon be the future.

How is technology pushing your practice forward?

It looks prehistoric, using stone and sand-casting, and there's a nostalgia to it. But, actually, we use a lot of tech in the background. We 3D-print many of the moulds and use virtual reality to envisage objects in space and scale furniture in a room. Technology has really opened up what can be done

Where do you find inspiration?

When I was younger, I started seeking out European flea markets – you get a really good idea of a culture's design history and what the everyday objects were. I'd go around flea markets in Germany, Holland and Italy and find thousands of examples of antique design that were unauthored or maybe not produced anymore. It was like a history lesson in industrial design.

henrywilson.com.au





As the former editor-in-chief of interiors magazines *Belle* and *Vogue Living*, judge on long-running television series *The Block* and co-host of Foxtel's *Love It or List It*, Neale Whitaker is one of Australia's most acclaimed and authoritative voices on design.

Past trends often return. In what ways do you see this happening now?

The 1970s and '80s are often dismissed as "tasteless" but they were very influential decades in design. We're seeing elements of the '70s in contemporary colours, design and materiality, as well as the popularity of house plants and macramé. The most enduring 1980s design trend is probably the Hamptons look, which reached its peak in the '80s, thanks to Ralph Lauren.

In what way is technology pushing the industry forward?

We're living in an exciting era. Because of social media, we have so much information and inspiration at our fingertips. Technology is also being incorporated into classic design, even in the middle market – you know, desks and chairs that will charge your phone. I think technology and design are working in sync now more than ever before.

What design elements from today do you believe will stand the test of time?

When we look back at this decade 50 years from now, it will be our preference for open-plan living, concern for sustainability and the overwhelming dominance of the kitchen. There are many modern classics – like the iPhone – but generally we're living in an era where design is more democratic. It can't be defined by one aesthetic in the way previous decades were. That means many contemporary designs will endure. Good examples would be the designs of Patricia Urguiola and Nendo.

Where in the world do you find or seek inspiration?

Travel is the most motivating and energising force for me. Different locations offer different things but I've always been drawn to the cultures of India and South-East Asia. I'm equally inspired by Los Angeles, Stockholm, Paris, Milan, New York and London. Tokyo blows my mind and I've fallen in love all over again with Athens.

You're invited to Design Lines

An exclusive *Qantas* reader event to mark the launch of the new Peugeot 508.

VIP event

Neale Whitaker, Henry Wilson and David Caon will join *Qantas* magazine Executive Editor Sophie Tedmanson to talk about the latest design trends and what's next in 2020. Enjoy drinks and canapés at this complimentary reader event.

WHEN: Wednesday, 27 November 2019,

6.30pm-8.30pm

WHERE: Alexandria Peugeot,

75-85 O'Riordan Street, Alexandria, NSW

REGISTER NOW:

Go to designlines.eventbrite.com.au.

Places are limited.

Win!

Attendees will go in the draw for a chance to experience great design during a two-night stay at the Jackalope Hotel on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula or a two-night stay at United Places in Melbourne's South Yarra. The two winners will also be among the first to drive the all-new Peugeot 508, which they'll take for the duration of their escapes.