



# **marc newson**

## design works

10 august 2001 – 3 february 2002

**Introduction and syllabus links**  
Australian-born designer Marc Newson has had a prolific international career. Constantly in demand by private and corporate clients, his work is also represented in museum collections throughout the world. This first major retrospective of Newson's work surveys the extraordinary range of his career to date.

Sketches, drawings, models, prototypes and multimedia programs support the exhibition offering insights into Newson's creative method, the varied technical processes and marketing initiatives that have contributed to his reputation.

This exhibition is relevant to high school students of Design and Technology, Visual Arts (years 11 & 12), as well as tertiary students of design, architecture, jewellery, sculpture, interior design, graphic design and industrial design.

Whilst at the Museum visit the Powerhouse Museum Shop, where you will find an extensive collection of contemporary design publications including the 1999 *Marc Newson* book. More information about Marc Newson is also available from the resources listed in these notes.

## BIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE

### 1963

- Born Sydney, Australia

### 1984

- Graduated Sydney College of the Arts, jewellery and sculpture

### 1985

- 'Marc 1' chair acquired by Powerhouse Museum, Sydney
- Awarded a grant from the Crafts Board of the Australia Council

### 1986

- First exhibition, *Seating for six*, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
- Designed first of the POD series of watches

### 1987

- Worked with innovative furniture company Idée, Tokyo, to create the 'Charlotte' chair and 'Super Guppy' lamp

### 1988

- Designed 'Wood' chair for *House of fiction* exhibition, Sydney
- Designed 'Embryo' chair for Powerhouse Museum, Sydney
- Designed Andoni shop interior, Sydney
- Received grant from Visual Arts Board, Australia Council
- *Marc Newson* exhibition, Idée, Tokyo
- Designed 'Black Hole' table, Tokyo

### 1989

- Designed Pod Bar interior, Tokyo
- 'Orgone' fibreglass chair and lounge, Sydney
- First exhibition, Milan Furniture Fair

### 1990

- Designed carbon-fibre 'Mystery Clock'
- Designed 'Felt' chair, 'Wicker' chair and lounge series, Idée, Tokyo



Marc Newson pictured in July 2001 with his plastic 'Orgone' chair.

### 1991

- Worked with Cappellini and Flos, Italy
- *Marc Newson* exhibition, VIA, Paris

### 1992

- Designed 'Event horizon' table, Tokyo
- Moved to Paris
- Designed Shiseido men's toiletries range, Paris
- Commenced designing furniture for Moroso, Italy
- Interiors of Hysterie and Skoda boutiques, Germany
- Visiting professor, Instituto Europeo del Design, Italy
- Visiting professor, Vitra Design Museum summer workshop, Germany

### 1993

- Awarded Designer of the Year, Paris Furniture Fair
- Presentation of 'Gluon' chair and 'TV' chair and table for Moroso, Italy
- Madonna *Rain* video featuring the 'Lockheed Lounge'
- Presentation of 'Helice' lamp for Flos, Italy
- Limited edition 'Orgone' aluminium chair and lounge, Paris

### 1994

- Development of new products for Alessi, Italy
- Designed 'Gello' table for 3 Suisses
- Formed Ikepod Watch Company, Switzerland, with Oliver Ike; development of 'Seaslug' watch

### 1995

- Designed interior of Coast restaurant, London
- 'Bucky' installation, Fondation Cartier, Paris

### 1996

- Designed 'Hemipode' watch, Paris
- Designed interior of Syn recording studio, Tokyo
- Designed interior of Komed restaurant, Cologne

### 1997

- W&LT retail units, Paris
- *Marc Newson* exhibition, Villa de Noailles, France
- Moved to London; formed business partnership with architect Benjamin de Haan
- Designed 'Dishdoctor' dishrack and 'Rock' doorstop for Magis, Italy
- Product design for Alessi, Italy

### 1998

- Designed 'Io' table for B&B Italia
- Designed glassware for Iittala, Finland

### 1999

- Designed Falcon 900B business jet, London
- Designed MNO1 aluminium bicycle, Biomega, Denmark
- *Marc Newson*, monograph, published by Booth-Clibborn Editions, London
- Designed Ford '021C' concept car

### 2000–2001

- Designed hair care appliances, Vidal Sassoon, New York
- Llama apartments project, Brisbane, Australia
- Designed interior of Lever Bar, New York
- Design work for Ikepod, Erreti, Nike, Idée-Sputnik
- Release of miniature 'Lockheed Lounge', Vitra, Germany

### Museum collections

- Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide Australia
- Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh USA
- Design Museum, London UK
- Musee des Arts Decoratifs, Paris France
- Museum of Modern Art, NY USA
- Powerhouse Museum, Sydney Australia
- San Francisco Museum of Modern Art USA
- Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein Germany

Marc Newson  
design works

*My work is about a direct link from my head to my hands.\**

The trajectory of Marc Newson's design career has been truly remarkable. Since graduating from Sydney College of the Arts in 1984, he has worked from studios in Sydney, Tokyo, Paris and most recently London. Today he is one of the world's most innovative, versatile and high-profile designers.

This first major retrospective of Marc Newson's work surveys the extraordinary range of his career to date, from furniture and interiors, to watches and homewares, from a bicycle to a car and a private jet.

Whether designing for manufacturers or private clients, Newson constantly exploits the opportunity to create new forms and to explore the potential of innovative materials and technologies. This creative interplay between mind and process informs all his work, be it a coathanger or a car.

\* Marc Newson quoted in Alice Rawsthorne, 'An Australian in Paris', *Blueprint*, February 1994.



'Lockheed Lounge', Sydney, 1988–90

Focus questions

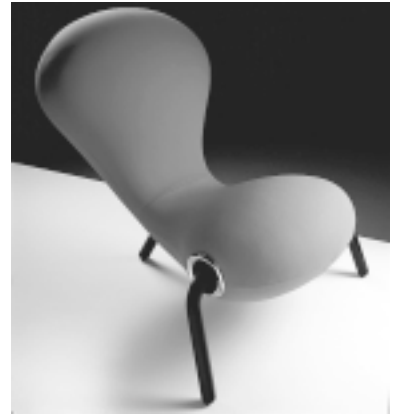
✱ In his early career Newson mainly handcrafted his furniture pieces. Look at the 'Lockheed Lounge' at the entrance of the exhibition. It has been made from sheets of aluminium riveted to a fibreglass core. What is the advantage of using this combination of materials to achieve the shape, surface, and structure, of the 'Lockheed Lounge'?

## Starting out Sydney, Tokyo, London 1984–1990

Born in Sydney in 1963, Marc Newson graduated in sculpture and jewellery from Sydney College of the Arts in 1984. While at college he began to design and make metal furniture and he exhibited jewellery and furniture at a group show in 1985.

But it was Newson's first solo show in 1986, *Seating for six* at the Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, that drew attention to his creative talent — best expressed in the extraordinary 'Lockheed Lounge'.

Travel to London and Tokyo followed in 1987. About the time he created the iconic 'Embryo' chair for the Powerhouse Museum in 1988, Newson began designing for the innovative Japanese company Idée. This creative collaboration was to provide Newson with a crucial entree into the European design world.



'Embryo' chair, Sydney, 1988

### Focus questions

✧ Find the 'LC1 chaise longue'. This piece is a homage to which architect? In what way does it differ to the 'Lockheed Lounge'?

✧ How do you think Newson's background in jewellery design and sculpture has influenced his approach to designing? Choose two pieces from his student years and compare them to one another and to his later work.

✧ Newson's designs have often been described as anthropomorphic or zoomorphic in form, meaning that they look like human or animal forms. What does the 'Embryo' chair remind you of? Make sketches of other Newson designs that have similar qualities. Describe the materials he has used for the 'Embryo' chair. In what way do they reflect Australian surf culture?

## Moving on from Sydney to Europe 1988–1998

With a significant number of furniture designs to his credit, Marc Newson settled in Paris in 1992. Commissions from well-known Italian manufacturers, support from established designers such as Philippe Starck, and exposure through design exhibitions and European furniture fairs substantially extended his international reputation. By the mid 1990s Newson had definitely arrived!

Highlights of this incredibly productive period include a limited-edition aluminium furniture series, interiors for boutiques and restaurants, and the formation of the Ikepod Watch Company. Moving to London in 1997, Newson established Marc Newson Limited, from which he continues his practice today.



'Helice' lamp, Paris, 1993

### Focus questions

✳️ Newson uses enclosed or negative space as an important element of his work. Often the positive form wraps around space as though there once were a form present. Using two pieces from this section, describe or sketch how the negative space defines the positive form.

✳️ Find a lounge which has been produced using surfboard construction technology. What is it called? How does it differ to the earlier lounges?

✳️ The 'Helice' lamp has been described as looking like a 'black hole'. How has Newson achieved this?

✳️ What does the name of the 'Gluon' chair refer to? In what way is it similar to the 'Helice' lamp?

✳️ Find the 'Mystery clock'. Why do you think it is called a mystery clock?

## Designing time watches 1986–2001

Utilising the jewellery-making skills he acquired in college, Marc Newson made his first watch, the 'Large Pod', in Sydney in 1986. His fascination with the design and technical complexities of watches led to the formation of the Ikepod Watch Company in 1994.

Based in Switzerland, Ikepod is operated by Newson in partnership with Swiss businessman Oliver Ike. Today the company produces a range of limited edition watches to Newson's designs. Exquisitely detailed, Ikepod watches also incorporate the most technically advanced mechanisms.



'Large Pod' watch, Sydney, 1986

### Focus questions

✧ In what way is the 'Pod' watch similar to the 'Mystery clock' in the 'Moving on' section?

✧ List what you think make Marc Newson's watch designs distinctive. How are they similar to one another?

✧ Newson does not see a difference between designing a wristwatch or designing a car. What design concerns are applied to the design of his watches that may be similar for the production of a larger scale object such as a lounge, a car, a bike or a chair?

Art and industry  
designing for mass production  
1997–2001

Since 1997 Marc Newson has been based in London but has pursued a truly international career. An important component of Newson's practice over this period has been his collaboration with a number of international companies — Iittala in Finland, and Alessi, Magis and Flos in Italy — to design mass-produced products for the home.

Dish racks, bottle openers, glassware, torches ... these objects all testify to Newson's continuing preoccupation with utilising the latest technologies to create new design solutions for everyday objects.



'Dish doctor' dish rack, London, 1997

Focus questions

✳ Find the 'Dish doctor' made by Magis. This is one of Newson's top-selling product designs. Describe in what ways it is similar to another of his designs, for example the 'Black hole' table. Sketch and label your observations.

✳ On a piece of paper make two columns and on one side list a selection of products from the 'Product design' section. In the column alongside list furniture and other designs that share the same or a similar design feature. For example:

Rock      Orgone lounge  
            and  
            Falcon 900B jet  
            (carpet design)

✳ Make a list of what you think are recurring design elements in Marc Newson's work.

## Marketing Marc image, identity and the media

In the volatile and competitive world of contemporary design, successful marketing depends not only on the quality of the product but also on effectively publicising the designer. Similarly, the graphic or visual identity developed by a designer can be an important self-marketing tool.

Both these aspects of marketing have played a crucial role in Marc Newson's career. Coverage of his work in international journals is rarely without a striking photograph of Newson himself. And the graphic identity he and his associates have created — through posters, catalogues, invitations and packaging — is an important component of the distinctive Newson design look.



Marc Newson portrait, photograph by Karin Catt, 1996

### Focus questions

✧ What kind of lifestyle market does Marc Newson appeal to through his products and designs?

✧ How do graphics, packaging and promotions fit his design image?

✧ Study the Marc Newson portraits. What do they say about the designer and the image he promotes?

## A new momentum vehicles 1998–2001

*It was a car and plane and a bike ... Now I'd love to be involved in working with NASA somehow in designing a space station. I don't see why I can't do that.\**

From early in his career Marc Newson has been fascinated by modes of travel — both on earth and in space. His dream of designing vehicles was realised in 1999 when he designed the livery of a private jet, the aluminium MNO1 bicycle for Biomega and a bright orange concept car for Ford.

All three projects have significantly expanded Newson's design horizons and provided him with extensive opportunities to experiment with new technologies. With current projects including the design for an as yet undisclosed airline, the sky is, literally, the limit for Marc Newson!

\* Marc Newson quoted in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 December 1999.



'MN02' bicycle, London, 1998–99

### Focus questions

✧ The '021C' car designed by Marc Newson is an opportunity to see a car that is not designed by a vehicle designer. View the video and carefully study the graphics on the wall. What innovative features has Newson introduced to the design of his car? Name some other designs that share similar features, manufacturing techniques, surfaces, shapes, form and colour. What does '021C' stand for?

✧ Newson has applied aviation technology for the design of the Biomega MN02. How has the use of this technology improved and changed the production and design of the traditional bike?

✧ Find the model and images of the Falcon 900B jet. What sets the interior design aside from most other aircraft interiors? Describe recurring Marc Newson design elements.

## VISIT ACTIVITIES

The following activities will be useful for your post-visit activities. **During your tour of the exhibition:**

\* Make a list of words you would use to describe Newson's work. Think about how it would feel to sit, move around, and use one of his designs. How would it make you feel — take into account all your senses.

\* List design eras, events and designers that you think have influenced the work of Newson.

\* Make a list of the companies that have produced his work.

\* Make a list of materials and production techniques Newson has used.

\* Sketch your observations of the forms and textures used by Newson.

## POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES

With the help of the list of descriptive words and observations that you have made during your visit to the Powerhouse Museum:

### **Create an object or pattern design**

- sketch an object or pattern that is representative of the Marc Newson style
- develop a 'name bank' or list of possible names for your object or pattern design
- describe the design era to which it is most similar
- design an installation for a shop or a restaurant using your object or pattern design as a central element. Give this shop or restaurant a name — be sure to choose a name that evokes a sense of what your design is about. Be sure to also design the lighting, tableware and service stations
- design an invitation to the launch that reflects the style of the restaurant or shop.

### **Create a decor**

- select complimentary furnishings from the objects you have seen in the exhibition to create a room
- sketch and describe the function of the room and the atmosphere created. Consider ways in which you can design the structures, layout and lighting in the room to go with your decor. Include detailed sketches.

### **Create a mail-order table**

- design a mail-order table that will pack away into an envelope that reflects one of the design features you have already used in your decor (*above*)
- design the packaging and promotional material
- design the assembly instructions to go with your table design.

## MARC NEWSON REFERENCE LIST

### Books

Alice Rawsthorn, *Marc Newson*, Booth-Clibborn Edition, London.

Bryan Lawson, *How designers think: the design process demystified*, Architectural Press, UK, 2000.

Powerhouse Museum, *Decorative arts and design from the Powerhouse Museum*, Sydney, Powerhouse Museum, 1991.

### Articles

Sorrel Hershberg, 'Design director, the new designs of Marc Newson', *Monument* 36, June/July 2000.

Johnathan E Turner, 'The shaper of', *Black & White*, December 2000.

Johnathan E Turner, 'Marc Newson', *Object*, No 2, 2000.

Stephen Todd, 'Liquid geometry', *Monument*, 20.

Christopher Henning, 'Lounge wizard', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 December 1997.

Louise Martin-Chew, 'Talk of the future' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 August 1997.

Alice Rawsthorn, 'Boot camp', *Wallpaper*, November 1999.

Alice Rawsthorn, 'Marc one', *Vogue Australia*, June 1997.

Alice Rawsthorn, 'Newson takes off', *I.D.*, April 1997.

Alice Rawsthorn, 'An Australian in Paris', *Blueprint*, February 1994.

Antonia Williams, 'Design', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 February 1997.

Michael Horsham, 'The ideas man', *Blueprint*, Vol 134, Dec 1996.

Michael Horsham, 'Creative expose', *Interior Design*, Issue 4, 1996.

Helen Greenwood, 'Modern Australian furniture', *Panorama*, February 1996.

Michele Field, 'Curves to suit a reclining Madonna', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 October 1995.

Helen Greenwood, 'Hot designer keeps his cool', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 September 1994.

Jean Bond Rafferty, 'Making waves', *Harper's Bazaar*, April 1994.

Mark Jackson, 'Virtual and negative space', *Object*, No.3 1994.

Lee Tulloch, 'Fine form', *Elle*, November 1994.

Stephen Todd, 'From elsewhere, by design', *The Weekend Review*, 16-17 October 1993.

David Redhead, 'Foreign exchange', *Blueprint*, April 1993.

Geraldine O'Brien, 'The high price of lounging around', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 September 1992.

Sian Powell, 'A peep at seats of power', *Sydney Morning Herald*, April 1991.

Michael Bogle, 'Designs on a bellicose future', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 July 1990.

Davina Jackson, 'Open the pod door', *Blueprint*, February 1990.

Ruth Hessey, 'Newson', *Vogue Australia*, April 1990.

### Websites

- <http://www.marc-newson.com/>
- <http://www.designaddict.com/collections/designers/designers-full.html>
- <http://www.dolcevita.com/design/designers/colombo.htm>
- [http://www.designandfun.com/joe\\_colombo\\_article.htm](http://www.designandfun.com/joe_colombo_article.htm)
- <http://www.socalhistory.org/Biographies/neutra.htm>
- [http://www.scandinaviandesign.com/verner\\_panton/index.htm](http://www.scandinaviandesign.com/verner_panton/index.htm)
- <http://www.cadinfo.net/editorial/newson.htm>
- [http://www.cadcam-magazine.co.uk/html/\\_casestudies/12982.htm](http://www.cadcam-magazine.co.uk/html/_casestudies/12982.htm)
- [http://www.biomega.dk/html/stage/design\\_02.asp](http://www.biomega.dk/html/stage/design_02.asp)
- <http://www.designmuseum.org/>
- <http://www.autoworld.com/news/ford/021c.asp>
- [http://media.ford.com/article\\_display.cfm?article\\_id=3073](http://media.ford.com/article_display.cfm?article_id=3073)
- <http://www.modernliving.com/Pages/mn.html>
- <http://www.intramuros.fr/portrait1a.html>
- [http://www.crocketts.co.uk/sales\\_file/fordnews.htm](http://www.crocketts.co.uk/sales_file/fordnews.htm)
- [http://www.designzine.com/2000\\_05\\_01/html/articles/articleBoxFrame.html](http://www.designzine.com/2000_05_01/html/articles/articleBoxFrame.html)

### Please note

These websites were available and suitable at the time of publication. We advise that teachers check sites before recommending them to students.

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For information on the *Marc Newson: design works* exhibition, visit the Powerhouse Museum's website <http://www.phm.gov.au>

Be sure to book your visit ... it's essential.

For bookings and information, contact Education and Visitor Services at the Powerhouse Museum:  
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Fax — (02) 9217 0441  
Email — [edserv@phm.gov.au](mailto:edserv@phm.gov.au)



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