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AUSTRALIA: A Design Overview

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The Department of Canadian Heritage, Trade Routes program, commissioned this Report. The opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

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Canada

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Context

The Australian design industry has been growing in confidence over the last 5 years. A broad cross section of contemporary Australian designers, including architects, interior designers, and product and furniture designers, are now receiving local and international recognition. Likewise, international designers have been attracted to the increasing number of design events, exhibitions and awards taking place in Australia each year.

A recent trend in Australia has been a focus on sustainable and eco-friendly design for houses, interiors and objects, with many designers inspired by the unique environment and landscape in Australia. Tasmania's environment in particular has inspired leading designers, who are creating work of outstanding quality from raw materials such as the unique timbers available in Tasmania. Tasmania not only boasts a rich range of material resources, it has a diverse and independent manufacturing sector, supportive design infrastructure and established links with important design centres internationally.

Multiculturalism and cross-cultural networks formed in Australia have also promoted a highly diverse and hybrid design practice. "Australian culture is underpinned with a fusion of colonial, multicultural and indigenous heritage, together with global perspectives and influences, and our leading designers draw on these to produce work with a distinctive and rich flavor." Brian Parkes, Curator of *Global Local: Contemporary Australian Design* at *Object Gallery*.

The importance of housing as a form of self expression in Australia is revealed in the time and energy many people spend in furnishing, decorating, and renovating their homes and gardens, and in the space given to home improvement and related topics in the media. Recently there has been a boom in *DIY (do-it-yourself)* housing renovation television series and magazines. This trend creates a bigger market for retailers and the commercial sector.

The Australian Government announced 2004 as the **Year of the Built Environment (YBE)** across Australia. The year of events successfully raised awareness of issues surrounding the built environment and enable partnerships between industry, environmental and community groups. NB: The **Australian Bureau of Statistics** www.abs.gov.au provides up to date statistics on the housing and construction industry.

Design Events and Trade Fairs

Last year the Victorian Government also announced a design initiative and a major component of this was **The State of Design Festival** launched at Melbourne Museum. The festival included 8 days of exhibitions, an international speaker series, seminars, student conferences, manufacturing forums, a design market and retail showcases. www.designfestivalaustralia.com

Design festivals in other Australian States include; **Sydney Design Week** managed by Powerhouse Museum (www.sydneydesignweek.com.au); **Sydney Esquisse** managed by Play (www.sydneyesquisse.org); **Designing Futures** managed by FORM in Western Australia (www.designingfutures.com.au) and Young Designers' Month managed by Arts Tasmania (www.arts.tas.gov.au/projects/ydm).

DMG World Media presents Australia's largest commercial and residential design fair, **DesignEX** – now in its 17th year. Alternating annually between Sydney and Melbourne, *DesignEX 2005* will take place at the Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centre, Southbank, Victoria (21-23 April 2005). According to *DesignEX Group Manager*, Danielle Fischer, *DesignEX 2005* promises to be one of the industry's biggest events ever and its co-location with new exhibition *Form + Function* will make it one of the largest architectural and design expos in the Asia Pacific region. *DesignEX* provides the industry with a national forum on design, an exhibition featuring new and emerging design talent, an International Seminar Series, the Interior Design Awards, the Australian Design Awards and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects National Conference.

This year *DesignEX* will include a New Zealand Pavilion with a group of New Zealand design companies. Italian and Malaysian design groups have also expressed interest in being included in *DesignEX* and the organizers are aiming to expand international involvement in upcoming years. www.designex.info

The second annual **Australian International Furniture Fair** was held at the Sydney Exhibition Centre (4 - 6 February 2005). The three-day trade fair focuses on opportunities for commercial companies and retailers. The Australian Furniture Fair also holds an Industry Seminar Series. www.aec.net.au/aiff

Created by *3Deep Design* in partnership with the Australian Graphic Design Association **Everything in Between** is a series of design workshops, talks and collaborations between national and international creative thinkers for students. Run over an intensive 13-week period twice a year, the program is open to Australian and international students wanting to challenge the conventional approach to design thinking and education. The two streams of activity, Design and Publishing, run twice a year. The program is currently based in Victoria and will be available in other states of Australia in the coming years. www.everything.net.au

Saturday in Design (July 2005) is an organized tour of the city's leading design showrooms. Alternating annually between Sydney and Melbourne it gives design enthusiasts an opportunity to see the best in design. www.saturday.indesign.com.au/saturday/

Key Players and Design Institutions

- Royal Australian Institute of Architects – *RAIA* www.raia.com.au
- Design Institute of Australia – *DIA* www.dia.org.au

- Australian Graphic Design Association – *AGDA* www.agda.com.au

There are opportunities for international designers to be involved in exhibitions and public programs at the following major Australian design institutions:

- Object Australian Centre for Craft and Design: www.object.com.au
- Powerhouse Museum: www.phm.gov.au
- Melbourne Museum: melbourne.museum.vic.gov.au
- National Gallery of Victoria: www.ngv.vic.gov.au
- *FORM*: www.form.net.au
- *JamFactory* - Centre for Craft and Design: www.jamfactory.com.au
- Design Centre of Tasmania:
<http://amol.org.au/foundmade/instquery.asp?ID=T115&fm=y>

Awards

Entry for the Interior Design Awards and Australian Design Awards is restricted to Australian-based interior designers, interior decorators, interior architects and other design professionals. www.interiordesignawards.com.au; www.designawards.com.au

The latest interior design developments were highlighted with the announcement of the 2005 interior design awards. Categories were divided into retail, hospitality, corporate, public/institutional and residential. Award winners were praised for their use of vibrant colours and daring designs. This indicates some of the current trends taking place in Australia; a move away from minimalism towards decorative, colourful and rich designs. A growing confidence could also be contributed to the injection of humour and sense of fun in various design practices.

Trade Magazines

- Architecture Australia www.architecturemedia.com
- Architecture Media www.archmedia.com.au
- Artichoke Interior Architecture + Design www.architecturemedia.com
- Australian Interiors www.interiorsmagazine.com.au
- Blueprint Media Specifier - Architectural + Interior
- Indesign and Scene Design Quarterly www.indesign.com.au
- Inside Out www.insideout.com.au
- LINO Magazine www.linomagazine.com.au
- Monument
- Object Magazine www.object.com.au
- Pol Oxygen www.ploxygen.com
- Vogue Living www.vogue.com.au/titles/vl
- (inside) Australian Design Review www.niche.com.au

Directories

These directories provide a list Australian contacts and job opportunities for designers:

- www.interiordesignersaustralia.com.au
- www.architectsofaustralia.com.au
- www.buildingdesignersaustralia.com.au

Work Opportunities for Canadian Designers

The President DIA NSW / Interiors Coordinator, Ms. Alma Maccallum, is of the view that there is no reason why Canadian designers would be restricted from bidding on Australian design projects and establishing partnerships with Australian interior and architecture firms. The Design Institute of Australia would appear to be the best channel for finding out details about projects.

In sum, design work in Australia is available for Canadian designers depending on the skills, level of experience of the applicant and what type of work they are prepared to accept. This is assuming that the designers have the required immigration approvals to work in Australia (www.immi.gov.au).