

# *(inside)*

australian design review



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# contents.

- 01 Cover inspired by Marcel Wanders' July throw
- 02 Inside cover – The Unwired light Garden by Eness
- 24 Exhibition | Work of Worth – WOW  
Words Ewan McEoin
- 28 In print | Book Reviews  
Words Gillian Serisier
- 30 In print | The World of Ornament – A new bibliotheca of ornament  
Words Gillian Serisier
- 32 In print | Stretch  
Words Jan Henderson Rake
- 34 In print | The Melbourne Design Guide – Who designs what in Melbourne  
Words Andrew MacKenzie
- 36 Exhibition | Supermodels Model-making at thinking  
Words Gerard Reinmuth
- 38 Exhibition | Esquisse Yourself – Playing with your mind  
Words Gillian Serisier
- 42 Exhibition | Rooms on View – Time out  
Words Andrew MacKenzie
- 46 Exhibition | Freestyle – Into the wild blue yonder  
Words Ewan McEoin
- 50 Exhibition | Conversations of things new – Ciao Italia  
Words Ewan McEoin
- 54 Photography | Future Archeology – Australian Landscapes by Brett Boardman  
Words Andrew MacKenzie
- 56 Events | Pecha Kucha – Fast and Loose  
Words Ewan McEoin
- 62 Business of Design – Getting down to business  
Words Robyn Gower
- 64 In practice | Tom Dixon – Making It  
Words Tom Dixon
- 70 In conversation | Performance anxiety – How green is your office?  
Words Tony Battersby and Peter Szentel facilitated by Ewan McEoin
- 74 Interview | Marcel Wanders – Wondering about Wanders  
Words Jeanne Tan
- 80 Awards | Bombay Sapphire – Discovering Mr Wilson  
Words Ewan McEoin
- 84 Project | Millenium Hilton Bangkok – Bangkok's new Urban resort.  
Interior Design: BARstudio  
Words Rowena Hockin
- 94 Project | The New Majestic Hotel Singapore – The Madame of Mistress Street.  
Architect: DP Architects  
Interior Design: Ministry of Design, Colin Seah  
Words Jacques Bennett
- 100 Project | Fog – Rooms of dark drama  
Architect: Wood Marsh Architects  
Words Kylie Fitt
- 108 IDEA Awards
- 164 Sustainability | Eco-Innovations  
Words Kendra Wasiluk, Andrew Walker-Morison
- 168 Intelligence | Interiors Market News  
Words Tim Humphrey
- 174 Retail department | Beautiful on the Inside – Home-grown direct to the public  
Words Ewan McEoin
- 176 Events | Beers with Ideas – Keepin' Ideas pouring  
Words Alana Di Giacomo
- 178 Interview | Andreas Storiko – Measured moves  
Words Andrew MacKenzie
- 182 Technology | System X – The new face of Fluoro  
Words Gillian Serisier
- 184 Dateline | December - February  
Words Alana Di Giacomo
- 186 Fascinations | Fascinated by fascinations  
Words Kate Bezar



*An empty retail space is transformed by an enormous collection of models by Sydney architect Sam Marshall. The collection covers the full range of model-making, from traditional card and wood to three-dimensional printing.*

# model-making as thinking.

Words by Gerard Reinmuth  
Photography by Sam Marshall

Supermodels is the culmination of a long-term project, conceived by Marshall over a decade ago and formalised when he received a Byera Hadley scholarship. Marshall's interest in the idea of an exhibition was initially driven by his sense of curiosity and enthusiasm for the activity of model-making and for the numerous models he knew were decaying in colleagues' offices throughout Sydney. Marshall is one of the more generous-spirited members of the Sydney architectural community and his desire to exhibit models by former mentors, contemporaries, ex-employees and current students must be commended. In this generosity lies his motivation for the exhibition – not so much to articulate a comprehensive position or to stake out an agenda in regard to the use of architectural models, but simply to collect in one place a wide range of work that exposes the extent and variation within this activity.

While both the Sydney-centric nature of the exhibition and

Marshall's lack of a curatorial position have been questioned, neither concerns me. The Sydney focus is circumstantial and pragmatic, with Marshall mounting the exhibition with minimum funds, relying heavily on the generosity of friends and the resources of his own practice. While the lack of curatorial intent could be considered more problematic, it allowed Marshall's generosity to shine through in a format that presented an enormous range of work of varying scales on an equal footing. Given the incredibly naïve position taken by some in the Sydney architectural community and press – warning against the evils of digital design and representation tools – it was a delight to see Marshall provide space for examples of three-dimensional printing works along with work utilising more traditional modelling tools. By being presented with this wide range of work, visitors were left to make their own assessments regarding the potential of techniques new and old in different situations.

Thus, this was the sort of exhibition where personal revelations might appear as a result of spending time exploring its contents. In my case, one distinguishing aspect of the exhibition was that few of the models were manufactured by professional agencies – most were made by the architects in their offices in the course of the design process. Thus, the models were often rough, incomplete and made of modest materials – built as a critical component of the ideation process and coming into being in order to focus a conversation between a group of designers or to illuminate possibilities for the sole practitioner.

In *On Longing*, Susan Stewart explores the potential of miniatures to open windows into our subconscious in a way that other means of representation do not. A specific aspect of this work – of interest here in the context of this exhibition – is the use of the toy as a device for fantasy. She notes that the toy “opens an interior world, lending itself to fantasy and privacy in a way that the abstract space, the playground, of social play does not”. She goes further to note that in miniaturising the real world in this way, the toy tests the relation between materiality and meaning.

It is this aspect of the exhibition – an exposition of the toys architects use to access an interior world, an architect's dreaming to unlock the design process – that is the most compelling. For opening this window to the community of Sydney architects and the public at large, Marshall should be congratulated.