

THE WEEKEND

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AUSTRALIAN MAGAZINE



By Trent Dalton

WELCOME TO LAKEMBA

A WEEK IN THE GREAT AUSTRALIAN MELTING POT



10 Questions

Mark Landini, designer, 54

English by birth, by your early 30s you were Conran Design Group's creative director. Now you run a global design business from Sydney. What prompted the move? I flew to Sydney for a weekend's rest in 1992 after being invited to judge a design competition in Singapore, and spent my first night at Bathers Pavilion on Balmoral Beach. At 1am, drunk and waist-deep in the sea, I rang my wife, Rikki, in London and told her I'd discovered paradise.

What was your first big break in Australia?

Shortly after we immigrated in 1993, Rikki and I walked into Liquorland and I was horrified by the whole look and feel of the store. I wrote to them suggesting a design overhaul. They asked me to work on a new concept, Vintage Cellars; a week later I gave a presentation including uniforms, packaging, wine tasting. At the end they all cheered.

What do you say about Australian design?

It's now consistently world-class. Given our climate it's often about the use of light and the blurring between inside and outside space. Simple, mature and classic.

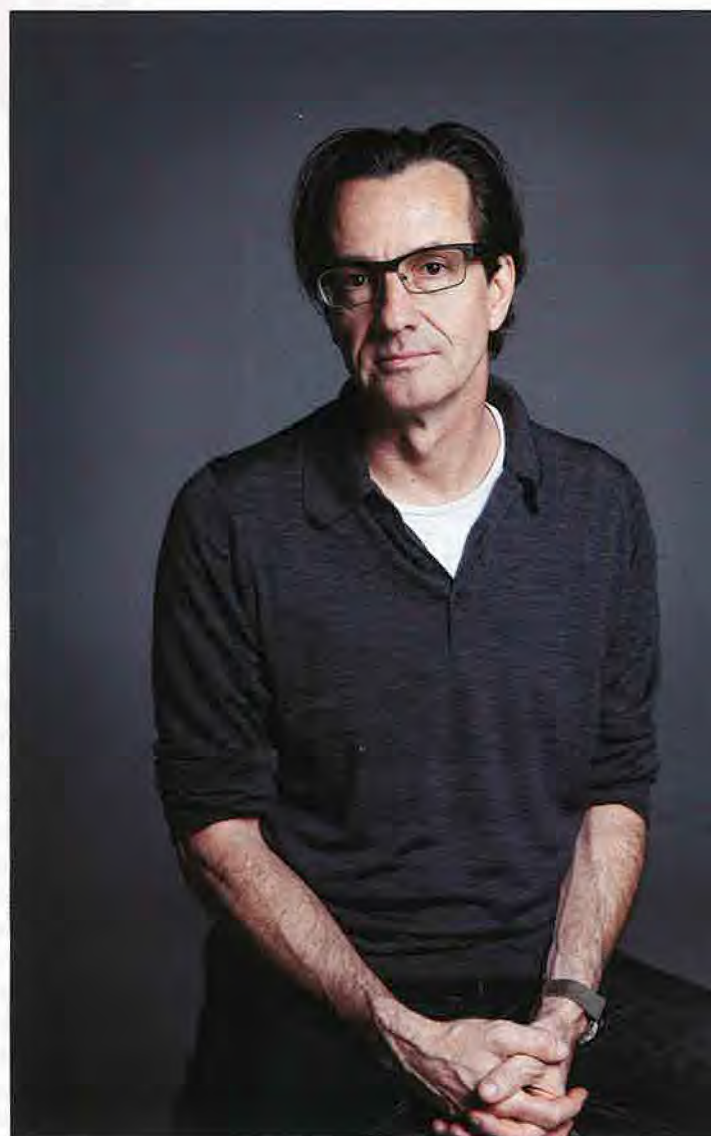
Your firm specialises in corporate design makeovers. That gives you a lot of power, doesn't it?

It certainly gives us a lot of influence over how people perceive and engage with brands. These businesses then have the power to project a singular and focused vision, both internally and externally, and that's what we help them articulate.

A lot of your work is designing food emporia in different countries. Is there a Landini stamp on all these projects? It's important that the food is pre-eminent. Our work just arranges and lights it, provides a working theatre for its service or preparation and a visually recognisable but neutral setting.

Your transformation of Loblaws food store in Toronto won a world architecture award recently. How did you tackle the project?

Everyone had told me Canadians were conservative. After visiting I didn't agree. They are what I'd call "cold climate Australians": they're very relaxed, don't take themselves too seriously and are lovers of life. We decided



that if we were to land the contract we couldn't do yet another generic "wholefoods"-style North American solution. We had to reinvent the vernacular of the international supermarket and so we took calculated risks. We embraced colour and scale, and used multiple materials.

Is food culture the antidote to the culture of electronic connections?

Yes, it's the yin to the yang. Electronic communication excludes senses such as smell, touch, taste – and also years of learnt social community. Eating and cooking together is at the heart of being human. Places that provide this are the antidote to this social disconnection.

Landini is an Italian name. Is the connection a deep one? It's my heartland, where I spent so much time growing up, surrounded by family, engulfed in centuries of design. Also, the food is incredible, the mealtimes are longer and followed by a snooze. What's not to like?

Are you ambitious? Not really. I'm quite content living off the hobby that I love and striving to do good work. Our business could be much bigger but the quality of our work and life would suffer.

Do you yearn for simplicity? This is a word that means more to me than perhaps any other, and guides me every day. I probably had attention deficit disorder in my youth, which explains my lifelong quest to simplify, rationalise and make things less cluttered. **LUKE SLATTERY**

SOCIETY

Can you bare it?

You know something's afoot when an awards ceremony that is usually predicated as much on semi-nudity as it is on singing decides to issue a dress code. The 2013 Grammys will be remembered for its wardrobe policy: "Please avoid sheer see-through clothing that could possibly expose female breast nipples." It continued: "Please avoid exposing bare fleshy undercurves of the buttocks and buttock crack. Please be sure the genital region is adequately covered so that there is no visible 'puffy' bare skin exposure."

Yes, we're living in an era when celebrities have to be politely asked to put away their privates. Under such circumstances perhaps it is no surprise that fashion's pendulum has swung the other way. Enter the European spring's biggest trend: the buttoned-up white shirt. Phoebe Philo, Jil Sander, Stella McCartney, Simone Rocha and Victoria Beckham all prominently showed them on their catwalks, either buttoned-up or high-necked. It's not that female designers peddle unsexy clothes; more that their definition of "sexy" is less rigid. It may well involve bare legs, a flash of back or an exposed shoulder, but actual breasts are out. So too is cleavage. Only time will tell if celebrities heed the call. **LAURA CRAIK**



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