

cover story | Julia Richardson

Aisles of adventure

Designers, dancers, architects and artists hit the streets – and the shops – for Sydney Esquisse.

Design isn't a product. It's a process. Designers learn that in their first week at design school, then have it reinforced in the years to follow as an idea becomes a first prototype, then a second, then a third until finally, somewhere down the track, if they can find a committed manufacturer and a willing retailer and if the planets are aligned the right way ... they end up with a saleable product.

But how do they get this message through to non-designers? Parents? Bank managers? Or landlords?

Sydney Esquisse 2005 (SE05), co-ordinated by a creative business consultancy known as PLAY, may have found a way of representing the notion that design is about solving problems, exploring possibilities and generally having a good old muck-about with ideas.

For the next 10 days, the streets of Surry Hills, Darlinghurst, Redfern and Chippendale will be bustling with activity and all passers-by are invited to take part in the creative process.

With shopping as their theme, participants have produced the beautiful, the bold and the bizarre. Take, for example, the installation of illuminated, white paper shopping bags by lighting designers bernabeifreeman in the Norman + Quaine showroom in Surry Hills.

Or the *Barter Charter* exhibition at the grassroots Knot Gallery (on Elizabeth Street, near Central Station), in which A5-sized works of art can be acquired only by trading goods or services. Then there's the performance piece in Darlinghurst's Victoria Rooms – devised by

Off their trolley: the Sydney Esquisse team and helpers, clockwise from top left, Yann Flahault, Holger Castritus, Simon Horauf, Martin Kornberger, Shannon Hepperlin, Anne Ryan, Philippa Hansen, Johannes Weissenbaeck and Sandrine Vinay.



an artist (Aspasia Sagiotis) and an architect (Dale Jones-Evans).

SE05 is the second manifestation of an idea famously concocted over a plate of pub gnocchi by a bunch of expats: from Austria, management consultant Martin Kornberger and strategic planner Johannes Weissenbaeck; from Germany, designer Simon Horauf; and the French contingent, fundraising manager Yann Flahault and event manager Sandrine Vinay.

The first Esquisse was held in 2003 with designers and artists exhibiting for just four days in about 40 venues in Surry Hills. The festival was successful enough to prompt a follow-up. This time, the area of the event has been expanded, the quality of the work is higher ("We were much stricter," says Kornberger), the volunteers are being paid for their services (though the PLAY collective still undertake the project without pay) and three people – Anne Ryan, Philippa Hansen and Shannon Hepperlin – have been added to the organisational team.

Time will tell how SE05 is received by the public but DesignEX this is not. The French word "esquisse" means sketch and the SE05 definition of design is broad, encompassing all sorts of creative fields, from furniture and fashion design to pure art, street art, performance art and dance.

"To me, it's not really important whether a thing is object design or furniture design or industrial design or whatever," says festival producer Horauf. "I want to see something that's exciting. Esquisse is all about crossing boundaries. An artist works with a designer, a designer works with an artist: that's the whole idea. You forget about these divisions."

It's a view shared by participants. "It's always interesting when people do things outside the mainstream," says David Stevenson of architects Lacoste + Stevenson, who are contributing to the design of the Launch Pad, the festival's ground zero, at the new St Margarets complex on Bourke Street. "It allows for people to be a bit more broad-ranging in their thinking and come up with ideas that wouldn't always be favourably received in the mainstream."

Julie Paterson, the designer behind textile company cloth, says: "I don't know of any other opportunities to put forward a conceptual idea under the banner of design. And [the organisers] encourage it to be unresolved. When you do a trade fair, everything has to be resolved to the nth degree. So this is really good. It's why I'm involved. It's why a lot of people are involved."

Sydney Esquisse also undermines the elitism of the turtleneck-jumper crowd, installing events and exhibitions not just in obvious venues, such as the top-end retailers and high-profile art galleries, but in more democratic locations, such as cafes and bars.

"[Some people] wouldn't walk into a gallery or a showroom. They would not be comfortable there. It's a world for only a very particular audience. And I think what Sydney Esquisse does is offer entry points for a lot of different people," says festival manager Philippa Hansen.

A democratic attitude to design is also promoted by exhibitions in which members of the public are actively encouraged to play a role. That's the case with Julie Paterson's exhibition at Spence & Lyda (see "In The Shed", below) and at Orson & Blake Gallery, where Tomek Archer of



THE LAUNCH PAD

This is the hub of social, commercial, broadcast and performance activity. Exhibitions range from drawings by the relatives of Redfern Aboriginal teenager Thomas "TJ" Hickey to extraordinary creations by the Korean collective known as Designers Planet. There will also be a retail space for International designers' Network (publishers of *id/v* magazine as well as esoteric books on subjects such as Japanese graphics and the emerging field of interactive design), screening areas (check the walls and the ceilings) and performance spaces (anywhere, any time).

There's a cafe that becomes a bar after dark. Look out for a specially commissioned set of Zaishu stools (the neat, flat-pack, screwless, glueless, plywood, Japanese-inspired seats) and the bar-code chandelier, pictured, designed for SE05 by Mobilet Design.

When all day, every day

Where St Margarets, 423 Bourke Street, Surry Hills



DESIGN MARKETS

The usual displays in the showrooms of Sasha Titchkosky and Russel Koskela will make way for dozens of trestle-tables laden with temptations: ceramics, glassware and hand-bound journals covered in barramundi and stingray skins. Look out for the bewitching creations of the Foong sisters from Newcastle, who trade under the name High Tea With Mrs Woo, as well as Toasty Ghosty egg warmers, pictured, and Cover Me quilts stitched from denim and vintage fabrics by the OMA collective. In the true spirit of the flea market, prices will start from \$15.

When Sat, 10am-4pm

Where Koskela, Level 1, 91 Campbell Street, Surry Hills, 9280 0999

Tomahawk Studios will trial an interactive shopping process that has customers selecting the individual elements of a piece, then assembling the finished product at home.

Flahault, the Esquisse fund-raising manager, says this is part of a trend to involve the public in a show, with other examples of populist art and design events including *Sculpture by the Sea* on the Bondi to Tamarama coastal walk and the *Affordable Art Show*.

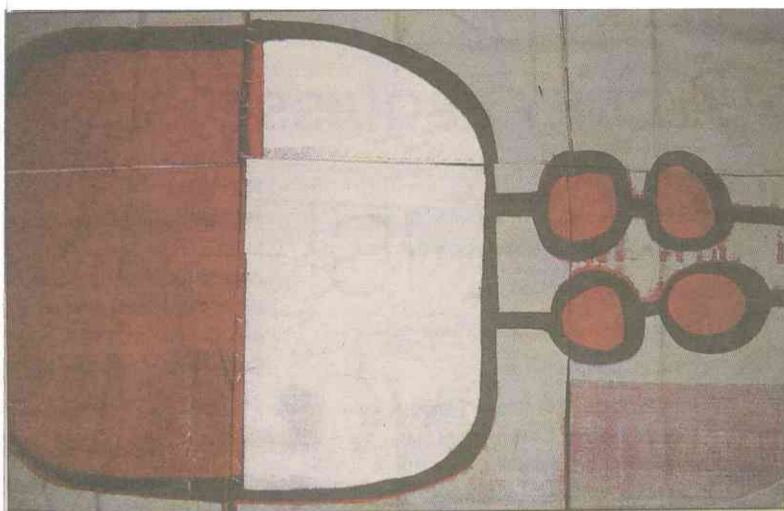
"[The public are] getting in touch with artists and designers, getting closer to the action and not just going to a showroom and buying stuff from overseas," Flahault says.

There are no superstars of design at Esquisse; many of the participants are recent graduates or professionals in the early years of their careers. Architect Shahe Simonian fits the latter

description, having graduated from the University of Technology, Sydney in 2003. His firm, MacCormick + Simonian, worked with members of Ausdance to design the performance areas of the Launch Pad. "Cross-pollination is such a good thing," Simonian says of this opportunity for creative collaboration.

Esquisse organisers recognise that, while universities, art schools and design schools may encourage experimentation, those explorative urges are neutralised by commercial realities.

"There's a lot of intellectual development going on," Kornberger says. "A lot of our designers are, like, 25 to 35, so they're out of university, they are professionals, they have careers - but they don't really have a platform to play around on. So this is an important spot for them."



IN THE SHED

The organic modern textiles produced by Cloth's Julie Paterson and later sewn up into bed linen, tablecloths, cushions, slip covers and deck chairs begin their production journey as tiny landscapes, which she paints onto pieces of wood measuring as little as 6 sq cm.

Paterson scales up those painted miniatures using traditional techniques, then screen-prints them onto linen panels that are stitched together, then stretched over frames to make large, limited-edition artworks.

Usually, that part of the design process takes place inside her shed in the Blue Mountains. During SE05, however, she'll be working on that intermediate stage at the showrooms of Spence & Lyda. "Basically, what I'm doing is emphasising the middle bit, the art bit, where [the design] is still hovering around being an artwork, but it's almost a textile," she says.

Visitors can buy limited-edition, self-sew packs containing the six screen-printed panels that make up each full-size work. (Paterson's *Bit of Both* design is pictured.) The packs, which will cost about \$500, may be used to assemble canvases, sew quilts or run up some cushions.

When Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm

Where Spence & Lyda, 16 Foster Street, Surry Hills, 9212 6747

DECEASED ESTATE

In partnership as The Study, Trent Jansen (award-winning designer of the Sign stool) and Tommy Cehak embody the contemporary notion of crossover in design, with experience in interiors, graphics and furniture. "We're over designed objects being these expensive, very precious things that people place in their homes as iconic symbols that they have no real interaction with," Jansen says.

Witness his Stomp lamp, pictured. It looks like something last seen in your grandparents' house but for the fact the lampshade rests at the bottom of the rod. Stamp on the foot pad at the base and the shade scuttles up the rod, switching the light on when it reaches the top.

Then there's Cehak's Wipe-out frame. Covered in perspex, the ornate frame is also a message board. **When** Mon-Sat 10am-6pm, Sun 11am-5pm **Where** Aero, 479 Bourke Street, Surry Hills, 9380 8856



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SYDNEY ESQUISSE 2005

CBD

Alliance Francaise, 257 Clarence Street
Galleries Victoria, 500 George Street

Surry Hills

- 1 Launch Pad, 423 Bourke Street
- 2 Aero, 479 Bourke Street
- Good Charlotte, 314 Crown Street
- The White Horse, Crown Street
- Blank-Space Gallery, 374 Crown Street
- Customweave, 499 Crown Street
- China Height, 16-28 Foster Street
- 3 FY2K, 4 Foster Street
- 4 Spence & Lyda, 16 Foster Street
- Knot Gallery, 107/342 Elizabeth Street
- Meta Lab, 10B Fitzroy Place
- Neal and Tim's Balcony, 159 Commonwealth Street
- 5 Norman and Quaine, 74 Commonwealth Street
- 6 Orson & Blake, 489 Riley Street
- 7 Koskela, Level 1, 91 Campbell Street
- Published Art Shop, 2, 23-33 Mary Street
- First Draft Gallery, 116-118 Chalmers Street

Redfern

Mao and More, 267 Cleveland Street
Medium Rare Gallery, 70 Regent Street
Appetite, 82 Regent Street
Royal Oak Hall of the Grand United, 143A Redfern Street
Ae Cude Studio, 66 Myrtle Street, Chippendale
Cafe Giulia, 92 Abercrombie Street, Chippendale

8 Space 03, 151 Regent Street, Chippendale

East Sydney

Ism Objects, Shop 2, 28 Bellevue Street
Bureau, 2/289 Liverpool Street

Darlinghurst

9 The Victoria Room, 235 Victoria Street
Kinselas Middle Bar, 83 Bourke Street
Jeremyville, 25 Oxford Street

