



Marcel Sigel

Meet the daring designer who just won't quit

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Some people hold career aspirations from a young age. Others, shaped by relationships, opportunities and the unfolding of time, take a more meandering route. Designer Marcel Sigel is the latter.

Marcel grew up around art. His mother was a potter who stored her works — in various stages of completion — atop every available cupboard, windowsill and table in the house. The family home, Marcel remembers, resembled a small, scattered factory. Despite his creative surroundings, when it came time to enrol in university, Marcel decided to study marketing and installed and repaired vending and ticket machines on the side. It was only when the company asked him to take on a designer role that things started to shift. "I learnt on the go and taught myself everything I needed to know. I was designing anything from automated car parking machines to coin counting machines," recalls Marcel. Two years later, he began studying product design at Perth's Curtin University and hasn't looked back since.

Marcel co-founded his first design firm, the award-winning zuii, in Melbourne, straight out of university. The firm had a broad design focus, producing anything from objects and interiors to graphics. "We enjoyed immediate success, exhibiting locally and abroad," says Marcel. Zuii gave him his first taste of working internationally and, when the time came, he followed up with a move overseas.

And where else for a young designer than Milan? Marcel spent some time in the design Mecca working with Italian creatives and designing for Finnish brand Artek, before taking up residency as senior designer with Tom Dixon in London. In 2012 Marcel set up his own studio, splitting his time between Sydney and London and working with an incredible calibre of clients including Google, Nemo Cassina, Bombay Sapphire and, of course, Australia's Gohome.

Marcel has devised two collections for the design brand, his latest offering, the Grille collection, inspired by the permanence of the outdoors in the Australian psyche. A bold and refreshing take on indoor furniture, the Grille collection speaks to Marcel's personality; the pieces push the boundaries and, at the same time, are rooted in what is pragmatic. "The entire collection is made from expanded mesh and welded steel tube," he explains. "These are highly industrialised materials, not typically associated with inside the home. We worked really hard to achieve something that seems so effortless, something very approachable, soft, friendly and familiar ... yet completely unique in the market."

In this global environment — where designs are replicated almost as quickly as they are released — uniqueness is a concern for many designers, including Marcel. Doing things differently is the driving force behind his creations. "I have a basic primal urge to create, to design something that's never existed before," he says. In his work, Marcel favours subtle colours, strong textures and materiality, though he's careful not to let his context overrule design needs. "I don't design to a formula," he continues. "Every project is approached with its own motivation, necessities and problems. The most important thing is to make something honest and true to itself, and then it will have its own style. Having said that, I guess there is a strong underlying character to the products I design, but I'm not one to label."

After countless groundbreaking designs and global success, does Marcel Sigel still have any aspirations to tick off the list? The answer, of course, is yes. "I want to design something so obvious and necessary, so cheap and beautiful, so full of character and meaning, so unique and indispensable, that the world will wonder how it ever lived without it." 🏠
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MARCEL SAYS

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