

print process

the future of print media

HEIDELBERG



Books: Windows on the world

Sydney Design for bookshops and magazines

Salt Lake City A library lures visitors

Kabul Education offensive for peace



Sylvia Weimer (right) and M...
on the terrace of their high-
building in Sydney. In the b...
Harbour Bridge and the Ope...

Window on the world

Far away from the big cities of Europe and America, the demand in Australia for books and new lifestyle magazines is extraordinarily high. Sylvia Weimer of Germany, and her partner Marita Leuver, are Sydney's trendsetting graphic designers.

TEXT: EKKEHART BAUMGARTNER, PHOTOS: TYRONE BRANIGAN



Trendy magazine graphics from the studio of the two designers.

They come around every evening at the same time," Sylvia Weimer says, pointing to the sky from the terrace of her office. Thousands of strange flying objects can be seen circling over the roof of the high-rise building. They're not birds, they're flying foxes. Day after day, swarms of them pass by on their way from the Botanic Gardens to the back-country forests, where they find the figs that are their favorite meal.

Sylvia Weimer, who runs a graphic design studio together with fellow designer Marita Leuver, would love to take in the spectacle every evening from the fifteenth floor, but the work she has to do leaves her



Magazine catalogs and other print products are among the design studio's specialties.

little time. The two women's business, located in the heart of Sydney's artsy Darlinghurst district, is one of Australia's top addresses for design. They create trendy layouts for new lifestyle magazines and sophisticated corporate identity concepts.

Despite all the bustling activity, amidst computers, magazines, ringing telephones and stacks of paper, the office has a relaxed, comfortable atmosphere. The furniture and interior design are minimalist. Visitors sit in Arne Jacobsen or Eames chairs, their attention commanded by an oversized red painting on the wall. The most enlivening element is the broad, floor-to-ceiling window front, with a view stretching from Rushcutter Bay all the way to the world-famous silhouette of the

Opera House in Sydney Harbour.

With the support of their production manager Adam Charlton, a freelance web designer and a junior graphic designer, the two women dressed in requisite black produce anything and everything contemporary graphic design has to offer. And there is much to do in Australia: "The demand for magazines in Australia is very high," Sylvia Weimer says. "People here have a strong need for news of the world," Marita Leuver adds. The continent is simply too far from the big cities of Europe and the USA; magazines in Australia are like a window on the world, they explain. In recent years, the demand for lifestyle magazines has risen sharply. In the process, the publication style "down under" has emerged as very experimental, focusing

on fashion, photography, music and architecture. At the same time, however, the creative scene adheres to British trends in terms of layout, a fact that motivated Sylvia Weimer to do some publishing of her own. The 36 year-old contributes articles about German designers to professional journals. For her, it's a kind of educational campaign: "People here just don't know enough about them."

While Marita Leuver, an Australian with Dutch and Irish roots, heads up the corporate identity (CI), signage and image segments, Sylvia Weimer's specialty is magazine layouts. In this configuration, the two women make up an effective team with a unique survival strategy. And they need one, because the density of graphic artists and designers is particularly high in Sydney.

Weimer and Leuver are choosy about who they work with. "We're known for our quality," Marita Leuver says, "Our success is founded on the perfect makeup of our team," she says. Marita Leuver: "We maintain very close contact with our clients. We don't need to drum up new business; customers come to us. They are familiar with our portfolio, our good people." The agency has handled CI projects for the famous Sydney Opera House, packaging



Cover of Australia's top magazine.



Designer Sylvia Weimer intended to spend a maximum of one or two years in Sydney, which have now stretched into seven.

design for Roche Pharmaceuticals, and invitations and catalogs for the Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery in Sydney, one of Australia's most prominent art galleries. For The Dome bookstore in Darlinghurst, Marita Leuver created an entirely new corporate design, concentrating on three elements that characterize the bookstore: the building as the scene of action, a cup to indicate the coffee shop and, of course, a book. "While working on the graphic images, I decided in favor of non-design," she says with a grin. What emerged were abstract

drawings, works of art in which the elements were reduced to the abstract by the simplicity of the strokes. Only lines remained behind. The building, cup and book merged into a single unit. The individual objects vanished, only to mysteriously reappear. "That makes the result timeless," Marita Leuver says.

Sylvia Weimer and Marita Leuver both reject arbitrariness in their work. They are guided by the thought process, detailed analysis of the objective. While most of Marita Leuver's follow-up jobs resulted

from collaboration with art institutions, Sylvia Weimer's came from her magazine projects. Soon after the German expatriate started working for the culture magazine *Black+White* in 1997, her first job in Australia, she was entrusted with the job of re-designing *Cream* magazine. With a focus on fashion and music, the quarterly publication primarily targets younger audiences. It is Australia's answer to the legendary British magazine *Face*. Under Sylvia Weimer's art direction, a story on the Caribbean Island of Bonaire in the last

Australians have a strong need for news of the world. Lifestyle magazines on popular culture, fashion and architecture are in demand.

edition of *Cream* became a cosmopolitan fashion spread, which vividly communicates the attitudes of the young by way of the selected photos: the Caribbean island landscape, the natural environment and the ocean all vanish behind the intensity of youthful faces and bodies.

As Sylvia Weimer talks about her work, about new art direction projects and photo shoots, she unconsciously runs her hand over the cover of “her” magazine. The gesture signalizes satisfaction.

Marita Leuver was predestined for a career in design. Her father worked as an art director, her mother as an illustrator, and all three of her sisters are graphic designers. Sylvia Weimer, however, had to take a few detours to get where she is today. Born in Wiesbaden, Germany, in 1968, she initially started training as a bank teller, eventually came into contact with the bank’s advertising agency, and finally was thrilled to switch over to the creative



Sophisticated spread in *Cream*, Australia’s answer to Britain’s legendary *Face* magazine.

AUSTRALIAN DESIGN

One of Australia’s most outstanding contemporary designers is Sydney native Marc Newson. His most spectacular work in recent times is a project for the Australian airline Qantas. Newson designed the new business class, which now has a “Skybed” for a comfortable sleep above the clouds, or even in seventh heaven.



A real improvement thanks to Australian design. Marc Newson (42) lives in London and is a star of the industrial design scene. His playful and distinctive designs are inspired by biological structures and the elegant lines of 1950s American design. His early works have been exhibited at the Roslyn Oxley9 gallery in Sydney, for which Marita Leuver today produces invitations, posters and catalogs.

team, with whom she completed an internship. At the bank agency, she later became responsible for doing final artwork, and simultaneously began studying graphic design part-time at Wiesbaden Technical College. Her first stay abroad in Holland was followed by another in Sydney, where Sylvia Weimer wanted to learn English. In the multicultural city, she was snapped up by *Black+White* magazine almost immediately after applying. She met Marita Leuver the same year at an art exhibition: “And that was the beginning of our partnership.”

Originally, Sylvia Weimer intended to remain in Australia for one or two years, which have now stretched into seven. She did not have any difficulty getting established in Sydney. “The mix of Anglo-Saxon and American lifestyles makes it easy.” One of the things she likes most about Australians is their laid-back attitude, even in the most stressful situations. All the same, the move into her attractive

office on September 12, 2001, was anything but relaxed. On account of the time difference – the dateline puts Sydney nearly a whole day ahead of the United States – the two women spent most of the time watching the dramatic collapse of the World Trade Center on September 11th on television. The move into the new office was marked by a historic event. “At the time, we had mixed feelings about our future,” Marita Leuver recalls. But that has changed today. The two women are optimistic about the future. And despite their success, they continue to preserve a modest outlook: “We want to stay the way we are: a small, effective team.” ■

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