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KATE'S NEW CLOTHES

**Topshop
collection**
Exclusive
interview
and preview

**MARC
NEWSON**
Designing
the future

GLAMOUR 2007

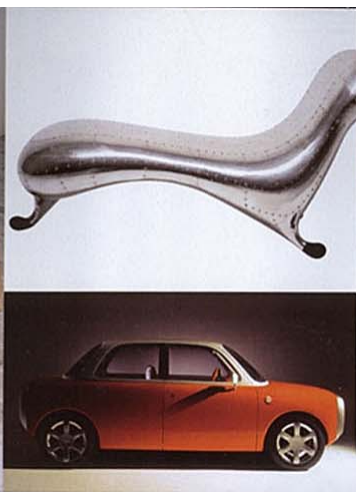
Flashdance fever, satin for day,
jumpsuits and cobalt blue

**INSIDE
THE
COOLEST
STORE
IN THE
WORLD**

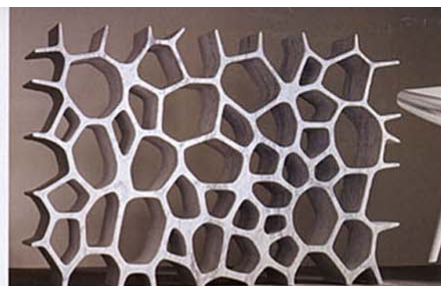
**STYLE
UPDATE**
6 women
6 pieces

**BOHEMIAN
BEAUTY**
The new
colours for
eyes





Clockwise from right, Newson with his girlfriend, Charlotte Stockdale, at the Gagosian in January 2007; the Ford 021C concept car, entirely designed (apart from the mechanics) by Newson; the interior of Azzedine Alaïa's Paris boutique; the Lockheed Lounge chair, 1986; the Micarta chair, 2007, made with a now-obsolete form of laminate



Newson has an expansive portfolio of design projects, all of which are shot through with his signature space-age style. Clockwise from far left, Diode lamp, 2007; red-gold Hemipode watch for Ikepod, \$28,000; Voronoi shelf in Carrara marble, 2007; Event Horizon table, 1992; Zvezdochka shoe for Nike, 2004, designed as all-purpose footwear for cosmonauts; Kelvin 40 concept jet, 2003

around the sparse studio are models of rockets, aircraft, swatches of hi-tech springy materials and a window-shelf full of awards arranged like a student's miscellanea of postcards.

Reflecting on the blast that was Miami, Newson says: "Yeah, it's funny, at a certain point you get swept up. In the space of a couple of months I've been to half a dozen major events that I've been the focus of. I try to keep a healthy disrespect for pomp and ceremony – none of that stuff means much to me. Of course, it's nice to be the centre of attention, but it's not always like that. It's not what my job is about. My profession is a grounded occupation – unlike fashion, film, music."

Limited-edition furniture is the elite arm of an expansive and influential body of work by Newson, now 43. He started in Sydney in the Eighties, operating out of his backyard workshop on a tiny budget, and making limited-edition or one-off pieces of furniture as a way of experimenting with materials and sculptural forms. The first Lockheed Lounge sold for A\$1,500 at a gallery in Sydney – the sale price did not even cover his three months of labour and materials. "My time was not worth much then, but it was a good investment in the long run," he says. "I was happy to get rid of it at that price."

In January, at the Gagosian Gallery, he unveiled a new series of sublimely beautiful furniture designs carved out of giant blocks of Carrara and Bardiglio marble. The Extruded Chair is a sinuous glyph of Carrara marble, while the mind-boggling Voronoi Shelf is a honeycomb network for shelving books, again carved from a single block. Prices range from \$79,000 to \$400,000. The exhibition was in the planning for three years, after Molly Dent-Brocklehurst, Larry Gagosian's right-hand woman in London, scouted out Newson in his then studio in Heddon Street. "I have a whole host of names I would love to work with,

whether they be factories or people – I just needed a good excuse to do something," explains Newson. "I had worked with marble on architectural projects before, but nothing as ambitious as this. It was a fantastic discovery. Marble is a material most would think anachronistic, out of context in modern product design. On the other hand, it is classic and has been with us for thousands of years. I'm always, in all aspects of my work, thinking about the perceived value, and although marble is not inherently expensive, it has a huge perceived value."

This series of pieces that have been years in development will appeal to the new taste for product-design-as-art, a hybrid first glimpsed with Philippe Starck's Juicy Salif lemon

squeezer (1989). Back in the stock-market-fuelled Eighties, the customers were loft-dwelling yuppies with a call to Schnabel and Basquiat. Now they are billionaire tastemakers and art collectors who will happily reinforce their dining-room floors to hold the likes of Newson's lathed-marble table.

A mere glimpse of his world would make many grown men weep tears of envy – the beautiful, successful girlfriend, the Lamborghini Miura, the Paris pied à terre, the Aston Martin...

"In terms of prices, it's nowhere near what's going on in the art world. This phenomenon is not widespread, but for me it's perfect timing. The Toms [Tom Dixon], Rons [Ron Arad] and Zaha Hadids are all getting into furniture now. We'll see where it goes, but the whole point of moving into the art world is that the parameters change, the rules change. You no longer have to work to limits, and that is so liberating for me. I'm only restricted by technical issues,

which are enough in themselves." The blocks of marble alone take months to find, before being cut into forms that even experienced marble workers had thought impossible.

This year also sees the unveiling of Newson's interiors for the new Qantas Airbus 380, a project he and his team have been toiling on for five years. It has been a huge undertaking to design everything from seats and lighting to cutlery and entertainment systems. Compared to his furniture, this is hardcore industrial work, governed by a zillion rules and protocols, and monitored via as many meetings. "PDMs [preliminary design meetings], CDMs [creative design meetings] – the whole process is governed by acronyms," says Newson of his endless powwows with "suits" and visits to the

Farmer and Le Bourget air shows. The aviation industry has historically relied on engineers for interiors, and Newson is the first designer to enter the field. He won the job after pitching to design a skybed for the Qantas first-class cabin. He was an outsider with little experience in the aeronautics field, a factor that he says typically works for rather than against him. Challenges drive Newson.

"Most plane fits have literally been shoe-horned in and there is little continuity between the different classes. The overall impression of Qantas Airbus should be different. Everything is considered and done properly – not as an afterthought. I hope the reaction is like, 'Wow! Shit! This hangs together, someone has thought about this.'" > 331

that much gush in Miami – here the triad of good looks, bankability and visionary talent are what get them going.

First stop on the Sunset Island tour is the Lindemann residence. Adam Lindemann, owner of Ikepod watches, is hosting cocktails to launch Marc's latest collection: a limited-edition range of signed designs in platinum, gold, titanium and diamonds, which start at around \$10,000. One watch, the Megapode, can compute fuel consumption for pilots.

Newson, in DJ and trainers (white leather Nikes which he designed for the Australian Olympic team) with his trademark square beard and floppy, layer-cut mahogany hair, darts through rooms dotted with twentieth-century art and collectibles, including his carvaceous Orgone chair. Sipping on champagne, he is his amiable, laconic self, answering questions about the watch designs from the cluster of collectors, connoisseurs and hedge-funders with money to invest in new timepieces. A chap who advises basketball champs on stylistic matters eyes up the watches with a clear intent to score several. "The players will wear anything he tells them to wear," boasts his girlfriend.

The watches' chief salesman carefully drapes their moulded rubber straps over valuable wrists. Respective partners look on admiringly while the chip-and-pin is fingered in the background. "Rather like a Venetian salesman visiting a palazzo in the sixteenth century with his box of exotic imports," muses Joel Berg, the graphic designer behind the packaging of the Ikepod line.

Next stop is another palatial house, this time belonging to Craig Robins, where the Designer of the Year is feted with a buffet spread of fresh langoustines, rare-beef brochettes and flutes of Dom Pérignon. Tom Dixon, Nadja Swarovski, artist John Baldessari and *New York Times* scribe Alix Browne all flit and flirt by the pool

as gusty winds swiftly put paid to pricy blow-drys. There's no Perspex dildo, but a whole lot of love for Newson. "He's such a great designer – never clichéd, and that's hard," says Craig Robins, who studiously positions Richard Tuttle and John Baldessari sculptures in his duplex condo developments to amplify their value. "Marc captures the moment in his work. It's fresh and current and will still seem so in 50 years – he's someone I'd like to collect."

By 1am, Marc, Charlotte, his PR director Patsy Youngstein, Gagosian gallerist and critic Louise Neri and Sebastian Segers, the architectural associate for Newson's company, are ensconced at a Miami karaoke night hosted by his pal André, owner of the cult Paris nightclub Le Baron. "I wish I could see inside Marc's brain," says Charlotte, who first met him 10 years ago when she was a stylist on a Newson profile for the *Sunday Times*. They met again, and have been a much-invited great-looking couple about London, Paris, Tokyo and New York for a year now. "I've no idea how his mind works," she muses.

Patsy, who has worked with Marc for nine years, talks softly about his charm and his genius. André gives him a wink while another art-person-of-note belts out Springsteen backed by the kooky French covers band. "Don't give up the day job," nods Newson in the art person's direction, before exiting to the courtyard, where a magnum of champagne awaits him, chilling in a Newson-designed bottle-shaped icebox (commissioned by Dom Pérignon). "Do you think it's big enough?" he says, stroking the neck of the bottle.

The next day, hangovers managed and five press interviews done and dusted, Newson is sitting with Louise Neri on an open-air stage to discuss his work before a live audience. Behind him, images are splashed onto a big screen: a concept aeroplane shaped like a stingray (the Kelvin 40); a Nike trainer

made for cosmonauts; a molecular sculpture (which dismantles into modular chairs) created for the Fondation Cartier Space; the award-winning interior of the Lever House restaurant in New York; a rubber-pronged dishrack; the Qantas Skybed, and his latest furniture designs.

Marc eloquently walks the audience through his work, explaining his fascination with materials, his obsession with processes and his perfectionism. Occasionally he brushes his hair back from his eyes and adjusts his cream felted-wool jacket to shield the biting wind. The session ends and, a few TV interviews later, the Newson crew speeds off to Joe's Stone Crab – a classic South Beach seafood diner – for a feast with Larry Gagosian, culture-preneur Johnny Pigozzi, cult publisher Benedikt Taschen, fashion-show producer Alex de Betak, André and a huddle of fun people that Marc and Charlotte have generously invited. Newson does not become ingratiating in front of mega-money and power – he's too Australian for that, and too much fun. Besides, it's difficult to fawn when you're wearing a paper lobster-bib and your girlfriend is passing around a digital camera loaded with snaps of you in the nude. "I'd lost my luggage," explains Charlotte. "I was miserable and he thought I needed entertaining."

Back in Paris, on a twinkly night just before Christmas, Newson, in his trademark hoodie, is in a more contemplative mood. He skips up the stairs of this two-storey studio in the Marais, apologising for his lateness. An end-of-year session with the company's accountants has eaten up most of the day. There are conference calls to be made, Qantas work to be finalised and blown glassware for a series of Diode lights to be approved. Sebastian is working on architectural plans with his nose pressed to the screen, while Nicholas Register, his right-hand man, pops in with specifications. Dotted