



It's the taste and lifestyle of these consumers that will influence the local or national design the most.'

A native Australian, Marc Newson has lived and worked in various countries, including Japan, London and Paris. He considers design to be one of the few creative fields to have no geographical boundaries. 'Being Australian probably affected my career in the early stages, although it doesn't have any effect on what I do right now,' he says. 'It seems that other people's perceptions of what being Australian affects their attitudes rather than our creativity... maybe that's what being Australian is all about - the ability to go from one place to another seamlessly.'

Having created everything from chairs and clothing to restaurants for clients in Europe, North America, Asia and Australia, Newson epitomises the modern international designer: travelling the world, learning from different cultures. 'I like to assimilate cultures so as to have a better understanding of how people live, and to try to find the hidden meaning behind the shapes that surround them,' he says. (Of course, the global designer is not a new phenomenon. Le Corbusier spent time in South America and India and his work drew influences from both places. Pre-Memphis, Ettore Sottsass also spent time in India and was influenced by the traditional forms he found there.)

At the opposite end of the scale, Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec have lived and worked in France all their lives. But this is more a matter of practicality than any sense of feeding off or into a French design culture. Paris's central European location - a positive that has drawn designers such as Newson and Jasper Morrison

to the city in recent years - makes it an ideal base for the Bouroullecs, whose clients include Vitra, Cappellini, Magis and Ligne Roset. The duo do not view their own designs as being particularly French; rather, they suggest, French design is marked by its diversity, a lack of a cohesive design culture. 'In France there are many individuals, each with their own personal approach,' they say. 'In fact, we feel closer to someone like Jasper Morrison, who is English, than to Matali Crasset, who is French, so there is a real richness in approaches in France that perhaps does not exist in other countries.'

The design professional of London, Milan, Paris or New York may now care little for the idea of national identity in design, see little purpose or usefulness in it. But those working in emerging design centres such as Turkey, Korea, India or China are more reliant on unique national tricks. Perhaps, then, the future lies not in singling out a country's individual cultural identity but in encouraging a fusion of design cultures that enables and encourages cross-pollination between designers on opposite sides of the world.

It was with this in mind that Wallpaper* put together the Global Edit exhibition at this year's Salone del Mobile in Milan, uniting the best emerging talent from ten countries and regions around the globe in a unique installation designed by Zaha Hadid.

In a similar vein, students from London's Royal College of Art (RCA) flew to Beijing last summer to join Chinese students in Project Gambei. Led by Professor Tom Barker, head of industrial design engineering at the RCA, the project's aim was to create an alliance that merged the philosophies of East and West. While the groups' approaches proved complementary, there were differences, says Barker. 'I think that the Chinese put more emphasis on their history and culture when designing. I also think they have a more pragmatic approach: take a brief, generate an idea, make a product. We tend to do a little more exploration of the initial stages, looking for that spark.' The project resulted in a number of design ideas that fused Chinese and Western cultures, such as 'Cutlery for East and West', chopsticks that double as a knife and fork.

Roset agrees that designers in emerging countries may need to cultivate a national design identity as a USP. Antonelli has another take. 'If we consider design as material culture, some of the so-called emerging countries are teaching the mature ones how to behave in a post-industrial world,' she says. Designers in India, for instance, seem determined to incorporate traditional crafts, techniques and forms into contemporary work. Ultimately, Antonelli believes design is an example of a healthy exchange of ideas and labour between countries, and of national angles and approaches feeding into an international style. 'We are familiar with the perceived and real dangers of globalisation, at both cultural and economic levels. And yet there is something wonderful about the free flow of creativity across borders. Design culture today has an enviable lightness, and good talent can land (almost) anywhere the manufacturing tools are.' *For details of Global Edit, see www.wallpaper.com*

Defining design styles

US

The streamlined style of the 1930s, as defined by art deco-inspired flowing forms and long horizontal lines, still dominates. Example: Donald Deskey's Radio City Music Hall interior

UK

Defined by its inability to be pigeonholed, although the application of industrial ideas and materials to high-end design, as pioneered by Tom Dixon, remains a point of reference. Example: George Carwadiene's Anglepoise lamp

DENMARK

Typified by simplicity, honesty and respect for function, utility and durability over surface embellishment. Example: Arne Jacobsen's coffee pot for Stelton

FINLAND

Characterised by organic forms and an inherent respect for materials. Functional and material efficiency are Finnish design's foundations. Example: 'Chair 41' by Alvar Aalto for Artek

ITALY

Italian design combines innovation and elegance like no other. Example: the 'Carlton' cabinet by Ettore Sottsass for Memphis

JAPAN

Masters in the art of managing small spaces; product design is typified by Zen-like simplicity and technical innovation. Example: the wall-mounted CD player by Naoto Fukasawa for Muji