

Designer Profile: Simon Cavelle



Simon Cavelle, who has devoted his energies to many important National and International design bodies and is also Managing Director of Scarib Design, was enchanted by his visit to Argentina in October

Why did you make a trip to Argentina?

The Argentinian design association, DArA, invited me along with four other design professionals to talk to South American designers and architects in Buenos Aires. I didn't realise until I got there that I was actually giving the keynote lecture!

What venue was used for the design conference?

A most amazing, almost-spherical building called the Galileo Galilei Planetarium, which was conceived in the 1950s. The acoustics and space are remarkable inside, and it seemed very dramatic. I decided to keep my lecture informal by walking around the room rather than hiding at the rear while my image was projected onto four huge screens.

What was the subject of your lecture?

As there was no specific theme, I gave a lecture entitled 'How designers add value' and covered everything from small detail work to an overall view of design and humanity. I spoke about how, as designers, we should value ourselves and become more business-minded. We should be building an environment in which people feel better, healthier and happier. And I touched on the two major challenges – which we should be treating as opportunities – facing designers today: the environment and the ageing global population.



My secret Buenos Aires





Was your visit a positive experience?

Very much so. I had a phenomenal time and was treated like a king. The people at the British Embassy were brilliant and organised cocktail parties, lunches, visits, and business opportunities for me. There were journalists everywhere, and I did TV interviews as well as an informal presentation for the business leaders of South America. It really was non-stop.

How did you find the Argentinians?

They are such warm people. They come across as flexible, have a great sense of humour and seem able to rise to any challenge; I think this is due to the economic crises they have lived through. They are also wonderfully proud of their nationality: at the beginning of the conference, they all stood up and really blasted out their national anthem.

What is Buenos Aires like?

The city itself is huge – much bigger than London. What really left an impression on me was the architecture, which is very mixed with lots of Spanish and French influence. There's a cool area that reminded me of the expensive Eastern suburbs of Sydney in Australia, such as Rose Bay, because of the way the buildings sprawl round the harbour. In Buenos Aires, this place is called Palermo Hollywood. It's quite residential, with low-rise architecture, and contains very high-end fashion, furniture,



Buenos Aires







design and retail outlets. And lots of coffee shops and bars. The Argentinians like their coffee as well as their wine and steak.

Did you discover any places that particularly inspired you?

I stayed in the amazing Hotel Faena, a cool hotel in the docklands area – which is actually very much like the London Docklands with its redeveloped storehouses. The hotel was designed by Philippe Starck and built using the British bricks that had served as ballast during the passages of ships between Britain and Argentina.

I visited some great restaurants, such as the Cabina Las Lilas. The Argentinian steaks are astounding, both in terms of quality and quantity, and their wines are out of this world. I discovered the brilliant San Telmo market, where there were musicians and tango dancers in the streets, and I found some cool antiques and fabric shops in the same district.



A project in Sydney



Now that you're back in the UK, what projects are you working on?

Actually, I'm hoping that one of my projects will take me back to Buenos Aires, which will be wonderful, we are in talks at the moment. Meanwhile, we are working on a cocktail bar called 'Blu' in Cape Verde; we're going back to refresh the wallpapers and paint in The Albany in London; and updating the Goat in Boots in Fulham. The Goldener Karpfen (Golden Carp) hotel in Germany where Philippe Starck has finished his rooms and we're completing our three suites schemes there over the next few weeks. We also are working on a large duplex apartment in London for a Middle Eastern client and other exciting projects in the pipeline, so it's really all go at the moment.



A project in London W6

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