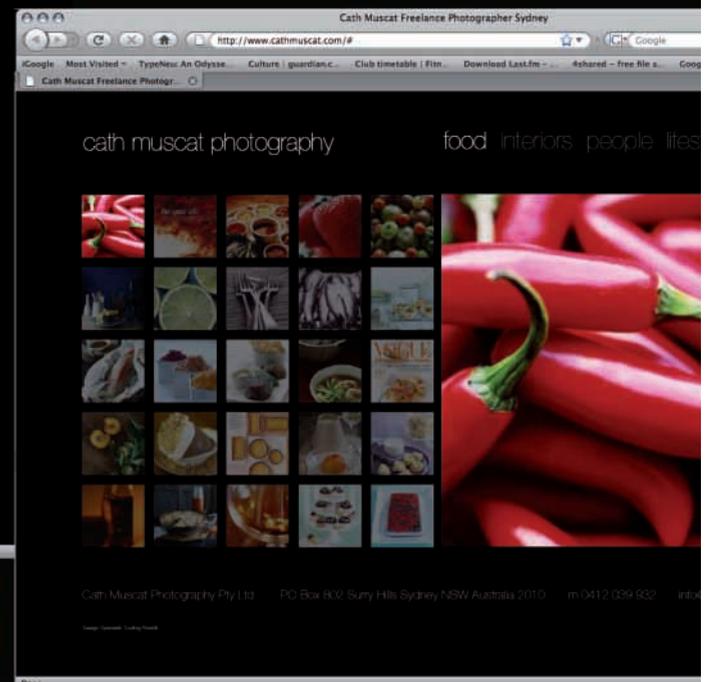
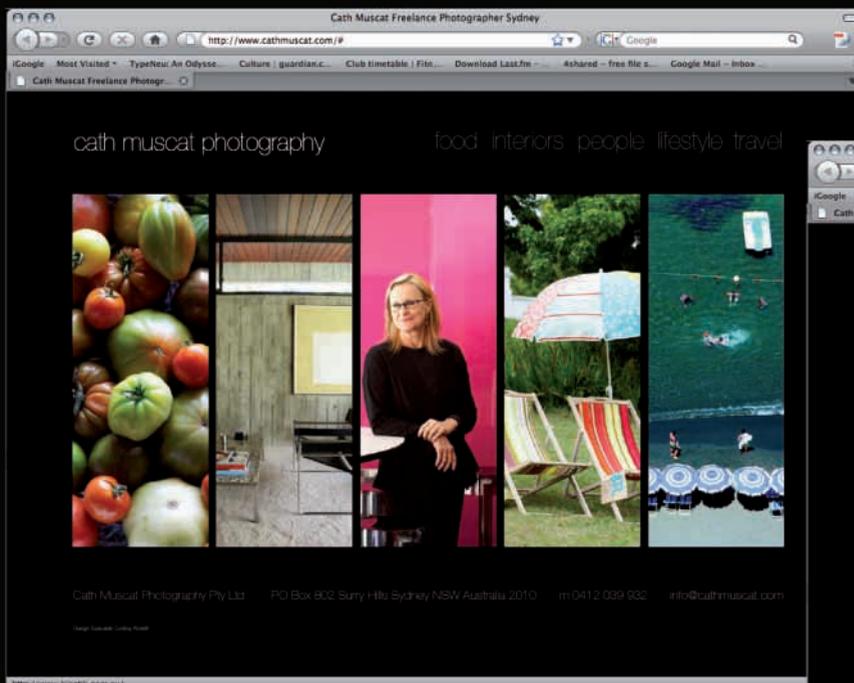


22/23 profile



# AS SIMPLE AS POSSIBLE



this page  
above: Assness website.  
A collaboration between  
Spacelab Design/Sylvia  
Weimer and Leuver  
Design/Marita Leuver  
left: Cath Muscat  
Photography website.  
opposite page:  
*Cream Magazine*,  
photography  
James Demetri.  
Images courtesy  
Spacelab Design



# DESIGN

Photography James Dennis  
Styling Fernando Barosa  
Grooming Steven Foye  
Model Kyle Hoggart of Chabwick

## ALISON COPLEY meets Sylvia Weimer, the driving force behind Spacelab Design.

**WORKING FROM A STUDIO THAT SOAKS UP THE VIEW** over Sydney Harbour, Sylvia Weimer is in a very good place both in location and vocation. As creative director of Spacelab Design, art director and designer of *Cream* and *Autore* magazines, Weimer's career seems to well and truly be on the right track.

Spacelab Design was formed by Weimer in 1997, but arriving at this point in her career wasn't initially straightforward. While she had always been interested in graphic design and drawing, she first had to endure a bank apprenticeship and business course, as her parents believed design wasn't a 'real' career. Luckily the bank manager realised that Weimer's interests lay elsewhere and soon sent her off to undertake work experience with the bank's design agency. "It was also the year computers started to be used in design studios, so I eagerly took to learning both old and new techniques at once - from typesetting to waxing machines, bromides and Letraset to Photoshop 1.0 and PageMaker 1.0," recalls Weimer.

Things really started gaining momentum from then on and, after completing a design internship and doing some freelancing, she embarked on a four-year bachelor of design degree from Fachhochschule Wiesbaden University in Germany. Following her graduation, in 1997 Weimer entered into a year-long exchange program at the University of Technology in Sydney before landing her first job in Australia at Studio Magazines' *Black and White*. She was then soon approached to produce an assortment of coffee table style lifestyle and architecture magazines, as well as other print projects, branding and campaigns.

At first, Spacelab was a 'one-man show', with Weimer calling on freelancers to help out when required. Since 2001, however, Spacelab and Leuver Design (run by the award-winning design industry stalwart, Marita Leuver) have shared not only a studio space, but staff and resources. They have also collaborated on several projects. "Our two companies share the same desk in the same inner Sydney studio," explains Weimer. "We specialise in identity and branding, websites and magazines for a range of prominent clients."

Apparently they're onto a sure-fire thing. Both have their own strong design identities and share 'a philosophy for intelligent and striking design'. Leuver, who has 27 years' experience in the design industry, has won numerous major art design, art direction and typography awards since 1988, and has also been a judge on many design, typography and illustration juries. She is someone from whom Weimer herself draws inspiration.

At present Spacelab is primarily involved in design for the art, architecture, fashion and lifestyle industries, but this encompasses a huge variety of different design jobs including editorial design and art direction, corporate identity, logos, stationery, annual reports, brochures, catalogues, invitations, web design, books and book jackets, programs, posters, press ads, wine labels, design for festivals and other events. It's an impressive list that is seemingly never-ending and is only matched by the studio's clientele, which includes such names as Indesign Media, Design Space, Artedomus, University of New South Wales, Pearl Autore International and Studio Internationale Architects.

Spacelab's success could be credited in the main to its customised, detailed and direct approach to design. "Every project, no matter how large or small is treated with the same amount of importance and respect. We do almost everything ourselves and have a very hands-on attitude. We also deal with our clients directly and so, as a result, our DNA is in every job. We are passionate about creating design that harmonises, design that is memorable and, most importantly, design that works," says Weimer.

When working with a client, the Spacelab approach is always consistent - create to be visually exciting, but also 'rational, tailored and intelligent'. A crucial point always considered is that a message is being communicated to a certain audience, and that audience should never be neglected. Yet Weimer is not fond of such fashionable terms as 'brand strategists' or 'information architects', instead feeling that Spacelab offers the same services but under the umbrella of 'graphic design'.

Spacelab's hands-on approach also extends to the equipment it calls on, dependent on the job at hand of course. Besides the obvious digital tools, such as the team's Mac Book Pro collection with matching Mac Cinema flat screens, analogue tools are also used, including items that may even be termed archaic - scissors, glue, Letraset, pens and even hand-stitching. "We appreciate that real originality and ideas exist in the head, and not on a hard disk," says Weimer.

Many designers will tell you that their design space is hugely influential in the process of creating an excellent end product, and Spacelab is no different. The team operates from a spacious open plan studio with a long table island in the middle of the room. It is a



24/25 profile

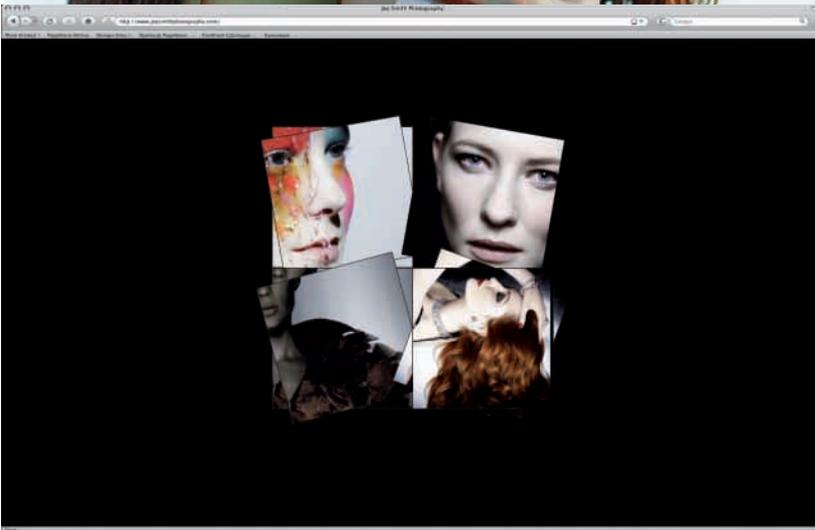


# on the beach

PHOTOGRAPHY GEORGES ANTONI  
STYLING CATERINA SCARDINO

AUTORE COUTURE BLACK SILK CREPE  
HAND DRAPED AND KNOTTED DRESS  
AUTORE COUTURE WHITE GOLD, SOUTH  
SEA PEARL AND DIAMOND EARRINGS  
AUTORE COUTURE WHITE GOLD, TAHITIAN

AUTORE MAGAZINE 87



space engineered so that everyone can communicate openly. Weimer describes it rather poetically. "It's a beautiful white box in the sky, with amazing views. It's above Kings Cross, and so a cacophony of police, fire trucks and screaming crackies [drug addicts] billows up from below."

The studio's size usually peaks at four people, though this can blow out to six if freelancers need to be called on. "Despite the small size we aim for a consistent output of unvarying quality and have an astonishing amount of projects coming through the studio each year," says Weimer proudly.

Recently this admittedly small studio faced the challenge of working on the design of three particular websites within a tight time-frame: a new design for events creative director, Tony Assness (a collaboration with Leuver), the website for the Jacques Grange-designed Parisian luxury boutique apartments and the site for Australian fashion photographer, Jez Smith. All of the jobs required the building of image intense websites, designed for highly creative individuals. "The process was high pressure," recalls Weimer. "Especially to fulfil the high creative expectations of other creatives, though ultimately the end result was rewarding."

From a proven body of high calibre work it is immediately clear that Weimer is one very talented creative, and her passion for design is instantly infectious. It is easy to see how she maintains a certain freshness and originality in her work. She draws inspiration daily from a mixture of sources including art, architecture, writing, friends and life. Yet she is also inspired by forebears such as the German art director, Willy Fleckhaus (who co-founded the 1970s magazine *Twen*) and the French art director, Fabien Baron.

The year ahead is surely set to hold an array of new design adventures for Weimer and Spacelab, but personally she hopes to work on more editorial design, intriguing websites and cultural campaigns.

Weimer's final quote embraces the words of an unknown stoic: "Make everything as simple as possible. But not simpler," she says. A fitting mantra for a soaring design guru. **DT**

#### USEFUL LINKS

- [www.spacelabdesign.com](http://www.spacelabdesign.com)
- [www.leuverdesign.com.au](http://www.leuverdesign.com.au)
- [www.assness.com](http://www.assness.com)
- [www.23placedesvosges.com](http://www.23placedesvosges.com)

"EVERY PROJECT, NO MATTER HOW LARGE OR SMALL IS TREATED WITH THE SAME AMOUNT OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPECT." – SYLVIA WEIMER

