

DETAILS

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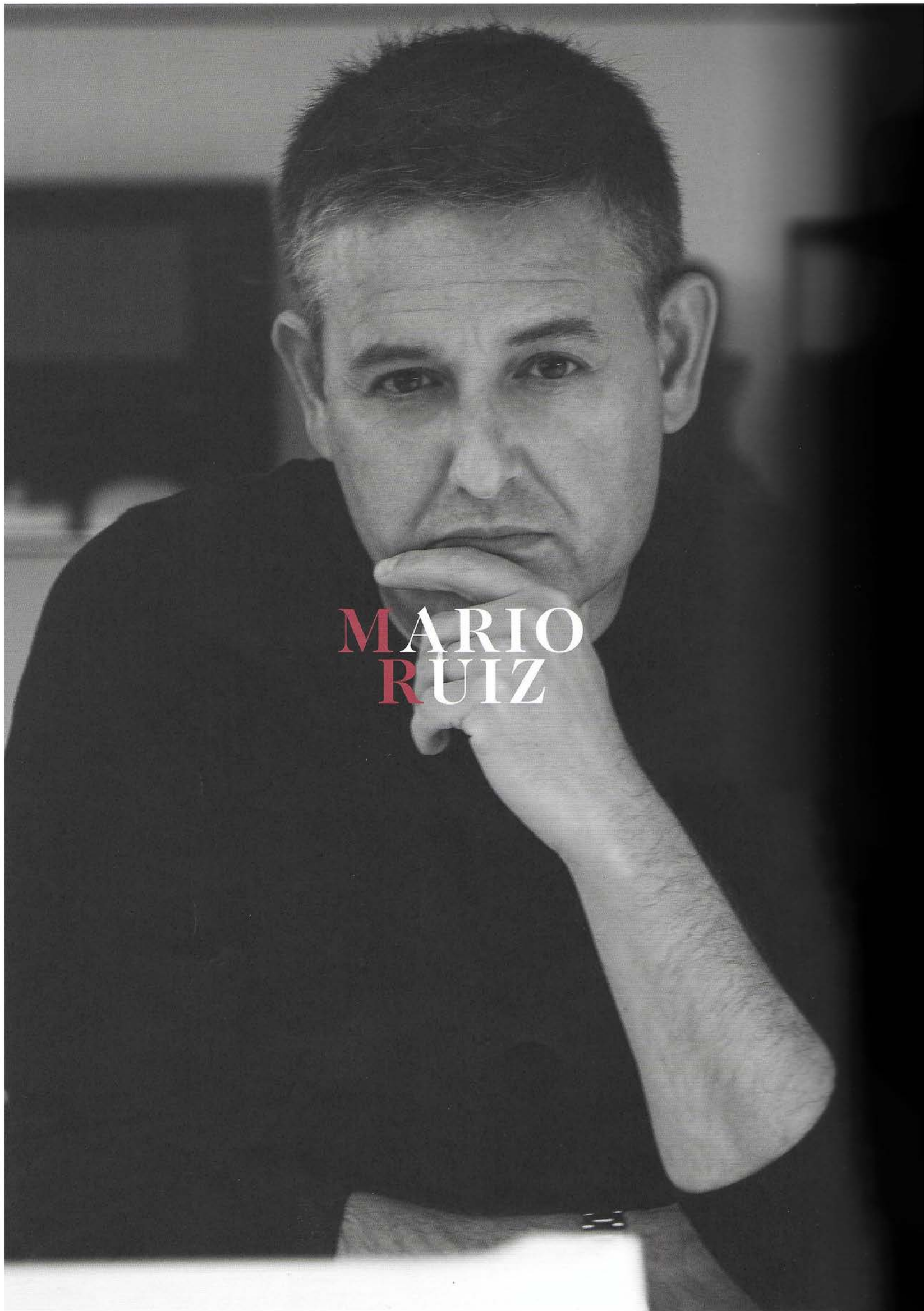
WHAT MAKES AUSTRALIAN
DESIGN DESIRABLE?
Alice Blackwood uncovers
the hidden qualities within
Australian culture that
empower our designs.

ANGELA FERGUSEN
& GAVIN HARRIS
SPEAK PASSIONATELY
ABOUT FUTURES SPACE

WHY IS ECE BECOMING
THE PREFERRED MODEL
OF THE FUTURE

THE MAN BEHIND THE
MR CHAIR - MARIO RUIZ
Penny Craswell discovers
what makes him tick.

schiaavello
50 years of creating



MARIO
RUIZ

PEOPLE

Mario Ruiz's approach to design always starts with the problem he is aiming to solve. Functionality, human behaviour, comfort and technology are never far from his mind in creations such as the MR chair and Aire work bench, meeting and fold table for Schiavello. Last year, he received the highest design honour in his country, the National Design Prize awarded by King Felipe IV of Spain, so what's the secret to success for Mario Ruiz?

PC Is furniture the core of your design practice?

MR Although furniture plays an important role in our daily work at the studio, it joined my activity relatively late. I started working on projects related to technology and office work because I had more opportunities of this kind at that time. However, I am a curious person and I wanted to do different types of projects, so I started contacting furniture companies that I admired and since then, furniture has been one of the many fields of my work.

PC How has furniture design changed over the past 20 years?

Office furniture has evolved to respond to the needs of office spaces. Workplaces have softened their environment by including warm colors and tender shapes, closely associated with home aesthetics. Ergonomics has also had an important role in the evolution of furniture design and now we are living the era of connectivity and flexibility.

MR We are leaving the home view and looking again at the concept of the office as a place to work, stressing the importance of making the most out of it. Therefore, furniture should be efficient and work for its purpose the best way possible. It's a turn back to basics in a context that calls for communication, adaptation and flexibility.

PC What is your approach to designing new works?

MR I focus on making things that work, products that are a solution for an existing problem or concern. For that, I create an atmosphere in which the product should live. To create this habitat, I consider the needs of the producer, the user and the moment and circumstances in which the object will be used. Then I visualise the product in that habitat and I can tell if it will work or not, then I develop it in one direction or another paying special attention to every detail.

PC What is the idea behind the MR Chair?

MR The key to the design process was longevity. It was essential to create a chair that could have a long life due to its durability and timeless design. The MR chair is a revision of the classic plastic shell chair with multiple base and finish possibilities, which makes it very flexible and adaptable. MR chair is soft and quiet, providing comfort to office or home spaces.

PC How important is comfort in design?

MR Comfort is a very important agent in design and it is a determining factor in knowing if a design is good or not. Comfortable products should be essential for every company, as they will encourage their team's happiness, which at the same time will affect their commitment to what they do.

PC Tell me a bit about Aire.

MR This furniture system has been created to answer the different ways of understanding and using the work space today. Aire provides a delicate and human design and at the same time meets every technological requirement, resulting in a balanced and honest design.

PC How is flexibility and technology in the workplace affecting the design of furniture and interiors?

MR It allows us to create products that efficiently support communication, collaboration and creativity. These days, workplaces are simpler, lighter, movable, they invite people to meet and collaborate, and are adaptable, allowing all types of connections, both physical and virtual. I think that office interiors have evolved in a very positive way in recent years.

PC How are materials and manufacturing methods changing?

MR They are constantly evolving, which is very interesting in terms of design and usability. In the technology field, the changes are so fast that once the product is launched the technology that it comprises is already obsolete. This fast evolution requires continuous documentation and learning, which is very enriching.

PC How important is storytelling in design?

MR It is very important as it is how we show what is behind the product. We all like to know why things are made in one way or another. When an object has a background, it means that it exists for a reason. Knowing the story of a product brings you closer to it, because you can understand why it exists and why it has a certain nature and distinguishing features. The same happens when you know a person. If an object doesn't have a story, that means it shouldn't exist.

PC I hear you are an excellent chef and love music - is it important for designers to draw on their other passions in their work?

MR Important or not, it happens naturally. When you work in design your work is your life and your life affects your work too, so many aspects of yourself slip in the final design unintentionally offering it a special character.