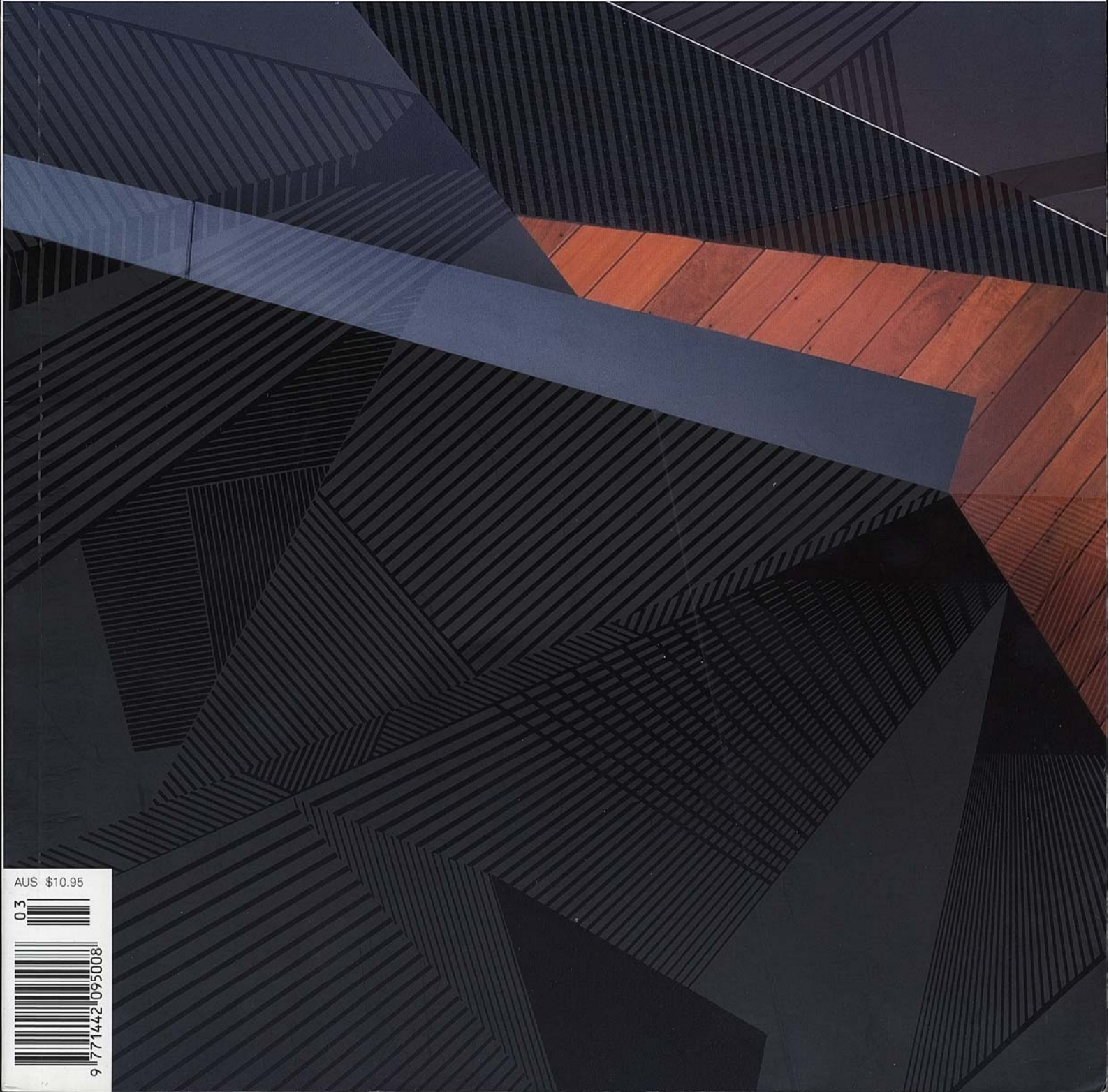


ARTICHOKE

INTERIOR / ARCHITECTURE / DESIGN / OBJECTS / PEOPLE

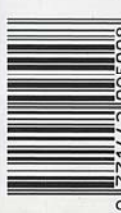
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QANTAS FIRST LOUNGE

words
DAVID NEUSTEIN
photography
COURTESY OF QANTAS

MARC NEWSON JOINS WITH SÉBASTIEN
SEGERS AND WOODS BAGOT TO CRAFT
A LAVISH AIRSIDE SPACE FOR QANTAS'S
FIRST CLASS PASSENGERS.





- 1/ LUSH VERTICAL GARDENS BY PATRICK BLANC APPEAR IN THE LOUNGE AND DAY SPA.
- 2/ OVERSIZED PORTAL FRAMES IN EUROPEAN OAK DIVIDE THE SPACE INTO SEPARATE BAYS.
- 3/ TILTED WINDOWS AND A FOURTH-STORY AIRSIDE LOCATION GIVE THE LOUNGE CLEAR VIEWS OF THE TARMAC.
- 4/ THE FITOUT FEATURES LEATHER ARMCHAIRS BY POLTRONA FRAU, AN AIRCRAFT-STYLE WAFFLE CEILING, BLACK-AND-GOLD CARPET, AND CREAMY CARRARA MARBLE.
- 5/ THE OPULENT SUITES IN THE LOUNGE'S PAYOT PARIS DAY SPA FEATURE WALLS OF GREEN.
- 6/ POSITIONED AT ONE END OF LOUNGE, THE LIBRARY IS FINISHED WITH LEATHER FLOOR TILES AND OAK PANNELLING.

What I like most about the new Qantas First Lounge is its sweeping array of windows. Rather than tilting up to the sky, they face down, taking in the activity on the tarmac. You look through them as though into an aquarium where there is a bustle of baggage trains, fuel trucks, aerobridges, and ground staff. Located within the convoluted, intestine-like plan of the Sydney International Airport terminal, the lounge caters exclusively to first class passengers and Platinum frequent flyers. Should you be one of these privileged few, your journey begins at the curb outside the terminal building, where a concierge collects you from your vehicle and escorts you to a private check-in suite concealed behind a marble wall. While you repose in a leather armchair, you'll be quickly checked in before being finessed through airport security to the lounge, where you can unwind and await your flight.

You'd expect every conceivable luxury from a first class lounge, but the most extravagant feature of this one is what isn't there: the old first class lounge has been completely removed. The entire expanse of the old lounge now functions as the entrance lobby for the new one, which has been housed in a purpose-built structure above. I like to call this "the Tokyo Prada strategy," in honour of architects Herzog and de Meuron, who fashioned a plan consisting of mostly open space for the Prada store planted on expensive central-Tokyo real estate in Minami-Aoyama.

Beyond the frosted glass doors of the lobby, a lush, curved wall embedded with *Anthurium*, ferns, and tropical plants provides relief from the dry fluorescence of the terminal. Created by French botanist Patrick Blanc, who also designed a vegetated facade for Jean Nouvel's Musée du Quai Branly in Paris, this hanging garden consists of 8,400 individual plants attached to a wall of irrigated felt. Where the curved wall terminates, an escalator ascends to the lounge proper through a sculptural white shaft. Lit by a circular oculus in the roof, the shaft subtly evokes Eero Saarinen's TWA Flight Center (1962) for New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport, an icon of airplane travel's glamour days. At the top of the Qantas lounge's escalator, the retro associations are confirmed. Old-school split-flap displays showing flight details greet your ears with the restless percussion of their ticking over, replacing the silent luminescence of now-conventional LCD arrival and departure screens.

The lounge's designer, Marc Newson, is infatuated with all things aeronautical, especially those from flight's silver-sheened heyday from the 1940s through the '60s. He flew onto the international radar with his riveted, aluminium-clad Lockheed Lounge (1986). Last year, the prototype for that chaise longue, inspired by bomber-plane bodywork, reached a record price at auction. With his star in continual ascendancy, Newson has gone on to build a prototype aircraft for the Fondation Cartier and a passenger cabin for the Astrium spacecraft. An expat Australian, the London-based jetsetter began his inevitable collaboration with Australia's foremost airline when he designed the Skybed seat for Qantas business class in 2003. This Qantas First Lounge continues the collaboration, which is due to climax next year when

the Newson-designed interiors of their new fleet of Airbus 380s are publicly unveiled. Conveniently, the massive Airbuses will dock directly in front of the First Lounge windows, with their seven-storey-high tail-plates towering above the fourth-storey lounge.

Newson steered the design process for the lounge, with French architect Sébastien Segers as his co-pilot and local architects Woods Bagot as ground support. The lounge interior offers a preview of what we can expect inside the planes. The ceiling, for example, closely resembles that of a plane cabin. A shallow white waffle washed at the edges by recessed lighting, it is occasionally punctured by shiny air vents fashioned as miniature afterburners. Newson's trademark streamlining is everywhere – no corner goes un-curved, no aperture un-slanted. The plan of the lounge itself follows a gently bending trajectory. Clad entirely in two kinds of creamy Carrara marble, the section occupying the inside of the curve contains a reception desk, restaurant kitchen, amenities, and day spa, and conceals staff rooms within. Cut to order in Italy, the magnificent marble has unfortunately been forced into an awkward curve where wall and floor meet. This coving detail is more appropriately employed in eleven luxurious shower suites, which are also clad entirely in marble.

The curved plan's outer edge is carpeted in a patterned blur of black-and-gold hexagons that trigger feelings of jetlag – and I haven't even flown anywhere today. This carpet runs up to the panoramic wall of tilted glass. Oversized portal frames clad in European oak angle toward the glass and divide the carpeted zone into bays for dining, entertainment, work, and lounging. Red-lacquered units spaced between the frames hold plasma screens, magazines, bar services, computer stations, and the like. A forty-eight-seat restaurant features chairs and tables designed by Newson and produced exclusively for Qantas by Cappellini, with canteen-style cutlery and glassware also by Newson. The Poltrona Frau leather armchairs and recliners scattered around the lounge have also been made exclusively for Qantas and were also designed by, you guessed it, Marc Newson.

At one end of the curved space, a library enclosed in a curved timber bookcase features leather floor tiles in their first Australian application. At the other end is the lounge's most successful and opulent feature, a Payot Paris day spa with relaxation, massage, and therapy suites. More Patrick Blanc hanging gardens adorn the spa walls. These vertical landscapes are extraordinary up close in the intimate spa rooms. Lighting in the spa is low, mainly directed at the plants and the curved white ceilings. Striated slate walls and floors recall architect Peter Zumthor's thermal baths in Vals, though Zumthor was never this sexy.

Like the duty-free shops in the terminal below, the Qantas First Lounge is stocked with luxury goods at every turn. The bespoke objects and the spaces they inhabit are undeniably elegant. Yet while the hanging gardens and fantastic view delight, this lounge is likely to fulfil passengers' expectations rather than stimulate their imaginations. But if you're a first class traveller, who cares? I say just lie back and be pampered to your heart's content.



- × **project**
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Sydney Airport
Mascot New South Wales 2020
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- × **vertical garden**
Patrick Blanc
- × **menu**
Neil Perry
- × **kitchen works**
Stoddart
- × **electrical consultant**
Barnwell Cambridge
- × **hydraulic consultant**
Axis Plumbing
- × **mechanical consultant**
James L. Williams
- × **project management**
CRI Australia
- × **structural engineer**
Connell Wagner
- × **builder**
Built
- × **products**
 - furniture**
Leather lounge chairs, recliners, and sofas by Poltrona Frau. Dining chairs and tables by Cappellini
 - ceilings and partitions**
Nuline Building Group.
European oak
 - flooring**
Leather flooring by JDC Flooring.
Tai Ping wool carpets from Korda Bros
 - finishes**
Carrara marble by Furrer, installed by Artedomus.
Quartzite by Truffer, installed by Natural Stone
 - joinery**
Hi-Tek fittings, Sydney, and Brisbane Commercial Joinery
 - entertainment**
Panasonic 42" plasma television.
Sony Playstation Portable and Sony Playstation 3
 - day spa**
Payot
 - bathroom**
Payot, Kevin Murphy

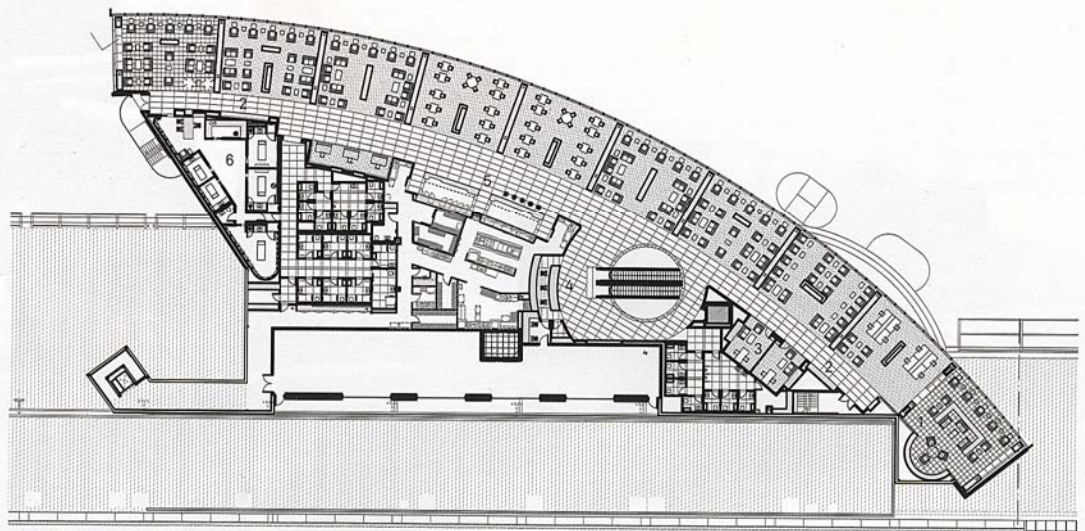
- × **project statement**
The Qantas First Lounge was designed and constructed with the aim of producing the best first class lounge in the world. The lounge is 2,500 square metres over two levels, consisting of entry lobbies, reception areas, lounge, dining, and restaurant areas, a full commercial kitchen, day spa, shower facilities and amenities, and a full plant room.
- The lounge was constructed airside within the Sydney International Airport and was subject to the full security protocols of the airport. The project followed an accelerated twenty-week program, consisting of two full shifts per day, and then a twenty-four-hour program for the final month of construction.
- Within the Qantas First Lounge, a Payot Paris day spa offers a range of complimentary treatments, from a thirty-minute express energizing facial to a fifty-minute full-body massage. Visitors can dine in the forty-eight-seat open-kitchen restaurant with menus by Neil Perry, or enjoy chair-side waiter service throughout the lounge. The lounge features a library stocked with a selection of newspapers and magazines, best-selling books, and board games, including chess and backgammon. Luxurious marble-lined shower suites are also provided, with individual

stereo, volume, and lighting controls, radiant heating to reduce condensation on the mirrors, and luggage racks.

Technology is integrated throughout, with state-of-the-art business facilities including eleven PC workstations, complimentary wireless internet access, power and data points throughout the lounge, and two private work suites with conference facilities and plasma display screens. There is also a dedicated entertainment zone, with plasma screens showing local and international news, sport, and weather, and Sony Playstation 3 and Playstation Portable entertainment systems offering games and movies.

The design team created exclusive furniture and luxurious finishes, including leather lounge chairs, recliners, and sofas exclusively manufactured by Italy's Poltrona Frau, dining chairs and tables exclusively manufactured by Cappellini, Tai Ping wool carpets from Hong Kong, marble from Carrara, and quartzite from Switzerland. European oak sculptures separate the lounge space into defined areas. The lounge also includes a vertical garden designed by international botanist Patrick Blanc, featuring over 8,400 plants.

Qantas



- 1 Library
- 2 Satellite station
- 3 Private work suite
- 4 Reception
- 5 Bar
- 6 Spa treatment rooms



1:750

