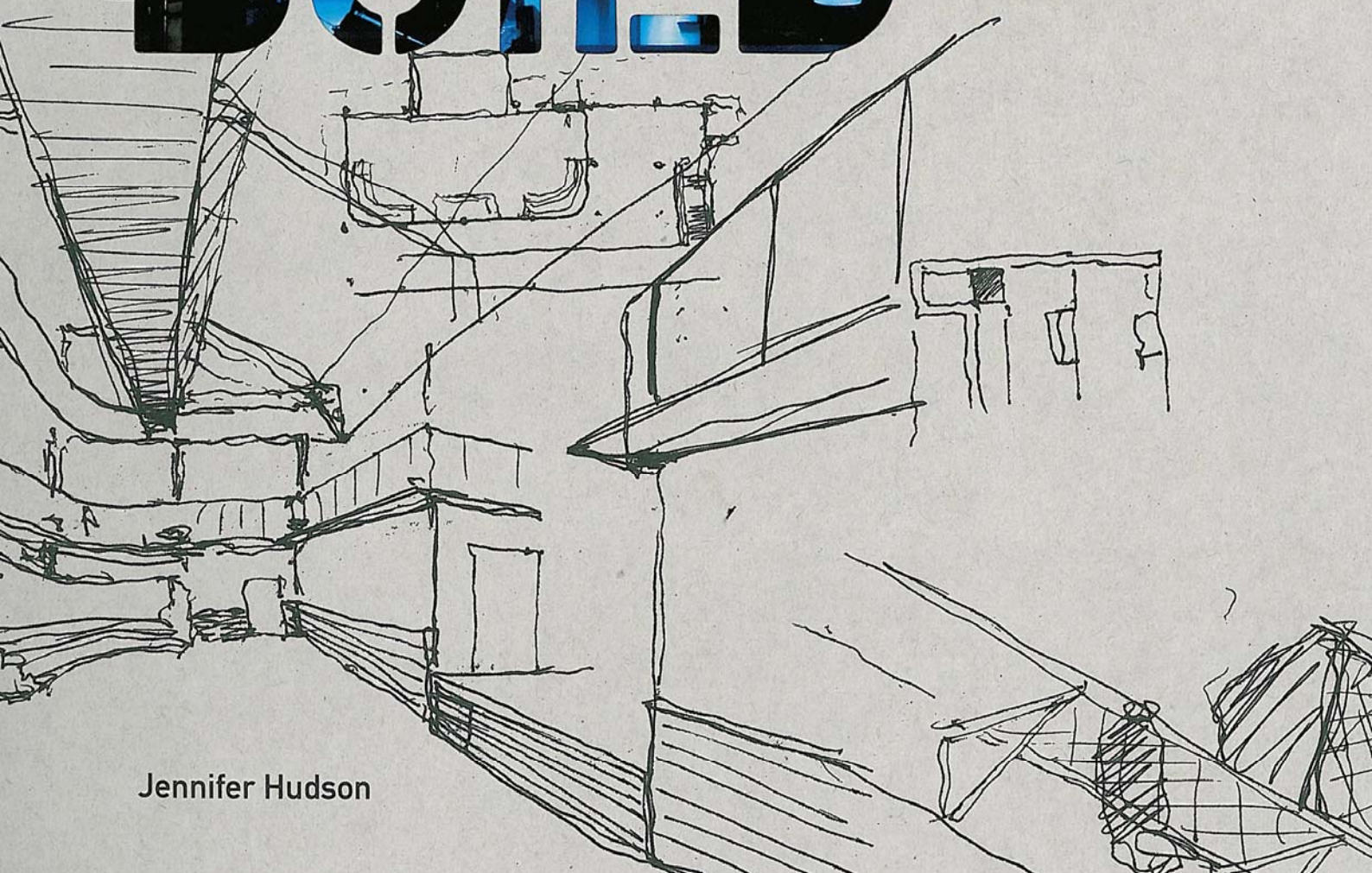


INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE

FROM  
BRIEF TO  
BUILD

Jennifer Hudson

A detailed architectural sketch in black ink on a light background. The sketch depicts a complex interior space with multiple levels and structural elements. On the left, a staircase with a railing leads upwards. In the center, there's a large open area with various lines suggesting walls, columns, and possibly a ceiling structure. To the right, there's a structure that looks like a wall or a partition with some rectangular openings. The drawing is expressive and sketchy, capturing the essence of a building's form and structure.

# Qantas First Lounge

Marc Newson with Sébastien Segers Architecte  
and Woods Bagot

**Location:** Sydney International Terminal, Australia  
**Principal use:** Departure lounge for first-class passengers and platinum members  
**Client:** Qantas Airways Limited  
**Floor area:** 2,080m<sup>2</sup> (22,389ft<sup>2</sup>)

**Design period:** November 2004 – April 2006  
**Construction period:** May 2006 – May 2007  
**Budget:** Undisclosed but realistic for a flagship project

Marc Newson confesses to never having had any particular interest in academic study. Australian by birth, the bohemian surfer trained as a jewellery designer and silversmith and used his time as a student to discover a wide variety of processes and techniques. His keen design eye led to a series of experimental and creative furniture pieces that formed the body of an early exhibition featuring the now iconic 'Lockheed Lounge' chaise longue that has since become the most quoted example of 'design art', and has twice broken the world record for the highest price paid at auction for the work of a living designer. As his reputation grew, so too did the opportunity to work with advanced technologies and manufacturing methods that have allowed him to push the limits of form and exploit the full potential of the materials he uses to adapt to his trademark sculptural designs. Today his inimitable style and his commitment to detail have secured his position as one of the world's most sought-after industrial designers. His attraction to all things aeronautic has been apparent in his work from the beginning. What started as aesthetic inspiration – the streamlined, metallic form of the 'Lockheed Lounge' was modelled on the riveted bodywork of a post-war Lockheed airliner – has now progressed into an understanding of the technical demands of aviation and a portfolio that includes the Kelvin40 concept jet for the Fondation Cartier and a sub-orbital spacecraft commissioned by the European aerospace consortium Astrium. The culmination of this fascination came in 2006 with his appointment as Creative Director of Qantas, a collaboration that has seen the design of the Skybed Business Class sleeper seat, the A380 programme, as well as the flagship first-class lounges in Sydney and Melbourne airports that are home to the Skybuses.

The idea for the lounges was to recapture some of the romance flight enjoyed in its heyday during the 1940s–60s. The brief was extensive and detailed in terms of logistics and programming but offered *carte-blanche* for the creative design. Newson worked closely with his associate architect, Sébastien Segers on a concept characterized by its organic nature where every component was conceived as part of an holistic approach. Segers has his own practice but has been associated

with Newson since he was a student, and together they have completed a number of attention-grabbing interiors, including the Lever House Restaurant in New York and the Azzedine Alaïa accessory shop in Paris. Over the years they have built up a successful way of working together and are in tune with each other's ideas. Newson describes and sketches what he has in mind and Segers has become adept at immediately understanding what is required. They use CAD from the start, printing off drawings and annotating them by hand, repeating the process until an idea is encapsulated. This palimpsest methodology means that throughout design development a project goes through a series of iterations.

For the flagship interior in Sydney the client requested a number of facilities including reception areas, relax spaces, showers, business stations, a library, restaurant, bar and day spa. Newson proposed a retro style and a rich material and colour palette inspired by the glamour of five-star air travel. As in almost all of his projects he wanted the space to be instantly comprehensible when first encountered but to progressively reveal itself as it is used. He presented the notion of an avenue of Statuario Veneto marble from which a series of zones with distinct atmospheres and functions would open up, separated by skeletal oak dividers offering levels of privacy but transparent enough to allow for views along the curved length of the concourse.

The project was a new-build and a major consideration for Newson and Segers was to keep the international terminal operational throughout construction. The solution came in raising the existing four-floor structure and erecting a self-contained pavilion above the roof. The base building was designed by the executive architect, Woods Bagots to bring to mind, in their words, "the aerodynamic sweep of air over the wing of the A380". Newson was involved in the design and suggested a 100-m (328-ft) long arc with an inclined glazed façade that would give a 180-degree panoramic view over the Qantas' Airbus boarding gates towards the city beyond.

During the early stages of the design process weekly conference calls were made with the client team to discuss the finer points of function and construction. Essentially the

architects reported to one person at Qantas who was fully convinced of the efficacy of the core concept and only minor alterations were made throughout this period. The detailed design was developed with the support of Woods Bagots who worked on the construction documents for the project compliant with local building and authority codes. The Sydney-based architect was responsible for the final design, construction drawings, tender and, in association with the client representative Simon Bathgate, oversaw the build under a Newson-Segers visa.

Not since Eero Saarinen completed the TWA Flight Centre at New York's JFK International Airport in 1962 has the old-world glamour of air travel been so successfully evoked. A frosted glass door separates the wider public in the terminal from Newson's lobby, which features a curved living

wall embedded with over 8,000 lush ferns and tropical plants. At the end of the curve an escalator silently ascends through an ethereal white shaft lit by a giant oculus that brings to mind the theatrical stylization of Powell and Pressburger's vision of heaven in *A Matter of Life and Death*. Once in the lounge proper the scale of the interior and the sumptuousness of the materials create a sensual and transitional experience from one world to another and prepare the passengers for their journey to come.

1 / The interior of the Qantas First Lounge was conceived to recreate the glamour and romance of flight in its heyday.

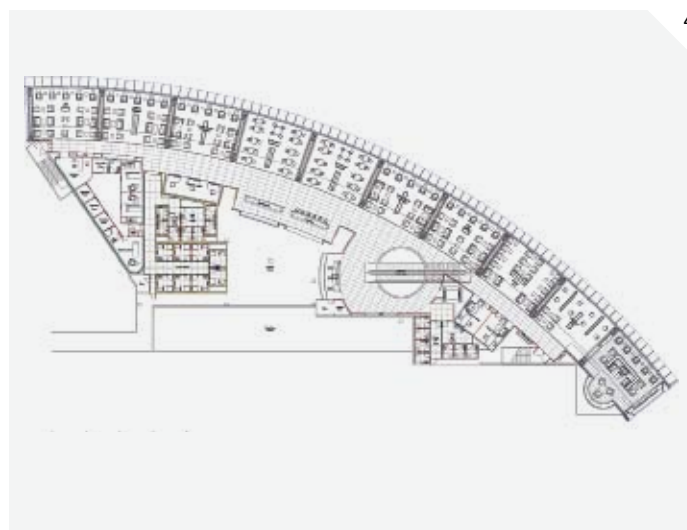




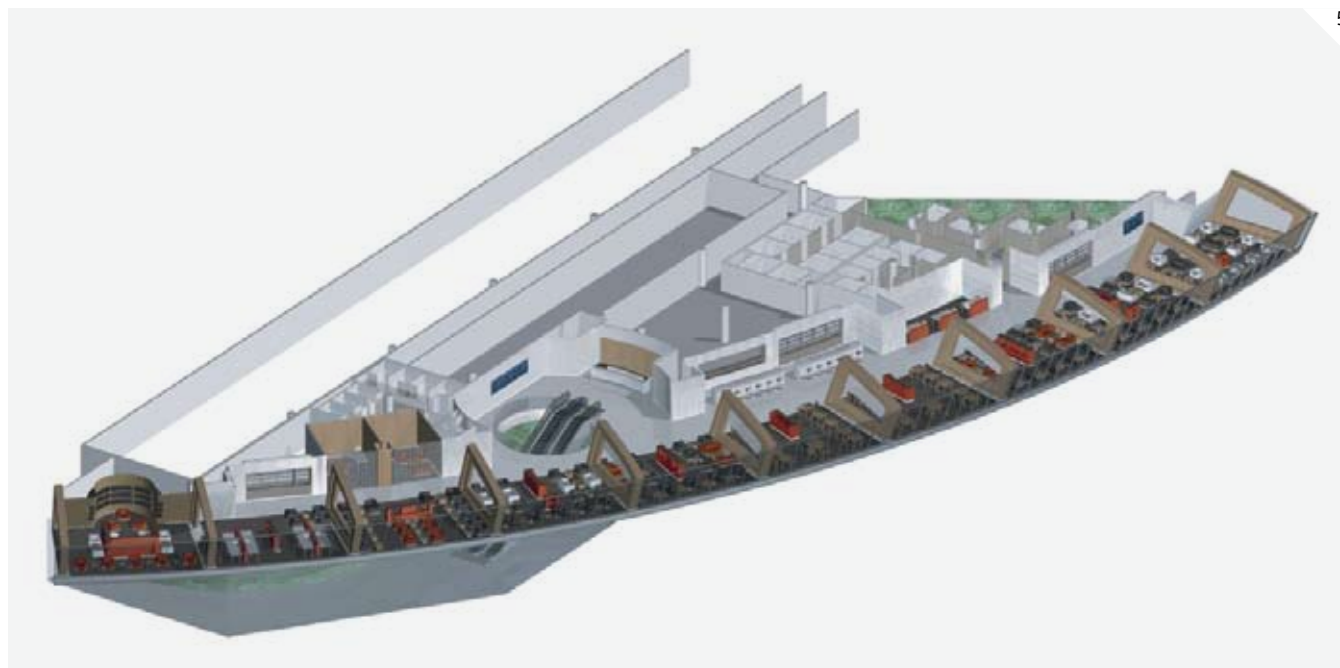
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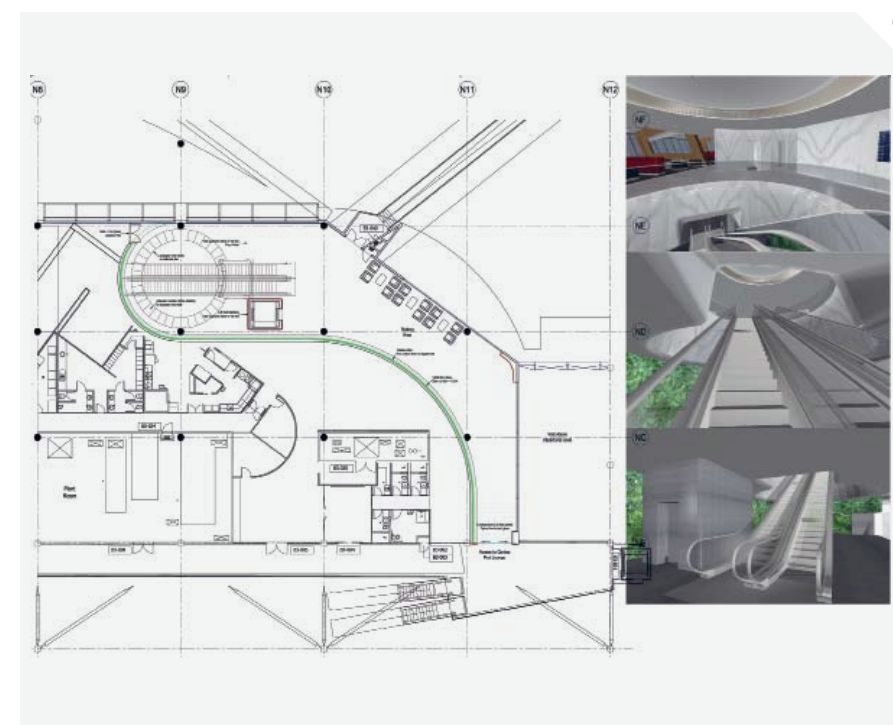
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2-3 / The lounge pavilion seems to float over the roof of the existing terminal like a spaceship.

5 / 3D floorplan: Marc Newson and Sébastien Segers flew to Sydney to make the presentation using 2D plans, sections and a 3D floorplan created on Autocad, as well as renderings and material boards. The client consisted of

a team reporting to a board. Newson describes his work for Qantas as a partnership: "Qantas and I defined the brief together. It's more than just a relationship. I perceive myself as one of them," he says.

4 / Floorplan.



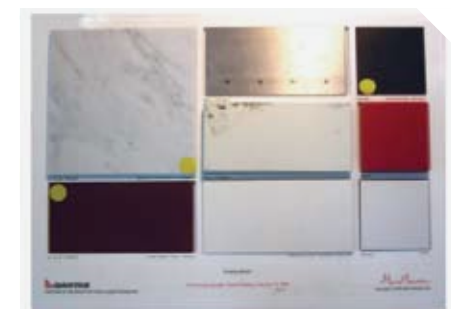
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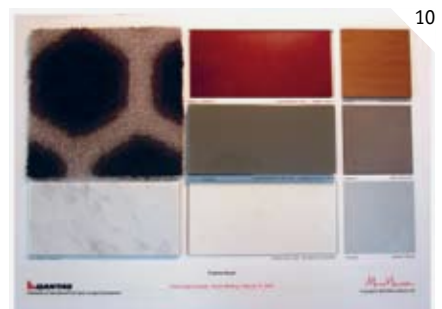
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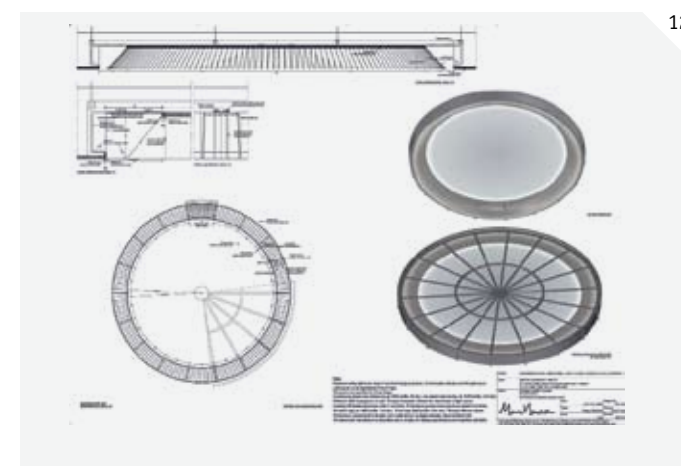
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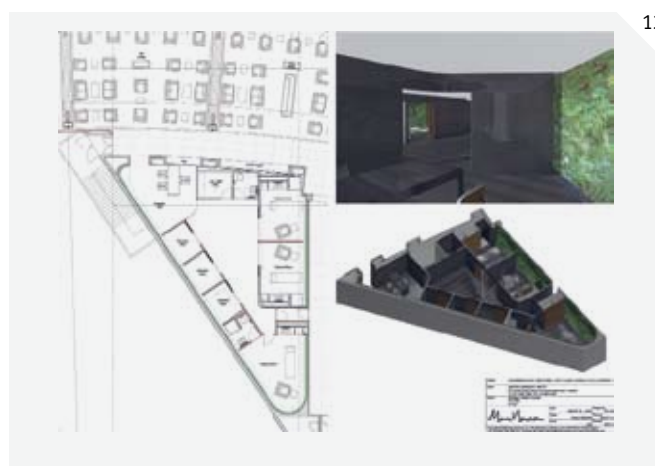
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6 / Plan and rendering of the entrance sequence. Many sets of drawings were produced through design development but they changed little from those originally presented.

8-10 / Material boards. The glamorous atmosphere was created by using the finest materials from around the world: European oak, White Carrara and Statuario Venato marbles by Furrer, Quartzite Stone by Truffer, wool carpets by Tai Ping, leather floors by Edelman.

7 / Renderings were produced by Segers using 3ds Max.

11 / It is not Newson's practice to produce physical models. In the case of the Sydney lounge, however, a 1:50 scale model was commissioned by Qantas to make the project understandable to the board.

12-13 / Ceiling plan, ceiling detail for the entrance oculus and 3D plan of the spa layout. Layout plans, detailed drawings and specifications were highly developed before being passed to Woods Bagot.



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14–15 / Construction shots. As the pavilion was being constructed over an existing and running terminal, the build was limited in time and completed in 12 months with two full shifts per day and a 24-hour programme during the final month. The project was highly developed when it started on site and there were few problems. Wood Bagot's construction drawings were reviewed and approved by Segers on a weekly basis. Segers visited the site once every two months.

16–17 / The main modification arose due to a mistake in the base building construction. All the elements in the design, the wall, floors and ceiling joints, are laid in a universal grid with a 2-mm (1/12-in)

tolerance and seamlessly unite. On site it was discovered that the construction columns embedded in the bay dividers were off grid by 70mm (2 3/4-in). To change the design would have affected the whole layout and adjustments were made to the columns.

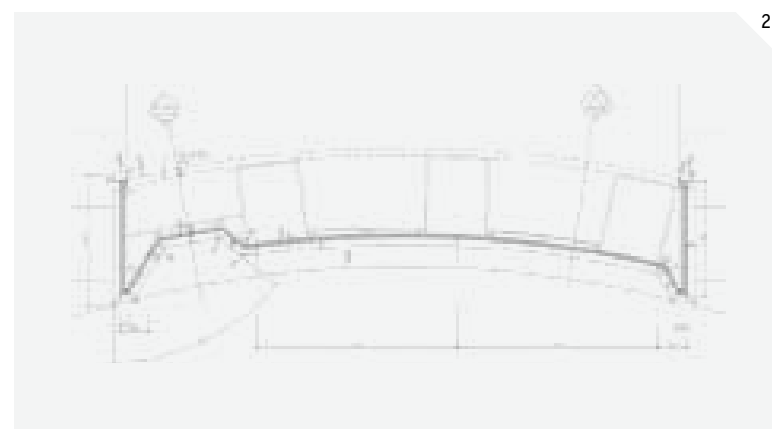
18–19 / The marble was cut and assembled like a giant jigsaw puzzle with zero tolerance. To ensure that the pieces were milled accurately Felice Carlino of Woods Bagot made two trips to the Furrer quarries in Carrara, Italy.

20–24 / Although the budget was generous, cost-cutting exercises occurred which saved thousands of Australian dollars. The bar was meant to be made from solid pieces of marble. To reduce cost and the weight of the construction Woods Bagot reworked the original document to create a moisture-resistant particle-board sub-structure clad in marble. It was difficult to achieve the raked profile on the front of the bar. Three trades, the stone manufacturers, kitchen manufacturers and joiners, had to be co-ordinated. Normally each would produce their own shop drawing but because the process had to be so precise Felice Carlino made one drawing that was followed by everyone. The effect achieved matched Newson's original concept.

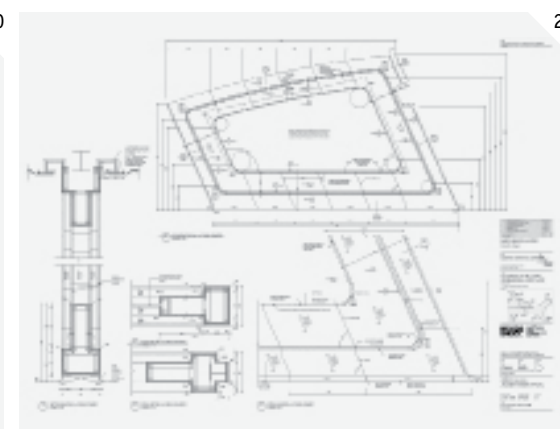
25 / Concept drawing and rendering. The bay dividers are made from European oak, the radial edges in solid wood and the rest veneered.

26 / Each component slots together and locks into place to form a freestanding structure. They were made by a small local joinery firm, Hi-tek Fittings, to Newson's specifications reworked into working drawings by Woods Bagot.

27 / A model was made in the factory to assess the dimensions of the bay dividers.



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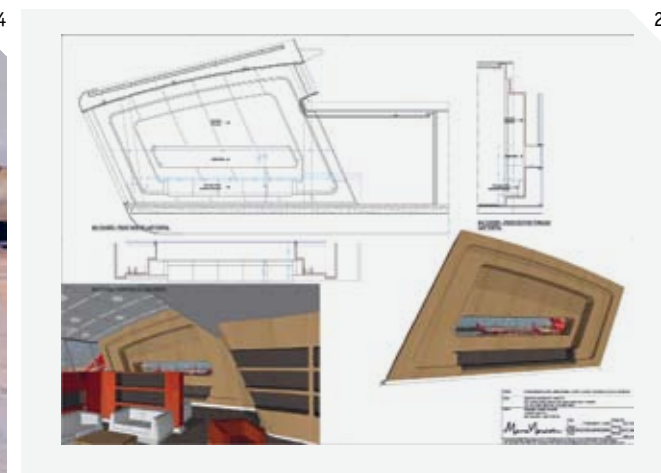
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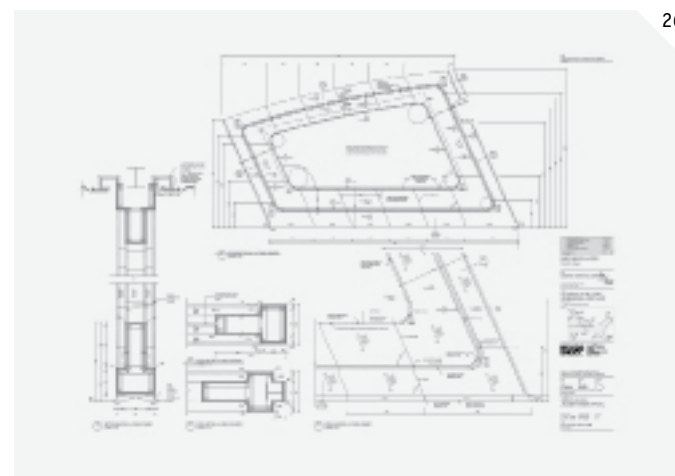
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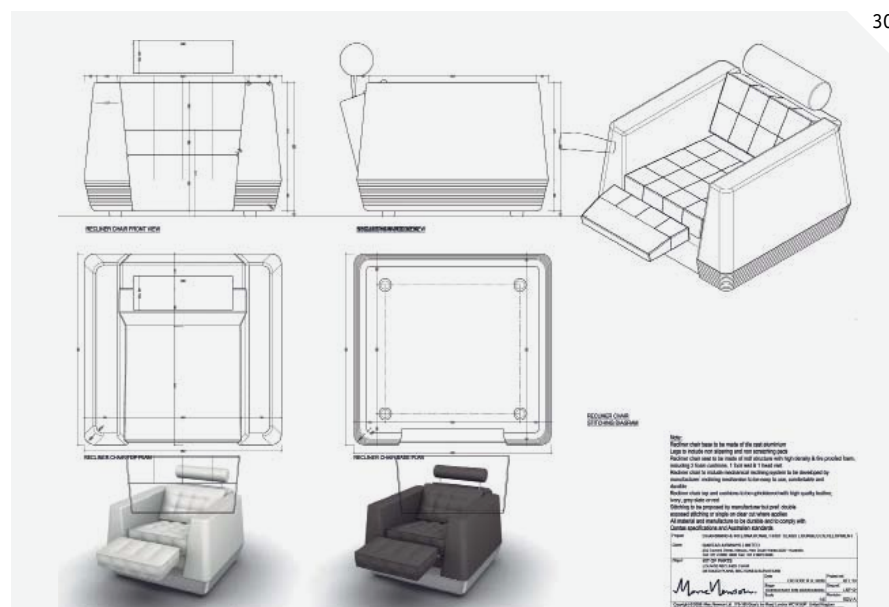
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28–29 / Construction of the bay arches.

30 / Working drawing of reclining armchair. All the furniture and lighting was custom-designed by Newson and manufactured by Poltrona Frau and its subsidiaries, Cappellini and Nemo.

31 / Prototype for the freestanding lamp used throughout the lounge and manufactured by Nemo.

32–33 / Flights are announced by the gentle clicking of an old-style, split-flap display designed by Newson.



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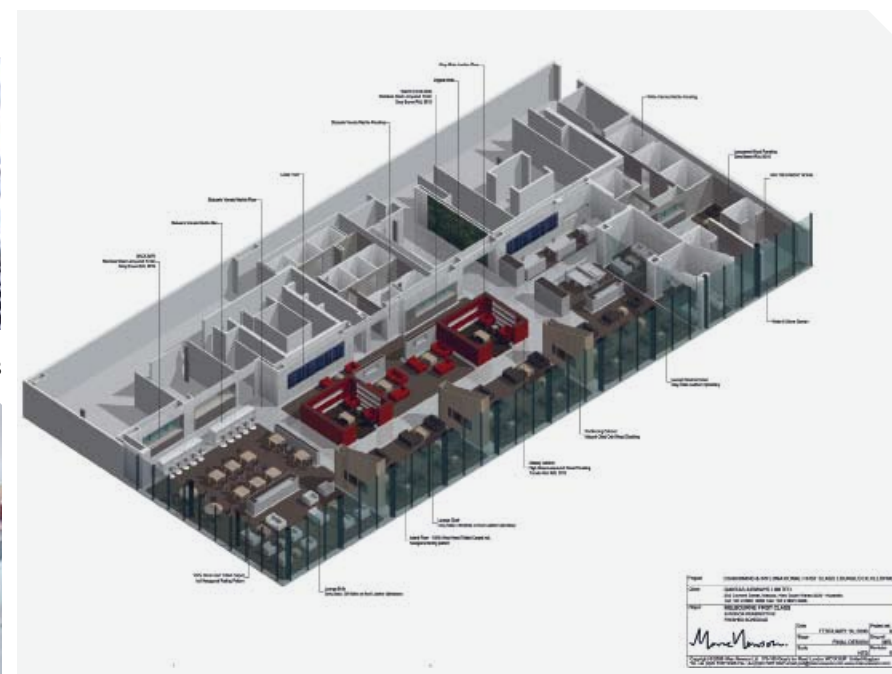
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34 / The living walls in the lobby and spa were designed by the botanist Patrick Blanc to introduce a natural element into the design. Situated at the two extremes of the building, they unite the interior. Woods Bagot had to work out a way to install and irrigate them.

35 / Qantas envisaged a luxurious day spa for their Qantas First passengers, where they can relax and be pampered before their trip. Newson created an extraordinary space with a contemplative atmosphere, allowing the passengers to transcend and prepare for their journey ahead.

36 / The library.

37 / The restaurant.

38 / The reception.

39–40 / 3D floorplan and finished image of the Melbourne Lounge. Newson's concept documents were the same as for Sydney.