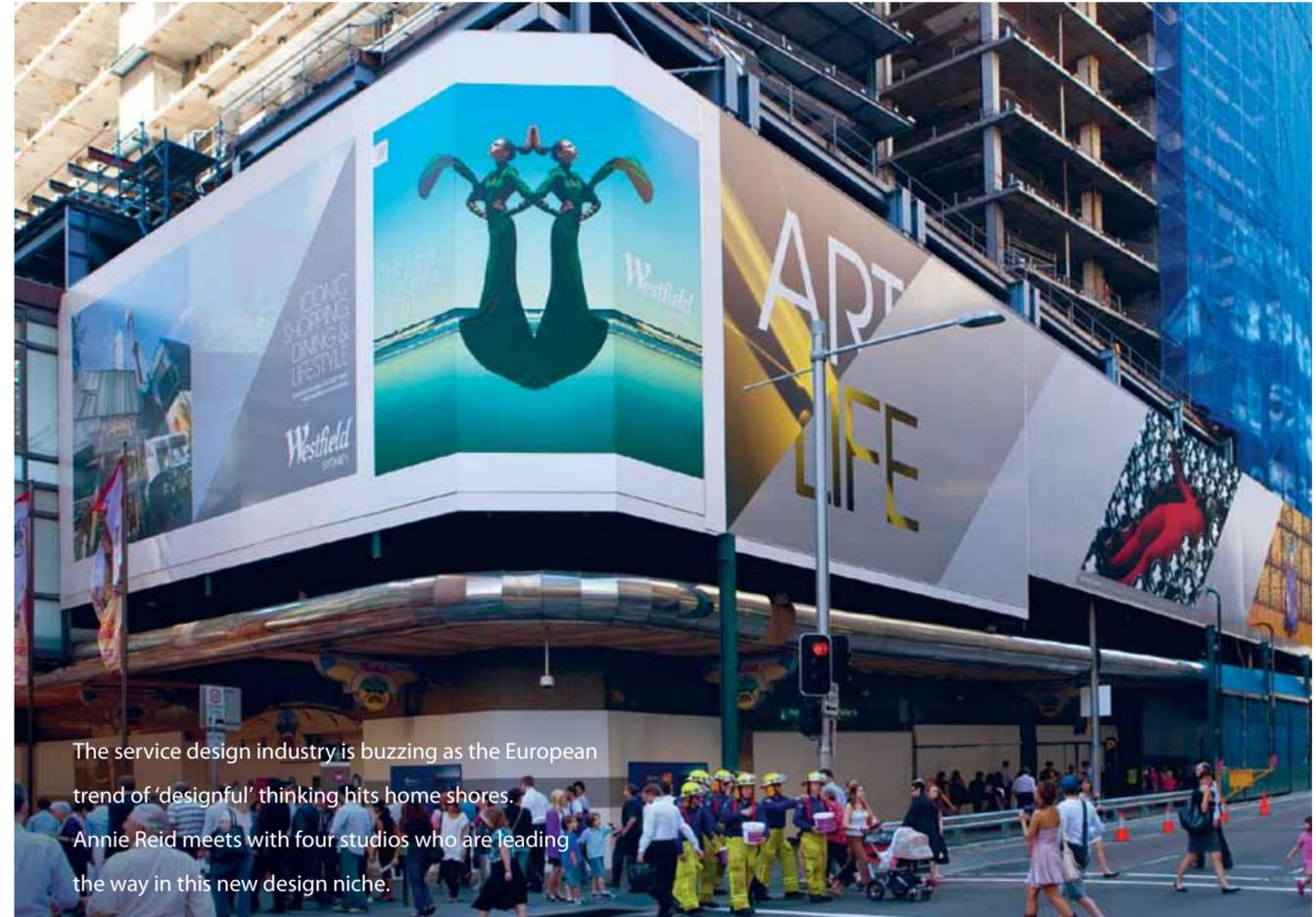


# at your service!



AD

The service design industry is buzzing as the European trend of 'designful' thinking hits home shores. Annie Reid meets with four studios who are leading the way in this new design niche.

In networks all over the world, a holistic, human-centred approach is finding favour with businesses that are embracing 'designful' thinking as a way to add value and innovate. While the tentacles are fast spreading in Europe, it's now emerging with an enthusiastic vigour on home shores.

And as the Western economy continues to move from a product-based to service-based landscape, the movement has powerful implications for the way our public and private sectors do business.

Here are four of the trendsetters:

#### **SNOOK**

Based in Scotland, Sarah Drummond and Lauren Currie's company, Snook, focusses on service design. "The global mood is good," Drummond says. "And I'm excited about the possibilities for both design thinking and the skills/tools we use when designing for business."

Globally, she says companies like Philips and Procter & Gamble are

leading the way, while in the UK the public sector, through the Design Council and Skills Development Scotland, is championing the mood.

Snook recently worked with various UK police organisations to create the online feedback tool MyPolice. An example of design thinking used in organisational culture transformation, MyPolice fosters greater communication between people and the police who serve them.

"It's a simple idea but I guess we just had the audacity to do it," says Drummond. "What needs to happen now is for designers to get smart and put on a suit, and not be the outside expert but the inside supporter."

#### **DESIGN PROVIDENCE**

Designer and Principal Director of Design Providence, Mark Watson, has expanded into service design and is keeping a close eye on the industry here and overseas. He says the research is growing in Australia, along with groundswell from

education institutions including RMIT and Swinburne universities.

"It's a bit of a design boom for designers right now. And right now I'm trying to break the ice within a number of industries, such as health and local government," Watson says.

He's also working with the Aboriginal Artists Development Trust, helping to redesign their organisation through education. "The Trust recently held a cultural festival, which was all about working with the community and giving them the best tools for how to operate," he says.

As an established designer, the design thinking process for Watson is innate. "I don't need to grab a toolkit, but for other designers, it's a way to work more creatively with evolving processes," he says.

#### **HUDDLE DESIGN**

In Melbourne, Dr Melis Senova is the co-founder of start-up Huddle Design, a service design company whose speciality lies within the area of design strategy.

**Above**  
» A Westfield project in which eskimo delivered strategic development services. Photo: Courtesy of eskimo



Clockwise from top left  
» Prototyping Session, QI Hub project by Snook  
» Visualising networks, GSA project by Snook  
» Global Service Jam workshop, Photo: Leila Marimuthu  
» Global Service Jam workshop, Photo: Leila Marimuthu  
» "Doing Not Talking" with Snook



“It’s all about experimenting through action, not just talking about it. The best changes happen when people do something together”

The company works with clients such as Vodafone, Telstra and the Parenting Research Centre. “I feel like we’re at the very beginning of what’s going to become the next customer experience,” Dr Senova says. Huddle often uses communications design as a starting point. “Then we expose them to the way we work and talk through that engagement to the more valuable or different approach we offer,” she says.

The company’s output includes customer journey maps, service relationship maps, service blueprints and touch point analysis. “To do this kind of work, you really need to have a CEO who is 100 per cent committed to fundamentally shift the way they do business,” she says. “But it can change the world and find solutions to really wicked problems.”

Huddle was the Melbourne host for Global Service Jam, an event in March where designers, students

and academics met in 60 locations with 48 hours to design a new service. “It’s all about experimenting through action, not just talking about it. The best changes happen when people do something together,” Dr Senova says.

**ESKIMO**

This Sydney company incorporated design thinking to create a more integrated strategic-creative approach. It’s now a leading creative-strategic agency that applies design thinking processes to solve client requirements, and specialises in branding, campaigns and design.

Katie Rockliff, Partner and head of eskimo’s strategic side, says it’s vital for agencies to absorb the new approach rather than simply adding it. “Companies who don’t have a unified brand culture from the outset don’t practice what they preach when advising others.”

Eskimo uses a key design tool – white space sessions – where the client decision-makers engage in a preliminary workshop. Working within a blank canvas or anything-is-possible framework, this initial session is designed so that the clients start thinking laterally and get involved very quickly.

“We then work on the approach using principles decided in the session. And whatever the result, it’s influenced directly by this session,” Rockliff says.

She says design thinking is particularly good for brand-related projects, because it typically involves sweeping behavioural and cultural changes. “Design thinking overall tends to be a very integrated and cohesive way of thinking. We’re very excited about the future for Australian business and opportunities available through this approach.”

**LINKS**

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