



Australasia's biggest annual trade fair for designers and architects, designEX, is the pinnacle of the design calendar and this year's event saw thousands of style disciples flock to Melbourne to check out what's hot in new trends, products and people.

This year's theme, designEx — It's a Religion celebrated the passion of the Australian design industry, with more than 300 exhibitors showcasing their latest and greatest.

But the best thing on show from April 30 to May 2 was the resilience of the design industry in Australia, said Phil Stoddart from organiser dmg world media.

"People had low expectations but the show was so positive and we've got strong rebooks for next year in Sydney. All the doom and gloom has lifted," he said.

A new attraction at this year's event was Kaleidoscope, which paid tribute to the transformative effect textiles and soft furnishings can have on the mood of a room.

A highlight was the display created by Kaleidoscope creative director and professional trend forecaster Genty Marshall.

Marshall's Observatory installation brought together a collection of fabrics from Kaleidoscope exhibitors, creating three vantage points from which to consider how the role of position and place can influence global directions. "Global design trends are endlessly fascinating as designers and manufacturers look for 'the next big thing', but experience tells us that they don't always translate easily in an Australian context," Marshall said of her creation.

Another feature event was the Latitude program, which gave 20

up-and-coming designers the chance to present their work. Sydney's Annabelle Peters won the Latitude People's Choice Award for her Skewer Lamp Modules.

Some of the best new products on the Australian market also strutted their stuff at designEX, with the New Product Awards recognising excellence in design across 13 diverse categories.

WA's Bubbledeck Australia & New Zealand won the best new product award in the Building and Construction Systems category for its Bubbledeck technology, which eliminates non-structural concrete, allowing up to 50 per cent longer spans between columns and no beams.

Melbourne-based designer Marc Pascal's Orchid Light took out the lighting category, a win that Stoddart likened to "the Slumdog Millionaire of design".

"His stall was so small, yet he trumped all the bigger guys winning best new lighting product, as well as best dressed stand and best stand under a 30sqm area," he said.

Dutch designers Floris Schoonderbeek, best known for his Dutchtub mobile bath, and Freek Verhoeven, the inspiration behind the colourful Freek Outdoor Carpets that have taken Europe by storm, also gathered a crowd.

The International Seminar Series proved successful, with 35 speakers including acclaimed Danish architect Bjarke Ingels, founder of multi-award winning practice Bjarke Ingels Group.

Perennial favourites included the Electrolux Outdoor Room with Jamie Durie, and D4S, an interactive showcase of the latest in sustainable design.



Sustainable: Part of a cardboard bar.

designEX's New Product Award winners:

- **Appliances:**
Heatmaster for Gas Fireplace
- **Bathrooms:**
JD McDonald for Select Classic
- **Building & Construction Systems:**
Bubbledeck Australia & New Zealand for Bubbledeck
- **Building Technologies:**
WC Wedderspoon Pty Ltd for mCube90
- **Decorative Accessories:** Picture Hanging Systems for Locator Mini Rail System
- **Doors & Windows:**
Sharp Plywood for XB+ Door Blanks
- **External & Structural Products:**
Modtank Pty Ltd for Modtank
- **Fabrics & Prints:** Publisher Textiles for Laced sueded non-woven wallpaper
- **Flooring:** Forbo Flooring Systems for Global 3 Artoleum Striato
- **Furniture:**
Aussie Dutch Tubs for Dutch Tub
- **Internal & Surface Finishes:**
Baresque Environmentally Sustainable Design for Ecotop
- **Lighting:** Marc Pascal for Orchid Light
- **Sustainability:**
Modtank Pty Ltd for Modtank