

# A few words with Marc

Alison Castle chats with Marc Newson about the joys and pains of making a major retrospective book



**Alison Castle:** Can you talk a bit about how this project came about?

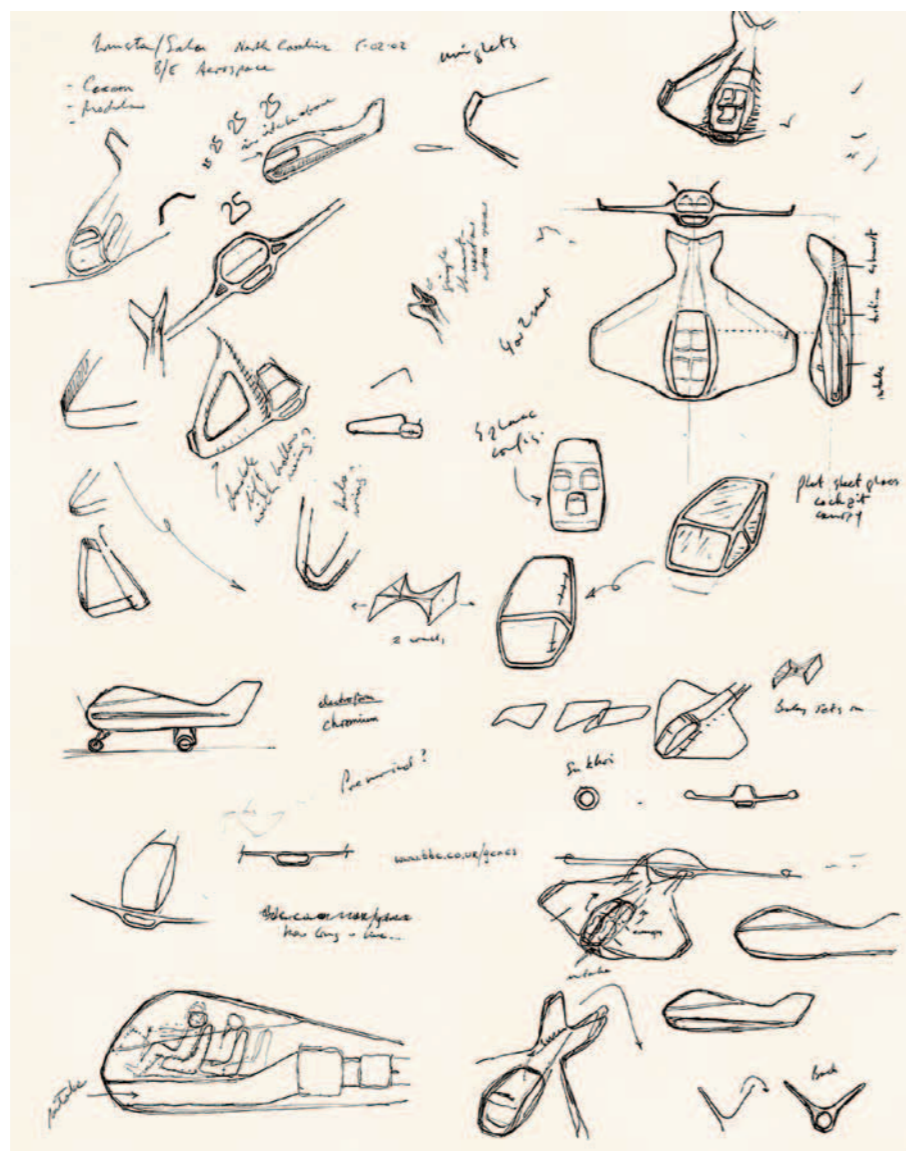
**Marc Newson:** I met Benedikt Taschen in 2007 at Art Basel Miami, not long after my first show with Gagolian. He was one of a group of us who had dinner together at Joe's Stone Crab restaurant and Benedikt and I got on really well. Benedikt mentioned the possibility of doing a book and I was thrilled—I had always been a huge admirer of TASCHEN books and I realized it was the best and only option to do the kind of book I really dreamed of doing. Very quickly Benedikt and I developed a close friendship which, in addition to doing my book, also resulted in the MoonFire collaboration. I've enjoyed having an incredibly close working relationship with him. For me that's what has really made the difference—I could just pick up the phone and call him, and he has taken an inordinate amount of interest in my project, which I can only assume he does for all of his projects.

**AC:** Do you think that this makes TASCHEN different from other publishers?

**MN:** Absolutely. It seems unique in the publishing world, particularly in terms of the amount of resources he has made available to make this a worthwhile collaboration. I had done some books before and my experience was not that inspiring. Even though from my side we've done an enormous amount of work on the project, you and TASCHEN have really matched that. In the past, I found that publishers would promise to do a book, but not throw any

resources at us, or provide an editor to really head up the project.  
**AC:** They basically wanted you to do all the work and deliver them a book to print?  
**MN:** Yes. A book is such an extraordinarily huge amount of work, it's like the ultimate project in personal and professional house-keeping, the way I see it. For me it's been like organizing my entire life: all of the stuff I've ever done has to be examined and organized. In a sense, it's like personal therapy. I am now completely familiar with what I've done over the last 25 years, whereas I simply wouldn't know a tenth as much if I hadn't done this project. It's really strange. People assume that because it's your work and your stuff, you know every-

thing about what you've done. But when you confront it.... It's much more than a book, it becomes a life's work.  
**AC:** This project took what seemed like an eternity, right?  
**MN:** Yeah, what was it, close to four years? But there was never a dull moment; we worked more or less consistently the whole time, so that's basically how long it took to pull all the material together. A lot of it needed to be created—so many things needed to be rephotographed, re-documented.... It was such an immense amount of work for everyone. I don't know how many hours I spent talking and working with you, we must have spent hundreds of hours together during the process. The text



**Opposite left:** Marc Newson at Gagolian Gallery, New York, in 2010.

**Opposite right:** Newson's early sketches of the Kelvin40 plane.

**Top, left and right:** Construction of Kelvin40 internal structure at Body Lines, UK.

**Right column, top:** Fitting and adjustment of the canopy  
**Right column, bottom:** Kelvin40's final internal structure.  
**Bottom:** The completed Kelvin40 plane (2004).



is so ridiculously comprehensive, I can honestly say that I'll probably never embark on something so comprehensive again in my life—unless it's the second volume of this book!

**AC:** Has this book project changed the way you approach your work?

**MN:** It's changed many aspects of the way I work, specifically the way I organize and categorize my work. I work in a much more organized and orderly way now. Perhaps the biggest task my studio has undertaken has been working on the research for this book. It's a wonderful thing to have done, on so many levels, the least of which is a philosophical level. When this book is done I feel like I'll be starting a new career.

**AC:** The next phase...

**MN:** Kind of, yeah! In reality I will be continuing, but it's safe to say that I've taken this project more seriously—and so has TASCHEN—than just about any design monograph out there. I've never seen another design book that is this compre-

hensive! Most are cursory by comparison. This really includes everything I've ever done—warts and all—even stuff from the early days of my career that are a little bit embarrassing. But I hope for other people it's a great opportunity to set the records straight. I don't think people generally have a clear understanding of the way that designers in general work, or me in particular, which I think is not typical. It feels helpful for me to know that there is now a document that can explain all of that. I simply couldn't have done it any other way. For me, in terms of the content of the book, both images and text, I can't imagine how it could be any better.

**AC:** Let's talk about the choices you made regarding the Art Edition.

**MN:** I chose Micarta for the case because it's a material I've worked with extensively since about 2006. It's a material that I love because it embodies a lot of the qualities in the particular materials. It's very warm; it was developed a hundred years ago and was

very advanced at the time, but now has certain anachronistic qualities, and its perception of value is high. It's an obscure material but I think it's very "me," it feels valuable to me, and I think people may even begin to associate it with me. It can be worked in the appropriate way, so that makes it feasible to use for the case of the book.



**AC:** And the leather marquetry on the cover?

**MN:** I wanted to utilize a craft that was nearly forgotten in the industry. I didn't want to do a hyper-modern, cutting-edge design solution that many people might have expected from me. I wanted to use the opportunity to do something that was slightly unexpected, and to go back to my roots as a craftsman. Again, marquetry is an anachronistic craft, and one that you wouldn't have the opportunity to use unless you were doing an edition like this with TASCHEN—I can't think of another excuse that would allow me to do marquetry! It's wonderful to work on projects when nobody questions why you want to do it. Usually in my line of business, I'm constantly being questioned and second-guessed; it's the nature of my job. But with TASCHEN, it's like "OK, that's what you want, we will do everything we can to make it work."

