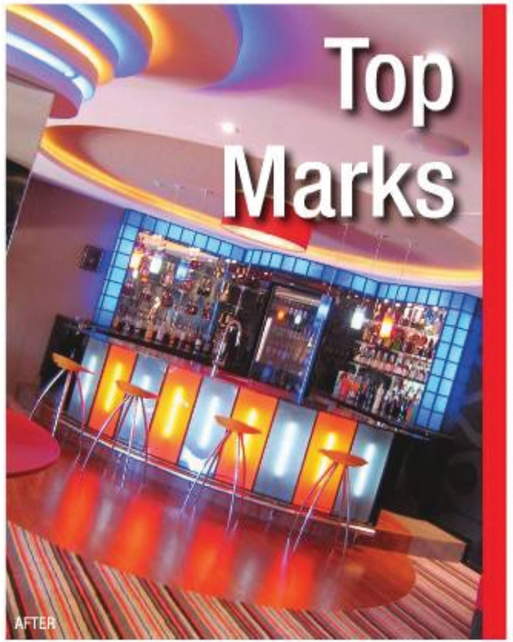

Top Marks

Interior designer Mark Gacesa has returned to the Coast, and his wonderfully personalised and eclectic designs are transforming local homes and businesses, discovers Jemma Pearson.

Born into an interior design family – the Gacesa business in Currimundi operated for 35 years – it was no surprise that Mark Gacesa's calling was design. When his parents retired from the business, Mark moved from the Coast to practise his craft in other regions of Australia. He recently returned to our region with his interior design business Ultraspace. "My business has been going in Brisbane for about seven years and I always had clients on the Coast." Now Mark is on the Coast, too.

It's exciting news for our region, and the home and business owners who've already had their spaces transformed by Mark's style. Just don't ask him what that style is. "It's the hardest question you can ask – my style is eclectic," he says.

Mark explains that when he meets a new client, "I just try to become that client as fast as I can. My job is to then inject as much of my creativity into the project based on that client."

Mark never imposes his taste or ideas on a property owner. He prefers to "take them on a creative journey. I guess I educate the client, but in a nice way, and I educate myself at the same time. One of the best ways to learn is to teach.

"My style is very broad – it's outside the box and creative. I guess I'm a bit of a chameleon. I think that is a really important attribute – not to be a dictator."

It's part of the reason why Mark doesn't read a lot of design magazines or watch what his colleagues are up to. He likes to be inspired in other ways. "My stuff is fairly original and I get my inspiration from bizarre things like street lights. I never copy other designers. My designs are about evolution, in my mind and on paper. I truly create things and not get influenced by other people."

It's what he recommends we should all do when creating our homes and businesses – whether it's a small room, a garden, a large commercial space, when choosing wall or window coverings or a piece of furniture, and whether we are doing it ourselves or getting a professional's help.

"I think people make mistakes when they are trying to copy rather than create something that is a reflection of their personalities, their needs and the way they live. Coast homes need more variety, and we need designers who can bring out the home owners' personalities and take them on a journey."

The biggest mistake you can make, says Mark, is "doing what others are doing".

"People also try to do too much all at once. My advice is, have a long-term plan and let a job come together, and don't forget to tie in the design from room to room. Spend a bit more money and spread the design process out. You don't have to do it all at once. Get nice stuff and get stuff that is timeless. Fads are a big mistake."

It's advice Mark lives by. A project he recently worked on took almost four years to complete. It's a large home in Maroochydore that he's particularly proud of. "In terms of the budget, it's one of the biggest. It's a project that steps outside the boundaries. It's a journey, that house." Log onto Mark's website and you can see pictures of the property, an opulent pad with plenty of marble, a fantastic lighting design and a chandelier or two.

"Lighting is inspirational," says Mark. "It's an element that, given the right thought, can transform a space. You don't need to spend a lot and you don't need excessive amounts, it's just about being smart. Use inexpensive materials but do it in a way that looks expensive."

Mark's ethos has won fans all over South-East Queensland. Right now he is working on several different projects. He is engaged in refurbishing the public areas in the Sebel in Maroochydore. And he's just worked on a home in the Gold Coast, "extensions and landscaping, the front fence and walls. That job has all been remote. I haven't been to the house or met the clients. It's all been done over the internet."

But it's a property in Buderim that Mark is perhaps most keen to finish. "It's my house and design studio. It's a pole home. This house is going to be different."

Think outside the square, take your time and invest in quality materials and expert advice, and your space can be different too, says Mark. Visit ultraspace.com.au.

mystyle