

DESIGNED FOR SUCCESS

It's the stuff of dreams. Young Italian student Eleonora Lucamarini visits Australia, is enamoured by Melbourne, enrolls for a civil engineering course, and is adjudged the most outstanding student. By Chelsea Wallis.

In 2013, Eleonora Lucamarini embarked on a journey from Italy to Australia with no idea that a trip overseas would change the course of her career. She and her partner were off to the other side of the world to visit a friend and travel the Pacific. But when she arrived in Melbourne, plans for travel gave way to plans to stay, as she fell for the city, its people and its opportunity.

An industrial designer by trade, she saw beauty in the lines of high-rise buildings and the bridges along the Yarra. It was in stark contrast to the static construction industry of her native country. Here, Lucamarini saw a dynamic building culture that encouraged something better, something different – something she wanted to be a part of.

In 2015, Lucamarini enrolled in Melbourne Polytechnic's Advanced Diploma of Civil Engineering Technology, where she was recently rewarded for her passionate pursuit of a new career with an award from the Civil Contractors

Federation (CCF) Victorian division for Most Outstanding Student in the Diploma of Civil Engineering 2015.

Design background

Lucamarini excelled at computer modelling from the beginning, matriculating from the European Institute of Design in Rome in 2009. She took her skills home to Civitanova Marche, in central Italy on the Adriatic Sea, where she worked at the Tecnomarche Science and Technology Research Centre until 2013.

Her digital experience brought her into contact with some of the biggest Italian fashion companies, working with platforms for 3D design and virtual prototyping of products; co-ordinating virtual reality stereoscopic walkthroughs of historical buildings; and applying real-time rendering for furniture and shoes in digital 3D product catalogues. While civil engineering appears to be a far cry from 

Eleonora Lucamarini was inspired by the beauty of the Melbourne skyline to study civil engineering. Photos: EDP





ITALY VS. AUSTRALIA

Italian civil engineering student Eleonora Lucamarini says one of the biggest takeaways from her time studying at Melbourne Polytechnic is the mindset of putting all your efforts into one solution that is right for the environment, the people and the place.

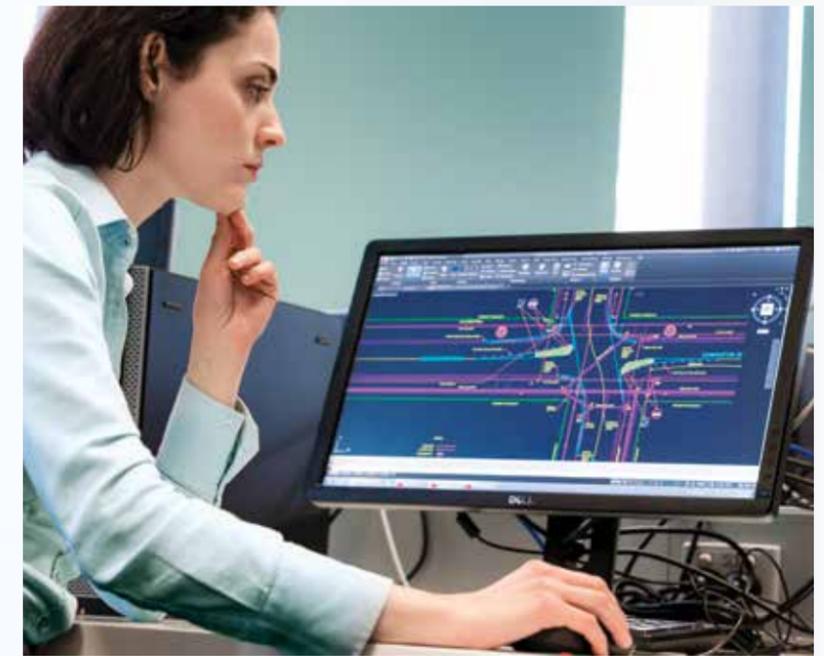
It's not that Italy is without bespoke design. Far from it, Lucamarini points out that there is a long history of world-renowned craftsmanship that still holds some of the biggest names in fashion and furniture.

"But if I design a thing for people in Italy, it's not the same as if I did it in Australia," she says. While the aim is loosely the same in both countries, the methods certainly differ.

Lucamarini says design outcomes back home are particularly reverent of the continent's artisanal history, something she's observed both in pitching work and in execution in Europe, but especially in Italy where it is a national strength.

It's the newness of projects in Australia that excites her. One of her favourite projects before moving to Melbourne was creating a simulated environment where you could change the colours of furniture and materials.

"I liked the experimental side to the work. We had no idea how we were going to do it, but it used my skills from different fields: photography, 3D modelling, rendering, talking to customers and dealing with pressure," Lucamarini says.



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her previous practice, there were strong ties to her design experience that would help accelerate Lucamarini in her new career.

"The approach when you design something is similar to engineering. You find a problem and you try to find a solution," Lucamarini explains. "After I graduated, I worked in 3D CAD and computer graphics, and while that was more for presentation, it's still a kind of technical drafting. It helped me so much for the classes I'm taking now."

Career change

Melbourne Polytechnic program lead for civil engineering Robert Presutti says career changers like Lucamarini, and others who approach degrees after 21 years of age, are often quite driven.

"A good percentage of the students in our program are people who have worked or travelled a bit and have come back," Presutti says. "These students are more mature, they know what they want and where they're headed because their experience is broader."

Not only did she take on the course with the expectation of being one of the older students, but she did it in a second language in an unfamiliar culture. ☒

"At first the language in class was very technical, and I struggled with that because you need to know the names. You can't escape it," Lucamarini recalls.

"And the culture, especially the sense of humour, was very different," she laughs. "I didn't know if they were teasing me or if it was serious or friendly. You make jokes with your boss, and that's fine. That's something we don't have much of in Italy. At first it was a bit shocking, and now it's fantastic. I love it."

It's an attitude that her teachers praise.

"She's contentious, always probing to ask questions, always offering assistance to classmates and motivating them through problem-solving exercises," Presutti says.

"We nominated her for the award and are so proud she won it. It was a really great moment for her, for the department and for our program."

Recognising continuing education

Only in its third year, the CCF is pushing for more recognition for students and training programs that create the future of the building industry.

Lucamarini was one of 12 recipients at the April awards dinner for excellence in 2015, which also recognised

interns, employers, apprentices and women in the Victorian construction industry.

CCF Careers Adviser (Vic) Faye Doherty says the federation wants to encourage people to keep developing their qualifications, and that's why it recognises the award for Most Outstanding Student in the Diploma of Civil Engineering.

"It's based around excellence, professionalism, work ethic and potential leadership," Doherty says. "Lucamarini came up very favourable in all those areas."

Looking ahead

Lucamarini says when her name was announced she was very surprised and overwhelmingly happy.

"I found it amazing that Melbourne Polytechnic didn't think twice about nominating international students," Lucamarini says. "Besides the award, I think the most useful thing was to meet people who work in the industry and start to have conversations."

Lucamarini is scheduled to complete her degree at the end of 2016, and she hopes to move directly into her new profession in Melbourne, with aspirations to co-ordinate with engineering teams. ●

Eleonora Lucamarini and Melbourne Polytechnic's Robert Presutti on campus. Photos: EDP

