



Wilding Wallpaper Design and Production needed an identity and rebrand and through Design Victoria's Business Immersion program, Ziegler Design rose to the challenge. William Wilding's business embodies a commitment to traditional craftsmanship within the context of contemporary art and design.

#### So what is the brief history of Wilding Wallpaper?

The idea for 'Wilding' came during my involvement in a German Art Collective situated in a derelict network of buildings on the edge of the Hamburg CBD. I was undertaking post-graduate studies in the Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion at the time. When first I conceived of the idea I was coming to grips with Plato's big-picture of the world. It was 2005.

'Wilding Wallpaper Design and Production' was originally called 'Heartsing'. Esther Wilding and I wanted the business to generate positivity through the products and services it offered. We felt activities dominated by thought become sterile, and we wanted to balance conception and perception into work that promoted happiness and emanated joy.

We changed the name to 'Wilding' because we felt 'Heartsing' sounded like a line of underwear. The word 'Wilding' is a romantic rendering of the Cycle of Life, the same process I was exploring at the art collective, the same process reflected in Plato's system, the same process we were experiencing with the birth of Lucy, our daughter.

We then returned to Australia because my father had dementia. At the same time I knew the Australian wallpaper industry had shut down at the end of the 1980's. We recognised a chance to recreate an unsaturated area of business.

'Wilding Wallpaper' was the first manifestation of a creative manufacturing brand. To build 'Wilding Wallpaper', first 'Wilding' had to create a Supply Chain.

'The Victorian Wallpaper Supply Chain Project' gave us a holistic understanding of business, and an unorthodox way of entering the market. By recreating the Supply Chain (from import, to design, to manufacturing, to marketing, to sales, to export) we were able to create good



relationships and build a profile that would gradually enable us to branch into other areas.

#### What role do you play within the company?

That's a question I generally try to avoid. On the one hand I produce wallpaper; on the other hand I provide creative direction and drive. We are a small business and I can write copy if needs be. More than anything I take responsibility for the little things required to keep multiple projects moving. That might be organising a photo-shoot in the morning, exposing a design after lunch, writing emails to clients and prospective partners in the evening.

Esther Wilding is a Communication Designer and I have experience with interiors. We couple these skills with our screen-printing business to realise whatever the client or Environment requires. I have a strong sense of belonging. Things always seem to fall into place at the right time.

#### What made you want to pursue the Wilding Wallpaper company?

Wilding Wallpaper Design and Production has enabled us to marry creativity to commerce in

an area that was so unattractive to begin with it was more or less ours to define. We felt the world was becoming increasingly flooded with mindless products and services. We believed there was a market for mindful work that not only satisfied the face of the client but the ambitions of its soul. We felt art and design studios would supersede ad-agencies. Interiors were still very 'minimal'. I am interested in Production Design. I felt custom-made wallpaper could contribute to many interesting fields.

We decided to bring products and services charged with the essence of humanity into people's lives. We felt artists and designers were undervalued in society and we wanted to harness their insight into works that promoted well-being. Wallpaper was the most convenient vehicle. It enabled us to kill a number of birds with one stone.

#### How did you choose the people you wanted to work with for the company?

I am attracted to people with humility. I admire open-minded people who interact with the world and invest themselves into their work: people charged with the power of their principles,



people who believe in what they do, value their word and move mountains to realise what they say they are going to do. I want to work with intuitive people who have a sense of the repercussions of their choices.

Each choice reveals the next phase of what we are actually doing. I try to create a permeable environment that admits many forces into each choice. The greater the input of a collaborator the greater the impact they have on direction. Collaborators often bring people. The right people tend to turn up at the right time.

**There are a number of people who work for Wilding Wallpaper, how do you approach and choreograph a new project with them?**

We have done a lot of work with Simon Mee, Lecturer in Arts Management and Collections Curator at the University of Southern Queensland; Jens Waldenmaier, fine art and commercial photographer from Germany; Caitlin Ziegler, illustrator and past President of AGDA (Victoria); and Simon Mundy, the current President of AGDA (Victoria).

Generally speaking we run multiple projects at once. This allows us to shape with what would normally be disparate forces. In the last instance

we restored two houses, worked on 'Wilding' with Design Victoria and curated 'The Wallpaper Project' with the USQ. It involved a great deal of trust, clear communication and a commitment to the power of timing.

Esther and I work from a Victorian terrace house that is papered top to bottom with wallpaper we made. Old and new collaborators meet here. Simon Mee introduces people from the art world. Caitlin and Simon know Design. Jens has worked internationally for many years. The key is in our willingness to work for each other.

**You've re-introduced a heavily traditional element into interior design. How do you feel the medium will stand in such a digital age?**

There are many types of wallpaper. What type it is often depends on the process used to produce it. There is more digital wallpaper around now -though I believe the quantity of that is still far below the quantity of paper rolling off the presses built during the Industrial Revolution. We screen-print wallpaper. We have moved with the times. The digital age is fantastic.

Wallpaper developed out of the textile industry in response to changes in political policy. It belongs to

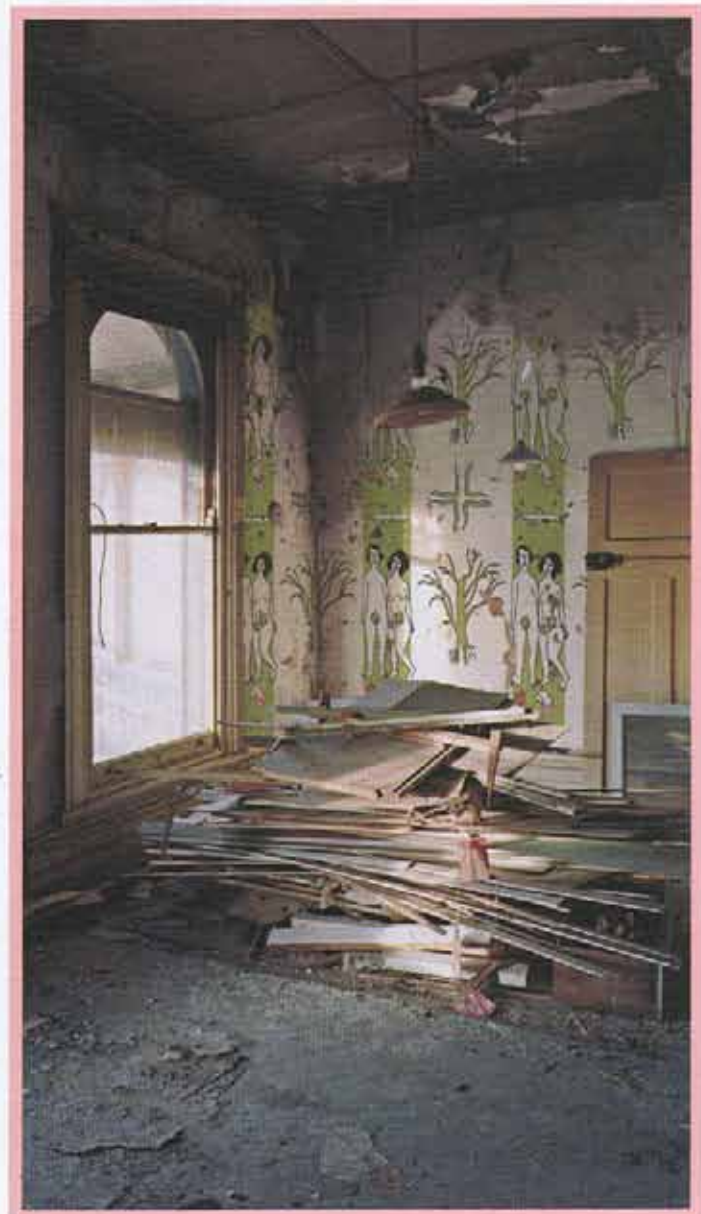
the architectural scheme of decoration. It's essential role is to create mood. One can be very creative with wallpaper, particularly if they deploy it in concert with the other elements party to the drama intended for a particular room.

**What is something new or exciting you have learned working with such traditional techniques?**

It is miraculous to me how mindfully produced designs somehow transmit not only the intention but also the essence of the designer. This is what we were investigating in 'The Wallpaper Project'. I think it's amazing that a design developed with a particular outcome in mind can invoke the behavior envisaged of the people exposed to it literally centuries after the designer has died.

**How did the idea for the Wallpaper Project come about? What was your motivation to pursue it?**

'The Wallpaper Project' is a joint venture between the University of Southern Queensland and 'Wilding'. We commissioned a number of artists to produce designs that had the look and feel of traditional wallpapers. The collection was turned into an exhibition that is now touring Regional Queensland. The designs are also available for sale.





I first had an inkling of an idea for this in Hamburg. Simon Mee contacted me out of the blue with the same idea once we had returned. Simon is investigating the relationship between art and decoration in his work — though for me 'The Wallpaper Project' was always an exercise in marketing designed to launch us into 'The Immaculate Perception Project'.

**What processes were involved when you were selecting designers and artists to be part of The Wallpaper project?**

'The Wallpaper Project' was fuelled by trust. Simon knew what he wanted to achieve and I wanted to support him in the achievement of that. He had done a lot of research before he contacted me. He chose the artists. He in turn fully supported me in the selection of Caitlin Ziegler as the main designer, or Design Manager. She suggested working with Simon Mundy. Esther did an incredible amount of work for 'The Wallpaper Project'. Without Esher's input it would never have got off the ground.

**How do you approach and plan an exhibition? What processes are involved?**

My approach to planning an exhibition involves having an idea to explore, getting to know that idea and then finding an interesting way to go about realizing it. I then look around for the type of people I hope will become involved. It's then a case of creating direction with them until we have an approximate destination in which we all believe. I then think about the project all the time. The budget is always on my mind. How can we transform this obstacle into the power we require

to roll into the next phase? What was the next phase again? Oh, yes, that's right. Stop. Reflect. Keep moving.

**What was the most time consuming or tedious aspect of composing such an event?**

The most time consuming, tedious, frustrating, character-revealing, pedantic aspect of composing 'The Wallpaper Project' involved setting and maintaining standards across the board. This involved partaking in every choice Simon and Caitlin invited me to partake in. These ranged from concept, to funding, to design, to manufacture, to marketing, to exhibition, to sales.

**Big events and exhibitions can sometimes be taxing. How do you prepare yourself for something like this?**

I take care of my diet, exercise regularly and sleep well. I stay close to home and pay attention to the 'little' things: I stalk the house for unjustifiable mess, battle the pigeons in the garden, and terrorize my family with a crazy excess of wild energy. Preparation involves keeping my mind open and the conduits clear. It means knowing the Environment I belong to at the time, so as to recognize the catalysts opening the future right up then and there.

**What is something you have found rewarding from this experience?**

The first thing is getting to know the people you are working with. I love seeing people grapple with impossible problems, believe in themselves and then click magic the problem unravels and the solution is there. I love the spectacle, the timeless, monotonous dance on the shores of the Red Sea.

The second thing is feeling myself change with a project; watching the superfluous or dead aspects of myself disappear.

**Do you have any plans for another Wallpaper Project? Or plans to extend the previous project into something bigger?**

There is still a long way to go with the current 'Wallpaper Project'. Everybody has invested a lot of energy into making the idea work. We are all looking forward now to making a return. This will involve setting up more gallery exhibitions around the country, and opening new markets up abroad: everywhere the project goes, we go wit it - though 'The Wallpaper Project' really was one part of a bigger plan.

There are a number of projects taking shape now about which I feel very positively. Caitlin is developing something with a friend that I believe is a very good reflection of 'now'. Jens has got something moving in Hamburg that I am hoping to contribute to in some way. There is the North Richmond Public Art Project which Simon Mee and I both feel will be deeply challenging and highly rewarding. There has been talk about doing something in the city with the State of Design Festival. I am watching the Australia Project with interest. 'The Immaculate Perception Project' is never far from my mind.

**Finally, do you have any tips or suggestions for someone considering a similar endeavor?**

I thought it was good what Ron Barassi, 74, said in the newspaper the other day about being truthful with yourself.

