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DESIGNER PROFILE: ROSELIND WILSON

Jade Tilley speaks to designer **Roselind Wilson** about her education and quest for design success



Ros Wilson is the Founder of Roselind Wilson Design. Ros established the company in February 2010.

From Cape Town to London and back again, Ros brings a wealth of experience with her wherever she goes. A consummate professional, Ros has learned all about design and the business of it through sheer determination and courage to succeed amongst her contemporaries.

Ros has 12 years experience in top end design both locally and abroad. Her BCom (Business Management) degree and Interior Design diploma allows her to balance the art of design with the intricacies of running a busy studio. This issue, Ros takes time out of her busy schedule to talk to Interior Design Today about her work.

Q What is your earliest memory of something you designed?

As a child I was always doing things, whether it was knitting, crocheting or drawing. My most prolific design and one that to this day I still talk about was a school I designed. Growing up in South Africa, education was limited so I conceived the idea of The Alessandra Nouveau School of the Arts! I designed everything, the building, the uniforms, class schedules, even down to the application forms that came in a special package. The school embodied everything that I wanted out of an education. The building was designed in a U shape. I didn't want to teach – I wanted to learn and to be super creative and this creation was my outlet for all the creative ideas I had.

Q Who are your design inspirations?

I have many inspirations and there are always names that I try to remember as I collect them. This question actually came up during my time working at David Collins. Andre Putman has always been a source of inspiration to me. Her timeless designs and her own sense of self-expression have always really struck me as something quite beautiful. She was a strong, assertive woman who lived and designed by her own rules. French, wacky, with big glasses and bright red lips, she was a very brave designer and this should always be admired. In this industry you often end up measuring yourself against your contemporaries but Putman had such a free spirit and her life

philosophy was truly inspirational. The world of fashion also provides much inspiration for me – Rosita Missoni for their bold and powerful designs that are instantly recognisable and Miuccia Prada for her eloquent sense of style and sophistication.

Q Which design school did you train at and how have design schools evolved since you were studying?

In South Africa I studied at the Boston House College School of Interior Design, completing a Diploma and CAD drawing course, both separate courses as they didn't teach it together. In the UK I studied at Chelsea College towards a 3D and freehand drawing. I also have a Bachelor of Commerce Degree from UNISA. I embarked on my degree and my diploma whilst working full time and renovating my apartment which was kind of crazy. I remember studying amongst dust and building work. Looking back it was a pivotal moment in my path of learning and so significant for my career as it taught me a great deal about balancing workloads and juggling tasks, especially in this industry, which relies on this skill.

Q Have you ever dabbled in other forms of design not necessarily linked to the world of interior design?

I started my career in publishing. I didn't study straight after school so there was a period where I worked in publishing for sports and health titles, I then moved onto a student life magazine and became the advertorial assistant creating ads. This enabled me to tap into my

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creative thought process and as a result I started on a web design course. I was also a marketing strategist for an international online brand. I think that all of these experiences have really helped my own development as a designer and businesswoman, teaching me the fundamentals of business so that I can adapt them to my company for the greatest success.

Q Where is the majority of your work based? Have you ever worked or lived anywhere else?

All of my work at the moment is UK based. We do have clients based around the world but often their residencies are in the UK and this is where we work for them. We have worked on a number of projects in South Africa, including a Nightclub and have previously worked across Europe. In terms of international design, I would not hesitate to work with an American client as another completely new experience. My mid to long-term plan now is to set up a branch in South Africa though.

Q How has this variety of work in different places helped to shape and influence your ideas on design?

The majority of the last eight years has been spent working in the UK. Prior to that I lived in South Africa, which was tough in comparison. Unemployment was high and this was partly why I chose to study business management. I wanted to be forward thinking and planning, able to adapt to any situation and to voice my opinions and have them heard. Growing up somewhere like South Africa you really develop a sense of drive and determination. You have to be assertive and creative in looking for ways to set yourself apart from the rest. The UK mindset is different because it's a first world economy. The rules and regulations are so rigid that this, combined with my earlier experiences in South Africa, has meant that I've adapted a policy that nothing is impossible.

Q How would you define your design style?

Adaptable – It's all about reading what clients want. I aim not to bulldoze the client or put demands on them, but to adapt my own style to accommodate their needs. I don't want to be pigeonholed into one particular form of design. Some people have a 'style' that totally works for them but I don't find that it works for me.

Q What was your first ever design commission?

It was terrible. The project was a master bedroom/ensuite and a family friend client. It was a really valuable experience for me in terms of how much you get involved in your clients private life. This was 12 years ago. The scale of the project was small but what I learned was invaluable. Be clear and confident in your communications with clients and suppliers, know your boundaries with clients and never do work with family or friends.

Q What was your biggest ever design commission?

When I was working at Helen Green we used to have up to seven projects each. I worked seven days a week sometimes, which definitely taught me how to juggle. Whilst working there I had a project – 103 Eton Place. It was on a good budget but it was vast. At this point I was responsible for everything, I ran estimates and budgeted, I worked on site, and dealt with furniture. It was a top end project so I really had to be on the ball. Within my own company we have seen growth every year to the point where now we are responsible for the interior architecture of the space as well. The latest project we are about to embark on is a Queenspark project, where the whole architecture of the site is required. Every year we grow and develop and our next project will probably be our biggest!

Q If you hadn't become an interior designer what would you be doing?

In the most humble sense possible, I think that no matter what I would have done, I'd have done it with such vigour and passion that I would have strived to make a success of it. Everything I do is an exciting project to me and I work really hard to achieve the best in everything. My background has taught me drive and determination and I carry this with me whatever I do.

Travelling the world is also a must for me. I think it is important to go on one really good holiday a year, taking in the culture and bringing those experiences back home with you to work and into your life.

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