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A TRUE ARTIST

Mark Wakeling has been using his imagination and creative skills since he was a teenager. From a young age he was particularly attracted to interior design and the notion of helping people create a home that reflects their personality.

"Like any artistic person, I am a dreamer. I have the gift of seeing things finished before I start," says Mark, 45, whose business, Timeless Interiors, is based in East Melbourne.

"I think if any artistic person was to get up in the morning and call what they do work, they are not truly an artistic person. Artistic people live to dream and dream to live!"

Mark has worked on a range of commercial and residential projects that have challenged and stretched his ideas and skills. A design project in an office in Geelong won a heritage award and Mark transformed the reception area of Cummins Engines in Scoresby by incorporating the company's emblem, a large letter C, and turning it into a door-handle feature. He also introduced curved and shaped chairs, mouldings, stainless steel and an art deco feel.

He admits he has a passion for French-style home interiors. "It's pretty hard not to enjoy playing with the lovely French blues, lemons and whites with gold gilding and painted white furniture," he says.

Mark lives in an 1850s heritage home in East Melbourne and, when not working, is a sports fan. He loves snow and water skiing, tennis, basketball, golf and yoga.

Why interior design? Interiors are where you live and spend most of your time. It's where you sleep and spend most of your day. It's very important to me to feel comfortable in my surroundings and to feel I belong. I think anybody's home should be a reflection of what they like. It's a challenge every time to achieve this and to deliver perfection. It's not just about fluffing around with fabrics and colour. It's not a craft but an art to be able to manufacture something, to design and proportion it.

What are the hardest parts of your work? Every job is a challenge. If you're not challenged as a creative person you're dead! Mick Jagger was recently asked why he still does what he does and his reply was that he is

an artist and artists always keep working. What designers do is their form of art. Car companies make one or two new designs every few years. Interior designers have to make different rooms and homes every week and that's a challenge. We get to play with so many different things that it can be overwhelming, but it's enjoyable.

What do you enjoy most about interior design as a career?

You feel such a rush of success, fulfilment and pleasure. You feel gifted. God has given you a talent and you feel gifted that you are fortunate enough to make a living out of it.

What are the key elements of good interiors?

They can be any colours. They can be colours you enjoy and good interior design is about balance, proportions and getting shapes and colour flowing. You need to put your own personality into it so you feel part of it and are comfortable with it. Decorating and interior design should be a warm, good feeling. You should walk into a room and say, "Wow, I like this, I like being in this room. I like the experience of sitting in this room." Feelings and emotions are key elements of good interiors. It has to feel right.

What kind of projects are most fulfilling for you?

Any rewarding project is one where you are given a little bit of freedom. I think as a customer, people get scared about giving designers freedom. Some designers can only do a few different colours and styles but good designers can adapt to different periods: Georgian, Victorian, French and art deco, for example. I enjoy working with blacks, whites and greys. I've enjoyed working with a black and white hairy cow, mixing different metals and metal objects and using black and white striped fabrics, French frames, French Louis chairs and smoked glass together.

Where do your ideas come from?

I have a collection of books and I walk and look at buildings and shapes. A dreamer can walk along a street in East Melbourne, Fitzroy or Paddington and enjoy the great architecture. A good decorator never turns off. They are always looking at shapes and proportions. It's a beautiful world.

For more information go to www.timelessinteriors.com.au

