



Clear as *day*

Architect Lisa Day on her recent rebrand, defining her values and the key role colour plays in her projects.

Aristotle once said, “knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom.” But knowing who you are is not something that simply happens, nor is it something that can be taught. It can only be earned – by putting in the hard work of figuring out what matters most, being honest about yourself and developing an understanding of everything that makes you who you are. But we can’t rest on our laurels there, either. Even if you do the digging when you’re young and are fortunate enough to find your individual sense of self early on, the truth is that we change and grow throughout our careers as we learn and face challenges and triumphs. So, we also need to be keenly aware of our evolution in order to continue to do work that we find meaningful.

In a world full of posturing and acutely curated social media posts, people like Lisa Day seem like particularly rare birds. It’s refreshing to come across someone who is so clearly tuned into who she is and how to structure her work so that it resonates with her beliefs. She not only understands how her youth and early career shaped her, but the metamorphosis she has undergone after more than 25 years in the field. And she’s a brave enough person to adapt her business to keep it in alignment with her goals, values and aspirations.

Lisa isn’t only a designer, either. She is also a maker right to her core, and she’s made space in her life to keep up with hands-on hobbies like pottery – which surely plays into her groundedness. She says her upbringing played a key role in instilling her love of making things, along with a healthy respect for the effort and materials that go into them. “I grew up in a family where the majority of things were made from scratch, from the home we lived in to our clothes, toys and furniture. Food was grown in

Resene
Duck Egg BlueResene
Blanched Pink

the backyard and the kitchen was full of baking or preserving. As the child of an occupational therapist and an electrical engineer, there were spaces full of projects on the go, or DIY builds that my parents were undertaking where we would climb through framing walls to take the short route to the kitchen for breakfast. We learnt early to think creatively and constructively through a wide variety of media and I really appreciate that upbringing.”

Seeing the world beyond her home borders was a hugely shaping experience, too. “Travelling as a child also exposed me to a world of architecture that we just didn’t see in New Zealand. It was incredibly inspiring to see the quality of light of different spaces and the fabric of the cities that people lived, celebrated and worshipped in, and how those spaces made you feel. My sister and I drew in notebooks constantly, not necessarily about architecture but about people’s interactions and stories that we imagined occurred within and around them.”

After graduating from Auckland University’s School of Architecture in the 90s, Lisa deliberately took her time before becoming a Registered Architect a couple of years later. It enabled her to plot out her dream career: one where she could combine making, art and science into a business that not only creates inspiring spaces but also positively influences people’s wellbeing – and her own.

Others in the industry will likely be familiar with Lisa’s work through Donnell Day Architects, but earlier this year, she rebranded her practice as Day Architects. She says the new name reflects not only a return to her roots, but a renewed focus on simplicity, light and a responsiveness to the everyday environment. “Over the last 15 years, the practice has grown from a sole practitioner into a lovely team. We are working with

	Resene Double Alabaster
	Resene Quarter Ecru White
	Resene Half Ecru White
	Resene Foggy Grey
	Resene Foundry
	Resene Double Foundry

opposite, above and right: Lisa’s carefully chosen Resene colour palette across the interior and exterior of her Beachlands House project brings comfort and warmth while enhancing breathtaking coastal views and the design’s striking forms. Her expert use of Resene Half Ecru White, Resene Quarter Ecru White, Resene Duck Egg Blue, Resene Blanched Pink, Resene Foggy Grey, Resene Double Alabaster, Resene Foundry and Resene Double Foundry earned it a Resene Total Colour Neutrals Award. Build by Faulker Construction, www.faulkerconstruction.co.nz. Images by Jessica Gernat, www.jessicachloe.com.






fantastic clients, sites and projects that span from residential new builds and alterations to a range of arts projects, such as music recording and television studios, which rely on a good understanding of how architecture impacts all the senses – not just the visual. It has been exciting to see that evolution.”

The simplified name also resonates with the important role intuitive and biophilic design have come to play in her professional

left, above left and right: Full of eye-catching mid-century flair, Lisa Day’s Paparoa House was recognised with a Resene Total Colour Residential Interior Award for its calculated use of Resene Blumine and Resene Blue Bayoux accents amidst a backdrop of walls in Resene Half Barely There, trims, doors and the ceiling in Resene Alabaster and architectural features in warm recycled rimu. In the children’s rooms, Resene Killarney, Resene Splish Splash, Resene Rocket and Resene Balloon bring creative pops of colour and energy. Images by Duncan Innes, www.duncaninnes.co.nz. Build by Robson Builders, www.robsonbuilders.org.



	Resene Alabaster		Resene Balloon		Resene Splish Splash
	Resene Killarney		Resene Rocket		Resene Blue Bayoux

philosophy and practice, which are part of the reason clients seek her out. “Intuitive design is about combining wisdom and a deep understanding of human nature in order to create architecture that is empathetic to human life,” explains Lisa. “By identifying and homing in on both the wellbeing of the individual, community and the environment, we can create spaces that you feel naturally at home in. This is something our clients love inhabiting, sometimes even without them putting their finger on what the difference is. I think there is a quiet beauty and an art to making spaces like that. We get a lot of referrals and also have quite a lot of repeat clients due to their lived experience of being within those spaces.

“Biophilic principles weave into that philosophy well because, at its core, it is about using a language – whether through materials, light or form, acoustics, etc – that our bodies intuitively understand and respond to beautifully. As well as respecting the natural environment, it enables connection – both with one another and the planet we live on. This ability to connect and to engage is an interesting one for architects to consider in how spaces flow together and how it encourages the occupant to move through that space. For us, the study of psychology is just as intriguing as the study of form, light and space.”

Lisa also carries a strong belief that architecture should be accessible and support everyday living – a value that



Day Architects will carry forward into its new permutation. “Architecture is about creating spaces for life. The industry generally celebrates and awards high-budget projects as the ‘be all and end all’, and there is certainly nothing quite like a piece of stunning architecture or an elegant photo of a moment of light and a beautiful detail – it can truly be a work of art. For me, the next test is whether they are spaces that uplift the spirit but also function seamlessly and intuitively to enable people to live their lives to the fullest, no matter what the budget. Is it truly accessible, or is it a beautiful trophy object?”

“We like working with people who have high expectations for the architecture they want to be a part of creating. These people want their architecture – whether it’s residential, community or arts projects – to reflect their core values and their ‘why’. It’s one of the first things we discuss, and our projects should reflect that as finished buildings. The detail, the art and the beauty need to be there, but our portfolio of work may be considered a little like a chameleon; sometimes the buildings fit within their environment in a way that is discrete and subtle, other times they are a little more outgoing. I like to think they each have different and unique personalities rather than mirror ours.”

Once her projects are completed, Lisa finds both purpose and pleasure in revisiting and evaluating the finished work. “Each of the projects and clients through my career have been important for different reasons. Whether a music space, an auditorium, a home, a heritage project or a community project, the highlight of each is going back after it has been completed and talking with the clients to see how it is working for them and their lives, and how it is working or contributing to the neighbourhood or landscape it is located in. It’s such a joy to hear their experiences of living and working in the architecture you have been a part of bringing

to reality. It may sound as though I should probably be used to it after a 25+ year career, but it still is a very special moment indeed. The collaboration on site with a like-minded construction team is a really important part of the process to me, too. A great client-builder-architect team creates something that everyone is proud to have been a part of.”

Lisa’s principled beliefs also feed into her philosophy about colour use. Her work has been recognised twice at the Resene Total Colour Awards for the project-specific way she weaves hues into her work, earning her a Resene Total Colour Residential Interior Award and a Resene Total Colour Neutrals Award. Her carefully curated Resene colour palettes enhance not only the forms she and her team create, but they’re integral to developing the right vibe and achieving the high level of liveability she continually strives for. “We work on both interiors and exteriors in our practice, and that enables us to see the building as a whole rather than disparate parts. We love colour and texture; whether neutral or bright, it helps define spaces, transitions and creates a mood. Often, we will create a colour story so that, as you journey through the spaces, the building and colours are experienced as a whole – not simply as an isolated room. Your memory of the spaces that you have travelled through influences the experience of the destination, so the sequence is therefore important to consider in our projects,” she says.

“Resene’s full range of products and technical support is incredibly useful. They are great supporters of the architectural community, have awesome environmental options and it is always exciting to see the new colour ranges that come out.”

When asked about her current favourite Resene colours, Lisa singled out a couple of classics, Resene Indian Ink and Resene Pohutukawa, along with two newcomers, Resene Kinship and Resene Plan B, from the latest Resene The Range fashion colours collection. “I enjoy using colours that connect you to the local environment and take you on a journey,” she says. “These are a part of some coastal projects we’re working on and colours that I have discovered through collaborative sample boards and mood boards we have created for a number of companies. Resene Seaweed has also proven remarkably versatile in these exercises, and I am looking forward to trying it out on site.”

As Lisa and Day Architects continue on their inspiring path of growth and evolution, we too are looking forward to what they try next. *BW*

To see more of Day Architects’ portfolio, visit www.dayarchitects.co.nz.

A quick Q&A with Lisa Day

What is the most inspiring place you’ve ever visited and what made it so special for you?

“I really enjoyed visiting Yemen many years ago, seeing and exploring the towers made from mud (either rammed earth or sundried mudbrick). From the stained-glass windows that glowed at night in the streets in Sanaa to the cooling methods used to ventilate the spaces (both inside and between buildings) that work incredibly well for the climate and environment, as well as being a beautiful experience to live within and without, it is a special country indeed.”

If someone could wave a magic wand that would grant you more hours in the day, what would you do with the extra time?

“When I started my practice, my aim was always to create a balance between raising my children and doing what I love in my career. I think you quickly realise and come to a place of acceptance that there are quite simply not more hours in the day. It has been a juggle and a challenge, as it is for everyone. But over the years, it taught me that you need to honour healthy boundaries between home life and work so you can truly enjoy the life and family that you have. I encourage my team (who have tended to have similar values over the years) to consider this to be just as much of a priority as their career in architecture, as it’s important for their wellbeing, creativity and the wellbeing of their family. Consequently, I am now fortunate to be creating ceramics and playing with clay alongside our architecture studio in Remuera with amazing clients and a great team, and to be a full-time mum to my two wonderful kids who have in turn grown up surrounded by projects on the go just as I did. It’s not a multitasking skill; it comes down to defining what you are going to do with the hours in your week and then investing time and a sustainable rhythm for what is important to you. It means that you can bring your best focus to the table for each of those facets rather than needing more hours in the day.”

If you could go back in time to the beginning of your career, what advice would you give to young Lisa?

“In the words of Brené Brown, ‘integrity is choosing courage over comfort; choosing what is right over what is fun, fast or easy; and choosing to practice our values rather than simply professing them.’ Align yourself with people – practices, clients, team members and collaborators – who walk the talk. These collaborations are an important part of growing and evolving.”