

Mikayla Rose

The principal designer and director of Heartly shares highlights and insights from her creative journey.

PHOTOGRAPHY *Tim O'Connor*



Hair & make-up by Lucie Stauff.

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I grew up with my four younger brothers on a fairly isolated bush property. It was a 4-kilometre walk to and from school everyday. We had no option other than to entertain ourselves, so that forced us to be creative. We would explore the bush and build cubbyhouses, or even just make a clearing to set up ‘house’. The joy for me was the planning and setting things up, getting everything organised and looking beautiful. **My childhood experiences really informed my later life.** While my beautiful mum always made us feel loved, we had limited access to resources and home wasn’t particularly safe. I became quite determined at a young age to create a different life for myself.

My first career was in public health. On a trip to Africa I was inspired by how happy and joyful the people were, despite their poor living conditions. I worked for the Red Cross for many years, managing health and capacity-building projects across developing countries. It was incredibly rewarding. Then I had a family of my own, renovated a house or two, and discovered a passion for interior design. I would become totally immersed in planning out spaces and movement through the buildings. I found I had a knack for envisioning the result before the work was done.

I needed to know more so I studied residential drafting at TAFE and interior design online. In 2009 I established my business, Heartly, part-time, initially just helping out friends and friends of friends. I maintained my career in public health for a few years, juggling that with family and part-time design work. Then in 2013 I ran the Boston Marathon – the year terrorists set off bombs at the finish line, killing three people and injuring hundreds of others. It was both the most euphoric and most horrific day of my life, and reminded me of the fragility of life. I took the plunge and focused on design full-time. I haven’t looked back.

I love the relationships we develop with our clients. It’s so important for designers to completely understand what homeowners want to achieve and I consider it an honour that people trust me and my team with such a significant emotional and financial investment – for many, a large-scale renovation is a once-in-a-lifetime thing.

My work days are usually structured around client meetings. It could be a brief, design presentation, selections meeting or site visit.

We always have multiple projects at various stages underway simultaneously, so either side of a meeting I could be working with one of my team members on a design or on another aspect of the business.

I don’t really have a fixed aesthetic. My team and I work hard to really understand what the homeowners want, so our design intent always revolves around that. But most of our work could be described as relaxed, clean, personalised, layered, balanced and – usually – serene.

I am so proud of the Heartly team, and the acknowledgement of our work at the Australian Interior Design Awards was a real honour. But the most wonderful achievement that we share as a team is the delight and sincere appreciation from our clients when we visit them in their completed homes.

Australia has such a strong and exciting art and design community. I could list many, but some of my favourite local creatives include artist Belynda Henry, interior designer Carole Whiting and architect Clare Cousins.

Getting enough rest is important for my creativity. I need down time to create the head space to think broadly and creatively. I often find solutions to things while walking or running or doing repetitive work in the garden.

I try to be focused while I’m at work so when I get home, I can give all my attention to whatever is happening there. I am quite good at separating the two. I think that’s the secret to maintaining work/life balance.

The Wilfred chair by Jordan is among my favourite design pieces. So, too, is the Paulistano armchair by Paulo Mendes da Rocha, the Highline pendant by Archier and the Mangus Space Rhombus rug by Gan.

I’ve just finished reading Still Life by Sarah Winman and now I need to go to Florence [where it is set]! I also loved *Before the Fall* by Noah Hawley and *The Happiest Man on Earth* by Eddie Jaku.

A travel destination that has inspired my work is the Hudson River Valley in upstate New York. It has beautiful, wide streets flanked with historic buildings; there is a humble simplicity to the town, nothing is pretentious or ostentatious.

My dream project to design would be a cosy retreat in the Victorian High Country, with long mountain views, flanked by bush and perhaps a creek in the valley. **H&G Heartly; heartly.com.au.**



MIKAYLA’S FAVOURITE THINGS
Highline pendant light, Archier. Winter Landscape art print by Belynda Henry, Greenhouse Interiors. *Still Life* book by Sarah Winman. Paulistano armchair, designed by Paulo Mendes da Rocha for Objekto, available at Hub Furniture.

OPPOSITE Mikayla with her beloved pooch, Sully, in her beautiful studio. Painting by Belynda Henry. Nuur table by Arper. Bench seat by JW Furniture for Project 82.