



Dumbo feather, pass it on.

ISSUE NINE: Ray Lawrence. Brigid Hardy. Danny Almagor. Robyn Beeche. Craig Ruddy.



BRIGID HARDY

PHOTOGRAPHY TIM WHITE

“I MUST JUST
HAVE THE
IRRESISTIBLE
URGE TO JUST
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A BIT ASKEW
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TO MAKE
PEOPLE THINK
A LITTLE
DIFFERENTLY.”



Brigid Hardy is a crusader – if she’s not defending human rights she’s changing the way we wash our dishes... and knickers, and pillowcases, and windows. Starting a business to ‘try to change the world’ may seem like a tall order but Brigid is no stranger to swimming out of her depth. As a fresh law graduate she played a key role in the reform of New Zealand’s Domestic Violence Legislation. Then, after obtaining a Masters in Law from Harvard University on scholarship she returned to New Zealand to be legal private secretary to the Governor General. A stint working for prestigious management consulting firm, McKinsey & Company, followed during which she was fortunate enough to meet one of New Zealand’s most successful entrepreneurs and philanthropists, Stephen Tindall. Tindall believed in her enough to task her with getting one of his ideas off the ground – ‘green’ cleaning products. Much like Brigid herself, the resulting B_E_E (Beauty Engineered for Ever) products are in a league of their own – as beautiful on the inside as on the out. And they work. Their website states that they “believe being green doesn’t mean you have to compromise on beauty and performance” and neither do we... Df

Df Where do you think your strong sense of right and wrong stems from?

Brigid I think it’s all about the rewards and the fun of fighting for something you believe in, and that you believe can make a difference. I love the energy of being part of a big purpose and the challenge of it. That whole ‘just imagine’ feeling. It’s funny, with B_E_E people get that sense that it’s about something really big so it stops being just about cleaning products and starts being about a whole attitude to buying, to their lives, to the world. And from that you get this virtuous circle because all kinds of people start relating to it really personally, in a way that they might not normally. It stops being just a job, just a client, just a product. Suddenly it’s something much more individual and more rewarding. You get caught up in it. I love that feeling of purpose, possibility and belonging. That’s probably why most of my jobs have been about crusading for one thing or another. I used to work for Doug Graham, the (New Zealand) Minister of Justice, and Treaty Negotiations and Attorney General. He was someone who really inspired me. He crossed so many different boundaries, achieved so much and brought in so many different people, uniting them all with a single purpose. He’d just cut straight to the heart of everything by finding the common sentiments that touched everyone. I loved it there.

Df How much is B_E_E a reflection of you and your values?

Brigid In a way I’ve sort of grown into it. I’ve had the real luxury of growing with B_E_E, but there’s always been a very, very close connection between what I think is important and what B_E_E does. Maybe more than reflecting me,

it is all about the person I want to be; strong, brave and courageous but also fun,

light-hearted and alive... On a mission, wanting to change the world – but not in a moralising, painful way. Hopefully it’s too charming for that. I think B_E_E challenges you too though, it’s quite revolutionary, but in a positive, personal way. That’s where its strength is – it’s got this purpose, but it’s inclusive (*see page 36 *Making it personal*). You’re invited and inspired because it only works if lots of people believe in it too. Actually, B_E_E reminds me quite a bit how I want to be - like when I see it lying around my house and I smile because know I’m not quite that cool. I should explain though that environmental cleaning products wasn’t my idea - it was Stephen Tindall (The Warehouse’s founder) who said, ‘Maybe we could do this’ and at first I thought it was ridiculous.

How did you meet Stephen?

Df When I was still at McKinsey (& Company, management consultancy) the Tindall Foundation people came in to see us and suggested this environmental cleaning product idea. We thought that if it was possible to do that, then surely Unilever would have already done it. Then later when I was thinking about ethical supply chain stuff I emailed Stephen and he

told me he'd been looking at all of these environmental business ideas. He asked me what I thought of what he was doing in that space and I told him 'not much really', but he was really just so keen on this environmental cleaning products idea. I said to him, 'Look I'm really interested in human rights, and I'm interested in design and things, I'm not sure that this is where I'm at, I'm not really a hippy greenie.' He said, 'I think that's why you should do it, you can take people on your journey.' I think that was a really valuable insight because in taking his green cleaning products idea and turning it into something that I could be really proud of, I pulled in all the things I thought were important and loved. When I left McKinsey, I was craving something with a real purpose, I was like, 'I'd love to get back into the whole human rights thing'.

I was craving some creativity too,

like, 'god, I'd really love to just go right down that creative path a get more into the design area...' So in a way I completely, selfishly have tried to bring all that together. I didn't think it could work unless we had the rigour, the design, the purpose and, most of all, the fun of it. I wasn't one of those people who would buy beige-looking \$12 dishwasher from Europe and not even know why it was eco-friendly...

Why did you leave consulting if you didn't know what you were going to do?

Df Frustration. And I was actually quite tired. I began to feel quite isolated. I'd see my friends for these power catch-up lunches and buy my clothes in airports.

What made you think you could do B_E_E?

Df I love something to define myself against – and both standard, multinational cleaning products and the grubby-green variety provided plenty of material for that. I knew that there'd be no half-measures. I knew that I was going to put my heart and soul into it. I knew that the products had to have exactly the attributes that I would want to be exuded from a consumer product and they would have to fit with my real dream of changing the world. The challenge was how green cleaning products could deliver, and be aspirational, and gorgeous and something that people got pulled in by the heartstrings by. How could they have a positive impact, but also how could they really be green? I didn't even really know that. So I investigated every environmental labelling regime in the world and figured out which would work for us. I analysed all the consumer research around selling green products...

Have you stopped doing that so much or do you still do a lot of analysis to help make decisions?

Df Sometimes I do that kind of stuff for B_E_E's shareholders. It is quite good if you can be really committed to the dream but then when they ask the questions you can suddenly be quite analytical and quite specific. It's a challenge because sometimes people presume that because you are idealistic, and optimistic, and really into the creative and conceptual side of the whole thing, that you mustn't be analytical and it mustn't stack up. That analytical rigour was a great thing to learn at McKinsey. Before that when I'd worked for Doug Graham, the Treasury boys would occasionally boof in and win over with their finance language. That was partly what made me go and be a management consultant - to learn that financial language. I could talk about the concepts, I could talk about the law, but it's even better if you can understand all the different languages and fight your cause on all fronts. It seemed as if much of the power was being wielded in the business realm and I knew I had to be able to foot it there too.

So let's just go back a bit. You studied Law at University?

Df Yeah, and English Lit.

Brigid And then practiced as a lawyer?

Df No. When I left Otago I worked on the Domestic Violence Legislation and I really loved doing that. I mean where else in

Brigid the world can you be 24 and be crusading, genuinely changing things and absolutely being cutting edge? In Women's



**Making it personal*

It's been termed the 'reverse effect' and 'user-driven innovation'. In the old days it just meant you bought a pair of 501s and ripped them just below where your butt cheek sat or BeDazzled them (more on that later). These days it also refers to Lego fans telling Martel what sets to manufacture and providing them with building instructions rather than the other way around. It is the plethora of iPod ads that Joe Blogs-on-the-street made and uploaded onto the internet, many of which were far better than those that Apple's advertising agency had done. It is also Wikipedia, the online encyclopaedia of content created by Joe Blogs-on-the-street which anyone can add to. Joe Blogs has been busy.

Of course this is threatening for those who make their wage as 'creatives'. During Sydney Esquisse 2006, on a panel discussing this topic, Mat Baxter, Managing Partner of Naked Communications said so-called 'experts' will have to start producing truly expert work, or, as he eloquently phrased it, "stop producing crap" because the competition is that much stronger, the bar that much higher. It is no longer good enough just to be skilled in the tools of the trade. Johnathon Kneebone, Creative Director of The Glue Society, also spoke of mass individualisation as being the ability to be more and more who you are. Now as a angst-ridden teenager you don't just rip and decorate your jeans, you create your own myspace page to tell the world what

makes you unique – what you read, what you listen to, who you're a fan of. Kneebone was quick to point out "the only downside is for people who are boring."

The technologies driving this are the ubiquitous internet and mobile phone. Internet enables true democracy (amongst those with an internet connection), freedom and global communication. Historically the domain of corporations with multi-million dollar advertising budgets, never before has an individual had the ability to reach millions. Also a factor is the affordability and usability of programmes like FinalCut Pro for making movies and Photoshop for creating images. Suddenly the tools of creativity are available to almost everyone. With the rise of blogs (no relation to Joe) anyone can be a reporter. Similarly, anyone can be an editor, curator and programmer. You'll decide what you want to watch on digital TV, what e-newsletters come into your inbox, what playlist you'll listen to and when. It's the democratisation of creativity.

The challenge for corporations is to embrace this phenomenon by letting go of control and inviting users in; encouraging them to unleash their creativity on a product, letting them customise it, relaxing copyrights, sharing proprietary information and starting a dialogue. If not, they risk facing the same fate as Encyclopaedia Britannica and the BeDazzler. "The what?" Exactly. (mybedazzler.com)

Refuge and places like that I would see the commitment, the passion, but also the lack of resources and infrastructure, and the amount of time those people would spend staying funded as opposed to just delivering. I studied the kind of Law most related to my slightly rebel streak. A lot of law is about understanding the framework meticulously and then applying it to a situation. But I was like, 'How can we change the framework?' So the papers I studied were all about how the framework could be improved. The Human Rights Movement, and I guess a lot of the social causes and things, are all based on situations where a very straightforward application of a legal structure just doesn't seem to work – that's the bit I was interested in.

How did you know that was what interested you even before you went to University?

Df You know how you know when you're little, and your mother turns around from the kitchen sink and says, 'Oh Brige, I hope you fight for a great cause one day, because you're sure committed.' I had a sense of, or a need to differentiate myself or something. I felt at McKinsey when I was being told off for wearing the wrong clothes, it was like, I would have worn the 'right' clothes but everyone was wearing the 'right' clothes, so I was dressing like gypsy. But now I can wear whatever I want and I'm wearing clothes I could have worn at McKinsey. Even at primary school, I would think that I was writing down exactly what the teacher wanted us to, and then I'd be told that I had this extraordinary imagination. I must just have this irresistible urge to do things just a little bit askew. I don't think it's really intentional.

Brigid But why would you do things the same as everyone else? What's the point?

Yeah... Have you read Middlemarch? There's this bit in it that's about how people's lives are determined very much by the way that they get up each morning and tie the knot in their cravat, and how they mindlessly go along with these habits.

Df But what about those who thought a little bit more about the world and might be able to change things? It's about those little thoughts and incidents that might somehow, like the tributaries to the river, someday change the world (*see page 39 *Middlemarch*). At university I found myself much more often writing about how the world could be better, than what the legislation actually said. It never occurred to me that Brigid Hardy aged 23 might not actually know what was best for the world. I don't know where that came from although my mum was just always incredibly, incredibly supportive. My sister's like that too. I come from a little place in Hawkes Bay, New Zealand and I remember one time when I didn't know what to do with my life, I was exhausted, just felt completely wasted. We were going to this party at the beach and I was in the car with my family and whinging about this. Dad said, 'Oh for goodness sake, just say you're painting a shed. People say that for years around here.' So there was definitely that sense that whatever I did I'd be fine. I never had any pressure. But part of being brave, and perhaps the hardest part for me, is that not everyone's going to like it, not everyone's going to think you make sense. One of my weaknesses is that I take it all quite personally. At some point you have to go, hey look,

you can't please everyone or you'll end up a murky grey.

Sometimes I want everyone to be around going, 'this is wonderful, and you're wonderful, it's all great, this is fabulous.' But you have to have your more courageous moments when you say, 'That's fine, you don't like it, but this is how I'm doing it.'

And you have to realise that people's criticism of the product is not a reflection on you personally.

And that's ok. There will be people who think you could do it quicker and cheaper, and that it's kinda silly. I mean there are all kinds of mistakes I've made – like this bottle shape, it's not the easiest to fill – but you just learn as you go along.

Df So part of it is not minding so much. You have to mind, but not as personally. We'll inevitably make mistakes because we're trying to bring quite incongruous things together. I love everything to be interconnected. I know it sounds a bit

weird to be trying to do that with dishwashing liquid, but B_E_E is about that, about a web. The times that I just adore it are when all kinds of eclectic connections come together.

It must be a challenge managing all those connections and interests that must conflict some of the time.

I love what we're doing with B_E_E, but one of the things with trying to do things on a large scale is that I don't own it all. Quite a lot of my energy has been spent explaining to investors why this can work. So, although I'm really always trying to stay true to the vision, it's almost a crusade to keep that pure amidst all these things. I feel like I'm going against the tide a little bit. For hundreds of years this is how people have sold cleaning products and I'm like, 'Hi, I'm Brigid Hardy and I don't know anything about anything but I would really like to do it just like this.' For example, we work with this gorgeous French perfumer who's the only 'nose' in Australasia. He works with all-natural plant extracts and gets it all made in France. I'm like, 'Sorry we're not going to have the multi-national, pretend-synthetic fragrance shit, we're going to do it this way. And it's non-negotiable.' Also, I know that the traditional way of marketing this would be a very rational, performance-based TV campaign, but instead we're going to make the labels about an environmental crusade and get into local causes and really engage people that way.

Df
Brigid

It is about the parts of people that are different from the cliché, the more human bits.

Some stockists say, 'The messages are really strong and we really love them, but our customers can't tell what the products are.' I'm like, 'Never mind, they'll work it out.' We have really strong evidence – data, feedback – to show that people love these products and this concept deeply. In some ways it is less accessible so they have to engage more and go deeper.

People aren't stupid, yet most companies treat us as if we are. Sometimes it's fun to have to work something out, and when you do the sense of reward is that much greater.

Df
Brigid
I do find myself saying constantly, 'Time is on our side, and we are going to tell a story, and yes it's going to take a bit longer. We are going to talk to people about things that are important and, you know what, we're not going to have that two-word catch-cry.' I also don't like that negative approach, 'We're not this', and 'We're not that', 'Everything else will give you cancer', and 'Everything else will ruin your life.' I would much rather that we're about being a really lovely way to look at the world and it being really important.

So rather than putting down your competitors, it's about giving people better options instead...

Df
Brigid
The thing is people want to believe the good stuff. I think that we all have many different sides to ourselves. There are those days when you wake up and it's sunny and you think, 'Right, I'm going to go to yoga.' Or you watch the news and it's the part of you that thinks, 'You know what, I might just write to the Prime Minister', or 'I might just get in touch with Amnesty [International] today.' It's not very often, but there is that part of you. I believe that enough people actually have that component in them, we just have to tap into it. Just in little old New Zealand, we spend \$300 million a year on cleaning products, just on cleaning products! I've stood in supermarkets and watched people and it's totally mindless, so if you could make that little process just a tiny bit better then you can actually have quite a big impact. I think the opportunity is quite significant.

What was it like being thrust into a position to have to make those kinds of decisions?

Df
Brigid
You can imagine... I came out of being a management consultant stuck at the bottom of the sea in an Excel worksheet trying to work out how to price frying pans or something, and then I got to hang out with gorgeous designers. At first we

*Middlemarch

by George Eliot, Oxford University Press 1986.

OLD AND YOUNG 119

of age; he had then read
guinea," which was neither
nt to pass for milk, and
re stuff, and that life was
modified that opinion, for
, he was not pre-eminently
ld do anything he liked
ng remarkable. He was
t, but no spark had yet
ge seemed to him a very
the conversation of his
han was necessary for
nal result of expensive
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eyond a general
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esse," never weary of listening to the twanging
strings, and are comparatively uninterested in
edom and fairnesse" which must be wooed with
d patient renunciation of small desires? In the
passion, too, the development varies: sometimes it is the
glorious marriage, sometimes frustration and final parting. And not
seldom the catastrophe is bound up with the other passion, sung by
the Troubadours. For in the multitude of middle-aged men who go
about their vocations in a daily course determined for them much in
the same way as the tie of their cravats, there is always a good number
who once meant to shape their own deeds and alter the world a little.
The story of their coming to be shapen after the average and fit to be
packed by the gross, is hardly ever told even in their consciousness; for
perhaps their ardour in generous unpaid toil cooled as imperceptibly
as the ardour of other youthful loves, till one day their earlier self
walked like a ghost in its old home and made the new furniture ghastly.
Nothing in the world more subtle than the process of their gradual
change! In the beginning they inhaled it unknowingly: you and I may
have sent some of our breath towards infecting them, when we uttered
our conforming falsities or drew our silly conclusions: or perhaps it
came with the vibrations from a woman's glance.
Lydgate did not mean to be one of those failures, and there was the
better hope of him because his scientific interest soon took the form of
a professional enthusiasm: he had a youthful belief in his bread-
winning work, not to be stifled by that initiation in makeshift called
his 'prentice days; and he carried to his studies in London, Edinburgh,
and Paris, the conviction that the medical profession as it might be was
the finest in the world; presenting the most perfect interchange
between science and art; offering the most direct alliance between
intellectual conquest and the social good. Lydgate's nature demanded
this combination: he was an emotional creature, with a flesh-and-



Villa

We work in a little villa in Ponsonby. I catch myself calling it 'the flat' sometimes –maybe a little bit sad but also reflects the way in which it is more like life than corporatia. The phone system is a bit old, and it can get rather cold in winter – but the lovely sunny veranda and little garden make up for that. We can all walk to work, it's close to the cafes, and there's a neighbourhood feeling where people pop in and out. Luckily our landlord is a bit of a B_E_E fan, and has let us stay here on really good terms. She gives our products away for Christmas presents.

Working BEE

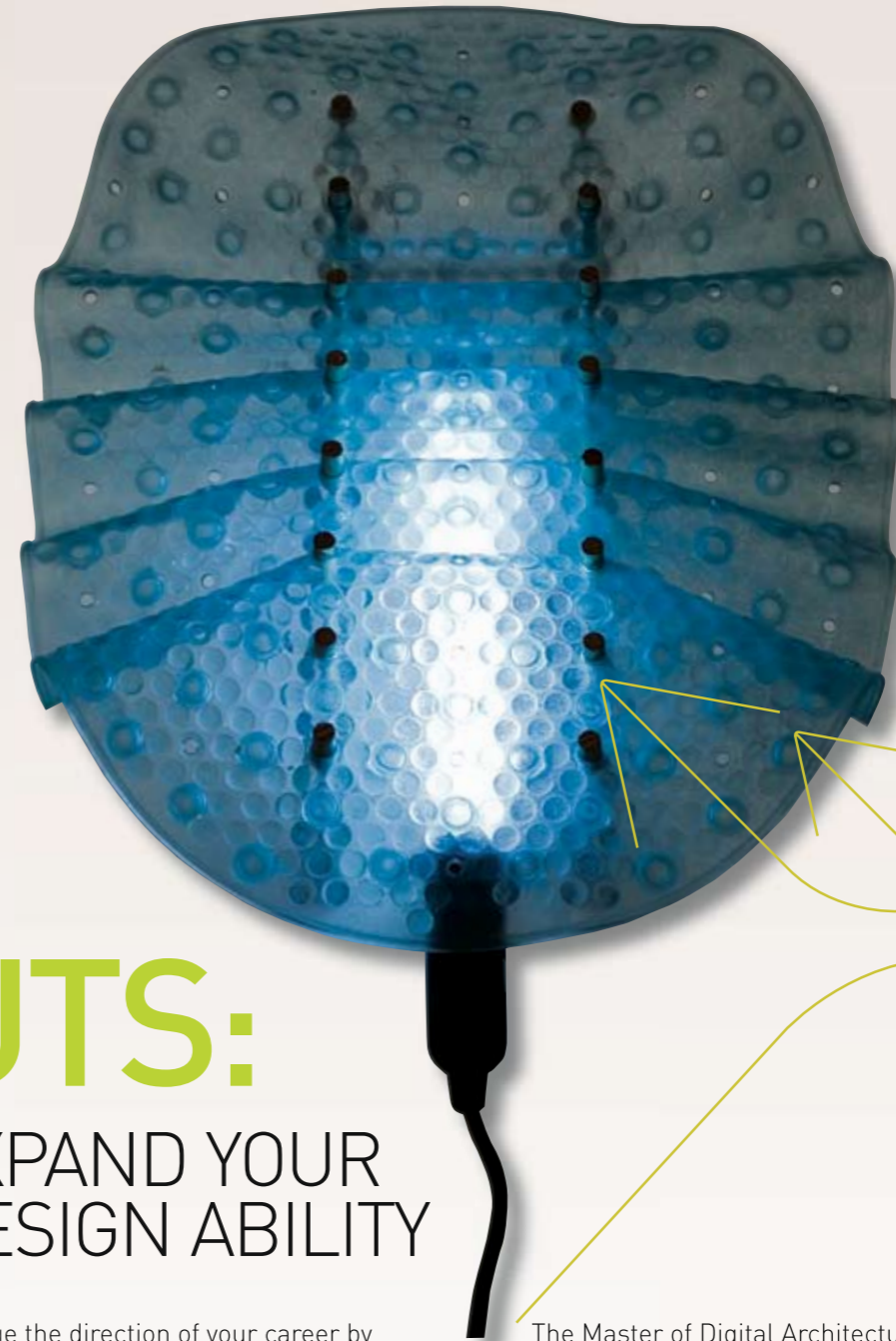
I suspect a few people are amused by how I work. I tend to find copies of my brainstorming schemes and dreams pages scanned in to presentations as much for entertainment as anything else. But I don't mind. I seem to like weaving together different ideas and approaches as I build a strategy – and that tends to make for a layering effect on my desk. Everything always seems to be interconnected. I've been living this business rather intensely for nearly five years so there now seem to be quite a few components to pull in together. I'm not the one that runs the day-to-day systems though, thank goodness – that might be a little scary for everyone.

Labelled

The labels are all about environmentalism being relevant and fun. When I first looked into environmental products I found that many people just didn't think that they were relevant. So we decided that we'd make the products talk right to you – so they'd pull you in by the heart strings and you just couldn't resist. It does really bring out their personalities I feel. I see one in the corner of a supermarket shelf half hidden by the pegs and I want to just reach down and grab it. But that's me and I'm biased. We have a lot of fun making up the labels – and our customers are always sending in ideas. I hope soon to have some where the environmental message is the main part, rather than the bit about the product itself. I'm such a chatterbox myself, it's a little ironic that these products are talking too. We seem to have a lot to say.

Poster

The poster is part of our Love Story campaign. So we all live happily ever after. For us, cleaning products are all about desire – not just functionally superior or leading from an ethics perspective – but also gorgeous to use. I think that the lovers convey this desire, while remembering that being so sound doesn't stop us from having a bit of fun. It was hilarious when the team came up with the campaign – it was a very good friend of mine who presented it and she had me in hysterics. It's just not what you'd expect from some moralising, green cleaning products. And that's the point I suppose.



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*Treehuggers

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course a tong
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ence to the hippies
of days past who were
indeed as likely to hugs trees
as wear daisy-chains in their
hair. Today's TreeHugger is far
more 'this millennium' with the "looks
of a modernist, heart of a hippy." This is
how TreeHugger.com, an extremely popular
web magazine "dedicated to everything that has
a modern aesthetic yet is environmentally responsi-
ble", describes its devotees. It is by no means the only
green lifestyle blog on the net, but definitely the most popu-
lar, and has been "serving design-obsessed, undercover bleed-
ing-hearts since 2004." As green design becomes a prerequisite
for "good" design and emerges from the fringes to the fashionable,
TreeHugger.com nurtures people's growing interest in the area. TreeHug-
ger.com's incredible popularity is testament to the growth of design with a
conscience. It has had 8,800,000 unique visitors, 7,500 posts, served 17,500,000
pages, and had 24,500 comments posted. If appearing on Martha Stewart is any indi-
cation of mainstream acceptance, then Treehugger.com's imminent appearance on the
show as part of its Going Green Week in October 2006 must say something. Here are just a
couple of things we found at TreeHugger.com; STONE PAPER (www.viastone.net): Yes, paper
made from stone. While Dumbo feather is printed on 100% recycled paper, we're still conscious
that somewhere in the cycle trees are being cut down, so the concept of 'tree-less' paper got us pretty
excited. Unfortunately it's only for laser printers, but maybe one day... WOOD SUNGLASSES; from The
Green Loop (www.thegreenloop.com). Okay, this might be in contradiction to what we just wrote, but the
wood used to make the frames for these sunglasses is all sustainably harvested, and they're terribly funky. CARD-
BOARD COTS: from Mothercare (www.mothercare.com). Made from eco-friendly cardboard the cots (or 'cribs')
are also recyclable and can be disassembled and flatplacked for easy transportation to the parents-in-laws. Ideal really...

TreeHugger also runs great
design competitions like the
current one, Umbrella Inside
Out, which encourages people
to come up with designs that
use old umbrellas, those that
have been blown inside out
– quite possibly traditionally
the most unreusable item.
Go to www.treehugger.com



Brigid wanted these products to be discovered just through their own integrity. But then you have the reality of the situation in a supermarket environment where it's just the opposite – you almost imagine the product with fists fighting to get to the front. We wanted B_E_E to be Beauty Engineered for Ever – this gorgeous, beautiful concept – and yet the question was 'How can this thing sell in an everyday environment in an FMCG (Fast-Moving Consumer Goods) world which in some ways is counter to everything we stand for?' We'd reached a slight crisis point and that's when the idea of the labels 'talking' came about. I think I'm always fighting, maybe not fighting, but

you really do have to believe in it to have the resilience and energy to keep going.

Occasionally when I'm really tired I think it'd be really lovely to do something smaller and more pure, but then I also think that the real challenge is letting those other insights come into the picture without losing sight of where you're going.

Do you see where you're going as part of a much broader movement?

Yeah, and there is a movement. Do you know treehugger.com? (*see page 42 *Treehuggers*). It really is very big globally but in New Zealand there's still a way to go.

Df

Brigid New Zealand has a very long 'green' history so perhaps it's a bit entrenched in the old perceptions of environmentalism as being hippy, whereas countries which are just embracing environmentalism now are doing it in a more 'now' way...

Df

Being a bit funkier about it. That's interesting. I like thinking that

Brigid

you can have everything that's important to you in your life

and bring it all together. I can't stand

that concept of, right, now I'm popping on my suit and going into the office, and click, I'm going to become Brigid Hardy at work. I just don't like that. I like it to be much more about, 'Ok, you're a human being, and I'm a human being and this is what's important to us...' You just have a much greater area in which to create something. I know that through that more personal approach the people that I meet feel much more connected.

When you do become more open to people being involved and welcome that, then the results are invariably great.

I think it's also the style of how you treat people. At work now, yes I'm the boss, but I'm constantly trying to make people laugh. I'm not very good at being professional. I can deliver much better under those conditions.

Df

Brigid And so too can your staff. That's a great lesson to have learnt.

I know, yet it seems so obvious. Maybe some people do perform better when it's all very harsh and 'goodness me, if you don't do this we're all going to die', but I would rather it was the other way round. It could be so fun. In 'marketing' there's this view that you have to be really clear on where you're going and it has to be very black and white, and very precise. I don't think life is really like that and I don't think human decisions are always like that. I think that as long as there's a consistency to it, and an authenticity, and a purity and a degree of sophistication... To have to justify something absolutely in commercial language can almost detract from it. It's like when you see the Body Shop's been sold to L'Oréal or Ben & Jerrys sold, you wonder if those little quirks, those little touches, will be lost. Like 'wai' means water in Maori and I want to do a label that says, 'Wai, wai, wai baby? Surely we can work it out.'

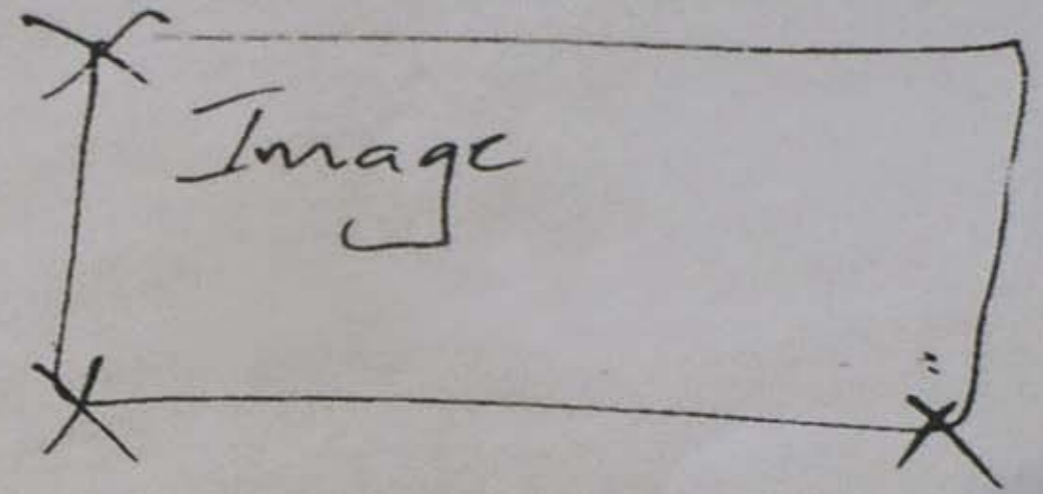
Just imagine /

the future.

Arture with a
Conscience

Value

Individuality
Idealistic
Integrity
Conviction



Irreverent
Personality

Intelligent / Thorough / Conscience

Edgy / Bold / Optimistic / Eccentric / Stylist

Ethical Legitimacy / Credible / Trust

Contemporary Aspirational Employment
Efficacious / Accessibility / Safe / Humour

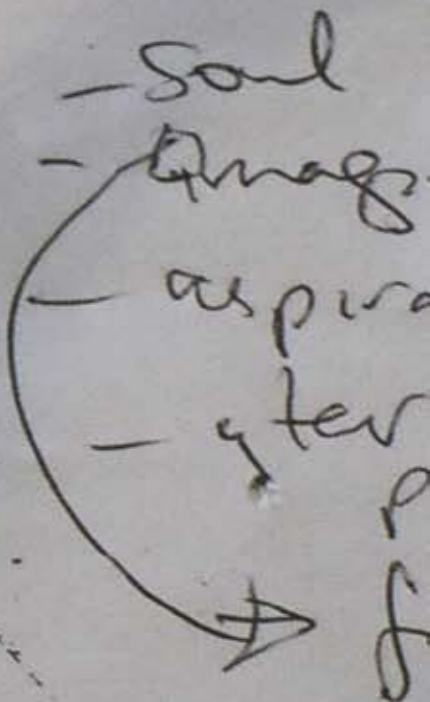
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Leading Edge / Science / Dermatology Tested

Indulgent

Environmental Accreditation
Great Design / Brio / Specialist Co



You never run out of ideas?

Df No, but it's just how realisable they are. Sometimes I've just felt like I'm the one in the middle struggling for it to survive and everyone else brings in the ideas. But, and I wouldn't have had the confidence to say this a few years ago, it is actually mine. I am right at the soul of it and I'm really committed to that. It's been a great process and I've seen so much satisfaction from the people who've been involved in it. But sometimes I have to be the one that says 'no, we can't do that'. That's what I find challenging.

Df It's important who you listen to too.

Brigid God yeah because otherwise you can lose originality and end up on the tried-and-true path. That's the tension.

Df Where to now for you and B_E_E?

Brigid We're just now getting to the point where we've proven that we can make these things, and we've even proven that we can sell some, so now it's more about really delivering on our purpose. It's not actually just about these products, it's what they stand for. Let's absolutely put our hearts on our sleeves. Let's stand up and say, right... Have you seen *An Inconvenient Truth*, the Al Gore movie? Afterwards it was like, oh my god. I just came out thinking that with B_E_E we are just taking this first tiny footstep on this massive journey we've got to take. We were sitting at the pub afterwards dreaming up all this stuff. I was ready to refuse to sell B_E_E in the small packs, everything had to be in 20L and we'd just tell the supermarkets that it had to be that way. I think that sort of sentiment is great – we've got to question everything, we've got to do better.

Df Absolutely, and as you said, it might feel like such a small step, but every one is vital.

Brigid First you've got to make people think a little differently. The majority of people are very busy, the baby's crying, the dishes are dirty, and Palmolive works. That's where they are. Palmolive's cheap, it's available, it's right there, and it works. So how can you make people take that journey to B_E_E?

Df And believe that it works - there's a perception that if it's natural, rather than synthetic, it won't perform as well.

Brigid There is, but all our products are independently tested and this [holds up B_E_E dishwashing liquid] is about twice as strong as the top-selling one in the New Zealand market. It cleans twice as many dishes. But basically if we want to move people from the dirty dishes to the big dream, we also have to give them something more, something pleasant and something fun. Rather than just having a product, think about what the relationship of that product to the world is. I like to think of them as having a certain attitude to the world and to the people that use them. It's a waste not to

impose the same standards on the products you use in your everyday life that you would on your friends.

There's something interesting, and there's something intriguing, and there's something very integrity-driven, and there's something very decent, and there's something very fun, and very entertaining, and something that extends me, and something very light and very imaginative about all my favourite people. I just think of them as being fabulous in their own way and having an edge. They also have their sensitivities, and they're intricate, and they're complex and I think that our products should be like that. The problem is they're just sitting on the supermarket shelf and busy people are like, 'What are you talking about?' If you look at the cleaning product category it's so garish and it's so basic and it's so... You know, we've been buying the same brands for generations and not much has changed. But increasingly, little people like us are saying they need to be safe for us and the planet; 'I wash my dishes with this', 'I eat off this'. But the people who first started demanding more were right off over there in the commune and they didn't seem as relevant. So this is about bringing those values alive and

*Money talks turkey...

... and chicken.

I clearly remember the moment when I recognized the power of my dollar. I was about to order my usual poached-eggs Sunday brunch, when a thought struck me. Why, if I refuse to buy caged eggs from a supermarket, do I chose to not only buy them, but pay twice the price for them, in a café? And then as I was munching away on my non-egg toastie a little later, I took the thought a step further. What would

happen if EVERY person who walked into this café chose another menu option because they didn't want to eat caged eggs? Simple, the café would either have to take them off the menu or decide to buy non-caged eggs. Either way, this move, totally driven by the consumer dollar (or lack of), would influence the growth or decline of an industry.

No longer are those pieces of paper and coins floating around in my pockets just something I hand

over, but they are something I am making a choice with. A choice for the kind of world I would like to be living in. The most powerful move any of us can do to help make our planet a better, healthier and more ethical place is to talk with our \$s.

There are many ways to shop with a conscience, but here are a sampling of the choices I now make and the beautiful products that delight my cupboards...

YOU CAN CHOOSE TO;

By Sharon Szetar

1

Prevent the inhumane treatment of animals in rearing and slaughter by avoiding animal products that come from factory farms. The best way to do this is to buy organic meat, poultry and dairy products. (www.animalsaustralia.org)

2

Help sustain our diverse and unique marine life by only buying seafood that comes from a sustainable fishery. (www.amcs.org.au).

3

Support local farmers by shopping at farmers' markets or local organic stores and checking the labels to see how far your food has actually travelled to reach your plate.

4

Support the people who work the land by buying tea, coffee, sugar, cocoa, rice and any other products that bear a Fairtrade logo. This guarantees that the products are produced in the best and fairest way possible, including supporting the economic and social viability of the communities involved. (www.fta.org.au).

5

Look for cause-related products. There are many wonderful companies out there who are contributing their profits to causes as diverse as protecting our endangered species to supporting underdeveloped countries. (Try www.chocolatebar.com and www.turtlemountain.com)

making them relevant. Part of the mission of this company right at the start was to change the attitudes of New Zealanders to environmentalism and to make them believe that ethical consumerism makes sense. We needed to prove that it could make sense philosophically and in terms of a hard-core business model. I'm still personally really committed to that.

Df People might start with your products and then think about the kind of car they drive, or what they use in the garden.

Brigid Or if they're putting the recycling out... I would love to have the website as a more informational, community-orientated device for that. From here it's not so much about more products and more channels – although there are a couple of new products and obviously overseas markets – but about really delivering on what we stand for. The products are our placards so we can use them to help support environmental causes. They are a touch point with people every day when they're pouring this stuff out. We've got all this space here on the label where we can actually say, 'Hey look, have you thought about this?', 'Go here and find out about that'. It could be "Life's a beach babe... but they're destroying our local one". We are working on a few things like that and a big national environmental campaign on the conservation front. Although we don't have much money, we can give a little bit per product or we can contribute concentrated bulk product. Even though we are a small company we do sell hundreds of thousands of them so we do come into contact with a lot of people and they are the kind of people who would be interested in those causes.

Df How important it is that B_E_E is a New Zealand product?

Brigid The ingredients aren't all from New Zealand, they just can't be – you couldn't make a cleaning product like that. But I believe to some extent that 'groovy green' and 'smart green', and a slightly different way of looking at things, and having a little bit of humour and combining that with something that's quite hardcore and quite scientific just needs to be from New Zealand – it just has to be. We need to stand for that nationally. Just as you might think, 'those shoes are from Italy, of course', and, 'this beautiful designer whatever is from Scandinavia, of course' – I would love people to think, 'that's from the land of Lord of The Rings, of course.' So there's part of me that's on this little mission, like I'm working for NZTE (New Zealand Trade and Enterprise) or something. You might say, 'How ridiculous that dishwasher could actually change the world!', but products, and money, and consumerism is changing and controlling the world (*see page 47 *Money talks turkey*). Here's little Brigid Hardy waving round her dishwasher bottle going, 'We can change it'. I think that's so New Zealand, that combination of idealism and bravery... I'm sure a disproportionate number of New Zealanders are working in NGOs (Non-Government Organisations) and those UN-type things. I know they are, I don't have the stats, but it's that belief that you really can have an impact. This isn't just about dishwasher obviously, it's about consumer products, and an approach to purchasing, and an approach to life and that can change the world. But to think that there's a point where you can start is a very New Zealand attitude. I think that New Zealanders have this awesome way of being both quite local and quite international at the same time. So it's not about 'Made in New Zealand', it's about a New Zealand spirit... but made for kindred spirits and with the desire and the commitment to encouraging that.

Df Grounded dreamers.

Brigid Yeah totally, exactly. B_E_E is about

a strategy with a soul, a dream with an ethic to it, with a purpose, because if you believe it, it just might happen. ♣

