

# A few of my favourite things

This month we welcome Lucy Feagins, author of The Design Files blog, as a columnist. She begins with her design finds for 2010...



Above Teepee by Leila Sanderson for Greg Hatton, from \$600. "By Melbourne creative all-rounder Leila Sanderson: made to order, no two teepees are the same." Phone 0405 543 411.

Below Postmodern Motorcycle called Blackmail, from \$5000. "You'd never guess that these retro-inspired custom motorcycles started life as humble postie bikes." See [pmmc.com.au](http://pmmc.com.au)





**Left** Bholu toys, \$65 to \$95. "Handcrafted in fair-trade workshops in India." See [bholu.com](http://bholu.com)

**Right** SEW bags, \$19.95. "The product of an inspiring development initiative in Tanzania in a project run by Melbourne law students." From Readings Bookstore Carlton, phone 9347 6633.



**Left** Hamish Munro's double bullet bracelet, \$44. "Young sculptor Hamish Munro turned his hand to jewellery design after graduating from VCA last year." See [hamishmunro.com.au](http://hamishmunro.com.au)

**Right** Tinker by Printink ottomans and cushions, \$170 to \$625. "A beautiful range in delicious ice-cream hues, designed and made in Melbourne." Phone 9329 5206, see [tinkerbyprintink.com](http://tinkerbyprintink.com)



**Above** Fiona Kate's wire poster grid, \$69.95. "A cute and original way to display posters or kids' artwork." Phone 0413 707 695, see [fionakate.com.au](http://fionakate.com.au)

**Below** Sarah Gibson and Nicholas Karlovasiti's butter stool, \$319. "Made almost entirely from recycled milk containers. Genius." Phone (02) 8005 4805, see [designbythem.com](http://designbythem.com)

**Right** Sackcloth and Ashes wallpaper, \$360 to \$510. "Handpainted in Melbourne." Phone 0425 756 399.



## Lucy's story

Lucy Feagins tells Ardyn Bernoth how she started her popular blog *The Design Files* and along the way became an internet sensation.

It started not with a bang, but a picture and a few enthusiastic words: "I love, I love", next to a photograph of a bedside lamp. With that low-key entry, on January 9, 2008, Lucy Feagins launched *The Design Files*, a blog filled with items about interesting houses, design-y objects, craft, architecture and trends that caught her eye, many from Melbourne and with the occasional interstate or international item.

The blog wasn't an immediate success. "About three people read it to begin with," Feagins says. But she persisted, diligently posting a find or two every day for those regulars who followed her loyally. Using the simple format of blogging (a DIY website where you can easily post your own content, with newer items appearing at the top of the page, similar to daily updates in a diary) she shared photographs she'd taken herself or borrowed (with a thank you) from other websites or favourite magazines, posted her interviews with local designers, and took readers inside houses she'd talked her way into: "I love to snoop, I think everyone loves to see other people's houses as they really are," she laughs.

Then came a tipping point. In April 2008, four months after her first post, Feagins featured the work of young Melbourne paper artist and book sculptor Nicholas Jones. Jones's photogenic work caught the eye of Grace Bonney, author of an influential American blog called *Design\*sponge* ([designspongeonline.com](http://designspongeonline.com)). Bonney borrowed two of Feagins' photos and posted a link back to *The Design Files* – a simple reciprocal gesture that saw Feagins' readership spike to 7000 overnight. (The exposure also helped Nicholas Jones, who received commissions in the States and was later invited by the Pratt Fine Arts Centre in Seattle to run a series of lectures and workshops.) The second wave of recognition came in December 2009 when *The Times* included *The Design Files* in its round-up of 50 of the world's best design blogs – "the coolest interiors blogs on the planet".

Feagins believes that one of the site's main drawcards has been her commitment to posting new content daily. "I have readers for whom the site is a morning ritual. They sit down with their morning coffee, check their emails and then check TDF. I've realised that this daily routine creates a really close bond which I guess is not comparable to many other types of media."

Why did she decide to post every day rather than occasionally? "Because I started as a blog reader, not a blog writer. I was reading blogs for a good four or more years before I started writing one and as a blog reader, my favourite sites and the ones I was most loyal to →

were the ones which were updated daily." The blog now attracts 140,000 page views a month, and from cyber obscurity, Feagins has been electronically propelled to semi-celebrity. "I try to work out why the site has done well," Feagins says. "I think the main reason is what a friend recently dubbed as the 'Secret Squirrel' effect. It's not an 'expert' opinion, it's like a tip-off from a friend."

Part of the appeal is Feagins' "voice" on the site: enthusiastic and honest, with no pretence at authority, and a fondness for exclamation marks. "I think that is the power of the blog – it's like a conversation," she says. "Seriously, is this not completely amazing?" she asks her readers in a recent interview with designer Jodie Fried. "Perhaps if we all pay really close attention, we will learn some of her secrets...!"

While Feagins is at pains to present herself as an enthusiast rather than an expert, she is not without some experience in the field. Arriving in Melbourne from the United Kingdom when she was 13, she finished school here then studied Creative Arts at the University of Melbourne. "I started working in the film industry straight out of uni, assisting film designers and eventually working my way up to a set dressing role. More recently, I have begun styling for editorial photo shoots."

She's often on the road finding homewares and furnishings, which in turn will often inspire a blog post or give her a new lead to chase up. Collating research, uploading images and posting content to the site then becomes a nightly ritual, rarely completed before midnight. The blog takes up 30 hours a week of her time and while she has started to accept advertising it's not paying her bills, at least not yet. It's more a "relentless side project". How long will she keep it up? "I don't want to lose my affection for it. At the moment, I am not writing for a market, I am writing about things I love."

Instead, she squeezes research trips and photo shoots in between the demands of her day-job – dashing out during lunchbreaks and between meetings. Feagins says her own sense of style is eclectic, quirky and "contemporary with a kooky edge", and her most treasured possession is a side table by Spanish designer Patricia Urquiola from her Flo collection – "the only piece of designer furniture I own!". Coveted classic pieces include the Atomic espresso maker ("a stunning mid-century sculptural design, too cute to use"), the timeless George Nelson platform bench and "Urchin" poufs by young Dutch designer Christien Meindertsma – "not a classic yet but destined for stardom". She's a fan of Melbourne lighting designer Volker Haug, textile designers Printink Studio, and sustainable design visionary Joost Bakker. "Melbourne is truly bursting with creative talent," she says.

*The Design Files is at [thedesigntfiles.net](http://thedesigntfiles.net)  
You can also follow Lucy Feagins on  
Twitter at [twitter.com/thedesigntfiles](https://twitter.com/thedesigntfiles)*



**Left** Dell Stewart's brooches, \$44. "The perfect antidote to laser-cut acrylic, Dell's handcarved, handpainted timber brooches are handcrafted in the truest sense of the word – no two are quite the same." Phone 9419 2430.



**Above** Greg Hattton bent willow dining chair, \$275. "Greg's incredible rustic furniture, lighting and props are handmade in Melbourne from found materials." Phone 0411 624 712, see [greghatton.com](http://greghatton.com)



**Left** Caleb Shea Concrete Sculptures, made to order. "Since graduating from RMIT last year, Shea's work has caught the attention of local collectors – they're still affordable for now ... watch this space." Phone 0431 591 322, see [calebshea.com](http://calebshea.com)



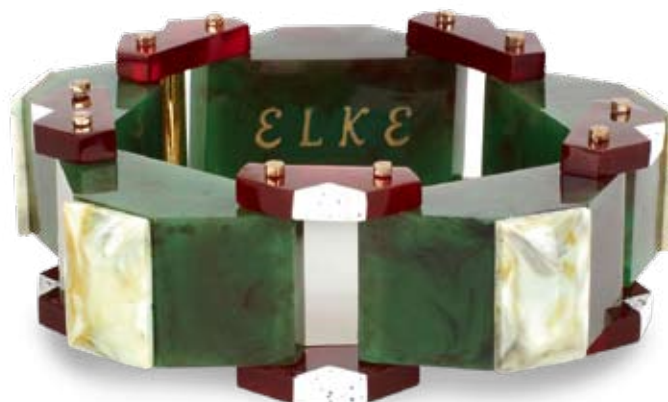
**Above** Tailfeather Leather & Textiles Studio Hawk Owl Bag, \$264. "Made in Scottie Neoh and Natalia Perez's Tallarook studio with a focus on quality craftsmanship." See [tailfeather.com.au](http://tailfeather.com.au)



**Below** IndustriaX palette coffee table, \$495 or made to order. "Part of a range of industrial-style furniture designed and made in Melbourne." See [industriax.com.au](http://industriax.com.au)

**Below** Elke Kramer Oversized Hexing bracelet, \$225 Phone (02) 9368 7711, see [elkekramer.com](http://elkekramer.com)

**Right** Volker Haug's handwoven lights, Lucky Pendant, \$759. Phone 0405 846 813, see [volkerhaug.com](http://volkerhaug.com)



Best in Park dog collars, \$49.95. "Designed in Melbourne for the distinguished pooch." Phone 0412 264 555, see [bestinpark.com](http://bestinpark.com)



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Above left Urban Crop tulips with bulbs and soil, by Joost, \$25. "Joost Bakker's latest genius hair-brained scheme is selling tulips from the back of a van. Each plant comes with a root system intact." See [urbancrop.com.au](http://urbancrop.com.au)

Above Daniel Emma magnetic tower, \$75. "The Adelaide-based duo was included in the prestigious *Wallpaper* magazine graduate directory. Their new Basics range is simple, understated and succinct, with kooky homewares and desk accessories." Available from October, see [daniel-emma.com](http://daniel-emma.com)

Left Queen B candles, \$29.95 to \$89.95. "Made from 100 per cent pure Australian beeswax, which burns cleanly and emits no toxic black smoke." Phone 1300 783 362, see [queenb.com.au](http://queenb.com.au)

