



PROFILES

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Wovin Wall®  
02  
Michael Fitzsimons  
receiving the Instyle  
20th birthday cake.

Fast forward 20 years and Instyle has grown and now has a successful international reputation. Seven years ago witnessed a fundamental shift in Instyle's evolution and success. After buying out his financial partners Fitzsimons was able to embark upon an expansion of the business and invested in the research and development of a significant number of new products (including LIFE Textiles), and opened showrooms in New Zealand and the USA.

The company also seized the opportunity to enter into joint ventures with David Gourlay to form the successful Contemporary Leathers business and Box & Dice (industrial designers and the creators of Wovin Wall) to form Wovin

in the USA, with Mak taking a lead role in the development of the most comprehensive international environmental textile standard that is due for release later this year.

Instyle's Sustainability Reports of 2005 and 2006 illustrate their practical approach to improving their environmental performance such as using recycled paper, changing all product packaging to recycled materials or recyclable plastic and switching to Green Power. They even consume fair trade organic coffee.

It is little wonder why they have been nominated in 2006 and again in 2007 for a Banksia Award in the Sustainability Category (the most prestigious awards in Australia

# Sense of Style

Text by Siobhan McNabb

**S**ustainability is a fundamental key to the success of Instyle, which this year is celebrating their 20th year as a textile design and marketing specialist to the contract interiors industry. Their textiles grace the interiors of Qantas aircrafts, Casinos, NSW and Queensland Rail Networks, Hilton hotels, Federation Square, Victorian Law Courts, Optus and many other high profile public spaces.

What is appealing and arresting about Instyle is their unrelenting commitment to the environment and sustainability. They have received local and international recognition for their knowledge, research, and developments of their LIFE (Low Impact For the Environment) Sustainable Textile collection. Their voice for meaningful standards for sustainable textiles has seen changes to the GBCA Green Stars eco preferred content criteria that will result in better outcomes for the environment and building inhabitants. Impressively, when it comes to the environment Instyle is a company that practices what it preaches.

What was started as a small one man band by Managing Director, Michael Fitzsimons, has grown to an internationally renowned company with over 50 staff.

Fitzsimons entered the textile industry by chance. Whilst studying a marketing and business degree, Michael's then girl friend was studying interior design. Helping her with assignments, Michael fell in love with design. It was then that he decided to get involved in the interior products industry. Upon graduating, having "no idea at all about the textiles industry", Michael took a job with a domestic textile company. Moving later to manage their contract textiles business, he realised that his passion lay there. He was then compelled to start his own company.

"I had no money, so I didn't actually know how I was going to do it." Fortunately one of his ex-employers offered financial assistance recalls Fitzsimons.

"I had to develop the company from scratch. We had no name, no office and very little access to product." Fitzsimons drew on his marketing and advertising knowledge, experience in the industry and his passion for challenges.

Wall as a stand alone business. Also established were subsidiary companies; Instyle Contract Textiles Inc in the USA and VIVID Textiles (New Zealand).

Another strategic shift was the employment, five years ago, of Tracy Mak, a textile science graduate, as Environmental Manager, to research and develop sustainable textiles and reduce the environmental impact of the entire company.

Instyle decided that it would not follow the path other textile companies had in promoting recycled PET (Polyethyleneterephalate – i.e. recycled plastic bottles) textiles, which contain, and can expel, toxic substances such as antimony, benzene and toluene, and cannot be recycled in Australia or in the USA.

The company chose to develop, with The Woolmark Company, a truly sustainable textile – LIFE Textiles that has become the benchmark sustainable textile collection. LIFE Textiles are produced from sustainable, rapidly-renewable raw materials such as eco wool or organic wool and manufactured according to the strict LIFE Textiles specification.

Instyle's work in textile sustainability has also been recognised

for environmental excellence and sustainability). An achievement that Fitzsimons is rightfully proud of.

Fitzsimons states that the company's staff are at their "absolute happiest when they have a major challenge at hand."

Their success in pushing the boundaries has produced better textiles and practices for the benefit of a healthier planet. And it's all done In style.

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