



8 questions with Steve Rosling

After Christchurch native Steve Rosling graduated from the Wellington School of Design's Industrial Design programme in 1994, he embarked on an OE. While extended working holidays are something many young New Zealanders and Australians take to open their eyes to other parts of the world, Steve's travels took him all over the map and garnered him experience not just in the industry he trained in but many others as well. It's something that has had a tremendous ripple effect on the way he's approached his work ever since. Today, his studio Element17 specialises in retail, hospitality, tourism and commercial office spaces with an impressive portfolio of projects that are brimming with energy, character, depth, details and, of course, colour.

"When I left design school, I first headed to Japan and worked at a hotel in a ski resort town where I got to ski every day and go out to the little bars at night. The tiny bars I really enjoyed along with the Japanese architecture and interiors that had been worked out over centuries for perfect size and detail," he says.

He next went to England, and a van trip that started there took him to Scotland where he worked in the bar industry and ended up designing and building a parade float for that business. A short stint in London saw him working in a large-scale office where he got to understand the workings of commercial environments and saw unique designs in furniture and fittings that got his mind ticking. He later went to Dublin, where he worked on retail projects from bulk designs through to high-end boutiques before doing some significant office projects for clients like Nokia and Scottish Provident.

right top and bottom: Steve drew upon his experiences in the UK for the jaw-dropping level of detail that developed a sense of age and authenticity in Element17's O'Loughlin's little pub project. Resene Resolution Blue and Resene Indian Ink were used to give a worn look to the pint-sized building's exterior while Anaglypta wallpaper (Resene Wallpaper Collection RD124) coated in washes of Resene Sour Dough and Resene Brown Sugar and ceilings in Resene Cedar and Resene Gold Dust metallic created the effect that the pub has been exposed to the wear and tear that comes from decades of revelry. Build by James Builders Limited (JBL) with joinery by MWF, www.mwf.co.nz, painting by Competitive Painters, www.competitivepainters.co.nz with special effects by Dream It, www.dreamit.kiwi.nz.

Resene Resolution Blue

Resene Indian Ink

- Resene Sour Dough
- Resene Brown Sugar
- Resene Gold Dust
- Resene Cedar





Of his time in the Irish capital, he says “I enjoyed living in such a vibrant city and had too many nights out in the local pubs where I admired the craftsmanship in the joinery and the patina that comes from the same spot being leaned on for a century.”

“The whole experience showed me that different cultures, architecture, interiors, furniture and objects of design can be so unique to where you are, but they all have references to each other, too. Those life experiences have shaped my career by helping me develop an understanding of how a hotel works, office life, managing and working in a bar, as well as the retail and commercial world. It’s shaped how I treat each project and client.”

Steve shares more about his incredible journey, what he’s learned along the way, his current favourite Resene colours and the designer he’d most love to dine with.

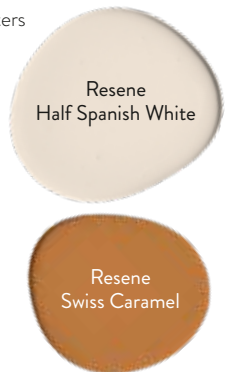
What drew you to become an industrial designer?

I feel like I was a lucky kid. I kind of always knew what I wanted to do even though nobody in my family came from a creative industry – my dad was a ‘suit and tie guy’ and my mum was a hairdresser. I just had this desire to

- Resene Riptide
- Resene Niagara
- Resene Tussock
- Resene Brown Pod

above: Chocolatey ribbons of Resene Brown Pod dance across the Resene Riptide walls and ceiling and the Resene Niagara pipes at the Waffle Haus in Christchurch. This delicious design won Element17 a Resene Total Commercial Interior Public + Retail Colour Maestro Award in 2021. Build by James Builders Limited (JBL), painting by Competitive Painters with special effects by Dream It.

left: Dalante in Lincoln, Canterbury is chock-full of the spectacular details that Element17 projects are known for. Resene Half Spanish White, Resene Swiss Caramel, Resene Tussock and Resene Sandtex Mediterranean textured finish were layered to create the effect of aged plaster walls – a perfect recipe for an artisanal Mediterranean bakery. Painting by Dream It.



top tip

Apply Resene Concrete Clear to your finished paint effect to alter the gloss level and add durability to the finish. If there is a risk of tagging, use Resene Uracryl GraffitiShield as a clear finish to protect the surface.



above: Steve says that designers like Philippe Starck inspired him to have fun and push boundaries. This sparked him to create an illustration of himself with a monkey on his shoulder. "We all have one, so why not embrace it and feed it? It might drive you crazy, but that craziness inspires creativity!"



above and left: Layers and layers of colour and effects brought the charm of Vietnam to Queenstown in Element17's Saigon Kingdom project. Ceiling effect in Resene Turbo, Resene Hyperactive and Resene Goblin and wall murals in Resene Bright Red, Resene Jalapeno, Resene Hyperactive, Resene Turbo, Resene Bilbao, Resene Space Cadet and Resene Picton Blue. Painting by Dream It.

	Resene Turbo		Resene Picton Blue
	Resene Hyperactive		Resene Space Cadet
	Resene Bright Red		Resene Bilbao
	Resene Jalapeno		Resene Goblin

create. I liked tactile things and loved objects you could look at from all angles that would just feel right to look at. I loved the look of some cars but didn't care about their engines.

At 16, my parents were happy to take me along to a Wellington School of Design's Open Day for their Industrial Design programme even though we lived in Christchurch. I remember seeing other students' work and got hooked on the thought of someone having an idea and turning it into a product. I thought, how cool is it that you could actually design something someone can use. I have always been creative and love the challenge of having an idea, a budget and a timeline and making it work.

When I was in my programme, I was with the same tightknit group of 15 students for the duration of the four year course. It was very focused and some of us have kept in close contact despite being spread afar. The Design School was on Vivian Street, and during the all-nighters we used to pull, we would get across to some of the cool coffee shops for a midnight fix. I loved those coffee shops and the cool cats in them.

What spurred the decision to start your own studio, Element17?

A colleague and I were working for a local business and at the time we thought we could do it better. But, wow, you don't really know what you are getting into until you do! After about two years, that colleague and I noticed our thought processes differed. I didn't know it at the time, but a quantity surveyor and a creative are a hard partnership to build – especially when you are still finding out who you are as a person. I took sole ownership at that time and have enjoyed the creative freedom. It taught me a lot, not just about business, but how creativity and business have to work together.

What are your favourite types of projects to work on?

I love working on all types of projects. I love the strategic approach to large planning projects for



above left and right: Resene Espresso, Resene Pendragon and Resene Gold Coast were layered to create an aged effect on the walls of Smoke in Rolleston. Select ceiling tiles have been made to look as if they've been branded with a cattle iron using Resene Moroccan Spice, Resene Fire, Resene Manuka Honey and Resene Cafe Royale. Other ceiling tiles in Resene Cafe Royale. Build by Kiwi Office Fitouts, painting by Competitive Painters, special effects by Dream It.

- Resene Gold Coast
- Resene Cafe Royale
- Resene Pendragon
- Resene Espresso

did you know?

Resene FX Paint Effects medium can be used to create a range of unique paint effects. To get the kind of depth that Steve's projects have, specify two or more Resene hues in addition to your base colour for your painter to build layers with.

commercial clients equally to a small bar with a shoestring budget. One of my favourite projects has to be Lumière Cinema, where I took my client to China for a buying trip where we not only designed our own carpet but we also had it made. It was highly creative and commercially driven and the best thing is that client has turned into a very close friend. Helping businesses get back up and running after the earthquakes in Christchurch was humbling, too.

What do you do if you feel stuck in a creative rut while you're working on a project?

I get out and ask for help. There is definitely nothing wrong with asking for help. All it takes is an opinion from someone else that can set you off in another direction that you hadn't thought about and that can set you on an even higher creative path. I love it when that happens because when I am in a rut, I know that just around the corner the best is about to leap out at me.

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

I would say stop and smell the roses and take time to reflect on what went well, what didn't and what you have learnt from it. Slow down and respect yourself a bit more. It's okay not to know and better to say so and ask.

What do you love about Resene?

Resene has been a great partner for me and my team – they're always there to help and so easy to ask for advice. The colours and the paint are definitely the best quality. I find the colours are true and have the quality of strength that we need in our commercial projects. Resene staff over the years have always been bright, friendly and knowledgeable – and that goes for all their locations I have dealt with over the country. The online specification system is so easy to use, too. They make my life easy when we need to show

- Resene Smoky Green
- Resene Sea Fog
- Resene Boutique
- Resene Unwind

a client what we are doing for them in finishes and colours with brushouts arriving quickly and the testpots are so easy to pick up and run with.

What are your current favourite Resene colours and how would you use them?

I currently really like greens and dusty sun-scorched pinks and oranges. It would be a challenge to get the proportions right, but Resene Unwind, Resene Boutique, Resene Smoky Green and Resene Sea Fog would be a great combo.

If you could have dinner with one design icon, past or present, who would it be and why – and what would you eat together?

French designer Philippe Starck. I love the fact he has had a hand in all areas of design. He has done products, architecture, interiors, furniture, objects of desire and has now even gotten into biotech parts. He's crossed over from industrial design to everything and does it while always looking a bit like a mad scientist having fun creating. I remember saving up for a Starck watch when I was younger; I still have it, all scratched and scraped with the patina of life. And how many stories and learnings would he have?! I would expect we would have a beautiful French culinary experience which would start with lemon juice squeezed from his Juicy Salif. [BW](#)

To check out more of Steve and Element17's exceptional work, visit www.element17.co.nz.

- Resene Fire
- Resene Moroccan Spice
- Resene Manuka Honey

