



by Neale Whitaker

# What's the buzz?

Just as bees are of unique service to the planet, they also appeal to those looking for design with a difference

Where there are bees, there are flowers, and where there are flowers, there is new life and hope. That's one of my favourite lines from Christy Lefteri's haunting novel *The Beekeeper Of Aleppo*. In the book, the honey bees' life-giving sense of order contrasts starkly with the atrocity and chaos of civil war, but bees – and concern over their drastically reduced numbers – have also come to symbolise environmental issues and climate change. Little wonder that the tiny creatures have also become a popular motif in design.

Melburnians will be familiar with the magnificent golden *Queen Bee* sculptures by artist and sculptor Richard Stringer

**“No sooner do the bees arrive in store than they sell out”**

(richardstringer.com.au) that adorn the city's Eureka Tower. Exquisite miniature alabaster versions of Stringer's bees are available at St Kilda's Scout House (scouthouse.com.au) and Fitzroy's Mondopiero (mondopiero.com.au).

Scout House owner Orlando Mesiti says no sooner do the bees arrive in store than they sell out. “It's incredible, but perhaps not surprising. The bees are very individual pieces of art. Australia has certainly found a place in its heart for these unique and environmentally important insects.” Mesiti's Fitzroy Street store even has a one-metre bee decal in its window. In Sydney, Bondi-based textile designer Kate Swinson has long integrated bees in her Native Swinson (nativeswinson.com.au) range of fabrics and wallpapers. “I use bees in my designs because I really like to draw them,” explains Swinson. “They're wonderful little creatures. I like that I can help celebrate them and, by doing so, raise awareness of their plight”

Swinson also urges us to buy ethical honey whenever we can, which segues neatly to The Bee Good Company (bee-good.co), launched in June by Sydney-based creative dynamo Pete Bunce. The company produces pure, natural honey harvested from the Tarkine wilderness on Tasmania's north-west coast. “I started this journey four years ago when, like many people entering their 40s, I felt my life was lacking purpose,” says Bunce candidly.

Twenty per cent of profits from the sale of their honey goes to a not-for-profit foundation he has established to fund research and initiatives to maintain the region's bee population. “People are getting more savvy,” he adds. “They're seeking out quality over quantity. I hope my philosophy is what will resonate – as well as the amazing honey.” Spoken like a true bee-liever. ★ Neale Whitaker is co-host of *Foxtel's Love It Or List It Australia* on Lifestyle, and a judge on *Nine Network's The Block*.

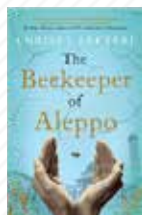


### THE BEE'S KNEES

(from top) Richard Stringer's *Queen Bee* installation adorns the side of Melbourne's Eureka Tower; Native Swinson's *Bee Lover* chair is a popular design and aims to bring awareness to the plight of the endangered insects; a one-metre bee decal on the window of St Kilda's Scout House.



### ★ NEALE'S OBJECTS OF DESIRE



**THE BEEKEEPER OF ALEPPO** book, \$29.99, [dymocks.com.au](http://dymocks.com.au)



**RICHARD STRINGER** gold bee, \$140, [scouthouse.com.au](http://scouthouse.com.au)



**NATIVE SWINSON** chair, \$820, [shop.nativeswinson.com.au](http://shop.nativeswinson.com.au)



**APIARY MADE** beeswax candle, \$65, [apiarymade.com.au](http://apiarymade.com.au)

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