

Robin Wilson

Pioneer in Healthy Home Design

BY BENNETT MARCUS

Robin Wilson has built a successful lifestyle brand in a stellar 20+ year career while breaking barriers along the way. Her company, A BLUE EGG CORPORATION has a design and licensing division. The licensed brand, CLEAN DESIGN HOME®, focuses on educating consumers on the power of a wellness focused interior home ecosystem.

INC's Top 100 Female Founders

Wilson was the first Black woman with a licensed, global textile line, the first woman with a licensed line of custom cabinetry sold nationwide, and the third Black woman with a Bed, Bath & Beyond line of merchandise. In 2020, she was named to *Inc.* magazine's "Top 100 Female Founders" list.

An entrepreneur, best-selling author, lifestyle maven, real estate developer and interior designer, Wilson laughed when asked how she would characterize her professional life. "I'm a poly hyphenate business entrepreneur," said this busy mom over Zoom on a snowy evening in March. "And I call myself a lifestyle brand that focuses on everything for the healthy home."

Allergy & Asthma Sufferer

An allergy and asthma sufferer since childhood, Wilson grew up in Austin, Texas, where she had a holistic pediatrician who advised her parents to make modifications to diet, interior design and exercise, instead of using steroid medications. This lifelong knowledge led her to build her lifestyle brand. She is now considered an expert to guide the 1 in 5 Americans—60 million affected by allergies or asthma.

Three-pronged Company

Her business has grown into a multi-channel, cross-category entity focused on 'everything home' with three prongs: Robin Wilson Home (design), Clean Design Home® (licensing) and a real estate development arm.

"My vision has created a firm that compliments each division. We develop a subdivision, I design the home concepts, and then our branded products are placed in the model homes! As a pioneer in eco-friendly design, we focus 'from the foundation to the furnishings' with eco-conscious, hypoallergenic, and sustainable products. It makes absolute sense," she says.



AS A PIONEER IN ECO-FRIENDLY DESIGN, WE FOCUS 'FROM THE FOUNDATION TO THE FURNISHINGS' WITH ECO-CONSCIOUS, HYPOALLERGENIC, AND SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS.



Along with residential, the design arm has begun to work in the hospitality sector – including design and textiles for the famed Esalen Wellness Institute since 2020 – with the lodging team working with her firm on sheets, comforters, robes, bath rugs and towels.

WestPoint Home's Martex Division

In 2020, Wilson licensed the CLEAN DESIGN HOME® brand in a deal with WestPoint Home's Martex division. Incomplete sentence: The textile collection, Clean Design Home® x Martex, for a line of premium hypoallergenic luxury products.

"In the 1970s, you could rarely find hypoallergenic pillows as feather was most common – and today we have changed the lexicon for hypoallergenic products with a focus on a solution-based luxury brand for consumers," Wilson says. She's excited about the brand appearing in every room of your home, with a deal for mattresses launched this Spring 2022. She says the brand will soon have products for every room of your home.

Macy's & Belk's

Clean Design Home® x Martex textiles are sold at Macy's and Belk's nationwide and online, in addition to an eponymous website,

cleandesignhome.com – and the brand has been picked up internationally in the UK and Japan.

During the early months of 2020, as the pandemic gripped the nation, Wilson's book, *Clean Design: Wellness for Your Lifestyle*, (Greenleaf, 2015) saw sales surge dramatically. At that moment, Wilson says, "As people were sheltering in place, everyone was being told to be 'clean' and virtual calls and classrooms required 'design' and a healthy, wellness 'home' became the primary focus. And at that moment, I realized we were at the zeitgeist of a solution-based opportunity," she says.

Rule of 5's: For Pillows

She created a few solutions including the "Rule of 5's" for pillows, which involves three layers of protection for achieving healthier sleep: wash the zippered pillow cover every three weeks, wash the pillow itself every three months, and replace the pillow every three years.

It is important to remember that Wilson is a pioneer in the hypoallergenic wellness lifestyle sector. And she has sometimes been overlooked, but after two decades in business, Wilson is thrilled that her expertise is being recognized. "It's just wonderful that people are catching on to what we've been teaching all this time."

Social Justice mission supports Domestic Violence Survivors

The CLEAN DESIGN HOME® brand has partnered with legendary Yankee Joe Torre and his Safe at Home Foundation. This organization has a network of safe spaces in schools to educate youth, and safe houses for families. The philanthropic initiative is called Project Lilac. Like Bombas socks, where they sell colorful socks but give away black socks to the homeless – the Project Lilac program allocates lilac sheet items for every Clean Design Home product purchased. These sheets might be the only thing a domestic violence survivor owns in a safe house – except their clothing, and it provides a reminder that they took a step in the right direction. Lilac is the color of domestic violence awareness and survivors have already started to see donations arrive in safe houses around the country.

Robinwilsonhome.com

Wilson had a meteoric rise in the corporate world. She was recruited to Boston by the prestigious Mercer Management Consulting firm upon graduating from the University of

Texas at Austin, followed by stints at Houghton Mifflin publishing and a boutique executive search firm – along with a consulting role on the city's Olympic bid. She joined the global executive search firm, Heidrick & Struggles in the Boston office and was transferred to New York in 1997 – and she was fortunate to benefit from their IPO in 1999. When they went public, Wilson sold her shares. She chased her dream and enrolled in a master's program at NYU, obtaining a master's in real estate finance while working full time.

The Hamptons & Manhattan

Fiscal inequality in real estate development, due to race and gender, limited her ability to get funding to utilize her master's degree. So, in 2000 she pivoted to become an entrepreneur, establishing herself as a project manager for high-end clients in Manhattan and the Hamptons – calling herself "the busy homeowner's best friend."

Oprah and Maya

Five years later, a person from *Oprah* magazine called – and she thought it was a prank so she ignored them until they told her in a voicemail that they would be going to the next person on the list. After an interview, they asked her about the reason for her company name. In response, she started to say, "...If I fail, then..." That person responded by saying, "You've done pretty well, your clients rave about you, so when are you going to believe in you? Put your name on it or we're not going to write the story." That person changed her direction and she leaned into the 'affirmation'. We all need a wow moment like that...

Within a few years, she was doing more than renovations and pivoted into design – with invitations to concept and showhouse projects such as the high-profile projects

including the *Esquire* 'Ultimate Bachelor Apartment' and the *Good Housekeeping* Harlem 'Greenest Brownstone'.

Maya Angelou

In 2004, she was invited to Maya Angelou's North Carolina home for Thanksgiving festivities. At some point during the day, Maya pulled her aside and gave her words of wisdom in front of Cecily Tyson telling her, "Keep focused...what you are doing will help people. It is not a job. It is what you do."

Since the pandemic, Robin remains committed to her vision – and is thrilled that she has another opportunity to build a brand, work with design clients and guide clients toward solutions for a luxury, hypoallergenic lifestyle.

She recently created a crowdfunding so that she could hire a strong team member and create a strong marketing platform. She remains stymied by the fact that her business has an idea that generates revenue (and is profitable!), but fiscal inequality continues to rear its head – she learned recently that women entrepreneurs receive only 2% of all the venture capital funding globally.

She believes that her history making efforts as the FIRST Black woman with a global, licensed hypoallergenic brand, plus a design project in New Orleans for a 6,500-sq ft ground-up build will create an eco-conscious showhouse designed for a multi-generational family. And the pending Austin subdivision with almost 70 acres will be a game-changer – and she hopes that venture people take notice.

Resilience is the one word that comes to mind to describe Robin – and at the end of the day, she remains focused on providing hypoallergenic options to help families. **P**

cleandesignhome.com