



UNIVERSITY OF
TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY



FASHIONINGNOW

changing the way we make and use clothes

EXHIBITION 28TH JULY - 28TH AUGUST

EXHIBITION & SYMPOSIUM AT UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, SYDNEY

www.educ.dab.uts.edu.au/fashioningnow

PRESS RELEASE

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IMAGE COURTESY OF ALEX MARTIN

EXHIBITION CONTACTS

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ORGANISATIONS

UTS Gallery

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www.utsgallery.uts.edu.au
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NSW Environmental Trust

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Powerhouse Museum, Sydney Design 09

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FOCUS: BIJAN SHEIKHLARY

SHARP AND SUITABLE:

The product-service system of bespoke tailoring

Bijan Sheikhlary is one of Sydney's few remaining bespoke tailors. Originally from Iran, Bijan trained at Huntsman on London's Savile Row and later brought his impeccable skills to Australia.

A bespoke suit is more than a made-to-measure suit. A bespoke tailor will advise his client on cloth selection, the most suitable cut and the choice of finer details, all based on the client's lifestyle and needs. Naturally a bespoke suit will fit the client's physique perfectly, but it is designed to make the most of the client's best attributes while disguising any shortcomings. When Bijan first measures a client, he will quietly note any figure irregularities such as uneven shoulders. These are considered during the suit's cut and construction. As Bijan notes: "a bespoke suit only fits the person it is made for".

Not only does Bijan use the best cloths in the world: each of his suits requires days of highly skilled sewing and pressing. A bespoke suit relies on craft techniques for its faultless fit and finish. The buttonholes of a jacket alone, including functional ones at the cuffs, take a day to complete.

The relationship between the bespoke tailor and client does not end at the completion of the suit. Bespoke suits are designed and cut with inlays which allow later alteration, should the client or fashion change. Long use-life is literally built into the suit. Repair is also part of Bijan's repertoire. Worn linings may be replaced, raggedy shirt collars changed over. In sustainability terms, such practice is referred to as a product-service system. Instead of attempting to solve problems of sustainability with yet more products, services that lengthen the useful life of an existing product may be designed. Bijan's practice is a timely example of such a system.

We have become increasingly detached from the people who make our clothes, and it is easy to have brief, meaningless relationships with the garments in our wardrobes. This practice provides us with an alternative: clothes designed and made for a person, by a person. A bespoke tailor provides us with a possible model for service design in fashion: a service that has the potential to reduce the physical need for more products, and foster a richer emotional relationship with a garment, reducing the emotional need for more. Clothes to cherish and to keep.

HIGH RESOLUTION IMAGES & INTERVIEWS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

CONTACT

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PHOTOGRAPHY: NICK BASSETT

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PHOTOGRAPHY: NICK BASSETT



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FOCUS: ROMANCE WAS BORN

TRASH TO TREASURE:
Romancing an artisan approach

Romance Was Born

Anna Plunkett and Luke Sales, the young visionaries driving Romance Was Born, are an anomaly in an industry rife with staid design and cost-driven compromises. Theirs is a rich, joyful aesthetic, underpinned by research into materials and techniques.

Every Romance Was Born collection is a rich collage of unexpected materials and craft techniques with a firm foothold in the avant-garde of Australian fashion. Objects we so customarily discard – bottle tops, fabric scraps – become precious trims and embellishments in Anna and Luke's hands. Waste is transformed through upcycling: material is reclaimed and reused, with value added to it in the end product.

Most garments by Romance Was Born incorporate handcraft techniques, from embroidery, beading and appliqué to a lush combination of all of the above. An explicitly hand-made garment forges a connection between the person who makes it and the one who wears it perhaps more easily than one made on a machine. Whether hand- or machine-made, Romance Was Born fiercely supports the local manufacturing industry, with all pieces made in Sydney.

Winners of the 2009 Woolmark Designer Award and darlings of the fashionable set, M.I.A, Bat for Lashes and Cate Blanchett as well as singers such as Lily Allen and Debbie Harry, Romance Was Born nevertheless inhabits a home on the fringes of fashionability. Never slavishly following trends, Anna and Luke remain loyal to their unique vision, creating garments of incredible beauty and strange timelessness. It would be impossible to wear one of these pieces without consideration, and equally to impossible to let go of it flippantly.

Each collection from Romance Was Born reminds us that concerns about sustainability need not limit aesthetic expression through the medium of fashion. The world is full of possibilities, not limitations. Dare to imagine!

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IMAGE COURTESY OF ROMANCE WAS BORN

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FASHIONING NOW: PUBLIC PROGRAMS

FASHIONING NOW SYMPOSIUM
Tuesday 28th July 2009, UTS

The symposium will present a range of perspectives in sustainable fashion and textiles from experts in academia and industry. Dr Kate Fletcher, author of *Sustainable Fashion & Textiles*, will deliver the symposium keynote. The symposium welcomes fashion industry professionals and design educators, and it will function as a launch for the exhibition *Fashioning Now: Changing the way we make and use clothes*.

FASHIONING NOW WORKSHOPS

In collaboration with the Powerhouse Museum, workshops aimed at design teachers and design students will coincide with Sydney Design 09.

01. Workshop for Design Teachers

In a workshop aimed at educators, current moves in fashion, textiles, design and sustainability will be explored.

02. Workshop for Design Students

The objectives of the workshop are to broaden the students' thinking regarding potential fabrics and materials for fashion design, and to invite them to critically examine the issue of textile waste. The workshop will have a practical focus and invited leaders in fashion design will facilitate the students' learning by sharing alternative approaches to fashion design.

Visit www.educ.dab.uts.edu.au/fashioningnow from May 2009 for further details.

IMAGE COURTESY OF ALEX MARTIN



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INTRODUCTION TO ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building:

The Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building (DAB) leads the way in developing the professions, with a particular focus on the integration of digital technologies, interactive media and sustainability. We explore how various strands of research can be integrated into the professional practice of designers, architects and the disciplines of the built environment. Our research spans the whole spectrum from applied, practice-based methods (reflection on practice), through to 'classic' academic research methods like ethnography, to speculative research-and-design explorations of possible futures. The Faculty has established a number of research clusters that are aimed at cross-disciplinary collaboration - within the Faculty, with other UTS faculties and research groups in industry and academia. State-of-the-art facilities support a growing and vibrant research community.

<http://www.dab.uts.edu.au/>

UTS Gallery:

Established in 1995, UTS Gallery is committed to presenting innovative works by artists, designers and architects with a key focus on critical practices that reflect and engage with contemporary issues. No other gallery in Sydney works from such a broad remit; UTS Gallery also supports its exhibitions through the development of related public programs, education and publishing activities.

<http://www.utsgallery.uts.edu.au>

NSW Environmental Trust:

The NSW Environmental Trust is an independent statutory body established by the NSW government to support exceptional environmental projects. Fashioning Now is a recipient of the Environmental Education Grant.

<http://www.environmentaltrust.nsw.gov.au>

Powerhouse Museum, Sydney: Sydney Design 09

1st - 16th August 2009

Sydney's annual festival of design, presented by the Powerhouse Museum, offers a 17-day program encompassing exhibitions and events at the Museum and satellite venues all over Sydney. Visit the SD09 website for the full festival program.

www.sydneydesign.com.au

London College Of Fashion:

The London College of Fashion (LCF) is the only college in the UK to specialise in fashion education, research and consultancy. LCF offers a unique portfolio of courses that aim to reflect the breadth of opportunity available in this vibrant industry. Visit the University's website for further information. Fashioning Now wish to acknowledge the support of the London College of Fashion as a key contributor in this project.

<http://www.fashion.arts.ac.uk>

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IMAGE COURTESY OF ALEX MARTIN

INTRODUCTION TO PARTICIPANTS

EXHIBITION

28th July - 28th August 2009

UTS Gallery

SYMPOSIUM AND LAUNCH

Tuesday 28th July 2009

University of Technology Sydney

CURATORS

Alison Gwilt & Timo Rissanen

Fashion & Textiles, School of Design,
University of Technology Sydney

EXHIBITION CONTACT

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PRACTITIONER PROFILES

The participants include a broad range of high-profile fashion professionals including designers, gallery directors, artists, tailors, and hybrid artists.

Professor Helen Storey, Research Fellow, London College of Fashion:

The work of the designer / artist Helen Storey spans arts, sciences and new technology. Working on projects that illuminate aspects of science that directly interact with the public Storey has most recently focused on partnering with other Universities to solve global problems. The beautifully designed 'disappearing dress' slowly dissolves over 28 days to become nothing more than liquid.

Jennifer Shellard, Course Director Surface Textiles, London College of Fashion:

Jennifer Shellard's LIGHT CLOTH is a practice based research project which explores interactions between hand woven textiles and projected, manipulated light. The research is currently developing into a form of installation involving animated abstract sequences, digitally projected onto woven textile lengths. Materials, compositions, colours and structures are evolving in response to the light - and vice versa - so both components are reciprocal and interdependent.

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Alex Martin: Little Brown Dress:

Alex Martin describes herself as a Seattle artist, choreographer, performer, dancer, designer, sewing machine operator and many other things. Her website is a record of her 'Intentional Wardrobe' projects, of which the 'little brown dress' was one project that explores the concept of styling one garment (worn for an entire year) as a solution for slowing consumption.

Mark Holt & Mike Betts, Better Thinking Ltd:

Holt and Betts run a consultancy unit in research, design, identity and communication for sustainable concepts. They work with a network of collaborators and for this project engaged an international community in the decision making process for the design and production of a sustainable t-shirt. The 'perfect t-shirt' concluded with a commercial collaboration with UK knitwear company, John Smedley.

Bijan Sheikhlary, a Savile Row (London) trained tailor based in Sydney:

Sheikhlary produces high-end suits for a broad range of professional clients. His practice originates from the traditional hand crafted traditional technique that produces a made-to-measure suit from exceptionally high quality materials. Bijan, from Iran, worked in London before moving to Sydney.

Dr Kate Fletcher, Reader in Sustainable Fashion, London College of Fashion:

Is currently exploring sustainability-related experience and ingenuity in the clothes of ordinary people and ways to feed these ideas back into the fashion system from the 'bottom up'. The 'local wisdom' project documents creative actions and ideas that are rarely acknowledged and never make it onto catwalks or business agendas. Kate is the author of 'Sustainable Fashion and Textiles: Design Journeys', published by Earthscan.

Romance was Born, Anna Plunkett and Luke Sales:

Romance Was Born collections often utilise materials such as bottle tops, old silks and lycra amongst the traditional fashion fabrications. This emerging Australian fashion label has a love of kitsch Australiana, craft construction and tailoring, which culminate in fashion items that create a "clothing experience". Their lavish aesthetic often includes a pastiche of craft techniques such as appliqué, tie-dye or crochet.

Issey Miyake, from the Gene Sherman Collection:

The creative work of the Japanese designers' often suggests a timeless solution to the problem of fast fashion. The piece, on loan from Dr Gene Sherman, typifies this concept and is exhibited from the viewpoint of the consumer.

Alison Gwilt, Fashion and Textiles, UTS:

Originating from the UK, Alison has a degree in fashion & textiles from Central St Martins College in London. Her academic career includes managing courses and lecturing in fashion design in the UK, New Zealand and now Australia. Since 2001, Alison has been the Course Director for Fashion & Textile Design at UTS and is currently undertaking a PhD at RMIT that explores the issue of sustainability in the context of the Paris couture fashion houses.

Timo Rissanen, Fashion Design, UTS:

From Finland, Timo Rissanen is a UTS fashion design graduate and currently a lecturer in fashion design and a PhD candidate at UTS. Prior to academia, Timo was the designer for the labels Timovsthang and USVSU. USVSU was the NSW winner of the Mercedes Benz Start-Up Award in 2003. Timo commenced his PhD project, 'Fashion Creation Without Fabric Waste Creation' at UTS in 2005.

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INTRODUCTION

UTS Gallery is delighted to present **Fashioning Now**: Chanxan exhibition and accompanying symposium featuring innovative research projects from Australian and international practitioners. The exhibition investigates the issue of fashion and sustainability - specifically the way in which clothing is produced, used and discarded.

Divided into four main categories: **Source, Make, Use** and **Last**; Fashioning Now examines various areas of the 'closed loop' system of production and presents ingenious strategies currently being developed to address the problems of textile waste, created during the manufacture and use of fashion.

Through a dynamic array of fashion garments, textile objects, photography, fashion illustration and time-based media, Fashioning Now seeks to highlight the diversity of sustainable options currently being explored by designers, researchers and manufacturers, while predicting possible scenarios for a future fashion industry.

BACKGROUND

Fashion is often perceived negatively in terms of sustainability and yet one of its inherent qualities is innovation: the search for new solutions. This exhibition explores various ways in which fashion designers, artists and companies are re-fashioning the act of making clothes for a sustainable future where 'fashion' is an inherently positive facet of everyday life.

From high fashion to mass manufacturing, from products to production systems, Fashioning Now attempts to highlight alternate modes of sustainable fashion (in addition to the increasingly common usage of organic materials or recycled 'vintage' fabrics). Some pieces are not wearable in the traditional sense, but make strong cases for new, improved practices.

PRACTITIONERS

Romance was Born (Australia)
Alison Gwilt (Australia)
Perfect T-Shirt / Better Thinking Ltd (UK)
Alex Martin (USA)
Jennifer Shellard (UK)
Bijan Sheikhlary (Australia)
Helen Storey/The Disappearing Dress (UK) (Video edited by Nick Knight)
Timo Rissanen (Australia)
Issey Miyake (Japan) (Garment on loan from Dr Gene Sherman)
The Local Wisdom project / Dr Kate Fletcher (UK).

CURATORS

Alison Gwilt & Timo Rissanen

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KEY DATES

EXHIBITION

28th July - 28th August 2009
Opening: 28th July 6-8pm

UTS GALLERY

Level 4, 702 Harris Street,
Ultimo NSW 2007
Opening Hours: Mon - Fri 12 - 6pm
www.utgallery.uts.edu.au

www.educ.dab.uts.edu.au/fashioningnow

SYMPOSIUM

Tuesday 28 July 2009, University of Technology, Sydney

Aimed at design students, educators, fashion designers, industry and the fashion consumer, the project seeks to highlight the diversity of sustainable options currently being undertaken.

WORKSHOPS

University of Technology, Sydney

Two workshops will take place to coincide with Sydney Design 09 in early August. One for design educators and one for design students, both secondary and tertiary. Both will be held in the Fashion Design studios at UTS.

PHOTOGRAPHY: NICK BASSETT



EXHIBITION CONTACTS

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High resolution images & interviews available upon request. Contact Holly.Williams@uts.edu.au

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Mark Holt and Mike Betts Better Thinking Ltd: Holt and Betts run a consultancy unit in research, design, identity and communication for sustainable concepts. They work with a network of collaborators and for this project the 'perfect T-shirt' concluded with a commercial project with John Smedley. Through a website poll they engaged an international community in the decision making process for a sustainable T-shirt.

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CURATORS

Alison Gwilt

Originating from the UK, Alison has a degree in fashion & textiles from Central St Martins College in London. Her academic career includes managing courses and lecturing in fashion design in the UK, New Zealand and now Australia. Since 2001, Alison has been the Course Director for Fashion & Textile Design at UTS and is currently undertaking a PhD at RMIT that explores the issue of sustainability in the context of the Paris couture fashion houses.

Timo Rissanen

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DEMOGRAPHICS & RELATIONSHIPS

The target audience is the Australian design community; specifically the textiles and fashion community, design teachers and students (tertiary and secondary schools), and the fashion consumer.

The exhibition also seeks to reach the international market through the publication of a book & creation of a website. Whilst the exhibition intends to make environmental information accessible and easily available for designers, the exhibition also intends to influence the education of design, fashion design, textile technology and clothing production students.

Relationships are being developed with the London College of Fashion (exhibitors and symposium speakers will come from LCF), the NSW Environmental Trust, the NSW Teachers Institute, secondary schools, TAFE institutes and design schools in universities.

The exhibition will coincide with the Sydney Design 09 festivities and two public workshops will be offered and promoted within the SD schedule. The exhibition is also supported with a half day symposium, featuring guest speakers from industry and academia.

SUPPORTED BY

This program has been assisted by the New South Wales Government through its Environmental Trust.

Also supported by University of Technology Sydney and UTS Gallery.

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FOCUS: DR KATE FLETCHER & ALEX MARTIN

Fashioning Now presents two projects that expose alternative relationships to clothing, and its place in the formation of individual identity. Both of these projects have particular currency in these uncertain economic times – with fashion consumption levels being tested worldwide and a shrinking garment manufacturing industry.

Local Wisdom reflects on the inherent value 'use' gives to an item, whilst Alex Martin's year-long **little brown dress** project reviews the notion of 'changing fashion'.



IMAGE COURTESY OF ALEX MARTIN

ALEX MARTIN: LITTLE BROWN DRESS

SAME SAME, BUT DIFFERENT:
a dress for 365 days of the year

In July 2005, Alex Martin, primarily a dancer and choreographer from Seattle, set out to wear the same brown dress every day for a year: "I made one small, personal attempt to confront consumerism by refusing to change my dress for 365 days".

Martin made the dress herself from humble cotton drill, designed and built for durability and versatility. Through the year, she humorously documented each day on her blog with text and photographs, building a strong on-line presence for the project. Each day she combined the dress with different garments, as much for appearance as for the ever-changing Seattle climate. Martin reflected on the year: "Did I look crazy? Most people didn't even notice that I was always wearing the same dress day after day." Martin deliberately set out to make a dress that could easily be layered as well as worn on its own.

In Fashioning Now, 365 photographs will show the diversity of 'looks' Martin created in the course of a year with one dress, demonstrating her resilience,

inventiveness and commitment to the venture. Referring to it as both a performance and an "art thing", Martin's project is reminiscent of New York artist Tehching Hsieh's series of one year performances in the 1970s & 80s and recent green eco-challenges such as 'Eat Local One Year' or the 'The Rubbish Free Year'.

Though Martin describes the project as "a one-woman show against fashion", it may serve the industry well in highlighting the value in producing durable, versatile pieces. Change is part of fashion, but it is often the pace of change - perpetuated by the industry - that causes fashion's environmental sustainability problems.

What became of the little brown dress at the end of the project? It was stolen at the 'Un-dressing' party (though it later emailed Martin to let her know it was ok). And what did Martin wear next? For the year that followed, she only wore clothes she made or had already. But that is another story...

<http://littlebrowndress.com/>

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DR KATE FLETCHER: LOCAL WISDOM

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD:
fashion from the people

Challenging the fashion industry's elevated position in dictating what is to be worn and for how long, the **Local Wisdom** project celebrates alternative ideas on style, use and value. By documenting wearer-garment relationships: clothes that have never been washed, clothes the wearer has customised, clothes that are shared; Local Wisdom draws on relational aesthetics to present ingenuity in everyday life.

A leading global expert on fashion design and sustainability, Dr Fletcher is author of 'Sustainable Fashion & Textiles: Design Journeys'. She is currently Reader in Sustainable Fashion at the London College of Fashion. Working with photographer Fiona Bailey, Dr Fletcher documents how peoples' clothes signify they are community on one hand and express individuality on the other. Common perceptions about norms such as hygiene are challenged in the participants' stories: the owner of an Arran jumper has never washed it because "it would lose its fantastic smell - a mix of fresh air and wood smoke. It's like part of the family."

Dr Fletcher sets out to make explicit the otherwise invisible efforts by everyday consumers, and to uncover the values we attach to those clothes we keep beyond their fashionable expiry dates.

<http://www.localwisdom.info/>



IMAGE COURTESY OF ALEX MARTIN