

Stepping out

SAMANTHA DOCHERTY SPEAKS TO A FORMER AND CURRENT FASHION DESIGN STUDENT FROM THE MELBOURNE SCHOOL OF FASHION ABOUT THEIR PASSION FOR FASHION.

DUE TO GRADUATE WITH AN ADVANCED DIPLOMA OF fashion design at the end of this year, Georgie Evans feels fashion is a great tool for helping people understand the importance of sustainability in today's society.

Discovering how to care more for the environment through ecological sustainable living whilst working in a eco-living store, Evans struggled with her perception of fashion as a part of the commercial, extravagant society in which it has been created.

"I established a concrete basis for my designs where all materials used ensure that our earth's resources are sufficiently utilised continually. Sustainable fashion has given me the opportunity to combine various experiences into one to form my passion for life."

Describing her four-year advanced diploma course at the Melbourne School of Fashion, Evans said it's like a large variety of fresh ingredients, thrown into a bowl and blended together depending on your taste.

"My tastebuds were tickled with fashion drawing, design, patternmaking and construction, business, textile printing, millinery, styling and couture. It's a flexible structure where you can pick and choose or do all [the subjects]. I've learnt more in the past three years than I did at high school in 13 years. The beauty of this course is the boundaries are endless and the lecturers are incredible."

Winning the course's student of the year award last year, Evans was surprised with the accolade due to the un-commercial direction of her designs.

"My concept was vastly different to the other students, so to receive this gave me great encouragement as to where I was heading. The concept all began through a business brief we were given where I created a childrenswear store for hypothetical use. From there I used this concept to create a kids range to accompany the store in my design class. Before I knew it every

project was based on this idea and I loved working with it."

Excited by the prospect of using fashion as a tool to make a difference to the earth, Evans hopes to gradually introduce her women's and childrenswear label, Vinta Enesis to Melbourne as an Australian-made, sustainable brand.

"I wanted to eliminate the purchase of new fabrics in terms of waste. I'm interested in pursuing organic fabrics to incorporate into my designs. My research of organic matter to sustainable living has produced interesting results. Seventeen teaspoons of chemicals are sprayed on a crop in the production for a single 'pure cotton' standard T-shirt. We can at least start by re-using this material to give back what we have taken or resort to certified organic unsprayed cotton." ■

FOR RECENT MELBOURNE SCHOOL OF FASHION graduate Amy Bell, working in the fashion industry is far better than she imagined.

Completing her Advanced Diploma of Fashion Design last year, she landed a design assistant position at Country Road prior to her graduation.

"It's an amazing company and I just love working for them. I started looking [for a job] in my final year and I was really lucky to get a position doing what I love. I get to work with some fantastic creative people and do heaps of trend research ranging from looking at the catwalks to street fashion and I'm getting paid for it!"

Working with a team of seven, Bell is responsible for cutting and sewing stretch fabrics (except knitwear). Collaborating with a designer, production, fabric and accounts she is also responsible for the illustrations for each season's key looks.

"I really enjoy [illustration] because it lets me still be a bit artistic."

With dreams to start her own womenswear label, Bell realised while studying she still had a lot to learn before venturing into business on her own.

Working part-time for Review for two years as an assistant patternmaker and then at Cactus Jam's head office as an assistant buyer during the majority of her studies, Bell believes students should try to get as much experience as possible in the industry before graduating.

"Although there is so much to learn at school, I feel you can only really understand it once you have experienced it first hand. I started looking for work experience in first year and it eventually led to a part-time position. I juggled my classes around and worked over the three-year period [of my degree]. I don't think I'd be doing what I'm doing now if I hadn't."

Studying various areas of the fashion industry during her advanced diploma, Bell's first year of classes included patternmaking, garment construction and illustration. Over the next two years she covered textiles, millinery, CAD, product development, fashion business and design.

"I enjoyed studying [at the Melbourne School of Fashion]. I made some great friends and it has some fantastic teachers. [The school] caters to everyone and almost any timetable. You can study full-time or do as little as just one subject a night."

Taking on an immense amount of work for her final graduation collection (as most final year fashion students do), Bell found the tight deadlines and heightened pressure prepared her for a career in an established design house.

"I had about 10 weeks to produce my major project for the final collection. In that time we had to design a range of six outfits, do mood and style boards, make the patterns and sew the garments. When designing the range summer was nearly coming and I was really into bright colours and fun dresses to wear on hot nights. It was a lot of work, but I was really happy with the result." ■



Above: Eco-friendly designer Georgie Evans.
Right: Amy Bell's sketches of her graduation collection.

