



george

COLLARTS
CREATIVE
MAGAZINE

5

GEORGE HAS HAD A REBRAND!

As George continues to evolve, so too does the way we represent it.

We've refreshed our logo, wordmark and brand guidelines to better reflect the creative, expressive and ever-changing nature of both the magazine and the Collarts student community. What began as a foundational identity has now been reimagined into something more flexible, energetic and aligned with the diverse voices that shape each issue.

The rebrand was driven by the students themselves. With a new team stepping in, there was a shared excitement around giving George a visual reset — something that captures the momentum of 2026 and allows future teams to adapt and make the publication their own.

This new direction embraces creativity, collaboration, and expression, ensuring that George remains a living, evolving platform that reflects the people behind it.

So... what do you think of the new look?

BEFORE

GEORGE

AFTER

george



FROM THE TEAM

Welcome to Issue 5 of George. This edition explores themes of empowerment, inclusivity, and what it means to build a creative career on your own terms. Across these pages, we've brought together stories that reflect the many ways our students and alumni are shaping their futures, with confidence, purpose, and individuality. From insights into the journeys of our Graphic Design and Fashion Marketing alumni, to student-led projects that tackle important social issues, this issue highlights the breadth of creative practice across Collarts. We also take a closer look at the work of Fashion & Sustainability students, explore experiences behind the scenes at runways and events, and feature a powerful film project addressing women's safety in public spaces. As always, George is built through collaboration. Every story, image, and design has been created by students working together across disciplines, learning how to communicate ideas, support one another, and bring creative work into the world. We hope this issue inspires you to think about your own creative path, and the many ways it can take shape.

— The George Team

COLLARTS

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CONTACT
www.collarts.edu.au
 @collarts
 @fashionatgeorge

T: (+61) 1300 818 777
info@collarts.edu.au

TO SUBMIT CONTENT
mmontfroy@collarts.edu.au

EICs
 Niki Bruce
nbruce@collarts.edu.au

Monique Montfroy
mmontfroy@collarts.edu.au

COVER PHOTOGRAPH
 Tayla and Alice for
 Wholehearted shot by
 Jessica Tormey

SOCIAL MEDIA
 Sophie Mallabone

PHOTOGRAPHY
 Jessica Tormey
 Jessie Hall
 Ella Conroy

STYLING
 Madeleine Kingston
 Shannon Haley

WRITERS
 Charli Lim
 Lilli Teycheney
 Ashlee Bilic
 Stephanie Troiano
 Ines Longo

GRAPHIC DESIGN &
 LAYOUT
 Susan Fernandez
 Hannalou Refran
 Jade Marshall



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FARE THEE WELL RUNWAY SHOW

Brunswick Ballroom, 314 Sydney Rd, Brunswick VIC 3056
Wednesday, 3 June, 6:30pm - 11pm
To book: moshtix.com.au/v2/event/fare-thee-well

Fare Thee Well will take place on 3 June 2026 at Brunswick Ballroom, offering an evening of runway, music and dance that explores the interplay between historical and contemporary art — where ideas both converge and contrast. This multi-disciplinary event brings together emerging artists from a range of creative backgrounds, creating space for connection.



FREE CLOTHES SWAP

Newport Community Hub, Newport, VIC
Saturday 13 June, 11:30am - 1:30pm
To book: www.eventbrite.com.au/clothes-swap-tickets

You are invited to join a relaxed and friendly Clothes Swap, offering a chance to connect with the local community, give pre-loved pieces a second life, and discover something new to fill a gap in your wardrobe. It's a simple, thoughtful way to refresh personal style while keeping clothing in circulation. This is a two-hour, in-person event, and all are welcome.



SLIP INTO SOMETHING MORE COMFORTABLE

Thursday 30 July, 2026 2.30 to 3.30pm
The Concourse, Caulfield Racecourse, Gate 23 Station Street (opposite Caulfield Station)
To book: themelbournefair.com.au/events Tickets Opening Night \$30

From The Melbourne Fair comes Slip Into Something More Comfortable — a charming vintage lingerie runway show. Guests are invited to step into a world of glamour and gentle elegance, where relaxed luxury takes centre stage. Featuring flowing gowns, elegant robes and refined loungewear inspired by the golden age of style, the presentation reflects a time when comfort and sophistication sat beautifully side by side. Through these graceful pieces, the show offers a glimpse into an era where even the quietest moments at home were approached with care and style—brought to life through soft fabrics, delicate prints and effortlessly flattering silhouettes.

BE STRATEGIC AND FOCUS ON WHAT REALLY MATTERS



1. How would you describe the ethos of your studio?

Our architecture and interior design studio is about making the most of what's already there, listening carefully to our clients and responding with care to the existing home or site. We approach each project with respect for its history and context, while layering in contemporary design that supports the way people actually live. We aim for work that is thoughtful, robust and joyful.

2. How did you first get into the industry?

I came into the industry after a long study journey, moving from Sydney to Vienna and then to Melbourne to finish my degree, a decade after graduating high school. By the end, I was burnt out and ready for a break, but a 'seeking graduate' ad in a shopfront window changed that path and I quickly found myself working in a small architecture firm. About five years in, my first daughter was born and I began taking on more private projects, eventually transitioning to having my own practice.

More recently, Margo Studio has become Amy Carroll's and my studio, and over the past six years we've been building a business that feels true to our values and interests.

3. Who or what has influenced your journey the most?

Having children has shaped my journey enormously, as has the desire to keep working

in a way that allows me to prioritise family. Running a design studio, while demanding, has given me the flexibility to do that. I also love new challenges, so teaching has been an integral part of my professional practice. Over the past 15 years it has become an even more significant and enjoyable part of my working life, keeping me away from the desk, connected to the industry and introducing me to many wonderful people.

4. Tell us one thing you wish you had known before starting?

From day one, I've tried to stay true to myself and to build my work around good relationships, kindness and integrity. If anything, I wish I had known earlier that those things matter just as much as the work itself — and that you don't need to compromise them to build a career.

Over time, and with growing confidence, I've also begun to understand that it's important to be more strategic about what you take on and to focus on what really matters.

Margo Studio can be found at margostudio.com.au and on Instagram at [@margostudio_architects](https://www.instagram.com/margostudio_architects)

WHAT STARTED AS A HOBBY HAS TRANSFORMED INTO SOMETHING MORE

By Lilli Teycheney



Abby Mayne, the Melbourne and Bali based creative entrepreneur, social media 'It Girl', and Collarts alumni, is the proud owner of a bold, fun and confident brand Yellow Chilli Jewellery.

According to Abby, she had a vision to produce unique and bold statement jewellery that was reflective of the wearers' inner confidence and charisma. The majority of the brand's pieces are handcrafted and sourced locally in Melbourne, or otherwise produced through trusted collaborators overseas. These pieces are available both online and in person at the Fitzroy Market every weekend.

It was never in Abby's initial plan to attend university or to start up her own business. Throughout her high school career she had trained full-time as a pre-professional ballerina, however the overwhelming pressure and rigid structure had ultimately pushed her in a different direction, and she found herself at Collarts. Abby realised "[she had] wanted to work for [herself] and have creative control, rather than following the direction of others", and that is precisely what she did.

What started as a fun hobby with a crude business plan jotted down on Google Docs, transformed into something more when she launched her brand just one month after starting her hobby.

Her studies allowed Abby to directly apply what she was learning into her own business: "Each trimester I could implement new ideas and refine my approach which made the learning process so much more exciting and practical". She also found that having the support of like-minded peers and teachers served as additional motivation and inspiration.

Why choose jewellery?

"I had always loved jewellery, it is the first thing I notice on anyone," explains Abby. The brand started with handmade beaded necklaces created through hours of practice, perfecting her skills and watching Youtube tutorials. Abby's hard work was rewarded when she received a shocking number of orders at her brand's launch. This momentum was not only sustained, it continued to grow. In 2022, Abby began trading at the Fitzroy Market, which played a pivotal role in cultivating her brand identity. Consequently, she still consistently sells her pieces there every weekend with the help of two amazing girls who work for her and operate her stall at the Fitzroy Market alongside various other cool locations across Australia.

As Yellow Chilli continues to evolve and expand, Abby has focused on balancing scale, creativity and lifestyle, which has at times posed a challenge to manage as she is often away from her main home base in Australia. However with the help of her mum back home, who helps with "packing orders and everything in between", as well as her wonderful team she is confident of keeping the balance she has found.

Why choose Bali?

Abby says that living in Bali has been an amazing experience, however it has slightly shifted her design process. In Melbourne, she loves to spend time in her studio physically designing new pieces, however this hands-on aspect is a little more difficult to do in Bali as it is harder for her to design and produce new pieces there.

"Living in Bali is incredibly inspiring but it also requires a certain mindset," Abby says, explaining that most people living there are extremely creative and driven and run their own business or work in content creation, since working for a local business is not necessarily sustainable.

At the same time, however, Abby says that like when she was at Collarts, living in a space that is consumed by business-minded, creative individuals is both motivating and inspiring.

"Everybody has a story," Abby says, expanding on the topic by saying that it is a really special thing to have the opportunity to be a part of that community. Abby is not only inspired by the people in Bali, but by the environment too. "So much of my jewellery is inspired by the ocean and the lifestyle [there]". This inspiration is present in every piece that she creates. Additionally, Abby is inspired by the clothing and jewellery worn by the people she meets everyday. Living in Bali offers her "an endless source of fresh inspiration".

Staying balanced

While Abby's life as a content creator, creative entrepreneur and business owner may seem like a dream, there are challenges she has had to overcome in order to build her brand into what it is today. The challenges have included finding the right suppliers, ensuring top-notch quality, months long periods of trial and error to create the perfect products, balancing content creation with running the business, and creating a pricing structure and business model that ensured high quality products, efficiency, quality of life and, ultimately, sustainability.

Shop Yellow Chilli Jewellery at yellowchillijewellery.com or in store at Trasho Mondo, 396 High Street, Northcote, and the Fitzroy Market, 75 Rose Street, Fitzroy, every weekend.



TELLING WHOLEHEARTED STORIES WITH FABRIC AND COURAGE

By Charlie Lim

Steph Troiano went from playing dress-up games on her iPad, to her grandmother teaching her how to sew, to stitching the patches on her Girl Scouts uniform. Fashion has always been an integral part of her life, even if it wasn't at the forefront of it.

Developed as her capstone project [for Fashion and Sustainability, Wholehearted is truly an amalgamation of all of Steph's beliefs, shaped by her personal values and sentiments reflected in the authenticity and forthright foundations of the brand's messaging.

"They really make you [when developing a brand], delve into so much about yourself and your history and your values, and it's so incredibly overwhelming to narrow it down ... And I kind of just one day had that thought, this light bulb moment ... I was really reflecting on values, and I've always been really strong in vulnerability, and it's [always] really meant a lot to me. Basically, Wholehearted is the idea that vulnerability is fundamental to us as humans, as we know, but then portraying that in a fun, playful, colourful fashion," Steph explains.

Stemming from the Latin word "cor," meaning "heart", the original definition of the word courage is being able to tell the story of who you are with your whole heart. "Stories are data with a soul, and I am a storyteller." That is how Brenee Brown describes her thesis as a qualitative researcher.

After six years of studying human behaviour and emotional psychology, she had finally collected enough evidence to prove that vulnerability is what defines the human



condition, neurobiologically stating that connection is the reason for life. From there, forming a philosophy about the importance of being wholehearted, describing a wholehearted person as someone who has been loved without promises and, in turn, reciprocates without any guarantees. So much so that they live in a constant state of worthiness that the love they receive is the love they deserve, that is the school of thought from which Steph's brand Wholehearted was conceived.

It was important for Steph to incorporate storytelling into her brand's ethos. A part of Brenee's study is the traits of wholehearted people when it comes to their emotions. They have enough courage to be open, so open that they're willing to share deep-rooted stories from their life's inner monologue, and so open that they feel everything wholeheartedly. They feel sad emotions wholeheartedly, they feel happy emotions wholeheartedly, fully embracing the vulnerability and fragility that life can bring. So, in line with the brand's values of community and connection, Steph created the Wholehearted Journal on Substack to convey this honesty. Not just to hone in her incredible writing skills, but also to open the intimacy of the story behind her pieces with the community she has developed.

"They [the garments] represent certain things, and pulling stories from each of them, it's a little bit more like sharing my own experiences as a way to try to connect with the consumers or readers," says Steph.

Just looking at a garment, you wouldn't know that Steph used her grandmother's fabrics to construct it. Even something as small as a button symbolises an emotional entity of connection, concealment and openness all at once; the see-through integrity of a bolero's fabric represents the fragility and vulnerability of a relationship.

The feminine stylistic choices in the brand's identity aren't just for aesthetic purposes; they reinforce the idea of Brenee's findings that wholehearted people fully embrace vulnerability. They believe that what makes them vulnerable makes them beautiful.

The images of Steph's core garments depict the affinity that takes place between two people leaning on each other emotionally and the fragility of a relationship. The brand's logo design implies two people on a dance floor, and the intimacy and freedom in such a cathartic experience with someone you love. The logo was also designed by one of Steph's close friends: "Seeing what resources I can get from my friends is great, but also it's fostering that community and connection, through it all."

More animating principles that contour the brand's direction are sustainability and creativity. Steph's design process is fabric-driven, using deadstock fabrics and building a piece moving forward. "Say there's a certain technique, you'll see something, and then I'll be like, 'Oh, what if we do this, but add this to this, what will happen?' And like kind of see how the fabric will play out and change, and then iterate that into a design." Finding that the best pieces stem from authentic inspiration and instinctual conceptualisation. "I love designing when it really comes naturally," she says. But arguably her favourite part of the process is seeing the result in a photoshoot, that gratifying feeling of seeing your vision come to life.

Forging ahead, Wholehearted's story has just begun. Steph sees the brand's future in independent runways, expanding to E-Commerce and overseas orders, also wanting to create more jobs in the local fashion industry, as she envisions having a team of wholehearted people working for the brand.

As we look into the future, Steph's sentiments for her buyers will forever remain the same: "I would want them to adore the piece genuinely. I hope it's something they pass along or give to a friend. I would want them to say it's one of their most worn pieces and they treasure it because it makes them feel really confident."

With Wholehearted aims to seek the strength we have to be vulnerable, and in that vulnerability to be loved and worthy of it, changing the face of fashion to more than just garments, by including the stories we all have, will give us the courage to tell them with our whole hearts.



Wholehearted's items are not currently available to be purchased yet, but you can follow Steph and the brand's journey via Instagram @whole.hearted._ and read the brand's Substack, The Wholehearted Journal!

MODELS: Tayla Kelly @tayla1kelly
Ella Conroy @3llaannee
HMUA: @elite_makeup_academy
@makeupaffair_byfif @makeupbyapoorva.b
STYLIST: Shannon Haley @Shan.haley
PHOTOGRAPHER: Jessica Tormey
@one.day.at.a.time.photography



MATRILINEAL THREADS

Emerging Melbourne-based fashion label Valissia is the expression of a matrilineal lineage of makers, founded and run by designer Ruby Valentino in collaboration with her mother Julie Valentino, a well-known former couture dressmaker. As part of Melbourne Fashion Festival 2026, the label held a unique exhibition entitled 'Matrilineal Threads' showcasing the exploration of fashion, art and history through the lens

of women's craft and inheritance. Collarts student Ella Conroy was excited to be invited to photograph the event, choosing to focus on the handcrafted details of Valissia's intricate garments, and capturing the sense of inheritance and the beauty of 'womens' work'.

BRAND: Valissia @valissia.____

PHOTOGRAPHER: Ella Conroy @edoniestudio

PROFIT PASSION

Making a Profit from Your Passion

By Charlie Lim

Developing, owning, and maintaining your own creative business is no easy feat. As much as we'd love to think that it's just about designing and creating, this would be hiding from the fact that there is a long, sometimes convoluted, process to getting started

Getting started is also a completely different thing from actually getting a brand off the ground. Turning a startup into a profitable business, dealing with the competition and staying afloat when you have gone into a competitive and expensive industry blind is not easy, but it can be done.

Meg Smith, from Meg Smith Makes; Nic MacIsaac from Eva's Sunday, and Silika Baselala of Ebony Bolts, are three designers who have managed to work out how to not only make a profit from their passion, but also how to do it in such a way as not to compromise their creative intent.

According to Meg Smith, who is the sole owner-operator of Meg Smith Makes, it's easy to get

negatively consumed by your business if you are doing it to chase numbers. "If I were doing this just for the money and not as a creative outlet, I would have quit years ago," explains Meg.

Meg, Nic, and Silika all said that many brands take years to break even and become profitable, so it's very easy for your creativity and motivation to get depleted by a lack of sales, and ultimately, you will have no money to put into making your brand better and fulfilling your vision. So in having a second source of income your doing something not just for your brand's sake but also yourself.

"As soon as you start chasing the numbers and not doing it because you love it, you will get burned out," says Meg.

Begin with your foundation

Now, in starting a brand, you must start with your foundation: know your brand values. Having a solid foundation for where your brand is anchored in your personal values is crucial to creating a product that feels true to you, and, in turn, to making that authenticity visible to your customers from a creative standpoint. In learning what you want subjectively for your brand, you also learn what you want objectively. This means developing non-negotiables on the cost and business side in terms of your products and learning how to compromise around those factors.

Especially for an independent brand, it's important to be cost-effective, but not before learning where you believe those costs are justifiable, so you can adjust accordingly as you go along. All three of the designers own inclusive, sustainable brands and stressed that quality material is where you truly cannot cut corners when it comes to costs. Designs are obviously crucial to sell a product, but no matter how good a design is and how tempting it may seem to purchase cheap fabric or work with a cheap manufacturer, in the long run, it will never be conducive to your business.

Nic says: "It will always come back to haunt you if you cut costs on quality".

"My non-negotiables are quality fabric and quality

workmanship. So, I would never, for example, put my collection with a cheaper factory just to try and get a cheaper make price, because it would always come back to haunt you, because you would get returns. And my measure of success is how few returns I've received," explains Nic, the owner and designer of Eva's Sunday. According to Nic, customers are the industry's taste makers, so in catering to your audience, make sure you're in a position to give them quality products.

Know what you are doing

According to all three designers, starting a brand takes more than just knowing how to design and make a garment. For these creatives, knowledge about how to run a business is crucial. "You shouldn't even contemplate starting your own label until you have had a lot of experience working for other people first in the industry," Nic explains.

Silika Baselala, founder of the brand Ebony Bolts, has a background in both fashion and finance, and expresses how heavy the business side is when owning a brand, especially if you're doing it completely independently.

"There's a lot more non-fashion bits and pieces that go into running a brand. About 5% of the time is spent, you know, doing the fun design and the fun fashion bit. But it's mostly a lot of admin, a lot of organising, like any business," says Silika.

The other designers agree in principle, and also say that it is important to network and attend fashion industry events and become members of relevant organisational bodies. Meg and Silika are both accredited members of Ethical Clothing Australia and say it is a great way to meet people and learn about manufacturing. According to the designers, even something as simple as picking up a book on business finances can help you learn about the basics of costing and the back-end of your business. Nic also recommends getting retail experience, so you know how to sell clothes and the merchandising side of it.

By gaining this knowledge, you will be able to work out what works best for you when you decide on your business structure and retail format. All three designers operate different business models: Meg works on a smaller, made-to-order business model with a few wholesale partners, while Silika does seasonal drops through E-Commerce, and Nic does a mix of everything, including having a physical store and an offshore manufacturer.

Learning what business model would be best suited for your skills and time is how you can make

your business profitable. The same goes for hiring people, Nic talks about hiring within the gaps of your skills, saying, “It depends on the skill set of the owner. You have to look at your own skill set and sort of work out where the gaps are, and hire for those gaps.”

Engagement leads to growth

All three designers say that engagement is the key to brand growth. They stressed the importance of customer engagement and knowing their customers on both a personal and business level. Most independent brand owners firmly believe that customer service and communication are a marketing channel, and being able to connect with customers develops brand loyalty.

Similarly, getting to know the behaviour of your customers means being able to market your products effectively, Meg explains: “Having great designs is great, but that’s not enough if you can’t get it off the ground in sales, so I make sure that I’m constantly thinking about who I’m selling these products to and how I market them.”

That means conducting the analytical research to determine which platforms would be most cost-effective for you to invest in marketing and advertising. Especially for smaller brands, it is not easy to simply put aside a large sum of your profit just for advertising. Silika says that organic marketing is what particularly works for Ebony Bolts.

“Because unless you’ve got a lot of money to pump behind it, it is really hard to stand out by just throwing money behind a Google ad or a Meta ad, especially with smaller brands. You can build organic reach and then boost it if it works.”

Nic also describes customer service as the most effective marketing channel for Eva’s Sunday, and

the other designers agree. “I think what we’ve done is we’ve got a really good understanding of who our customer is, and we are very focused on that particular customer with everything that we do,” Nic says. That also includes marketing, designing, and price points. Unfortunately, there are a lot of compromises to be made in making a brand that is profitable, and that can only be achieved through listening to your audience, Silika explained when asked about design choices and price points for her brand.

Don’t expect a work/life balance

So, how do the designers of small, independent creative brands manage to balance their creative practice, profit and work/life balance? Basically, the answer is ‘they don’t’.

Owning a brand is all-consuming if you’re entirely independent, like Silika and Meg or working on a larger scale like Nic; there is no time when you aren’t thinking about your brand. Despite this, all three designers noted that it doesn’t matter, since they love what they do. While each creator started their own brand for a different reason, what motivates them is the same: a love and passion for what they do.

Eva’s Sunday
@evassunday.linen on Instagram
evassunday.com.au
57 Victoria St, Fitzroy VIC 3065

Ebony Bolts
@ebonybolts on Instagram
ebonybolts.com.au

Meg Smith Makes
@megsmithmakes on Instagram
megsmithmakes.com

Top tips for manufacturing & costing

Here are some of Nic’s top tips on what to do when organising the manufacturing and costing of your new brand.

1 The first things to ask a manufacturer are: What are your minimum order quantities? And what are your unit prices? If these work for you, then send them your patterns or samples to get a reproduction. Make sure you thoroughly inspect the shipping sample. “One area that you can get really burnt on is if you don’t approve shipping samples first, and all of a sudden, a box of 300 garments arrives, and they’re not right. You don’t have much of a leg to stand on,” explains Nic.

2 Be aware of what the ‘perceived’ value of your products is, and how much your customer is willing to pay, then design and price accordingly.

3 Make sure you are pricing and designing items that fit your target market, but remember to factor in some profit. “So, to maintain the sort of profit margin that I require, I’ve got to be able to sell it at a certain price point. If my retail price point wasn’t a factor, then I could go to town on different design elements that might end up, you know, costing a fortune.”

4 Now your supply chain, it may seem like a tedious process once you’ve signed a deal with a supplier, but things go wrong in production all the time, and you need to be able to trace the mistakes in order to not waste product, time, and money. “I work directly with a mill, and they make everything for us. So, if there is a problem, I know exactly who to go back to, and we can rectify it. The supply chain is super, super important,” Nic explains.

TALK TO PEOPLE AND JUST GIVE IT A SHOT

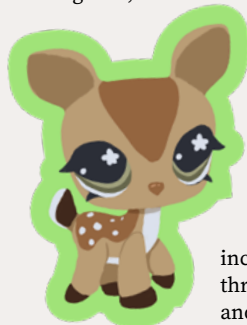
By Ashlee Bilic

Breaking into the creative industry has never been easy. For Melbourne-based graphic designer Grayson Barnes, it started with twenty dollars and a market stall run for Collarts students

A Collarts graduate with a bold, quirky and playful visual style, Grayson has built his brand by creating opportunities rather than waiting for them. From word-of-mouth, freelance gigs and website illustrations to selling his work at markets. Every step has been shaped by creativity, persistence and willingness to connect with others.

How did you first start making money as a designer in Melbourne?

I feel like the first instance was through Collarts. There was an artist who had a studio just down the street and a shop. She ran a market for Collart's students, and I made twenty dollars. But that really got me into what I'm doing now,



which is most of my freelancing work. It's hard to get consistent clients. I have done some projects for people for actual design work, but most of my income as a creative is through doing markets and conventions and



making my own product and selling it. And I feel like it's a lot more rewarding because you get to interact with the customer one on one. They like the things that I like making. So, it's great.

What were some of the early opportunities that helped you get started?

I feel like that market was the biggest one. Having that opportunity through Collarts is what kickstarted it, because I was like, no one wants to buy my stuff, it's so expensive to get started. But that really pushed me because it was free to do, I just had to pay for the product. It was a good launch pad towards doing the real thing.

After graduating from Collarts, what was the transition into a professional design role like?

I am still looking for work, as is the way of any graduate. I feel like I've gotten closer to getting a job since I graduated. There's a lot of "oh, we want to take you to the next round, we want you to do a little design task" but I feel like it's a lot of following up and emailing people and being like, hey, are you still hiring?

When you first started out, what were some of the ways you began making money from design?

Freelancing-wise, just telling people that I'm a designer. Some of my work was through my website, which was really cool; someone just found my website randomly and they were like, oh, I love your style, can you do a book cover for me? But also, just telling people in my life that I am a graphic designer. One of the security guards at my work runs a charity for a few African countries — he's from Kenya



and he wanted a brochure — so I got to do that. So, a lot of word of mouth. Word of mouth helps a lot. And it's really cool to be able to do that and do it for people that wouldn't be able to afford it otherwise.

Do you think having a distinctive personal style helps designers stand out and build a more sustainable career?

Definitely, yes. When I did my internship, I did it in Fitzroy. There's a lead designer, creative director, and then there was me, and they hire a bunch of freelancers, but none of them could illustrate. So, me being able to illustrate really set me apart. Now I've done some illustrations for one of their clients, which is now on their website.

How can the design industry become more accessible or inclusive for emerging creatives who might not have strong connections?

Touching on AI, there's a lot of talk recently that AI is replacing junior designers, which is a bad thing. Because like, how are you going to have mid-level designers and senior designers in a couple of years if you're not hiring juniors. So, I think that is the biggest one. People can tell when it's AI; it's cheap, it looks bad. AI cannot do what a human designer does, which is design with intent. It can only do what the person is typing. But also, as a graduate, you need to try and make connections as best as you can. It is hard, but at least those people know who you are, so they might bring you up later. And taking advantage of your teachers who are in the industry is the biggest thing as well.

What advice would you give to young creatives who want to turn their passion for design into a sustainable career?

Just go for it. You can't be scared. It's [not] like, I need to wait until this happens or that happens. Life's too short. You have just got to give it a shot. You never know, you might be making hundreds or thousands of dollars like some people do. Some people have made it their full-time job, which is the dream. Also, talking to people is important. Connecting with your mentors at uni or your friends from uni, hold on to that, because you never know, they might put in a good word for you if they remember you for being friendly and doing good work. I latched on to my course coordinator, she's who got me the internship. I was the only one in my cohort that did an in-studio creative internship, which was my goal. But it's so hard because a lot of studios just aren't taking interns anymore. They always want someone with experience. Five years' experience for a junior position, even though I just graduated.

If you could change one thing about how the industry supports creatives financially, what would it be?

I think honestly, more support from things like Workforce Australia and Centrelink would be good. They kind of have something, but you need to be already making money from it to be able to benefit from it. Being able to support artists that want to pursue that as a career. Also, being more open to graduates. There are so many talented graduates that just don't get work, and they burn out. They can't be applying for jobs for two years straight, it's not fair.

You can find Grayson's work via Instagram @ghostdesign.au or visit his website ghostdesign.au. While an online store is currently in the works, custom work and enquiries are open via Instagram DM or email hello@ghostdesign.au





SECOND SKIN: A COLLARTS COLLABORATION

Collarts Fashion and Sustainability student Alyssa Dimakakos' graduate collection Second Skin, is about "the feeling of home, not as a place, but as something you carry within yourself," says the designer. "It came from the idea that you are your own protector, your own safe space, and the one who carries your strength and happiness forward." Inspired by architecture, elegant 1950s fashion and 1980s power dressing, Second Skin was shot by Collarts Photography student Jessica Tormey. The images were directed with an eye

towards strong graphic lines and making the most of light and shade. More Collarts collaboration saw fellow students Ella Conroy, Cecilia, and the designer herself, modelling the strongly shaped garments created from deadstock natural materials. "More than anything, I want people to feel grounded in themselves supported by clothing that lets them take up space, feel at home in their body, and move through the world with quiet confidence," says Alyssa.

BRAND: Alyssa Dimakakos

PHOTOGRAPHER: Jessica Tormey @ one.day.at.a.time.photography



GARMENTS: Serenita by Alyssa Dimakakos @serenitathelabel

PHOTOGRAPHER: Jessica Tormey @one.day.at.a.time.photography

MODELS: Ella Conroy, Alyssa Dimakakos, Cecilia Jones



TEXT ME WHEN YOU GET HOME

By Ashlee Bilic

Every woman knows the routine. Keys between fingers. Headphones out. The text sent the moment you're through the door.

Four Collarts students; Sarah Portbury (producer, co-editor), Jodhi Ramsden-Marvic (director, sound design, co-editor), Annie Spiter (cinematographer), and Vanalyn Livy (production design and gaffer) decided to stop treating that routine as normal. Their documentary *Text Me When U Get Home*, gives a face, a voice, and a body to the fear women carry quietly every night. It doesn't sensationalise or simplify, it sits with the discomfort, letting real women speak their experiences with an honesty that statistics never could. The result is the kind of storytelling that makes you feel seen, if you've lived it and shaken if you haven't. This project was made by women. For Women.

When asked about the origins of their documentary, the team points to something personal: "We were talking about our own personal experiences with safety and thought, we should make this film," explains Sarah. From the beginning, the process was as carefully considered as the subject matter

itself. "There were a lot of group conversations, dealing with a heavy subject, we all needed to be on the same page, checking in every class, every week," adds Vanalyn.

What followed was a deeply collaborative process, with constant check-ins ensuring every member of the team felt supported while working through such emotionally demanding material.

For Jodhi, that care extended beyond the group dynamic and into the filmmaking itself. "The subject of the film is my housemate, so a lot of the directing for me was working on that relationship," she explains. "Whenever they needed time to work through something, we were all respectful. We listened. I think that was a huge part of why it worked."

As the project developed, the team came to realise that the phrase "text me when you get home" carried a weight they had never fully examined. "When men say it when going out, there's not that same understanding as there is for women, it is a safety thing," explains Sarah. "What we're depicting is a routine. Things that happen happen on a night out, every night, for women. We're asking: why do we have to

say that all the time? Why is that normal?" For Annie, the phrase had become so familiar it had lost its meaning. "I always had it said to me every time I went out, but I'd forget to message back and they'd never follow up. It ends up being an empty phrase," she reflects. "Particularly when men say it, it can function as an excuse: I care, but not enough to actually do anything." Jodhi adds that there is something cathartic in the moment women recognise this pattern in each other. "There is a conversation that happens between women where you realise, all women do that."

Resistance road

The road to making the film was not without resistance. When the team first pitched the idea, they encountered scepticism from those who didn't fully grasp what they were trying to do.

"There was quite a bit of fighting to make sure it happened at all," says Jodhi. "We had a good film, and it was clear some people in charge didn't want it to go through. We had to fight, as women do in every facet of our lives, to get it made. We learned a lot about women's safety, and we also learned a lot about where we exist in the industry we're trying to break into." The experience of making the film shifted

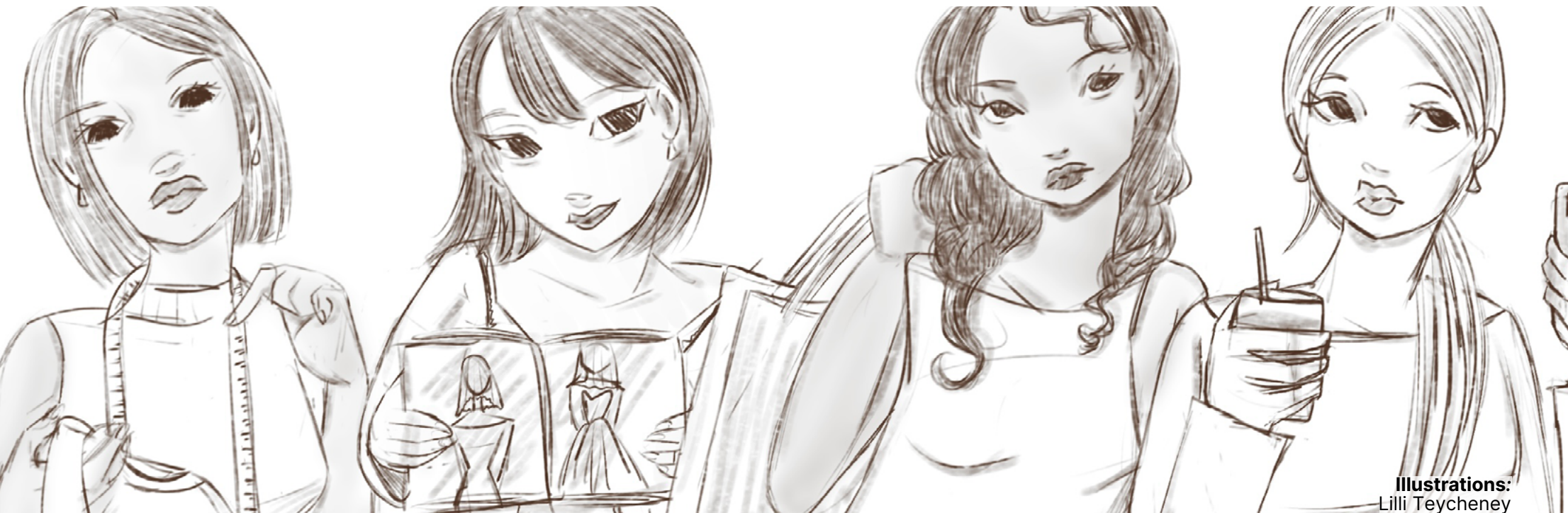
their thinking in a way they hadn't anticipated. Annie reflects that she now notices things on a night out she never registered before. "I realise how unsafe it is for female presenting people to go out alone, and it shouldn't be like that."

Vanalyn explains: "Just existing and getting home safe is a risk. It's not guaranteed. Which is terrifying." Jodhi points to a dimension the film doesn't fully explore; the financial cost of staying safe. "It costs money. You take an Uber instead of a tram. I work at a bar and finish at 1am. I have to take a ride home every single night because there's no safe alternative. It's like you're working to get home safe."

With that weight came a deep sense of responsibility in telling this story. For Jodhi, that meant ensuring the protagonist could tell their story on their own terms, without fear of consequence. "I wanted to capture all of their emotions without making it gloomy or exploiting fear," adds Annie.

Text Me When U Get Home is available to watch now on YouTube, search for 'text me when u get home'. Follow the project on Instagram @txtme. whenugethome to stay updated and support the filmmakers.

"... 'my biggest fear is being kidnapped, raped and murdered' ... Those words are so morbid, so scary. But it's reality."



Illustrations:
Lilli Teycheney

INSIDE THE FASHION CAPITAL: A GUIDE TO MELBOURNE'S JOB MARKET

By Ines Longo

Defined as the 'fashion capital', of Australia, Melbourne's fashion isn't an accessory but an infrastructure. It is a functional extension of the streetscape, lived in and worn through the laneways.

Why is Melbourne called the fashion capital? From the renowned Melbourne Fashion Week every year to the iconic, busy Chapel Street and Collins Street luxury stores, accompanied by the largest mall in Australia, Chadstone Shopping Centre, Melbourne is better equipped with fashion opportunities and potential than any other state.

Melbourne's \$1 billion fashion ecosystem

According to research from the Australian Fashion Council (AFC) and RMIT, Victoria is Australia's fashion manufacturing capital with the sector valued at \$960 million. This ecosystem is the most robust in the country, employing over 10,300 people, surpassing New South Wales to lead the nation in textile,

clothing and footwear production. This combination of high-end retail and a localised \$1 billion manufacturing engine demonstrates that Melbourne is the strategic heart of the Australian fashion industry (Willey, 2024). At these fashion events spots are always open for internships and roles for emerging designers and marketers to get a glimpse of the fashion world, with these opportunities designed for beginners.

For those established in Melbourne, the city's high concentration of design talent and events makes it easier to navigate the fashion landscape. When it comes to Melbourne fashion, it is anything but simple. It is a blend of international trends, high-end and avant-garde styles, which are influenced by the city's artistic and inclusive cultural vibe.

The global connection: Impact on local employment

While social media and online shopping have digitally connected Australia to global fashion hubs due to the geographical location of Australia, inverted seasons have created a

physical isolation. The entry of international brands such as H&M, Zara, and Uniqlo in the Australian market now provide clients with what Europe offers. These brands didn't just bring European trends to our doorstep in real-time; but bridged the logistical gap caused by our location. More importantly, by establishing a physical presence here, they created a robust local job market, offering Australians the chance to work within global fashion operations without having to leave the country.

As Australian employment reaches over 14.6 million, the Victorian fashion sector is competing in a high- participation market of 66.7%. This demonstrates the reason why brands on Seek are offering more competitive benefits. With female participation and employment in the fashion industry growing by 2%, the industry remains a critical pillar for the Australian professional female workforce (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, n.d.). This growth in part-time female employment makes up 3.9% and aligns with flexible retail management roles in Victorian job listings.

PART 2: FOUR CAREER PATHWAYS

By Ines Longo

When looking at current recruitment data, the Melbourne market isn't just a broad list of "fashion jobs" but rather it is segmented into specific career pathways for individuals with various interests and passions. If you were to search Seek today, there are over 900 active listings (SEEK Australia, 2026), but they generally boil down four main 'lanes' for those starting out or looking to level up

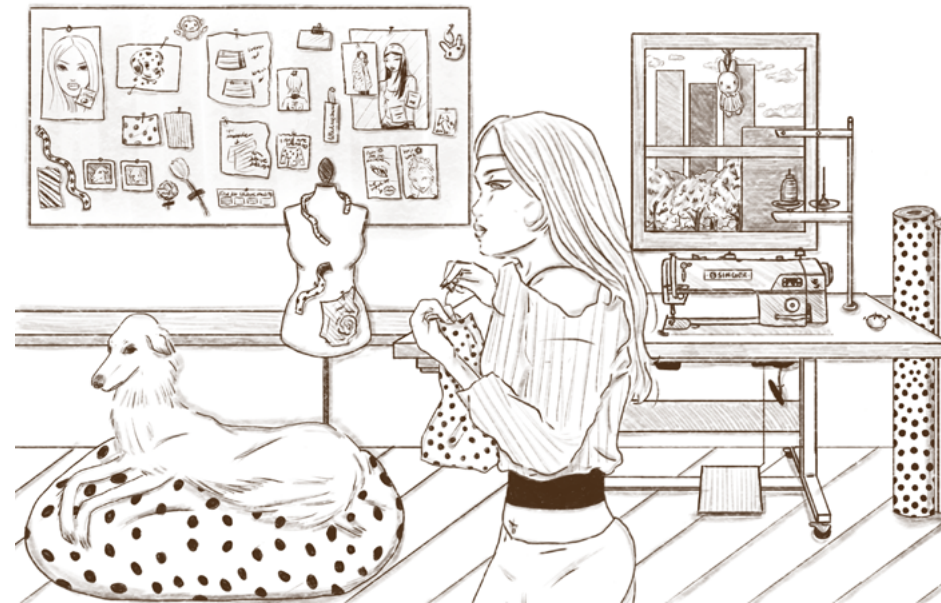


The luxury lane

A significant portion of Melbourne's fashion employment is in the high-end retail hubs such as Chadstone and Collins Street. Roles include 'Client Advisor' or 'Bridal Stylist' at houses like True Society, Burberry and Dolce & Gabbana which are currently in high demand. These roles are relationship-management positions that offer competitive rates, and you can expect an hourly rate of between \$33 and \$50 per hour. These jobs usually represent the "front face" of the fashion industry and are the main primary entry points for those wanting to understand luxury brand heritage.

The strategy and operation lane

What distinguishes Melbourne from other Australian states is the high concentration of fashion "Head Offices" which are located in inner-city pockets such as Hawthorn, South Melbourne and Cremorne. Brands like Henne and Harris Scarfe are constantly recruiting for Operations Coordinators and Buying Assistants. These roles involve work around scaling businesses and decision making for the type of inventory to hit the shelf. Labels such as Country Road and Kat the Label are focusing on people to be Allocators and Design Assistants.

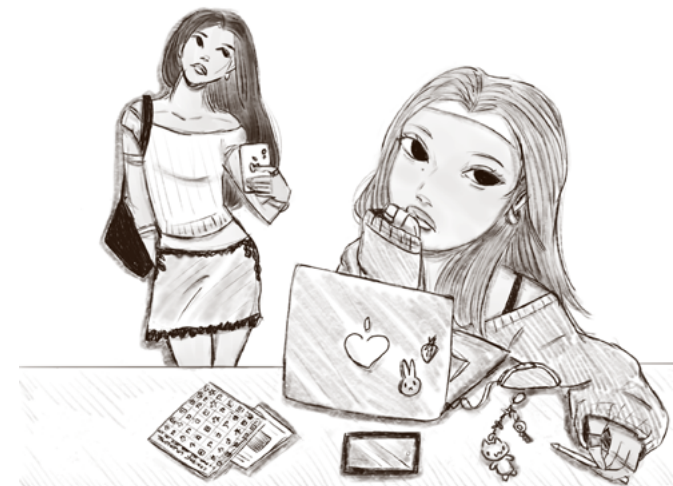


The design and production lane

Beyond the storefronts, Melbourne's manufacturing engine is visible in the demand for "Back-End" roles. Brands such as Luvalot Clothing and Jaceo Group frequently list opportunities for Junior Fashion Designers and Production Coordinators. These roles can be found in more creative pockets such as Richmond and Abbotsford, which focuses on the construction of fashion, and includes managing 'fit sessions' and tech packs to overseeing the transition from a sketch to the final design sample.

The digital and e-commerce lane

There is also a more global shift to online-first retail, a niche for "hybrid" roles in Melbourne. These role listings include E-commerce customer specialists and Digital Marketing Coordinators which are becoming the new standard. Brands like Michael Kors and local jewellery labels are looking for people who can manage both the storefront while also analyzing customer data. This path is perfect for those who can and want to blend style with technical data skills



SUPPORTING EMERGING CREATIVES IN A CUTTHROAT INDUSTRY

By Lilli Teycheney

Melbourne fashion designer Justin Tong, with Collarts Alumni and business manager Garrett Skein, always planned to support the emerging fashion talent they saw around them when they launched their eponymous brand Justin Tong

Founded by the Vietnamese-Australian designer, the eponymous brand is a tantalising blend between bold, contemporary fashion; rich, Vietnamese heritage and artisanal craftsmanship. Each piece is deeply personal and infuses quality artistry with a sustainable mission, acting as a testament to the fact that it is possible for luxury fashion, ethical responsibility and community support to coexist harmoniously.

Supporting emerging talent

Justin Tong has collaborated with students at both RMIT and The Australian College of The Arts (Collarts) through Industry Placement Programs. “We have always known that we wanted to support young, emerging creatives as the fashion industry is such a cutthroat

place,” Justin remarks. He and Garrett say they want to support Fashion Students in their journey whilst also exhibiting the reality of the fashion industry, even the grittier sides of it; so that aspiring fashion designers aren't simply thrown into the deep end.

“When you put yourself into a degree and career, it's pretty disappointing when you don't get exposed to it before you make a decision,” Justin says. Through student internships Justin hopes to show both the “beautiful and the ugly sides” of the fashion industry, and support students in finding what is right for them.

I found this to be true during my own internship at Justin Tong. I was lucky enough to complete my industry placement during the brand's South



Yarra store opening period. While it was a lot of work it taught me the reality of managing a brand and opening your own brick and mortar store, which is something I hope to do one day. I got to cultivate my skills in social media marketing, learn more about the strategy and operations of a brand, witness first hand the work that goes into keeping a brand running and sustainable, and make connections with amazing people in the industry as well as create memories that will stay with me forever.

Interning at Justin Tong was truly an eye-opening and rewarding experience and I am very grateful to have had the opportunity. Another emerging creative, Justin Tong has recently shown support for, is one of the brand's Vietnamese staff who recently graduated with a degree in Fashion Design. She had been involved with the brand's journey since its inception, taking a chance to work for a small company just starting out. Similarly, Justin Tong has supported her university journey since the beginning, watching her truly flourish as a designer, even when she didn't see it herself. Justin is truly proud of what she has accomplished and wishes to support others in their creative journeys.

Building a brand

Justin's original vision for the brand was simple; he wanted to create clothes that made women feel both empowered and beautiful. This vision still rings true. The brand has evolved with its consumer base, getting to know their customers' wants and needs more intimately. Justin Tong is not only a brand that empowers women, but has also established itself as a champion of sustainability and ethical fashion. Additionally, as the brand was built with the help and support of many Vietnamese manufacturers, designers and businesses, Justin wanted to use his brand as a way to bring Vietnam into the global spotlight so that these often overlooked individuals are able to gain the recognition they truly deserve.

To buy Justin Tong, pop into their South Yarra Store, 554 Chapel Street, South Yarra VIC 3141 or head to the Justin Tong website at justintong.com.au





WELCOME TO THE YUMAUVERSE

By Madeleine Kingston

Yuma Cochran is in the final stage of his Fashion and Sustainability course at Collarts, and is excited to see the first pieces of his new brand Yumaverse coming to fruition.

“I think I would describe myself more as a maker [than as a designer] in general, however fashion design is my main ambition at the moment,” Yuma explains. “The brand hasn’t launched yet, its Instagram account is slowly cooking but the brand launch is hopefully early next year. Yuma says that he has always loved fashion and expression, but it was a trip

to Japan that really focused his interest into a possible career.

“The ball really started rolling when I moved to Japan and spent time with my uncle and aunty to help run an art collective called ‘Antibodies Collective’. This is where I experienced a lot of inspiring fashion design, music and

dance. I look into my heritage for a lot of my inspiration, I’m half Japanese and half American but born in Australia. However, nature would be my biggest influence on Pinterest. Other than that, designers I really like are Nicholas Daley, Charlie Constantinou and vintage Balenciaga. Some Aussie brands are killing it right now as well, like Shinzo, Sixth Avenue, Mutimer and Monphell.”

Yuma says that the Yumaverse concept is an “ever changing space of creation, collaboration, sustainability and fun”.

“The brand will one day be a place where artists can showcase their work. Kind of like a gallery I guess. [Its] aesthetics are still changing and forming, however comfortable streetwear, elevated casual is probably the best way to define the clothing at the moment.

Sustainability has always been a part of creating for me, it was never an option or choice. Therefore during every step in the creation of each garment, sustainability and ethics is thoughtfully considered. For example all of the clothes are dead-stock, locally sourced, natural fibres, naturally dyed and unisex.”

You can follow the Yumaverse on Instagram at @yuma_verse.





MODELS: Kieran Dorman @ludas_
Colby Wall @lost_in_the_grate
Rama @sou1arch
MUA: Tayah Jain @tayahjain
STYLIST: Madeleine Kingston @cntrlmxxdi
PHOTOGRAPHER: Jessie Hall @shotby_jessie

A GUIDE TO FINDING AND KEEPING YOUR CREATIVE RHYTHM WITHOUT LOSING YOURSELF AND WHAT YOU LOVE

By Sophie Mallabone

The first thing that comes to mind when stepping into a creative field isn't always excitement at first but it's a spiral of hows and whys the approach to doing something 'right' in creativity should be

We are surrounded by advice that is sometimes not always helpful. TikToks, articles, guest speakers, endless opinions on what it means to be "creative" or "successful". Although this advice tries to be helpful, it is also at times extremely overwhelming, especially when you are trying to hone your craft. The moment you strip it all back, most of the advice you keep hearing and seeing says the same thing, do this, do that, stop this or rework this. The truth is, creativity isn't something you unlock through a perfect routine or formula but rather it's something you build slowly,

through consistency and self-awareness and most importantly being kind and reminding yourself how talented you are.

Despite being generally overwhelming, there is some advice I have found that actually works ...

1. Practising your craft (even when it feels small)

There is a misconception that practising your creativity has to look serious, or polished or perfect every time. As a creative person, even if you are a student, freelancer, professional or doing it as a hobby, creativity comes in waves, and doesn't work like that.

Although it's different for everyone, creativity often looks like the things you do to be mindful or when you are half-paying attention.

Sometimes it looks like doodling in the corner of your notebook while you're half-paying attention, or taking photos of things that don't really matter. Maybe writing thoughts you'll never share, or making someone laugh in a way that feels natural to you. Those moments count more than we might think.

Creatives who stay inspired aren't necessarily the most talented but instead they are consistent in their approach as to how they look at their craft.

Rather, they just do things for fun, or because they just want to do it, instead of waiting for everything to be 'perfect'.

2. Being realistic (and kind) to yourself

This is the hardest one for a lot of creative people to do. We have all heard it before; 'comparison is the thief of joy'. We know the meaning of it, but it is a very real fact, especially when we are constantly exposed to people our age, in our profession, doing exactly what we want to do, but seemingly better. Sometimes this is not helpful because it makes you question everything.

What we forget is that we are only ever seeing a finished version through highly polished videos, or photos curated to be perfect, instead of the process that it took to get there. Everything we have to learn takes time, through failure, ideation and implementation. Growth is slow, and it is rarely visible while it is happening but it doesn't mean it's not there, and you aren't trying.

Being realistic with yourself doesn't mean lowering your expectations, instead it means understanding that progress takes time, and that your way of creating will never look exactly like someone else's and it shouldn't need to in order for it to be deemed successful.

3. Letting Inspiration Find You

I used to think inspiration had to be intentional. Spending hours doing deep-dives on Pinterest, Vogue or some niche and obscure vintage curation collection to get 'inspiration', only for it to be a meaningless mission instead of insightful. Instead, the times I have had the most inspiration (which I believe is relatable to most) has always been accidental. These things include; the way two colors have melted together because a building has decayed or paint has chipped, a conversation about a topic or thing that you feel like you need to have a deeper look into. It is something that cannot be fully explained because it's synonymous with how instantaneous it is. Inspiration isn't rare, it is constant, but it is also a matter of being able to recognise it when it arrives.

"As students, we tend to limit ourselves by only consuming content within our field or what is available to us via social media but that can become a never-ending cycle of restriction. The best ideas often come from things that have nothing to do with what you are creating but from enjoying what you love and living your life. At the end of the day it's not about what you're looking at, it is about how you interpret it."

4. Protecting your creativity

No one really prepares you to protect your creativity. Creative people need to protect their creativity and the skills they have because when you are constantly being drowned in information it feels like you don't know where you end, and other peoples' creativity begins. .

So, stop scrolling and set a limit, try to create without referencing anything or just sit with your thoughts and be mindful, even though these thoughts may feel unfinished or unclear.

Burnout doesn't always look like exhaustion; sometimes it looks like avoidance or losing interest in the things that you previously loved. Sometimes it is about the dissonance you have in your mind. This is when you need to implement the four steps; implementing these can help your creativity feel effortless instead of draining.

At the end of the day, there is no one way to be creative. There is no scientific method or 100% guarantee for success. There are, however, mindsets and small habits that can help. Take what works for you and leave what doesn't. Allow yourself to figure it out in your own way. Creativity isn't something you have to chase, it's already a part of you.

Some recommendations for more information on how to keep your creative rhythm without losing yourself; Steal Like an Artist: 10 Things Nobody Told You About Being Creative by Austin Kleon, and The Creative Act: A Way of Being by Rick Rubin.



COLOURFUL CREATIVE & ENERGETIC

By Stephanie Troiano

Put your hand up and volunteer for a fabulous fashion experience like lots of other Collarts students with one of Revival Runway's shows

“The energy in the room is crazy as everyone is so hyped up for the show”

The second Queer by Design runway show took place in February, 2026, showcasing Melbourne’s Queer community and talent. Put together by Revival Runway and Queer Connect, the event featured all Queer designers, models, MUAs, and Hairstylists. The QBD runway is Melbourne’s Largest All Queer fashion event.

Featuring eleven queer designers, the runway was anything but lacklustre. The designers featured included Fool, Milky Plug, Karma Corbett, MX Drummer with Cuong T Nguyen Studio, Baaqiy, June Joy Hullena, King Norb, Sydney Sydney, and Haus of Loren.

The fashion both on and off the runway truly embodied the diversity of the event, with an abundance of colour, texture and ultimately camp! Plus there were several dance and drag performances throughout the show.

Several Collarts students had the opportunity to be involved in the event through numerous creative outlets. Students worked as models, photographers and Back of House dressers, creating a diverse event from the inside out.

I spoke with Collarts alumni Asiah Marumaru and Lily Belyus to discuss their involvement and experience with the event. Both volunteers worked back of house for the runway, managing and assisting with the organisation of the whole show, the



garments and dressing models, all to ensure the event runs seamlessly while on stage the event is taking place and the talent are experiencing the spotlight.

Both Asiah and Lily describe the energy backstage as their standout memory of the event: “The energy in the room is crazy as everyone is so hyped up for the show,” explains Asiah.

Both volunteers worked on the first Queer By Design runway, finding the experience incredibly rewarding, and eager to be involved. Asiah describes the event as “colourful, creative and energetic”; while Lily says the shows are: “exciting, vibrant, and camp”.

The Queer by Design show is just one of the runway events that Revival Runway is known for, the organisation is a nonprofit volunteer group whose aim is to support independent Australian fashion brands with runway shows, internships and editorial shoots.

If you would like to be involved in the next Revival Runway show, send an email with your resume and areas of interest to info@revivalrunway.com.

ARTICLE

WORKING MELBOURNE FASHION FESTIVAL: A FULL 12 HOUR DAY IN THE LIFE

By Charli Lim

February 25, 2026, 8:15 pm, Royal Exhibition Building. Click. Click. Click.

One of the biggest events of the local fashion season, the Melbourne Fashion Festival has an average of over 175,000 attendees in its two-week span, all there for a love of fashion. Finding your seat, waiting for the show to start, you'll soon hear the music change, see the lights dim, and hear murmurs of excitement, the telltale signs that the show is about to begin ...

8:30 pm. Click. Click. Click.

You hear the echo of footsteps stepping onto the runway as the first model opens the show. Watching the shows as a spectator means seeing the day at its zenith, 10 full minutes of models wearing incredible pieces of art, brimming with craftsmanship, creativity, and style. We witness what is close to perfection, everything pinned in place, shoes shine, and gowns are pressed. What we don't see in those 10 minutes are the hours of hard work put into making the show happen before it starts, and the village of people behind the curtain making it happen. That's the side of the show that Collarts fashion marketing student Erin Newson got to see firsthand as she worked as a Back of House (BOH) dresser for two days at the 2026 Melbourne Fashion Festival.

A spectator would probably start their night by getting ready around 7 pm for an 8:30 pm show; Erin's day started even earlier, with a 9 am call time. After picking up her MFF shirt and lanyard, as someone working for BOH, her day started right away with being briefed on the shows she'll be working on by the BOH manager, the stylists, and the designers. Erin's biggest piece of advice? Listen. The briefing is when all your responsibilities are delegated, getting assigned a model, seeing how many looks you're handling, your order in the show, and so on, so it's crucial to pay attention to be able



to do your role properly, even if it feels like a huge onslaught of information.

In joining a behemoth event like this, it's easy to assume that everyone has it figured out, that you're the only novice in the room. Going in, Erin thought that she'd be surrounded by industry pros when, really, the majority of the people who volunteer are people like her. Uni students with a love for fashion, wanting to gain experience. "I was expecting, I don't know why, a lot of older people, but they were generally just younger people, studying fashion or just having a general interest in fashion... Everyone was so easy to talk to. Everyone wanted to network and connect," she explains.

Erin stresses you should not be shy about asking questions, do not be ashamed if something feels overwhelming at first, because you're not the only one.

After the briefing, Erin went straight into meeting her model for final fittings and rehearsal. Rehearsals are when everything gets troubleshooted. For the models, that means dresses that are too long and shoes that don't fit; for the dressers, that means trying to be the most efficient pit crew possible. Anyone you speak with about being a dresser describes it the same way you would describe being part of an F1 pit crew. Instead of changing tyres and unbolting screws in time for your driver to continue in the race, you're buttoning gowns and putting on shoes in time for

your model to be in line to get back on the runway. Erin explains how experiences like these really challenge you to think on your feet and find solutions as fast as possible, like when she had to safety-pin her model's purple gown at the last minute because the zipper had broken as she was getting her ready. It was moments like these that, though they were a learning curve at the time, were what she recalls as the most exciting and educational parts of the experience, especially if you're looking to find work in an industry like this one.

"It is challenging. But you do feel so rewarded afterwards, and you gain a lot of experience in the fashion industry as well," she says. Handling gowns also seems like the most stressful garment to handle, but in reality, the most stressful shows are the ones earlier in the day, which Erin says is one of her favourite shows as well. The first runway of the day is often not couture, meaning there are many more individual pieces to handle than gowns. More layers in a look, more accessories to take on and off, more things on the spec sheet and more looks for each model, all to be done in under a minute or so.

"When you're behind the scenes, the 10 minutes of the actual show feel like hours. You spend hours trying to make sure everything's perfect, and then you're rushing to change your model in that short amount of time to make sure they get on the runway. It's very chaotic, but it's fun. You get to see everything that's going on. I almost prefer it. I prefer being backstage."

After the adrenaline rush that is rehearsals, the designers tell them to steam their garments, then head to dinner for a big bulk of downtime, which was Erin's least favourite part of the day by far as she ticked down the hours for showtime. The plus side? Networking. One of her biggest takeaways from volunteering is how crucial networking is to getting into the industry, and how convenient it is to be in environments like these to do it. She now starts a group chat with her and the other volunteers before the guests are seated for the show.

7pm, the first show starts, but not without a hitch.

It wouldn't be the fashion industry if there weren't a last-minute change. The models start getting ready around 5 pm and should be in their first looks by 6 pm, as the dressers do a quick run-through of their racks to make sure everything is in place. At this stage, dressers develop a strategy for their looks, Erin explains.

"Doing those rehearsals was super helpful as well, knowing the pacing because right at the start, you're like, 'Oh no!', it's a bit of a rush. But when you do the

"I love fashion, I love being surrounded by people working, I love being challenged."

rehearsals and the showtime actually comes, it's like you can kind of breathe when you're getting your models ready"

One of Erin's models had issues with her pants fitting, which they weren't aware of during the rehearsals, so she had to walk the runway with a safety pin in. Loads of missing shoes for all the models; Erin lost a shoe right before the runway, and the chaos that ensued between her and the stylists was a whirlwind as everyone scrambled to find a pair that would fit the model. The show itself passes by in a blur as you rely on your muscle memory to remember which buttons to undo first, and before you know it your wrapping up shop. "[It] seems like no matter what you do, you've always got to be able to problem solve and be fast-paced," Erin says, but from an outsider's perspective, it might seem like signing up for an unpaid event where you know you would be stressed seems like a complete waste of time.

Erin found that the stress is arguably the best part. It might be because you're doped up on the adrenaline rush in the sea of garments, or because it genuinely feels good to be a part of something meaningful and be responsible for something on a larger scale when you feel like a small part of the industry.

Erin came across the opportunity from just scrolling through social media, finally taking the chance after enrolling in Fashion Marketing at Collarts, she explains: "Before I even started this course, I knew that I wanted to do it. Just to gain some experience because I knew that I loved fashion, but I just never did it. I was a bit too scared and a bit intimidated, and I felt like I couldn't do well enough. So it took me a while, and then finally this year I was like, you know what? I'm just gonna go ahead and do it."

Getting over the fear of not belonging and conquering an experience like this is the best way to throw yourself into the industry and absorb every little bit of knowledge you can.

The Melbourne Fashion Festival happens annually in the first quarter of the year, and they are always looking for volunteers for various positions in both front and back of house for the week-long event. Follow @melbfashionfestival for more information.

MAKING FOR MARKETS

Many Collarts students use their creative talents to fund their lives, and most of those do it by making things for the various arts and crafts markets of Melbourne. A new option, the Artisan Market, needed some images for its marketing and branding campaign for their event, so the organisers reached out to work with Collarts students from the Fashion Marketing and Photography courses. Artisan Market is a nonprofit volunteer organisation supporting independent Australian fashion brands and creators, and offering students in the creative industries internships. These fabulous images shot by Pip Jones were produced by a team of students and alumni, working together to create something that was not only artistic, but also fit for a client brief.

For more information about Artisan Market, go to @artisan_market_australia



PHOTOGRAPHER Pip Jones
STYLISTS Ruby Hartley and Grace Boyle
ALUMNI SUPPORT Lilly Belyus and Asiah Marumaru

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- Fashion Design
- Illustration
- Animation + More

Build portfolio-ready work, collaborate across disciplines, and gain real-world creative experience through Collarts' student-led magazine.

Interested in joining a future issue?



OUR EYES ARE ON



We were so excited to discover that one of our team is an amazing Fashion Illustrator. Lilli describes her style as a “blend of fashion illustration and slice of life storytelling”. Her line work is loose, gestural and ‘lived in’. It has a sketchbook vibe, says Lilli: “I want it to be soft, expressive and quietly introspective.” Lilli is excited to have her illustration work published: “It was a really fun experience and I would love any opportunity to contribute more of my work – it’s only made me more eager.”

Follow Lilli's work at [@lilliteycheney_](https://twitter.com/lilliteycheney)

Illustration: Lilli Teycheney