

Fashioning Now... Like Wow!



Romance Was Born's Garden of Eden Collection



Helen Storey's Dissolving Dress.
Photo by Nick Knight



Issey Miyake Spider Dress

We fashion the future by shaping the now. It's a simple logic really, that the steps we take now will determine where we end up in the near and distant future.

So while our politicians sit on their hands and call for more 'assemblies' (as though talking will remedy climate change) there are people actually out there doing stuff about it, from the proactive to the educational.

Alison Gwilt is one such person. While she might not be out there on the front lines, fighting for climate change, she is taking steps toward educating the public on how to create, achieve and actualise a sustainable future in the exhibition Fashioning Now.

'The scope of the exhibition extends from high fashion to mass manufacturing, and from fashion products to systems,' Gwilt said.

'It attempts to highlight alternate modes of sustainable fashion in addition to the popular options of fashion produced with organic materials or recycled vintage fabrics.

'Some pieces are not wearable in the traditional sense, but make strong cases for new, improved practices.'

The exhibition examines fashion from a lifecycle perspective, examining the sourcing of materials, the processes by which garments are made, the use of these garments and then how they last.

As a result, some of the most innovative designers in the field of sustainable fashion have been brought together to showcase their work.

These include the Japanese master of trans-seasonality Issey Miyake, Australian darlings Romance Was Born and British artist Helen Storey whose clothes literally dissolve.

Issey Miyake is known for his beautiful work, often organic in shape and heavily pleated. He's presented people with the opportunity to create their own clothes with his APOC (A Piece of Cloth) series and continues to be an innovator in the field of fashion.

The Issey Miyake piece in the exhibition comes from the Gene Sherman Collection.

'The creative work of the Japanese designers' often suggests a timeless solution to the problem of fast fashion', said Gwilt.

'He works with unusual materials and focuses on producing clothes that suit different consumers (and) is often viewed as conceptual but owners will tell you that when they buy a piece from his collection the piece is kept in their wardrobe for many years. They find his garments truly timeless.'

Romance Was Born's Anna Plunkett and Luke Sales offer Australiana kitsch.

These kids take the old school and mash it with new cool, blending craft techniques with cutting edge technology, creating work that blends crochet, macramé and appliqué with silk laser printing, making them endearing and highly covetable.

'They have a love of kitsch Australiana, craft construction and tailoring, which culminate in fashion items that create a "clothing experience",' Gwilt said.

'Their lavish aesthetic often includes a pastiche of craft techniques such as appliqué, tie-dye or crochet.

'Their work is inspiring to both fashion designers and to the fashion DIY'ers...they offer something for everyone, and we are really interested in this mix of recycled materials and craft techniques for new fashion.'

Helen Storey's work spans art, science and new technology.

She devised a fabric that dissolved over the course of a month or, once dissolved in hot water, literally melted into a fertile matter perfect for seed planting, beautifully shot by fashion photographer extraordinaire Nick Knight.

'Working on projects that illuminate aspects of science that directly interact with the public, Helen has most recently focused on partnering with other Universities to solve global problems,' Gwilt explained.

'The beautifully designed "disappearing dress" slowly dissolves over 28 days to become nothing more than liquid.

'While the ideas may seem conceptual, Helen works with many different research groups and companies and her aim is to create ideas that will lead towards real, new solutions.'

For Gwilt, she believes that there needs to be a pluralistic approach to sustainable fashion.

'We need to slow consumption patterns whilst also acknowledging that this needs to sit alongside a mainstream, faster industry,' she said.

'We should encourage people to develop their own fashion garments, while supporting new, boutique small-scale businesses. We should take better care of our clothes while responsibly recycling items that we do not need.

'There are many different ways for fashion to be sustainable and it's the responsibility of both producers and consumers to engage in this process.'

To gain a greater insight into the depth and breadth of sustainable fashion, be sure to check out Fashioning Now: Changing The Way We Make & Use Clothes which runs at Fremantle Arts Centre until September 19, along with darkrooming, Dream Bore and The Glomesh Project.

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