

## **PEERS Juliette (Aus)**

### ***Sisters (and Brothers) Doing it for Themselves: Textile designers reinventing themselves as independent creative practitioners - paper***

Some of the most innovative work in studio and atelier production of garments and accessories around Melbourne in the last decade has been the work of students trained in textile design as much as fashion. With the erasure of the fixed trade hierarchies between Australia and firstly Britain and later a diversified series of global capitalist interests located off-shore, the workplace trajectory of textile designers in Australia is becoming more flexible if unpredictable. Once an Australian textile designer's career path was to be employed in or submit freelance designs to firms demanding reinterpretations of overseas sure sellers, now many young designers are setting up as small enterprises themselves. The unravelling of traditional TCFL structures in Australia has re-aligned textile design graduates as closer to creative arts practitioners. The economic security of a salaried employee is replaced by greater creative and lifestyle freedom of an emergent artist, with concomitant erratic income support. Whether this development is an expected aim of industry restructuring is debatable. A number of factors have facilitated this development. Digital technologies have opened up diverse product outcomes and professional quality output to small scale design enterprises. Youth culture has developed peer group structures for entrepreneurship that substantially elude scrutiny from more traditional media and fora for defining the public sphere in Australia. Subcultures are a significant, self-directed point of discourse around style and taking-up of style innovations. Senior level secondary education of the past decade or so encouraged both abstract debate and self-reflection amongst younger Australians, often on flimsy foundations, yet has established a pattern of alertness to creating and running with opportunities unmatched by earlier generations. This paper will survey the products and practices of a number of Melbourne-based firms and personalities from Vixen to Princess Tina Pony Club to Melbourne's "Knitting Queens".

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