



## GENERATION NOW

### The Spirit of the Black Dress: 2010

TULLIA JACK, WGSN 07.04.10

**The Spirit of the Black Dress launched its second year with a spontaneous 'flash walk' at Melbourne's iconic Flinders Street station. Ten models, wearing dresses by Australia's top emerging designers, descended on the local landmark and took part in a live catwalk show, to the astonishment of passers-by.**



The Spirit of the Black Dress 2010 flash walk, photography by **Jaclyn Adams**

The flash walk created awareness for The Spirit of the Black Dress, established in 2009 by a group of independent graduates with the aim of raising the profile of emerging fashion, as well as increasing international appreciation for Australian design.



The Spirit of the Black Dress 2010 flash walk, photography by **Jaclyn Adams**

The Spirit of the Black Dress designers for 2010 were selected from talent across Australia. A panel of industry judges chose the final garments based on design aesthetics, as well as their response to environmental concerns facing the fashion industry. The designers honoured for 2010 are: Cheryl Chee,

Melina Hollway, Maja Karlsen Mueller, Michelle Czech, Alexis Belcher, Oliver Wilkinson, Renee Bock, Shagun Maheshwari, Tia Carrigan and Melissa Mahony.

The designs were photographed by Jaclyn Adams and styled by a top Australian creative team, including Jordan Moore, Carl Reeves, Julie Provis and Ellinda Corbisiero. The mural-sized images were hung in a gallery alongside the dresses as part of the L'Oréal Melbourne Fashion Festival, which ran from March 14 to 21.



Photography by **Jaclyn Adams**

Clothes by **Cheryl Chee**,  
photography by **Jaclyn Adams**

Cheryl Chee graduated from RMIT's Bachelor of Design course in 2008, after which she travelled to Japan to do an internship with Tokyo designer Ito Hiroko of Hisui. Chee has worked extensively with existing objects, and is fascinated by creating new and desirable objects from post-consumer waste. She predominantly works with garments on the human form, experimenting with fabric drape and three-dimensional pattern-cutting.

Chee is currently developing a short movie on the lives of Tokyo-ites, as well as creating a website and completing her new collection.



Photography by **Jaclyn Adams**

**Melina Hollway**, photography by **Kit Haselden**

Hailing from the Gold Coast, Melina Hollway draws inspiration from her luminous tropical surroundings. She is a self-taught artist, who aims to create beautiful garments for a democratic segment of women.

Her strengths lie in her meticulous hand-beading, experiments in texture juxtaposition, and her strong eye for proportion. This year, Hollway aims to expand her label to international markets.



Photography by **Jaclyn Adams**



**Maja Karlsen Mueller**, photography by **Kit Haselden**

Maja Karlsen Mueller, of Danish origin, studied at Melbourne School of Fashion, graduating in 2008. Scandinavian design principles shine through in her garments, which are simple and stylish in classic silhouettes. Her semi-couture designs have subtle but intricate details, including beading, quilting and the use of scrap fabric.

Her achievements to date include Melbourne School of Fashion Student of the Year 2007, and top places in the Australasian Young Designers Wool Awards, MYER Fashion Awards and Australian Wool Fashion Awards.



Photography by **Jaclyn Adams**



**Michelle Czech**, photography by **Kit Haselden**

Studying at RMIT, Michelle Czech graduated in 2008 with a Bachelor of Fashion Design, specialising in Fashion Technology. Czech developed her signature style when she was presented with the Metlink Design Award for her graduate collection, Endo/Ecto.

2009 was an important year for Czech; she was selected to feature in the Metamorphosis Student Showcase at L'Oréal Melbourne Fashion Festival. Czech also participated in the inaugural Spirit of the Black Dress, and was involved in the Chambord Shine Awards in Sydney, where her winning design was auctioned for Breast Cancer Research.



Photography by **Jaclyn Adams**



**Alexis Belcher**, photography by **Kit Haselden**

RMIT Graduate Alexis Belcher has spent the last two years initiating various design ventures, including experiments in millinery and accessories for Melbourne Central, and a streetwear range for the Melbourne Design Market. Belcher's flattering and wearable graduate collection, Pleats & Pixels, epitomised her design philosophy, with a juxtaposition of structural and soft elements, emphasising intricate design embellishments.

Her achievements include showing as part of the Metamorphosis Student Showcase at the L'Oréal Melbourne Fashion Festival, and a nomination for the Australian Fashion Graduate of the Year, involving a parade as part of the Mercedes Benz Fashion Festival Brisbane.



**Oliver Wilkinson**, photography by **Kit Haselden**



Photography by **Jaclyn Adams**

Oliver Wilkinson honed his technical skills, while enjoying freedom and conceptual exploration, at RMIT during his Bachelor of Design (Fashion) degree. Since graduating, he has put his skills to good use, starting a fashion label for private clients, which he finds very rewarding.

Wilkinson aims to continue challenging people's perceptions, aesthetics and desires, and also to carry on challenging himself as a designer.



Photography by **Jaclyn Adams**



**Renee Bock,**  
photography by **Kit Haselden**

Melbourne-based designer Renee Bock is currently embarking on the fourth and final year of RMIT's Bachelor of Design (Fashion) course. Throughout her studies, Bock has drawn inspiration from mathematics and science, in particular, the field of entropy. These themes drive her sculptural, elegant forms. Working predominantly in natural textiles, she aims to push sustainability beyond the realm of production and materials to the incorporation of design theory, with collections embodying an awareness of the concept throughout the entire life cycle of a garment.

After finishing her studies, Bock plans to find more experience within the industry, before launching her namesake label.



**Shagun Maheshwari,**  
photography by **Kit Haselden**



Photography by **Jaclyn Adams**

Shagun Maheshwari has lived in various countries, including Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, fostering her keen interest in international textiles and craft. She studied at RMIT, where she completed her Bachelor of Design (Fashion) in 2007, while interning with various labels, including Dhini Couture, Akira, Abraham & Thakore and Material by Product.

Maheshwari has a keen interest in sustainability, and she took on various electives, giving her a deep understanding of contemporary sustainability issues. Going forwards, Maheshwari plans to open her own label, operating on the principles of fair trade and sustainability.



**Tia Carrigan**, photography by **Kit Haselden**



Photography by **Jaclyn Adams**

The fifth generation of a wool-growing family from rural Australia, fashion designer Tia Carrigan is determined to use her eponymous label to promote and reinvigorate the Australian natural-fibre industry.

Since graduating from Queensland's Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE, her collections are hallmarked by their use of quality Australian Merino wool and natural-fibre fabrics. In 2004, Carrigan won the National Australian Young Designer in Cotton Award and a month's internship with Italian fashion house Trussardi.

The label Tia Carrigan is now in its third collection, and it enjoys a strong following.



Photography by **Jaclyn Adams**



**Melissa Mahony**,  
photography by **Kit Haselden**

Melissa Mahony's design philosophy pairs an interest in the creative arts of all cultures and eras with an appreciation of fashion's power to enhance a woman's beauty.

After graduating with distinction from RMIT, Mahony travelled to Milan on a full scholarship to study fashion marketing at the prestigious Istituto Marangoni. In 2006, she was awarded the titles of the Australian Masters of Fashion Student Eveningwear Designer of the Year and the Australasian Young Wool Designer of the Year. The following year, she won three of the top professional categories at the Australian Wool Fashion Awards - Bridalwear, Racewear and Eveningwear - which led to an invitation to showcase alongside established couture designers at the Gold Coast Fashion Week.

## Links and related reports

[The Spirit of the Black Dress](#)

[www.thespiritoftheblackdress.com.au](http://www.thespiritoftheblackdress.com.au)

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