



## GENERATION NOW

### The Spirit of the Black Dress

TULLIA JACK, WGSN 08.10.09

The inaugural Spirit of the Black Dress event aims to promote emerging Australian fashion and textile designers. Designers from across the continent were asked to submit their interpretation of the wardrobe staple then 10 were selected to represent the event for 2009.



The 10 final designs

The successful applicants are a varied and talented group who have come together to lead the way forward for Australian fashion. As part of the application **the designers were asked to respond to the question of sustainability** and a dominant theme was the use of upcycled textiles to create a functional multipurpose garment, contrasting dramatically with the fast-fashion consumer culture that currently reigns on the high street.

The garments were photographed by **Christian Blanchard** and hung in a gallery format alongside the dresses giving viewers the inspirational and physical side by side. Creative types from across the genres of styling, photography, hair, make-up and design were given the opportunity to flex their imagination and create directional images that demonstrate the way forward for Australian design.



Alyana Eau

### Alyana Eau

Iraq-born **Alyana Eau** emigrated to Australia in 2000 where she completed a Bachelor of Design (Fashion) at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT). Her heritage has proved a rich source of inspiration and much of **her work experiments with three-dimensional, architectural elements**, using a diverse range of techniques to achieve construction and silhouettes that challenge the traditional. Currently working on a range of projects and exhibitions, Eau intends to break the mould of modern design by **blurring the lines between art and fashion**.

[Alyana Eau](#)



Andy Tsang

Smallweed's Joolz

Smallweed's Joolz

### Andy Tsang

**Andy Tsang's** recent work reflects his fascination with Japanese techniques, leading to a simple clean philosophy obvious in his design aesthetic. **Inspired by a stint living on Osaka, Japan**, the country's rich culture, architecture and people inform his designs that also incorporate the structure and silhouette of Japanese dress. Currently based in Melbourne where he studied at the Melbourne School of Fashion, Tsang writes for a fashion blog and hopes one day to establish his own label.

[Andy Tsang](#)

### Smallweed's Joolz (Claire Djuve and Airdrie Makim)

Melbourne-based **Smallweed's Joolz** is a collaboration between **Claire Djuve** and **Airdrie Makim**, who both have their own labels - Smallweed's and Joolz respectively. With a shared love of texture and shape they strived to create an black dress that **embodies 20s Hollywood glamour** and did so with the aid of environmentally friendly materials such as **vintage playing cards**, as well as pearls and silk.

[Smallweed's Joolz](#)



Leigh Buchanan

Leigh Buchanan

Kuwaii

### Leigh Buchanan

**Leigh Buchanan** has an ingrained creativity that combines well with his confident, outgoing nature.

Having studied Fashion Production in Brisbane he found employment at Easton Pearson (where he still works) and later found fame by **securing second place in the inaugural Project Runway Australia**. This led to him hosting a radio show and compiling a weekly worst-dressed column in NW magazine. He currently **makes bespoke gowns** and is excited about the forthcoming launch of his eponymous label.

[Leigh Buchanan](#)

### Kuwaii (Kristy Barber)

Focusing on **geometric forms and mathematical composition**, **Kristy Barber** creates garments that are minimal yet boast a strong presence. A graduate of Melbourne's Box Hill Tafe, Barber established **Kuwaii** in March 2007 and has since been on the Independent Runway at the L'Oréal Melbourne Fashion Festival in 2009 and been a finalist at the 2009 Fashion Palette Excellence awards at Rosemount Fashion Week.

[Kuwaii](#)



Michelle Czech

Michelle Czech

Nikolina Kucan

### Michelle Czech

**Michelle Czech's** garments are distinguished by her **meticulous hand cutting and focus on architectural form**. A graduate of RMIT, where she specialised in applied design, Czech has previously researched the use of cutting-edge technology within the fashion industry and wrote a thesis on this subject. Now Czech has a small design studio and continues to develop her use of decorative techniques and technology.

[Michelle Czech](#)

### Nikolina Kucan

**Nikolina Kucan** migrated from Croatia to Australia where she studied in Albury before honing her design skills at RMIT. She **now concentrates mostly on millinery** and has started her own label in this field. However, her tailoring skills and **ability to drape and flatter the body** remain strong, as demonstrated by her design for the Spirit of the Black Dress.

[Nikolina Kucan](#)



Noelle Kan



Noelle Kan



Rachael Cassar

## Noelle Kan

**Nature and architecture** are strong sources of inspiration for Malaysian **Noelle Kan**. Winner of The Cue Clothing Co award 2008, she is currently completing her graduate collection at the Whitehouse Institute of Design in Sydney. Noelle interprets **sustainability** in her designs by making each garment timeless, functional and made for longevity.

[Noelle Kan](#)

## Rachael Cassar

Sydney designer **Rachael Cassar** began to gain media recognition in 2006 when she launched a line that uses post-consumer textiles to create one-off semi-couture designs. Her list of achievements to date is vast and includes winning Italy's Mittelmoda competition in 2007, **gaining recognition from WGSN as a designer to watch for 2009**, and now showing at London Fashion Week. Creating fashion that is striking both aesthetically and in its moral considerations, Cassar hopes to continue her blossoming success while **encouraging consumer awareness about sustainability**.

[Racheal Cassar](#)



Sonya Kraan



The Spirit of the Black Dress

## Sonya Kraan

Although Melbourne designer **Sonya Kraan** recently graduated from RMIT with a first class honours degree in Fashion Design, her previous experience working as a pathology lab assistant continues to influence her design aesthetic. She believes that **design should involve an equal ratio of experimentation and function** and creates garments with a strong focus on tailoring. She is currently working towards the launch of her eponymous label.

[Sonya Kraan](#)

**Image credits**

Mood shots: photography by Christian Blanchard, styling by Jordan Moore, hair by Carl Reeves, make-up by Ashleigh Richards.

Designer headshots photographed by Kit Haselden.

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