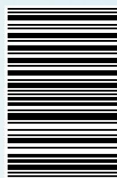


5' ELEVEN"

SPRING SUMMER 2023

Eduarda Britas
wearing VERSACE

UK £22



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PRINTED IN THE UK

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

with KRISTEN APOLLOS

photographed by JULIAN SCHULZ

styled by ASHLEY CONOR

words by CHARLIE NEWMAN

The West has its fashion stereotypes. The US smashes commercial clothing, France favours sexy, Italians look for drama, Danes colour whilst the Swedes opt for a monochromatic palette, and the Brits revel in breaking boundaries with avant-garde, punkish designs. Of course there's wiggle room within each of these boundaries but there's also an element of truth within them, found in their culture and history over hundreds of years. So what's setting the other side of the world alight?

Australia is a continent of extreme climate, with a heady combination of wild fires and heavy flooding tearing through the land. As a result, on a surface level you might think of Australia as a nation of practicality and utilitarianism, complete with zips, reversibles and all-weather-proof fabric, but think again. It's no surprise that a nation so consumed by and submerged in nature should have such a deep appreciation for it. In Australian design you'll find planet friendly fabrics in earthly hues, bound together with loosely structured, floaty silhouettes. Take Gabriella Pereira, the Co-Founder and Creative Director of Beare Park, who blends impeccable neutral toned tailoring with shimmering metallics that alleviate some of her sharper lines. Beare Park celebrates the principles of slow fashion and community where all of their master tailors can be found in Sydney and Melbourne. Pereira's collections wouldn't seem out of place pounding the streets of Manhattan or Milan – The Row fans get in line.

Australian designer Christopher Esber also enjoys the jarr of juxtaposition. In his cult brand you'll find a nod to the nineties served with a dash of sass, with designs favoured by Margot Robbie and Adwoa Aboah. Esber explains, *"Constructing and deconstructing parts of a silhouette to work with the body underneath is something I am always drawn to... I am constantly looking at ways to experiment and play with traditional forms through a modern lens."*

Having cut patterns, sketched and sewn since the tender age of eight, Esber is a dab hand at knowing what his customer wants, *"My muse comes from women on the street interacting in everyday life."* Life for Esber is currently split between Paris and Australia, the perfect pairing for his brand. Growing up in *"isolated Australia"*, Esber turned to international references for inspiration, pouring over the pages of i-D, Vogue Paris or Italia. Whilst Esber may be tapped into these very publications today, he still cherishes the small but mighty design community he is a part of at home, *"one that is multicultural and inclusive. Embracing this point of difference has always been an asset to the Australian fashion industry."* Australian model Victoria Lee agrees, *"We are so far removed from other fashion capitals so there is a sense of versatility and freshness that comes from our remoteness."* Having graced campaigns and catwalks across the globe, Victoria compares Australian fashion as more *"practical and laid back... There is a quiet confidence to how we dress, with an appreciation for quality, ease of wear while still being fun and adventurous."*

Fans of Christopher Esber include Sophie Coote and Nicki Campbell, the Co-Founders and Creative Director duo of SIR the label who thrill in the sweet spot of Australian Fashion, noting how buyers look to Australian brands for elevated summer attire. In addition, Sophie explains how *"a lot of companies use Australia as a test market."* SIR (short for separates, intimates and ready-to-wear) has garnered an international audience since the pair launched the brand from their bedroom in 2014 thanks to their savvy use of social media. Soon after Barneys became their first international account where their linen tie pieces sold out immediately, *"It's that very essence of SIR, the really simple but feminine, minimal aesthetic that worked then and continues to work."* For 2023 you'll find SIR at pop ups in New York, London and other travel destinations as well as working in an artist collaboration in LA. As the brand has grown, so to have they. Nikki and Sophie oversee every department from creative, to design, PR, strategy and the direction of the brand. In under ten years they've grown from a business of two to a business of 45 in the head office and approximately 75 across their three stores-cum-gallery-cum-design spaces in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia.

Contrast drapey V-neck tank and skirt by BASSIKE.

Patchwork check trousers, mesh long sleeve and tie-up top, all by KOURH.

Rigian flat in raffia and leather by HELEN KAMINSKI.

Resin river rock pendant on leather by DINOSAUR DESIGNS.





The downside of working so remotely from the rest of the world as Bianca Gregg, the Founder and Co-Director of global wholesale agency Del Rainbow, points out is that, *“There is a clear lack of global experience [and education] being brought to the Australian industry... which makes the Australian industry feel somewhat isolated. Whenever working with Australian brands on global wholesale, there is such a huge education process that must take place. Despite their lengthy time in business here, there is such a disconnect between the global industry and the ‘bubble’ in Australia they operate in. It’s quite backwards, even seasonally.”* Coote at SIR agrees, understanding that SIR’s biggest challenge has been getting their *“heads around the international market in general, international expansion, understanding duties, taxes and shipping is still a challenge!”* But Campbell is quick to point out that the opportunity of starting a once small brand with little fashion experience gave them, *“the ability to be agile and react quickly which meant we could grow really quickly as well... We’ve always felt very free to start our own thing because there wasn’t infrastructure.”*

Charlotte Hicks launched her label ESSE in 2014 and quickly realized that the local fashion climate leans more towards ready-to-wear, *“Whereas in Europe there’s more infrastructure for higher quality contemporary, ready-to-wear, luxury brands.”* Hicks points to governmental support for fashion, such as the British Fashion Council – so why in London but not in Sydney? Hicks believes it’s because *“there’s more of a market and just culturally there’s more of an appreciation... So what you get left with in Australia is a more female dominated industry. I believe there’s more creative than commercial emphasis on the business here. There’s a lot of self-funded brands ticking along, figuring things out for themselves, but in Europe maybe you’ve got more contemporary brands being invested in.”* However that’s not to say it’s a quaint industry, as it’s estimated that the Australian fashion industry contributes approximately 27.2 billion AUD to the national economy.

Collectively, the Australian fashion industry is crying out for home grown production. Gregg at Del Rainbow states how, *“It is almost obsolete in Australia and there is very minimal infrastructure or support. Recently, I embarked on a mission to create the strongest ethical brand in Australia... it was by far one of the most challenging experiences I have ever encountered in my career. Given [the industry] is so small, it is very self-regulated therefore there’s lack of consistency, responsibility and structure across the board.”* Coote is desperate for the Australian government to support local mills, *“because one of the big barriers for us to produce here is that there are no fabric weaving mills.”* To combat this, SIR have partnered with an Australian cotton farm for carbon positive costs, *“but then it has to be woven offshore so that’s a barrier because the government won’t subsidize stuff like that.”*

“We only work with Bilum cooperatives, not middle men who buy them very cheaply and then sell for a lot more. The money goes DIRECTLY to the makers... It’s not just a bag, its a STATEMENT piece.”

Anna Saboisky, Head of One of Twelve

You might have noticed a common thread running throughout Australian fashion and that is female founders. Campbell cites her school years as a spring board, *“We were always taught that you could do anything if you put your mind to it. I’ve worked a lot previously under other Australian women and they’ve always encouraged and empowered each other to go and do their own thing.”* Hicks has long admired Phoebe Philo at Celine, *“for me it’s about what she did for women and the kind of woman she spoke to.”* After her own lengthy design tenure at female Australian powerhouse, Sass and Bide, Hicks was keen to share her positive experience and knowledge through her own company. *“I’m passionate for female-founded businesses with a purpose at their core and passionate about exchanging stories around purpose pursuits.”*

Hicks remains true to her own purpose, one that aligns the commercial with the creative. She asks the question, *“When you lie in bed at night what do you want your work to be?”* For her that means slower growth combined with quality over quantity within product. Most brands like to tell the world of their B Corporation verification (a vigorous certification that champions environmental, ethical, transparent and accountable practices) but for Charlotte, the most exciting part was receiving the meticulous audit, which gave her the blueprint for a sound business.

“I’ve worked a lot previously under other Australian women and they’ve always ENCOURAGED and EMPOWERED each other to go and do their own thing.”

Nikki Campbell, Co-founder of SIR

Fellow B Corp member Bassike was launched as a responsible brand in 2006 by Deborah Sams, offering well cut basics that can slot into a unisex wardrobe. 15 years later they have now reached their carbon neutral certification. Together Sams and her Co-Founder and Director of Sustainability and supply chain, Mary Lou Ryan, have forged an environmental path for Australian designers, though that doesn’t mean that they rest on their laurels. Together they hope *“to work towards reducing as much inventory waste and excess fabrics as possible.”*

Sienna supine silk dress by ESSE.
Pink lace bodysuit by KARLA ŠPETIĆ.
Ball necklace (worn at waist)
by DINOSAUR DESIGNS.
Filament squared flat by STUDIO AMELIA.





Wilarra silk scarf by
MULYATINGKI MARNEY
at ONE OF TWELVE.
Feather earrings by CASSIE LEATHAM.
Linen cocoon sleeve maxi
dress by ALBUS LUMEN.

left page
Nebular nylon mesh tank by KOURH.
Wood beaded necklace by NGALI.
Bourdelle utility mini skirt worn
over mesh panelled skirt by SIR.
Gilt meringue platforms
by DONE BY MATEA.





*Hillary dress in silk and
cotton by LEE MATTHEWS.*



Bassike's responsibility isn't solely environmentally focussed but ethical too, through their support of the Northern Beaches Women's Shelter, a charity to whom they have contributed more than \$223,000. Giving back is important to SIR also, where they have partnered with carbon insetting company Vert Science, i=Change (where \$1 of each sale goes to a chosen charity), circular fashion not-for-profit Worn For Good and dead stock initiative Thread Together. Furthermore, since 2018 SIR have partnered with The Batchelor Institute, a not-for-profit organisation that combines "Indigenous Australian traditions of knowledge and Western academic disciplinary positions and cultural contexts, and embraces values of respect, tolerance and diversity." Campbell explains. *"As an Australian business that built our success in the fashion industry through technology, this partnership is very synergistic. The projects that the institute run also focus on the progression of fashion with technology, so, naturally, we're thrilled to be working together."*

Australian organisation One Of Twelve also bridges art and community. One Of Twelve sell colourfully patterned Bilum, traditional bags that portray their female makers' traditions and historic symbolism. Head of One of Twelve, Anna Saboisky asserts that, *"We only work with Bilum cooperatives, not middle men who buy them very cheaply and then sell for a lot more. The money goes directly to the makers... It's not just a bag, its a statement piece."*

Alongside bags you'll also find printed silk scarves designed by Aboriginal and Torres Straite islander artists. Using her experience as a buyer at the National Gallery, Saboisky was inspired to generate "revenue for the art centres and giving them a platform to showcase their work in a different medium, something that's wearable. I don't know why artwork can't be translated into fashion." Her chosen art centres *"are hubs of the community. They're a place where the artists can meet with their elders and they teach a lot of young kids how to paint. They're so integral to the community. Intellectual property is a valuable thing, it's important to get their stories out to the community. You're not just buying a scarf, you're buying the whole story of the scarf and the art where they're from."*

"It can't be underestimated the IMPACT of art and culture on the direction of FASHION and DESIGN. The things you absorb through ART at any time seem to find its way into something you REFERENCE in the future."

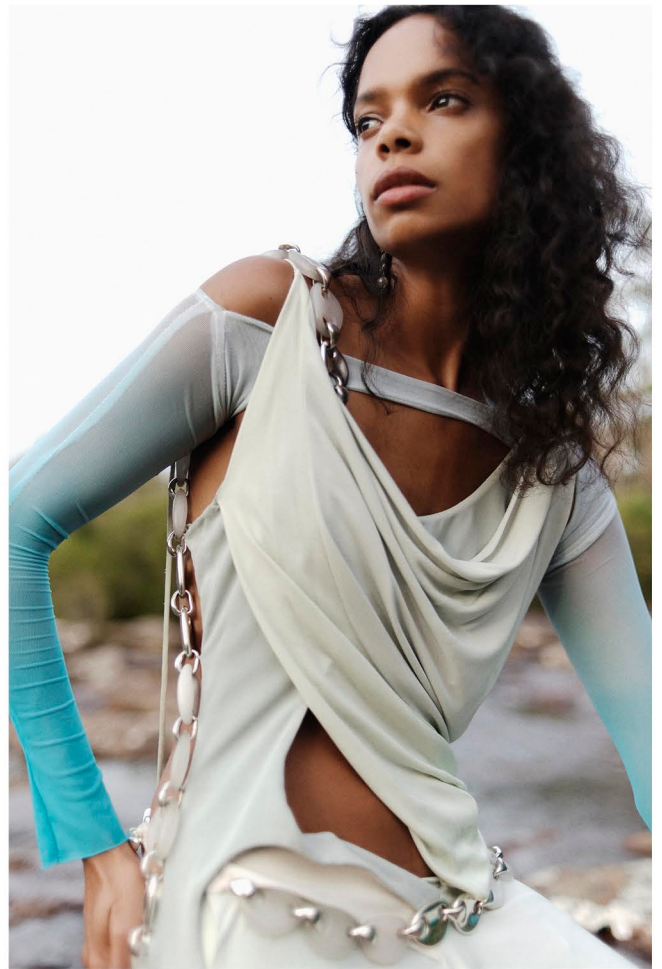
Lee Matthews, designer

You might not think of Australia as a country of culture but designers Lee Matthews and Marina Afonina at Albus Lumen are dispelling this myth. After years as an Illustrator and Art Director at Australian Vogue, Matthews' work graduated off the page and into fabric. Her 360-degree approach to fashion has redefined a *"wardrobe philosophy [of] clothes that are functional and beautiful, that are ageless and simple and manage to add ease and confidence into every day."* Her past creative pursuits have massively influenced her brand today, *"It can't be underestimated the impact of art and culture on the direction of fashion and design. The things you absorb through art at any time seem to find its way into something you reference in the future."*

Marina Afonina founded Albus Lumen (Latin for white light) in 2015, finding that, *"there was a gap in simple and chic holiday wear."* Like Matthews, Afonina's roots in fashion grew from magazines, kickstarting her career as a Fashion Assistant at Harper's Bazaar before graduating to Fashion Editor. Albus Lumen is your answer to sculptural tailoring via textural fabric. Rather than an additional side note, the art showcased at Albus Lumen is an extension of the brand, a source of, *"Never-ending creativity and support for all young talents out there."* Their retail space Société offers a unique shopping experience for their customers and Gazette, their biannual print project, champions emerging global artists.

So if you're in search of an effortless piece to carry you through the seasons whilst also giving back, you know which nation to source them from. Australia, a country that serves women by women.





*Marner chain twist dress
by CHRISTOPHER ESBER.*

*Long sleeve mesh bolero
by AMY MITCHELL.*

*Pebble earring in sterling silver,
rutilated quartz, labradorite, and
freshwater pearl by CONG YU.*

left page

Mesh panelled long sleeve by SIR.

*Wrap shorts with mesh flounce
by AMY MITCHELL.*

*Acrylic bilum bags (from left to right)
by BENO, SILA MOSES and*

SANDY SIO at ONE OF TWELVE.

Net chunky flat by STUDIO AMELIA.

Stockings, stylist's own.

*Hair by TAYLOR JAMES REDMAN
using Hair Ritual by Sisley Paris & Dyson hair.*

Makeup by YUKA MATSUI.

Kristen appears courtesy of Kult Models.

With thanks to Chris Colley.