

TEXTILE BEAT

make it from scratch

SEWING A FRESH SEAM

Sowing or sewing? If you are a gardener or a sewist, you reap what you sow or sew. While there are many gardeners among us growing their own food, there are fewer sewists making their own clothes.

Words and Images by **Jane Millburn**

In the same way many are sowing seeds in the garden to yield nutritious home-grown, local, natural food to eat, it is time to invest energy in sewing local natural clothes.

With global supply chains pumping out 80 billion garments each year, most people have lost sight of where and how things are made, and what from. Slavery combined with use of synthetic/plastic fibres makes it cheap to buy two to four times what we used to, resulting in waste and pollution, and a loss of skills and knowledge about clothes.

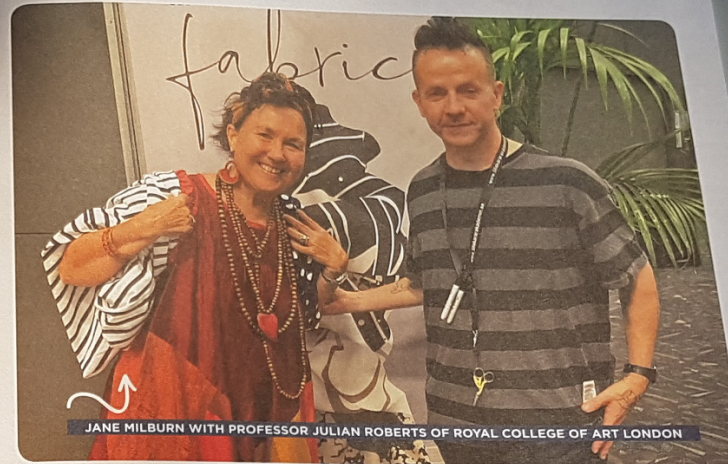
Over the past two decades, globalisation and production efficiencies have meant it is cheaper to buy clothes than make them. We've got used to affordable, ever-changing styles. Shopping is addictive and we're encouraged to buy quantity over quality for the good of the economy. It is only when we stop and think about why clothes are so cheap that we realise they are not properly costed and that exploitation exists in the system.

Each of us influences the future of the fashion industry through our buying choices. Surely the beginning of a new decade is a great time to turn over a new leaf. Let's think about fewer clothes, of better quality that we wear longer.

Clothing culture is changing. Perhaps the high-tide on fast fashion will be marked by the recent filing for bankruptcy by Forever 21 in the United States.

This global fast fashion brand arrived in Brisbane in 2014. I know that because I wrote about it during my 365-day Sew it Again campaign <http://www.sewitagain.com/2014/10/change-clothes-to-wear/> when I publicly declared that I wear secondhand clothes and sew – to be sustainable, resourceful and autonomous.

My 25 October 2014 post said: "I am adopting an alternative approach to something fresh everyday. The Sew it Again project is posting something fresh by upcycling clothing that already exists, rather than buying



JANE MILBURN WITH PROFESSOR JULIAN ROBERTS OF ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART LONDON

new. It is a social-change project, based on the premise that the 'greenest' clothing is that which already exists in the world. By upcycling garments from our own and others wardrobes, we can have something 'new' created from reject or unworn garments. The project aims to shift thinking about the way we consume clothing and textiles. It engages old-fashioned sewing skills, encourages a culture of thrift, and reflects concern for where mindless consumption of fast fashion is leading."

While I was interested in influencing change, I did not really expect to see articles in mainstream Australian newspapers in 2019 reporting a resurgence in sewing as a personal pushback against fast fashion exploitation, or that thrifting is now projected to outstrip new fast fashion consumption according to ThredUp, a secondhand clothing retailer in the United States.

Yet that is what has happened. Wearers are changing their purchasing habits. This is based on a combination of factors: slavery continues despite calls for change and polyester fabrics shed microplastics into the ecosystem. In addition textile waste and pollution is expanding. We now know from UK waste reduction group WRAP that extending the life of existing garments by nine months reduces their water and carbon footprint by up to 30 percent.

Thrifting is hot. There are many who love preloved, yet it seems millennials concerned about sustainability and declining disposable income are driving the new trend to buying existing clothes. Thrifting is now aided by technology and moving beyond opshops and weekend markets to online curated stores as well as Facebook groups and rental agencies.

The original 'Spirit of the Bush'
TRADITIONAL
Balladeers & Heritage Muster 2020

Historic Boondooma Homestead
8202 Mundubbera-Darling Road, Boondooma QLD 4613

5 DAYS of Entertainment from 21 to 26 April 2020
ANZAC Service, Saturday 25 April, 9.00am
entertainment to follow

Celebrates 20 years

also featuring ...

Entertainers – Tony Wagner, Jeff Brown, Col Edmond, Antanda Faulkner, Laura Downing, Charmaine Post, Greg Biss, Ashley Cook, Devin Perren, Jack Vilpin
Poets – Brenda Jay, Paul Fleming, Susanne Henner, Brian Weir, John Bidgood
Band – Key Groves, Alan Blowers, Ian Wilson

● Poetry & Ballads – 7.30am until late on 22 April to 24 April, 10.00am until late on 25 April, 7.30am to 3.00pm on 26 April.

Plus the Homestead Balladeers and Poetry Competitions. Workshop artists are welcome on-site. Cloak hangers must be organised for their act. ALL materials must be of Australian content.

Licensed Bar – BBQ – Stalls – Chips/Drinks (tall holders welcome, must have own insurance)
Camp oven meals by Boondooma's Camp Oven Cooking Team

● ADMISSION \$10 per person for the full festival, includes camping from Tuesday 21 April to Monday 27 April 2020. Day rates and Book Camping are also available. SORRY NO EFTPOS.

Bring your own mug and get FREE tea and coffee ALL weekend!

● CONTACTS
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South Burnett Regional Council

Photo: Ian Wilson

Subtraction Cutting Technique

As part of Fabric 2019, a program of slow fashion and artful living events, the Sunshine Coast Council included events on sustainable styling through thrifting and clothing swaps.

They also hosted a visit by Professor Julian Roberts from Royal College of Art, London, to share his innovative ideas about designing garments based on subtracting cutting.

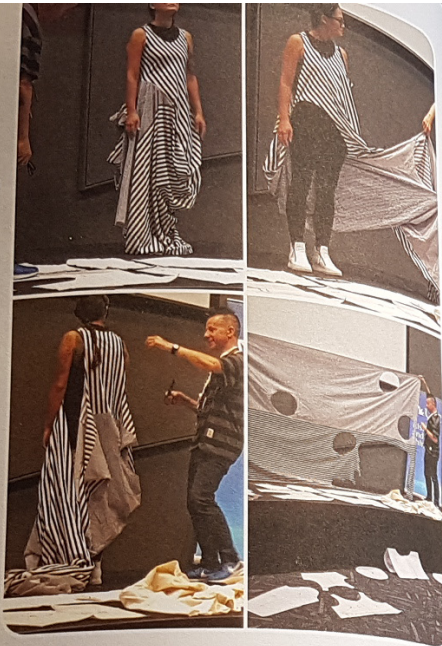
Julian spoke at a Considered Fashion Design Forum organised by University of the Sunshine Coast lecturer Deb Fisher and ran a one-day workshop at USC where he shared his process and technique of removing circles and other shapes for the body to pass through.

He believes it is important to freely show and share the making process, so that people can see into it and try for themselves as a way of passing on the skills and learning by doing.

"We need to value cloth, and the stitching, sewing and touching that goes into making clothes. An opaque fashion system where you don't see the process is unethical because the team of people behind the garments is now acknowledged. It is only the designer out front taking the bows."

"When I show and share the process, and people understand the inner geometry and process of making, they will value it more."

Download Julian Roberts' Free Cutting PDF:
<http://researchonline.rca.ac.uk/3060/1/FREE-CUTTING-Julian-Roberts.pdf>



textile SWING

In these times of excessive consumption, the concept of keeping beautiful textiles in circulation while building the slow fashion community is the brain child of Sian Robinson. Sian knows from experience that sewists, crafters and makers have a stash of fabrics, patterns, zips and buttons hidden away. She envisaged a Recycled Textile Market (RTM) full of beautiful things.

On August 25, the first RTM took place with 30 stall holders offering pre-loved old, new, vintage and retro items.

"The energy in the beautiful Morningside School of Arts on the day was amazing. People loved being with other like-minded creatives, and some travelled from Ipswich and the coast to be there," Sian said.

She said RTM is dedicated to the slow fashion movement and she has further plans of bringing the maker community together to meet and make things, enable intergenerational friendships and skill sharing for a sustainable future.

"Whether you're turning a tablecloth into trousers, sewing scraps into a skirt, or buying a handmade dress from a local designer, our market helps provide a platform for the sewing community to support the slow sew," Sian said.



FOR INFORMATION VISIT
RECYCLEDTILEMARKET.COM

SHE'S A GEM

If you want to learn to sew but don't know where to begin, have a chat to Gemma Thibault. She has lots of great advice to get you started.

Gemma Thibault is passionate about dressmaking and through her workshops, blogs and online business, Sewing Gem, she is inspiring a new generation of sewists.

Sewing Gem stocks patterns suitable for beginners by Megan Nielsen and Gertie's Charm and also matching fabrics (including broderie anglaise).

We'll be featuring more from Sewing Gem in the autumn edition of Ruth.
www.sewinggem.com.au



Springhill Country Craft Retreat

Patchwork and craft shop in a quiet country bed & breakfast setting

Grab a group of friends & enjoy a crafty weekend. Scenic beauty sure to inspire your creativity or simply kick back put your feet up. Gift Vouchers are available.

Just near Amby only a 45 Min drive from Roma!



Spend \$100 or more at the shop and you will go into the draw for one of OLISO - PRO Smart Iron*.

*Drawn Dec 8th 2019 at Kenniff Country Quilter's Christmas Day.

Your host and teacher, Gay Burey

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