

**Thames & Hudson Australia**  
**Media Release**

# **FASHION**

## **Australian and New Zealand Designers**

### **by Mitchell Oakley Smith**

Australian and New Zealand fashion designers are increasingly recognised and admired in the international arena. Not since the early 80s has there been a publication which offers such an insight into the work of Australia and New Zealand's most influential, dynamic and creative fashion designers. *FASHION* documents the countries' current players, showcasing the work of 70 of Australia and New Zealand's leading contemporary designers, including Aurelio Costarella, Romance Was Born, Josh Goot, Willow and Akira. Profiling designers creating women's, men's, swim, haute couture and street wear collections, this essential book looks at the fresh newcomers as well as those who have weathered the industry and are still as relevant today as they were several decades ago.

The ultimate reference book, featuring campaign shots as well as current catwalk designs, *FASHION* is both richly illustrated and stylishly designed. An indispensable who's who of those in the industry, it celebrates Australia and New Zealand's distinctive and innovative design talent.

### **about the author**

Mitchell Oakley Smith is associate editor of *GQ* Australia. He has written extensively on fashion and design for such publications as *Belle*, *Box*, *Myer Emporium* and *The Australian*. He lives in Sydney.

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Featured designers

AKIRA  
ALICE McCALL  
ALPHA 60  
ANNA & BOY  
ANTIPODIUM  
ARNSDORF  
AURELIO COSTARELLA  
BASSIKE  
BEAT POET  
BETTINA LIANO  
BIRTHDAY SUIT  
BRENT WILSON  
CAMILLA & MARC  
CARL KAPP  
CHRONICLES OF NEVER  
COLLETTE DINNIGAN  
CYBELE  
DHINI  
DION LEE  
EASTON PEARSON  
ELLERY  
ELSOM  
FERNANDO FRISONI  
FLAMINGO SANDS  
FLEUR WOOD  
FRIEDRICH GRAY  
GAIL SORRONDA  
GARY BIGENI  
GINGER & SMART  
GORMAN  
HOTEL BONDI SWIM  
J'ATON COUTURE  
JAYSON BRUNSDON  
JIMMY D  
JONATHAN WARD  
JOSH GOOT  
KAREN WALKER  
KARLA SPETIC  
KATE SYLVESTER  
KIRRILY JOHNSTON  
KONSTANTINA MITTAS  
KSUBI  
LEONA EDMISTON  
LIFEWITHBIRD  
LISA HO  
LOVER  
MANNING CARTELL  
MARNIE SKILLINGS  
MATERIAL BY PRODUCT  
NATHAN SMITH  
NICOLA FINETTI  
NOM\*D  
PAM  
PISTOLS AT DAWN  
ROMANCE WAS BORN  
SASS & BIDE  
SCANLAN & THEODORE  
SEVENTH WONDERLAND  
SOMETHING ELSE  
THERESE RAWSTHORNE  
THREE OVER ONE  
TINA KALIVAS  
TONI MATICEVSKI  
TV  
VANISHING ELEPHANT  
WILLOW  
WORLD  
YEOJIN BAE  
ZAMBESI  
ZIMMERMANN



# FASHION

AUSTRALIAN & NEW ZEALAND DESIGNERS

MITCHELL OAKLEY SMITH

**Thames & Hudson**

## AKIRA AKIRA ISOGAWA

One of Australia's most famed designers, Akira Isogawa's work defines a stylistic genre of clothing representative of cultural marriage. Of Japanese heritage, Isogawa immigrated to Australia in 1985, where he studied fashion design at the TAFE Design Institute. In 1993, the young designer opened his first boutique in Sydney's Woolloomah, launching the label that soon came to be known simply as Akira.

As the designer reflects, "I started my own label really low key, without much expectation. I didn't even have time to think about what may happen with my work." Indeed, Isogawa was responsible for creating and producing his own collections, as well as working in his boutique. Isogawa's designs gained a strong following in the initial years after launching, positioning him centrally in the great progression of Australian fashion in the mid-1990s. Since then, Isogawa's design and business have continued to flourish, now represented in high-end boutiques throughout the world and with four stand-alone stores in Australia. Isogawa believes the change he has witnessed in the industry over the course of his career is that "it is not as naive as it was. When I have a look around the cities in Australia, the choices are much more vast. It's become more savvy."

Isogawa describes his work as "timeless," noting that he frequently receives comments from customers that they wear pieces from various collections many years after purchase. "They bring it back another year," he explains, "maybe not frequently because the designs are quite specific, but in that way they are timeless and quite individual." The concept of timelessness seems inherently relevant to Isogawa's clothes, given their unique nature not only in terms of thematic or stylistic expression, but in the complex



1 Silk shawl  
Dress with  
embroidered  
beads, A/W 16

level of construction, use of textiles and hand-dyeing. With a base of predominantly natural materials such as silk, wool, cotton and linen - with the addition of 'certain man-made fibres like Lyra or nylon for practicality and stretch' - Isogawa makes use of hand-manipulation to 'create the desirable shape' of each garment. Such techniques include organic-inspired folding (a paper technique that translates in textiles) and smocking, as well as embellishment with hand-embroidery using beads and gata.

Isogawa finds inspiration in travelling and, more specifically, the people, techniques and practices he discovers along the way. "Perhaps visiting the people who produce hand-crafted textiles, which could be in India or Japan," he offers, "it could be anywhere in the world. I just find rare textiles,



2 Printed silk shawl  
Dress with  
embroidered beads,  
S/S 16

hand-crafted by people, and that experience of working with them quite inspirational." This, combined with the designer's Japanese heritage, is perhaps what differentiates his work so distinctly from the surrounding fashion climate. Drawing upon traditional costume from his native Japan, the designer creates garments that simultaneously respond to the relaxed Australian aesthetic and that can be introduced into wardrobes of women and men the world over.



3 A/W 16



4 S/S 16



5 Spring 16



'WE ARE TRYING TO BE BETTER CREATORS AND I AM TRYING TO BECOME A BETTER DESIGNER'  
- Nicky Zimmermann



## ZIMMERMANN NICKY AND SIMONE ZIMMERMANN

Beginning as a start-up at Sydney's Paddington markets in 1991, Zimmermann is now recognised as one of the most iconic swimwear labels in the world. Sisters Nicky and Simone Zimmermann today manage the business and design each range as a feminine and sexy reflection of Sydney beach life. Dynamic and strong, each piece of their collection has a distinctly recognisable aspect of Zimmermann's history and story within it.

It makes sense that a swimwear business should hold the crown as one of Australia's most successful and globally recognised fashion designers, for Australia is known for its beaches and swim culture. But despite this, Zimmermann has respectfully earned its place in Australia's burgeoning fashion industry, staying true to their values and creating in an innovative, fashion-forward manner. As such, Zimmermann can truly be referred to as 'fashion' as opposed to just swimwear. Indeed, their range now includes ready-to-wear and accessories that build upon the aesthetic and styles produced in the swim collections, creating a fully-rounded, complete wardrobe suitable for any warm climate.

While Simone is responsible for managing the operational aspects of the business - which has grown to include stores in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane and Surfert Paradise and a growing wholesale network in some of the world's most revered department stores - Nicky focuses on the design of the various collections. Trained in fashion design by the TAFE Design Institute, Nicky recalls wanting to design and make clothes from a very early age: 'I always played with fabric and made things, developing it into garments as I got older. In my early teens I would use my mum's sewing machine to make clothes for myself,' she explains. Upon

graduating from design school, Nicky worked in a range of hands-on design and production roles before beginning Zimmermann six months later, slowly developing a business around her popular and innovative swimwear. At this time, the concept of Australian fashion was still considered a paradox. 'You had to be self-sufficient and find a way to make a mark. There wasn't the attention on fashion, and no fashion week or sponsors or industry groups to advise you on a way to bring your label to life.' While Nicky believes this has changed in the years since her entry into the industry, she notes that the 'business of turning a label is very difficult.'

In almost two decades, Zimmermann has experienced considerable success in its growth and recognition. Showing occasionally at the Miami Swim Fashion Week, and with showrooms in Sydney, Melbourne, London and New York, Zimmermann also shows regularly at Australian Fashion Week, which they believe 'has evolved into a great event. We don't necessarily participate to secure international stockists - we are more focused on presenting our vision for the season to the local media and to support our Australian business, including our



retail and wholesale accounts.' In doing so, Zimmermann taper their approach to the Australian and international markets in different ways that respond to their presence in each. The overriding element, however, is a desire for continual success, not in way of sales but in design. 'We are trying to be better creators and I am trying to become a better designer,' says Nicky. 'We are all working harder and harder to do great collections, both in ready-to-wear and swim.' That said, Nicky believes she and her team work harder now than they ever have before, motivated by the design process and exploring new projects.

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FERNANDO FRISONI  
FLAMINGO SANDS  
FLEUR WOOD  
ERIEDRICH GRAY  
GAIL SORRONDA  
GARY BIGENI  
GINGER & SMART  
GORMAN  
HOTEL BONDI SWIM  
J'ATON COUTURE  
JAYSON BRUNSDON  
JIMMY D  
JONATHAN WARD

JOSH GOOT  
KAREN WALKER  
KARLA SPETIC  
KATE SYLVESTER  
KIRRILY JOHNSTON  
KONSTANTINA MITTAS  
KSUBI  
LEONA EDMISTON  
LIFEWITHBIRD  
LISA HO  
LOVER  
MANNING CARTELL  
MARNIE SKILLINGS  
MATERIAL BY PRODUCT  
NATHAN SMITH  
NICOLA FINETTI  
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