

scene magazine
It's all about Whangarei

on the **BUTTON** award-winning fashion

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the happy wanderer

settling down
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work PATTERNS

Designer-pattermaker Louise Paul is working for some of New Zealand's finest in the fashion industry. And it all started from humble beginnings at the Ruakaka races! She works now for one of the biggest boutique design houses in the country, High Society (home to labels Obi, Catalyst, Chocolat and Mosaic).

Louise started out as a personal tailor in Whangarei, showcasing herself by fitting out ladies for race-day's Fashions in the Field, while juggling motherhood. She eventually decided to enrol in a pattern-making diploma at Northland Polytechnic because she wanted to be able to do her own patterns, instead of being restricted by which patterns are commercially available. This new skill, combined with the knowledge gained from her 'clothing mentor', Glenside Clothing's Rod Dowell, kick-started a host of new experiences and business lessons.

Megan Bowers meets Whangarei fashion designer Louise Paul

The first was that the fashion industry is a fast and ever-changing machine that waits for no one. Example: Louise made a soft-cloth hat for a friend who sold the design to a major chain store. Louise then had to frantically supply them with 300 hats per week. When Louise failed to keep up with demand, Max found a new hat supplier within days.

Louise eventually took on a patternmaking contract with Auckland-based swimwear manufacturer Moomtide, which marked the beginning of a new era in her career. She now commutes weekly to Auckland.

Louise loves the challenging work, but finds balance by returning to her home in the hills behind Ruakaka. The villa has been her family home for 25 years; she can relax and take a break from the hectic lifestyle and enjoy the stunning view of Mount Manaia.

Louise spent four years with one of New Zealand's biggest names in the fashion industry, Trelise Cooper, an amazing designer and stylist who has a real eye for creating balance within a complicated garment, as well as instinctively knowing how the garment will look on a real woman, not just on the size 6 model.

Making patterns for Trelise brought a whole new perspective to the creative process. Louise had previously had experience making patterns for chain store labels like Hallensteins, Barkers, Enzyou and Pumpkin Patch, where a pattern may have taken a day to perfect.

FASHION

She now found herself taking up to three days creating 75 piece patterns to bring Trelise's intricate designs to life.

Louise was given a drawing of the front of a design, and then usually had to create the garments back, make her pattern, and then it gets sent to the machinist who will make a prototype of an outfit. The prototype was then run by Trelise, who would either approve the garment or make adjustments. In which case the process would start again. Louise jokes that at fashion week when the model made her turn at the end of the runway, you suddenly get to see Louise's designs. Fashion Week was one of the busiest times of the year for Louise and the Trelise Cooper team, whose popular shows would run back to back.

Louise thinks that the fashion industry in New Zealand is a fantastic one to be involved in and believes that young talent should be encouraged to get involved. "There is a wealth of talent in Whangarei," she says, and has some great advice for any industry hopefuls.

"The best way to get ahead is to find the area you love and strive to be exceptionally good at it, whether it be patternmaking, designing or machining, for example. Then find some unpaid work experience to get your foot in the door. A lot of companies are more than happy to let you work for free, and it will give you a valuable insight into what the industry needs and demands."

Louise's newest challenge will be working on patterns for High Society's summer 09-10 ranges, which will see Louise and team creating upwards of 200 patterns ready to be shown off to buyers early next year.

"There is plenty of work in fashion in Auckland now. Whangarei's up-and-coming fashionistas are in a perfect position to take advantage, if they're up to the challenge!"

Some examples of my work for scene magazine over the last couple of years

FASHION

on the button

The Bernina Fashion Awards celebrated its 31st annual awards last month, overseen by a new promoter, Whangarei South Rotary Club. The crown of Northland's young design talent flocked up once again to provide a glittering night of creative flair and high fashion. The addition this year of the "Northland's next top model" prize meant that there were three major category winners overall.

All of the top prizewinners showed true originality and determination to outshine the competition. **Minnie-May** was one of the first there on the show's practice night to rehearse and perfect her winning catwalk strut. **Duncanross** spent many late nights sewing a staggering 1000 buttons on to his creation, while overall winner **Kelly** spent three months (and drove her family to distraction) creating her fierce wearable art piece, **Snakes Alive!**

Kelly used good old-fashioned Kist integrity to make her creation, most of which is constructed from items from around her family's farm - including No 8 wire and sister drainage pipes - to make the three metre long snakes that form the train of the garment. The bodice and skirt featured aluminium cans and miles of organza and fake snakeskin!

Kelly knew she had to have it on inside. It's a task to complete her design to her own high standards. During the three month construction phase, Kelly admits she made life pretty unbearable for her poor family.

"I am the worst perfectionist you will ever meet! I had to get this costume just right and it looks as though my fisting paid off!"

Megan Bowers talks to the major prizewinners at the 2008 Bernina Fashion Awards

Kelly acknowledges that her family have been wonderfully supportive throughout her 'creative process', especially her sister Paula, who endured countless fittings and Kelly's wild mood swings.

"Because I had to get everything perfect I was quite stressed, so my family put up with three months of hell from me as I had to put my life on hold to finish the costume. I was sleep-deprived, having mood swings and just took it to heart if I snapped at her," says Kelly. "She also understood how I wanted the garment modelled. She couldn't smile, she had to look cold and fierce, but without looking bland and emotionless. And she is looking forward to her trip to Wellington for the Montana World of Wearable Art Awards Show (MOWA), which runs from 25 September through 5 October.

"I am stoked about winning! It made all the stress and effort worth it, and I can't wait for the Wellington trip. I have always wanted to go and my dream would be to one day compete down there. The experience will be great!"

Paula was also a great support person backstage. "I chose my sister Paula because I know that she would be able to put up with my mood swings back stage and wouldn't take it to heart if I snapped at her," says Kelly. "She also understood how I wanted the garment modelled. She couldn't smile, she had to look cold and fierce, but without looking bland and emotionless. And she is looking forward to her trip to Wellington for the Montana World of Wearable Art Awards Show (MOWA), which runs from 25 September through 5 October.

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WINNERS
Overall Prize: Kelly McDowell
Elegance award: Duncanross Brown
Model award: Minnie-May Naha
Masquerade Section: Megan Williams
Wearable Art: Kelly McDowell
Open Section: Glenside Winans
Fashionista: Victor Tufanovic
Dancing Queen: Hayley Douglas
Student Formal: Samantha Burns
Body Art: ?????
Kings As Queens: Hayley Clarke
All the award photos can be viewed online at: www.befo.com/photography.htm

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Duncanross's design had a very distinct French flavour, which he says he is heavily influenced by, and was modelled fabulously by his friend Holly Jett, who was his winning model from last year.

"I knew she would work! It's the real joy of how I wanted the dress to look and the character that went with it. I also chose her because she calms me down when I get too excited and stressed out."

The Bernina awards were only one of these busy 'creative' projects this year. "I am very dramatic and I get involved with drama and theatre. I was in Gats this year which was a big highlight," said Kelly. "I was in Duncanross? I have entered in another design competition which is in Auckland, not wearable arts but mainstream fashion, so I am straight into it at the moment - sewing, drawing and planning a portfolio, which is really exciting and challenging."

When he leaves Katoa High School Duncanross is 'definitely looking at a career in fashion design or somewhere in that field and to get my name out there. I know the business is really tough, and you have to start at the bottom and work your way up, but I believe that if you have a great mind for re-invention and new ideas, thick skin and good old-fashioned hard work, you can make it. So watch this space!"

Another talented young wearable artist, Paige Mackay, spotted the modelling talent of Minnie-May Naha when he was looking for someone to model his futuristic design, **Pipeharmonia**. "I really loved what Paige designed and made," Minnie-May says. "I feel so lucky that Paige chose me to be his model. His design was beautiful."

The beautiful 14-year-old Katoa High student jumped at the chance of getting out on the runway as she has always aspired to get into modelling.

"I went to Whangarei Heath School, where we did lots of productions and performances there. The school was very supportive of us and that's where I got a love for being on stage. I am also a cheerleader with Fantasy Cheerleading here in Whangarei and it has taught me many things about being a performer, especially the need to present myself well."

This young fashionista credits her grandmother for her love of fashion, saying "I like to wear clothes that make me feel good, and don't be shy!"

FACTS
Above: Dipping topology to put into the beds. Below: Construction - formwork in place. Right: St Stephen's team and helpers from the Whangarei Heads area inside the completed 'sea-walk' or food canal!

about myself. I'm not a trackspits sort of person. I prefer to get dressed up whenever I can. I think I got this from my Nan, who has always told me to be well dressed when I'm out. My Nan has always told me to look my best!"

When asked what she thinks makes a good model, Minnie-May says "I think it is important to be confident in yourself, present yourself and the designs as well as you can. It is helpful that I am tallish." And she has some advice to any model hopefuls looking to enter next year's awards. "Get out there, give your best, and don't be shy!"

Kelly McDowell's stunning snake creation will be on display at Tutton in Bank Street. Duncanross's elegant French outfit will be on show at Steve Hayward Master Jeweller in the Town Basin, while Minnie-May is looking forward to getting some practice in front of the camera when she does a series of photo-shoots with me later this month.

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