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STYLING + DIRECTION / Jamie-Maree Shipton MAKEUP / Porsche Poon, HAIR / Ronnie Woodward
ALL CLOTHES / Matis Studio MODEL / Xie @ Premier



Jamie-Maree Shipton

interview Tagen Donovan

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Retrospectively, could you outline the beginning of your career leading up to now?

I've been doing this for what feels like forever, so to speak retrospectively is mildly daunting! Looking back can be a little hard (*I'm very critical of my work*). Overall, it feels as though my journey has been a constant grind but satisfying nonetheless.

I fell into styling naturally, being that I didn't formally study the subject, but I do have a degree in Journalism.

During my studies at Melbourne University, I began writing for the Australian/New Zealand faction of I-D Magazine, taking my preexisting love for fashion and moulding it into a career. During this time, I was writing columns, opinion pieces, and interviews. Initially, I wrote about my general thoughts regarding fashion, specifically relating to my surroundings. Always having had a strong affinity for the U.K, especially for the design school Central Saint Martins (CSM). I somewhat wanted to mimic this long-term affinity by aligning myself with The Melbourne Design School (RMIT). Spending a considerable amount of time there working alongside the graduates, I began to style and shoot — mainly with local photographers, the images would then run alongside my articles.

From this point on, I began getting offers to style rather than to write. I embarked upon creating editorials for various publications, including one of my favourites, Novembre Magazine. This is where I began to position myself into the UK/European market. Australia is great, however, the industry is very small, and in my opinion, narrow minded. The general response from the Australian market observing my work, was that they didn't quite get it.

Despite this, I decided to take the leap in uprooting to the U.K, and ever since, it's been a whirlwind. My work feels much less restricted, and I've been able to be free within the articulation of my ideas, which has ultimately led me to becoming more of a creative director rather than a stylist. Progressing to where I am now, often working alongside CSM graduates and various other exciting new-generation designers, I feel more at home in myself and within my practice.

with clothes, it's very clear you have your own personal aesthetic. Could you explain your process and what inspired you?

I don't simply dress, I wouldn't be satisfied with that. I need to have a story, concept, and key elements that build into the styling to ground it, expand it, and ultimately, translate it. So for me, inspiration in how I approach clothes comes secondary to the concept I've created (not in every case, as I'm lucky enough to be in charge of creative direction).

Initially, inspiration is conceived from random references, from there I tend to build upon them, mostly by colour palettes (my train of thought finds momentum in colour), and that is usually when the finalisation of a story comes to fruition.

My creative thoughts run non-stop and I'm lucky enough to be eternally inspired, building my tangent thoughts into streams of concepts. Once the concept is initialised, the styling flows naturally, I tend to build my reference boards and then think about how I'd like the styling to be incorporated.

Tagen Donovan **speaks with** Jamie-Maree Shipton





STYLING + DIRECTION / Jamie-Maree Shipton MAKEUP / Porsche Poon, HAIR / Ronnie Woodward JACKET / Mateo Velasquez BODYSUIT + TIGHTS / Stylists Own MODEL / Xia @ Premier

I'll make the call in terms of general direction and then from there, it's all feel. Most of the time, I don't know how the final form will look until the fitting process, from there, it will speak to me in an organic way. I can be emotional about my work, which can be difficult, mainly because if I'm not feeling it, I'll have to force it. For a "purist" like me, that's almost like drowning in cement. I'd never want my aesthetic to feel corrupted or disingenuous, and the only way to do that is to really go by how I feel the clothes are connecting to the story.

There is emphasis on your approach in working alongside up and coming designers and giving platform to independent image-makers. What are the general criteria you look for while in search of new collaborators?

New designers have always been at the forefront of what I do. As previously mentioned, my love for CSM and other enterprising design-based schools has been a common factor in discovering new collaborators, purely based on the fact that I've always been a fan of the designers that they have produced.

Secondly, I love to discover people, and use items that no one else has creatively incorporated, ultimately giving them life.

Thirdly, new designers rarely restrict themselves in the design process, so the garments and accessories they have created are wildly unique and exciting because there are no commercial restraints. Fourthly, it's satisfying to know that you've worked alongside a designer at the beginning of their career, building a relationship that lasts until they are more established.

Many of the Australian designers from RMIT that I have worked with have ended up at some of the world's largest and most inspiring fashion houses. In regards to photographers, again, I think I'm more inspired by those following their own aesthetic. It's not so much about new or independent image-makers, but more about those who are enthusiastic in trying new things, people who are interested in carving out their own style and not following others.

What is your stance on using Instagram as a tool for self-promotion? Do you think it's imperative for artists to use in terms of circulating their work or do you think we are entering a shift in social media consumption where some individuals are opting out of participating?

For me, it's about balance and how you define "self-promotion".

Essentially, my work communicates the idea of self when it comes to Instagram. I don't need to show my physical self in order for my work to speak, therefore, rarely will you see me on my online feed. Some people have mentioned that I'd go further if I were to be more of a "personality" on social media. However, I must stay true to what I'm comfortable with, and for me, self-promotion doesn't mean I have to do it only one way. I tend to be quite pedantic about how my Instagram looks overall, and that does indeed provide me with work.

I think it is an important platform for disseminating your craft, and it also gives you access to collaborators.

Once you figure out how to be part of "the matrix" in your own way, it's far less overwhelming. Playing by your own rules is what may work for some on Instagram, however, it doesn't always work for others. The key is to do your own thing, and those who pay attention and appreciate will always come. Time away from Instagram is just as important, don't make it the centre of your world; it's a tool, not the be-all and end-all.

Often where one lives and/or has grown up informs the visual tone for their work. Do you feel there is any truth to that?

In all honesty, I don't really think it has much of an effect. Being influenced by things that are less tied to geographical location and generally finding inspiration within a multitude of places, location really only plays a part in terms of accessibility. My style is free-flowing, and would be the same no matter where I am located.

Considering that we live in a time where education fees are verging on extortionate, do you believe it is imperative to study an arts related degree to further your prospects, or is making a name for yourself achievable outside the constraints of post-secondary education?

I'm proof that you don't necessarily have to study. I think studying to be a creative or furthermore, to position yourself within the creative industry, is quite pointless.



BEAUTY DIRECTION/ Jamie-maree Shipton PHOTOGRAPHY / Tom Blasch MAKEUP / Sabu Suzuki EARRING / TIGHTS (MORN AS HEADBAND also) Celia Calderon Asensio, TOP / Asai MODELL / Sompa @premie

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Yes, you may learn technical skills, however, placing a grading system on a naturally creative intuition seems absurd to me. What else does it teach but to alter a genuine creative process into one that seeks a graded result? You are far better off putting the money, time, and risk into your own projects and building your portfolio, rather than having an exterior entity define the potential of your ability.

Clothing designers are an exception to this rule however, as I believe having an educational body behind you does make a difference.

Your Instagram communicates a bountiful visual vocabulary. What sets you apart from many other stylists is your sense of playfulness and a seamlessly mastered D.I.Y approach.

What was your thought-process behind your jewellery made from seemingly everyday objects, such as souvenir keychains and business cards?

Since an early age, I've always been a "crafter" with a predisposition for "weird" objects. When I was in journalism school, I had my own jewellery label that incorporated a crystal collection of mine, now the pieces that I create embody the colours and shapes that I'm drawn to.

Lately, as I've been travelling often, keyrings have become a current fascination. In general, the hands-on aspect to my work has always been present; anything that allows me to be creative, I'll do it.

Additionally, turning found objects into new pieces is my small part in making my practice a little more sustainable.

What key aspects draw your attention to a designer's collection? Would you ever consider designing your own line of clothing in the future?

It depends on my mood and the overall concept. I can be pretty fickle, for instance, something I like one minute, I may not necessarily like the next.

Jamie-Maree Shipton

Acrylic nails make a recurring appearance in the backdrop of your projects, often curling around the models hands with exuberant abstracted designs.

What is it that appeals to you about the expression of nail art?

In general, I'm drawn to mixing colours, textures, and dynamic shapes. My aesthetic emphasises a layer-heavy approach. I tend to dissect collections in my mind, ultimately envisaging how they could be added to something or perhaps translated in a different way. As for my own line, stay tuned!

You work closely with photographers, are you heavily involved with the process of a shoot?

How much planning ahead is involved or do things tend to naturally unfurl?

Being that I'm a creative director first and a stylist second, the majority of the time, my concept initiates the shoot.

From there, I will begin the process of assembling a team from start to finish. I'm heavily involved from the onset.

Endless planning is something I partake in, shoots are incredibly timeconsuming, especially since I'm often doing the art and creative direction, along with the overall styling aspect of each project. I'm also a perfectionist, and rarely leave things to chance, planning as much as possible right up until it's time to shoot. However, I do allow for things to change naturally if they need to. You never know how a model is going to embody something until they are in front of the camera, and often, I push them quite hard in their poses, so sometimes tweaks here and there are made.

My mum has had acrylic nails her entire life, not once have I seen her without them. Perhaps observing this has planted a seed within my mind, invariably sticking with me. I've always loved how she used them as another element in building her style.

Nowadays, nail art is truly art within itself. It's not always necessary, but when I can, I love having that extra element. The same way a beauty image is placed in a shot-list, I generally love to add a nail shot if it's possible. It can speak volumes to further translate the story behind my concepts. From the curled nails I proclaim as "prawns" to a set painted with birds and dogs. it's an extra bit of fun.

Who and what inspires you the most?

It's never just one thing, I find that I can be quite a moody person and this will always dictate what I feel creatively speaking.

However, in some respects, I believe that makes me lucky because I'm not always looking in one specific place for inspiration — I generally let it flow freely and find it everywhere.

Where do you see yourself in ten years time?

In ten years time, I'd love to have my own publication or be at the herald of one of those I admire.

I'd also love to be more mentally, emotionally, and spiritually happy. I work far too much, which I'm grateful for, but I'd rather not be stuck in a seemingly „eternal" hustle, that most of us creatives enforce upon ourselves. It's okay for now, but it's not a forever mood; balance is the dream overall.

What is the most important lesson you've learned so far? If you could give any parting advice to aspiring stylists, what would it be?

Find your balance; the moment I learned to take time away from my phone, Instagram, and the pressure to always illustrate that I'm working, I got out of my own way.

Learning to measure your worth based solely on yourself and how you feel about it, rather than in comparison to others, is the greatest thing you can learn. Don't ever do anything to be like someone else. Stay true to you and you will never regret it.

