

# THE SOCIAL STUDIO

ANNUAL REPORT 2010-2011

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

When people with diverse personal and work backgrounds come together in pursuit of a common aim, inspiring things can happen

The Social Studio, an enterprise built by volunteers and dedicated professionals, is inspired by a simple idea: creating training and employment pathways for culturally diverse young adults who need a chance, but are too often denied meaningful opportunities in the broader community. Our social enterprise is at its heart a collaborative venture and harnesses the skills and aptitudes of talented young people from refugee backgrounds by tapping into their interests in fashion, design and food.

The past year, the second in operation, has brought many highlights and great successes. Our students are flourishing. We have achieved a 93 per cent retention/completion rate across our programs and significantly expanded the number of training and employment places at The Social Studio. On top of that, we created many external placements with our industry partners. After much anticipation and hours of toil, we have also expanded our hospitality service by opening an inviting new gourmet cafe, The Cutting Table, which has fast become a fixture in Smith Street, Collingwood. Our fashion events, meanwhile, are creating a buzz in design circles.

The greatest yardstick of success however are the stories of our students. This document gives you an insight into the impressive milestones our people have attained as individuals and as a collective. The success of The Social Studio is enabled through the goodwill and energy of our dedicated volunteers, funders, industry and community partners, and, not least, loyal customers who enjoy our label and our food.

I wish to thank the hardworking staff and board for their efforts this past year, and congratulate all the students. A special thanks to Tobias Muench, a founding director, who is bowing out of the board this year. Toby, an architect, has donated innumerable hours to The Social Studio from the day the idea for the space was launched. We appreciate the energy and practical skills he has brought to the organisation.

Finally, congratulations to our CEO Grace McQuilten who was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to enable her to conduct a study tour of overseas social enterprises next year. We will benefit as a group from the knowledge she gains.

Farah Farouque

Chair of the Board, The Social Studio

## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Growth and change has been the theme for us over the last year, with nearly constant building and renovations in the background as we have moved our training upstairs (January 2011) and opened our new café The Cutting Table, next door (April 2011).

This expansion has been a wonderful sign of our development as an organisation. It has also added a lot of colour, noise and disruption to the daily operations of the Studio, with builders and building debris a constant part of the background, along with plumbing and electricity outages and lots of background noise.

In times of change, it is important to create a stable foundation of support, to provide consistency in daily operations and to maintain a strong sense of collective vision. As a result, our organisational focus over the last six months has been on looking after staff and students, focusing on the core business of training and running the shop and café, and steering a steady course through the exciting times. An independent evaluation conducted at the height of all this change was very useful in identifying and implementing communication processes and organisational systems to create a strong sense of comraderie, pride and excitement about the future for our dynamic team.

The coming year will see the rewards of all this hard work, with expanded retail operations, wholesaling of the collection to other stores, our online store in full swing, increased intake of students including a new training program in hospitality, and increased employment through wider retailing, manufacturing work and a busier cafe which is now also offering catering and private functions.

Each day in The Social Studio is joyful, abundant with creativity, celebration, fun, humour and learning. We are proud to be able to share this unique and special enterprise, which foregrounds people and human experience over business and process, with the wider audience of Melbourne and Australia. Together we hope to build an enriched community that celebrates diversity and provides exciting opportunities for talented young people to develop and express their creative vision.

I wish to extend a huge thanks to our team, to our supporters and volunteers, to our Board and our friends who make it so easy for us to thrive, develop and grow.

Grace McQuilten

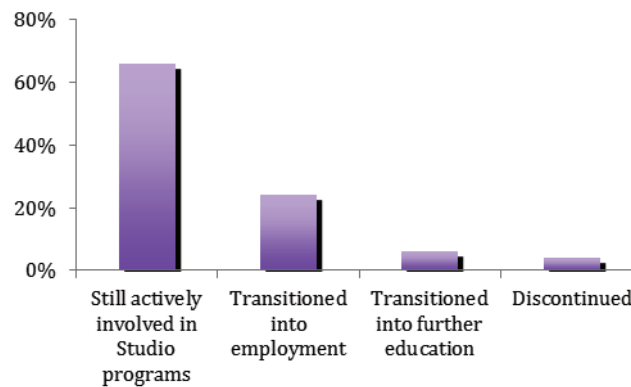


# HIGHLIGHTS

## Training and Employment Pathways- Fashion

- Achieved a retention and completion rate above 90% over the past year
- Two students were accepted into a Diploma in Fashion Design at RMIT, congratulations!
- Assisted 10 students to gain paid work in the fashion industry.

**Studio participation 2010-2011**



Our retention rate is one of our major indicators for success and is the result of the flexibility in the way our training is delivered, the intensive relationships that are developed between staff and students and the additional support that students receive for issues beyond study (e.g. counseling, financial literacy, driving lessons).

Our programs are highly engaging and many individuals choose to stay involved for long periods of time (12-24 months), until they feel ready to transition into higher education or further employment. We do not have an “exit date” and prefer to work with people in a long-term capacity to achieve their professional and personal goals.

## Clothing Manufacture Highlights

- Introduced three traineeships in Clothing Manufacture providing stable employment to students who are interested in the manufacturing side of the fashion industry. Our manufacturing team manufactures our label and take on orders for external customers.
- Created a corporate catalogue to offer conference satchels, corporate gifts and uniform supplies to the hospitality sector. These orders directly support our manufacturing trainees and enable businesses to buy quality products that offer incredible social impact.
- One of our manufacturing trainees has started a home tailoring business and another trainee has secured free space for her community women's group to start up their own sewing training program in Dandenong.

When our doors opened in 2009, Salamawit Meckonen was the first person to enrol in our fashion design school and has been one of our most committed students ever since. Salamawit has made the most of opportunities to receive additional tuition from industry professionals, played a lead role in our fashion shows and has been a valuable source of support to other students. This year Salamawit's dedication was rewarded with her acceptance in the Diploma of Fashion Design (RMIT). In honour of her achievements, The Social Studio has awarded Sal with a scholarship to assist with the purchase of materials and equipment needed for her studies. Congratulations Salamawit, you're a star!





*“...The look of pride on our trainees faces when they complete a garment and then see customers buying it from our shop is a great joy. I remember when Abuk sewed one of our coats, she put it on and started dancing around the Studio. She was so happy, we all were...”*

Cheryllyn De Vries,  
Manufacturing Mentor

### **Retail and Wholesale Highlights**

- Secured free retail space in Melbourne Central on the Lonsdale St bridge, providing a great opportunity for our retail team to experience an authentic retail environment and giving our label fantastic exposure.
- Stabilised our retail team to a core group of 8 people who work regular shifts each fortnight.
- Welcomed three new stockists of our label in Melbourne; Queen (Smith St, Collingwood), Lupa (High St, Northcote) and Mandrake and Willow (Anderson St, Yarraville).

In the coming year we will focus on expanding our wholesale distribution interstate with a particular focus on boutiques in Sydney and Brisbane.

## Cafe Highlights

- Launched The Cutting Table
- Expanded our training and employment places ten-fold
- Introduced an African Banquet night, re-launched our catering service and introduced private function options, all of which are proving popular!

Read all about The Cutting Table in the Growth and Development section of this book.

# GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

## Introducing...The Cutting Table

In April 2011 our brand new café opened its doors in the space adjoining The Social Studio. It was a very proud moment for Enza Adem and her team who have made the most of the space and the benefits that street frontage offer. The larger area has enabled us to expand the jobs and training on offer; eight people work shifts each fortnight and ten people are enrolled in Certificate II in Hospitality delivered in partnership with William Angliss TAFE out of our café.

We were very lucky to have many wonderful people who gave freely of their time and energy throughout the renovations. In particular we say a huge thanks to Raphael Kilpatrick, Tobias Muench, Enza Adem, Asiah Lado, Francis Anjong, Thamer Alshamari and Padma Carroll who did everything from handcrafting our furniture and benches, painting, scrubbing and shopping around for bargain deals on equipment and somehow they managed to keep smiling!

The Cutting Table is a great example of the community working together to achieve a dream and has been successful from day one. Enza has created a delicious menu that offers African-style burgers alongside her famous curries and tasty home-baked goods.

Our catering is gaining a strong reputation among schools, community organisations and businesses and people are hiring our café for private functions, all of which creates extra employment and work experience opportunities for young people. During winter we have trialed African Banquet evenings and we hope that these nights become a regular feature.

### **Introducing...The Printing Studio**

The Printing Studio is an exciting initiative that will move The Social Studio into the world of digital design. Three philanthropic trusts – The Eureka Benevolent Fund, Helen Macpherson Smith Trust and The Danks Trust - have come together to fund the creation of The Printing Studio, which has three primary objectives:

- Creation of training and jobs in digital design, skills that are transferable across a range of industries.
- Tapping into a niche market by offering a personalised service and direct communication with the customer. This is ideal for independent designers and students who have specific design needs but currently have to source their digital designs interstate or overseas. The Social Studio label will also benefit from access to uniquely designed fabrics.
- Providing a commercial return that will ensure the initiative is self-funded and enable any excess funding to be directed to the fashion design school.

The creation of The Printing Studio is well advanced and will be officially launched in November 2011, with local designers already enquiring about orders. We are very appreciative of the support of Deloitte Private in developing our business plan for this initiative and our three philanthropic partners who have recognized the wonderful opportunity this venture offers for young people.

# ACHIEVEMENTS

## **Graduations**

28 of our students graduated from certificates in fashion design and retail

## **Employment Pathways**

We established a fantastic employment pathway partnership with Nobody Jeans and placed 10 people into employment there. We continued our employment referrals to The Social Roasting Company, Hunter Gatherer and Mariana Hardwick

## **Collections**

We have designed, produced, launched and retailed TSS2 (Spring/Summer) and TSS3 (Autumn/Winter) collections

## **Expansion of jobs and training in retail and hospitality**

We have grown our retail and hospitality teams to 8 people each.

## **Awards**

- 2010 Small Business of the Year Award, Victorian Training Awards
- 2011 Sustainable Design Award, Fashion Group International Awards
- Commended in the City of Yarra Sustainability Awards
- Finalist in the 2010 Melbourne Awards

## Fashion Shows

- Our first Spring Fashion Gala was a sell-out with 350 guests attending. The event, in September 2010, raised \$15,000 towards our school
- Our second Hunter Gatherer street fashion parade was held in November 2010 and was a lot of fun
- Featured in the L'Oreal Melbourne Fashion Festival with the launch of our TSS3 collection (March 2011)

## Events

- Collaborated with 40 Interior and Industrial design students from RMIT to create our Pedal Powered pop-up shops, they were launched at the State of Design Festival in July 2010
- Launched a six month pop-up shop in Melbourne Central, Jan – Jun 2011
- Ran workshops with SAIL, Somalian Women's Group and the Liberian Group, and as part of the L'Oreal Melbourne Fashion Festival
- Ran two Quick Unpick design series where people can meet local designers to learn more about the ideas that underpin their work. Around 15 - 20 people attend each talk, ensuring an intimate atmosphere and good discussion opportunities
- Ran two seminars in Melbourne and Sydney on social enterprise for the School for Social Entrepreneurs
- Guest speakers at forums such as The Public Relations Industry Association annual lunch, the Institute of Chartered Accountants annual lunch, RMIT Sustainability Expo and Craft Victoria Careers Conference and others.

Took part in the:

- o Sustainable Living Festival
- o Fair at Square
- o RISE Festivals
- o Oxfam's Exchange for Change in Queensland
- o Stalls at: Shirt and Skirt, CERES and Fitzroy Market
- o Future Fashion Now, City of Port Phillip Sustainable Fashion parade



# MEDIA COVERAGE

## **Magazines, Newspapers and Journals**

Sydney Morning Herald

The Age

Melbourne Times Weekly

Jetstar Magazine

MX Newspaper

Herald Sun, November 30, 2010

Ragtrader

Skills Victoria

## **Television**

7.30 Report, ABC

ABC News AsiaPacific, ABC

SBS News

7PM Project, Channel Ten

Sunrise, Channel 7

Channel 31

## **Radio**

3AW

ABC Radio National

Fox FM

RRR

## Online

Broadsheet  
Three Thousand  
Michi Girl  
Ethical Clothing Australia,  
Ispy  
Your Restaurants,  
hiddendocumentary,  
The Design Files,  
Sleekitone  
Style Melbourne  
State of Green  
The Slow Guides  
Flocks  
Random Specific  
Green Fables  
The Vine

# PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

## Enterprise Goals

- Manufacturing for corporates, government and local designers
- Wholesaling the collection to other stores
- Developing a new retail presence
- Launching our new digital fabric printing enterprise - The Printing Studio
- Expanding our catering and private functions at The Cutting Table Café



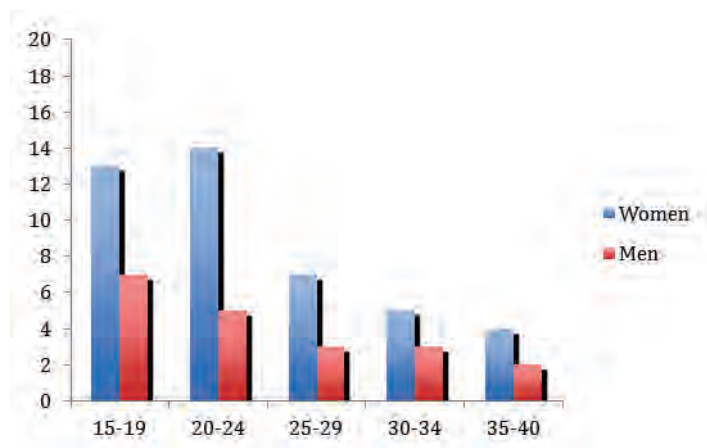
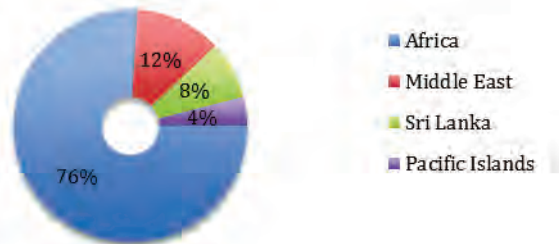
## Social and Community Goals

- Increasing our educational programs in The Social Studio by creating a dedicated fashion school with increased curriculum and through our partnership with William Angliss TAFE (hospitality)
- Mentoring a group of Sudanese women from the Twitch community in Dandenong to set up their own sewing co-operative and continuing our work with a community in Alice Springs to progress their own plans for initiatives in their community
- Developing and expanding our savings and microfinance program
- Increasing employment at the Studio and pathways to further employment beyond our doors

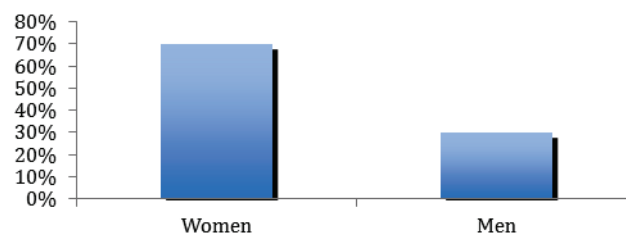


# FACTS AND STATS

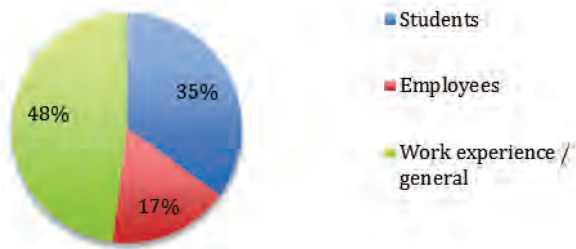
## Demographic



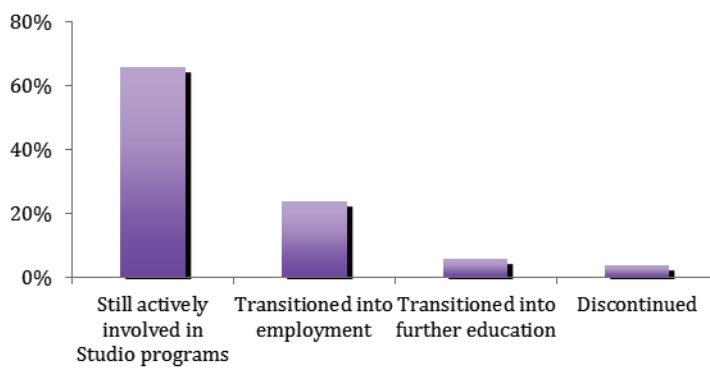
## Gender Profile



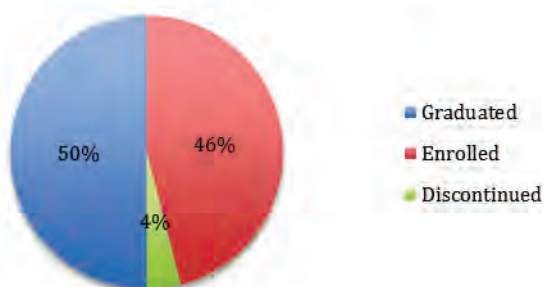
## Various types of involvement



## Studio participation over the last year



## Educational outcomes





## OUR SUPPORTERS

In the past year more than 100 people have volunteered at The Social Studio. There is no job too big or too small for our volunteers; they are our tutors, cleaners, couriers, events crew, photographers, social media managers, fundraisers, mentors...they are the backbone of our organisation! The interest in volunteering is so strong that we now have a “waiting list” of people who are willing to help out. From all of the staff and students at The Social Studio, thank you to everyone who has offered their ideas, expertise and energy. It means so much to us.

This year one of our Sydney supporters, Jackie Ruddock, created the What Ken Be Done campaign in which Jackie wore a piece of Ken Done inspired clothing and accessories everyday for 365 days. Aside from the fantastic publicity Jackie’s efforts secured, her efforts raised over \$23,000 for The Social Studio! Jackie’s energy and enthusiasm knows no end and we are so very appreciative to have connected with Jackie. To all who supported What Ken Be Done thank you so much!

The Social Studio is proud to partner with many organisations who provide us with financial and strategic support. In particular we would like to thank the following organisations for their support during the 2010-2011 financial year:

- Chicks Writing Cheques giving circle
- Danks Trust
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR)
- Department of Planning and Community Development
- Deloitte Private Banking
- Dominion Private Clients
- Eureka Benevolent Fund
- Foundation House
- Galleria Tessuti
- Helen McPherson Smith Trust
- Ian Potter Foundation
- Kere Kere
- Melbourne Central
- Melbourne Community Foundation (The Eastweb Fund)
- Myer Foundation
- Neighbourhood Justice Centre - Collingwood
- Process Plus
- Public Relations Institute of Australia – Women in PR Group
- RE Ross Trust
- RMIT School of Fashion
- SBS Foundation
- Streetsmart
- The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre
- The City of Melbourne
- The City of Yarra
- Victorian Multicultural Commission
- Westpac Foundation

# OUR BOARD AND STAFF

## Board of Management

### **Farah Farouque (Chair)**

Farah is Senior writer for The Age newspaper and is our media and policy advisor. Her interests range across social policy, politics, law and the arts.

### **Tamara Veltre (Vice Chair)**

Tamara is Director of Ruby Patootie & Lulamae Clothing, two fashion retailers in Melbourne. She lends expertise in business, retail operations and fashion design.

### **Enza Adem (Director)**

Enza is a community leader from Eritrea who speaks Amharic, Tigray, Arabic, Italian and English. She has a passion for design and hospitality and manages our café, the Cutting Table. Enza mentors our students

### **Grace McQuilten (Public Officer)**

Grace has worked for several years in community development overseeing projects to support the capacity and development of emerging communities in Melbourne.

### **Nyanbol (Rose) Kuol (Director)**

Rose is a young community leader in the Sudanese-Australian community. She has an interest in politics, international development and community welfare.

### **Raphael Kilpatrick (Director)**

Raphael is a designer with an interest in architecture, interior design, graphic and web design. He teaches at RMIT School of Design.

### **Tobias Muench (Director)**

Tobias is an innovative architect and designer, who specialises in environmentally sustainable architecture and design. Tobias retired from the Board at the conclusion of this financial year.

The Board wishes to thank Tristan Perry CA (Dominion Private Clients) for his pro-bono accounting assistance to The Social Studio.

## **Staff**

This year we have welcomed several fantastic new staff to our team who have greatly enriched our offerings at the Studio across fashion design, textiles, hospitality and community development. Thank you to all who worked for The Social Studio over the past year.

### **Studio**

Anna, Ryan, Sarah, Cheryllyn, Helen, Francess, Abuk, Meselech, Mathan, Festus

### **The Cutting Table**

Enza, Korlu, Mihret, Almaz, Mohamad, Rose, Francis, Asiah, Mohsen, Thamer

### **The Printing Studio**

Milly, Ramesh

### **Operatioins**

Grace, Trudy

### **Book-keeping**

Nicole

### **Retail**

Carrie, Fatimata, Alek, Atong, Victoria, Karl, Awen, Angelina, Nyadol, Ayat, Zubeyda, Ista, Asiya, Joyce, Aden, Mario, Jehnet, Salamawit, Sally

To the more than 50 people who volunteered at The Social Studio over the past year, a huge thank you from all of us!



# THE SOCIAL STUDIO

Buy our label, order our catering, make a tax deductible donation or simply learn more about our work at [www.thesocialstudio.org](http://www.thesocialstudio.org)