

Creating a Fashion Hub: The Easton Pearson Archive

Kathryn King

Head of Collections and Exhibitions, Museum of Brisbane, Australia

Summary

In this paper we will share the ways the Museum of Brisbane has integrated one of the largest single fashion archives in an Australian institution into the Museum's collection and program. We will explore how the Archive has transformed the Museum into a fashion hub and the future role of the Museum in the preservation of traditional craft practices.

Contents

About the museum

About the archive

About the Exhibition



Image of the exhibition of the Easton Pearson Archive, November 2018

About the Museum

Museum of Brisbane is a city Museum that uses art, design and objects to tell the stories of Brisbane and its people.

In 2017, Museum of Brisbane received a transformational gift – the Easton Pearson Archive, a contemporary fashion archive characterised by colourful, eclectic, patterned and highly embellished designs. The gift more than doubled the Museum’s existing collection of artworks and social history and represents a remarkable opportunity to tell the stories of Easton Pearson’s creative process and evolving aesthetic, and provide an extraordinary resource for fashion, art and design students and enthusiasts.

About the Archive

The Easton Pearson Archive is the complete collection of a fashion label partnership that lasted 28 years, led by creatives Pamela Easton and Lydia Pearson. With humble beginnings in Brisbane the label’s success was built on meticulously designed collections, demi-couture practices and a passion for creating bespoke textiles, prints and embellishments. With a unique design approach and practice of defying mainstream trends Pamela and Lydia’s careers as internationally recognised designers, saw them appearing regularly at Paris Fashion Week, and their collections stocked in 140 stores in 24 countries around the world.

The Archive signifies something quite exceptional - an intact body of work that captures the extent of a fashion label’s history. With over 3,300 garments and 5,000 items of supporting material including sketches, accessories, range plans, look books, press clippings and photographs, it is the largest archive of a single Australian fashion house held by a Museum.

Maintaining a fashion archive of this scale and significance rests in perpetuity with Museum of Brisbane. Since receiving the Archive in 2017, the Museum has worked on establishing workflows and procedures around housing, location control and quarantine, and a Conservation Management Plan exists to lead out priorities of care, and to provide a solid framework for the long-term preservation of the Archive.

The task of cataloguing such a volume and depth of material, although commenced, represents an enduring commitment. The Museum, together with a team of volunteer supporters, is working to document the Archive so that its future capacity as a centre of learning can be realised.

About the exhibition

The Museum’s first major exhibition from the Archive opened in November 2018. Entitled [The Designers’ Guide: Easton Pearson Archive](#) the Museum worked with designers Pamela and Lydia to select the designs they felt highlighted the most daring technical innovations, fabrics and embellishment choices of their design practice.

200 garments were selected that revealed the artistry and techniques that placed the label at the forefront of Australian fashion for 28 years. Drawing upon the Archive’s extensive range of support materials, including design-sketches, fabric samples, look books and inspirational pieces the exhibition highlighted the design process from inception to completion of the garments.

A film featuring Pamela and Lydia discussing their partnership forms part of the exhibition, as well as an audio guide and podcast with Vogue Australia’s Sustainability Editor-at-Large, Clare Press focusing on sustainability in fashion. The Museum published a full colour 128 page

catalogue to accompany the exhibition presenting in-depth research on the Archive as well as commentary from the designers about their adaption of traditional techniques and collaborative ways of working. Before slow fashion was even a turn of phrase, Pamela and Lydia's work ethic of sustainable collaborations, and commitment to ensuring the highest degree of workmanship in every aspect of a garment, marked them as unique and leaders in their profession.

The Easton Pearson Archive is a treasure held by Museum of Brisbane and captures a pivotal piece of Australian design and fashion history. It will continue to provide opportunities for engagement and research, ensuring the Easton Pearson Archive is a source of inspiration into the future.

Visit the Easton Pearson Archive online today via artsandculture.google.com