

## UNSTITCHED: LOCAL FASHION REVOLUTION DUNEDIN

Fiona Clements

Unstitched, a Dunedin initiative, takes the form of a series of practical workshops (held in 2016 and 2017, so far) open to the public, with the aim of sharing the skills and processes involved in creating, maintaining and re-purposing contemporary fashion.

The workshops are run by Just Atelier (Fiona Clements and Fiona Jenkin), who set up their sewing machines, tables, mending library and education resources in various spaces so people can come to a safe space to participate in practical mending, knitting, upcycling, soft-toy making, making garments and gifts for others – and also to discuss hard questions about the global fashion industry. Learning and sharing skills and information, connecting and networking are thus facilitated, with the aim of encouraging conscious fashion consumption by spreading awareness and inspiring better environmental choices in clothing.

Fiona Clements, who also makes unique, environmentally friendly fashion under the name Senorita AweSUMO, is a working committee member of Fashion Revolution, a global movement calling for greater transparency, sustainability and ethics in the fashion industry. Fashion Revolution believes that fashion can be made in a safe, clean and fair way where creativity, quality, environment and people are valued equally. They recognise that problems in the fashion industry are global, but address these with local solutions – such as Unstitched – to engage communities in socially and environmentally positive fashion initiatives.

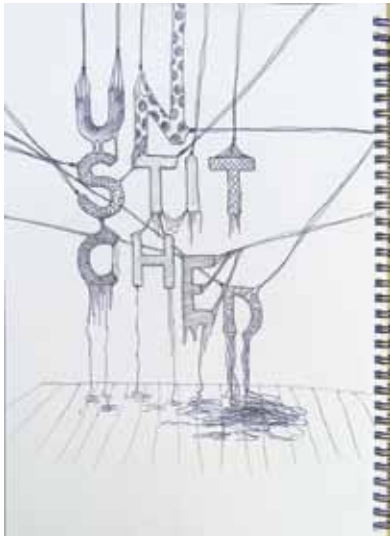


Figure 1. Inspirational drawing for Unstitched installation, 2016, by Craig Scott (Head of Design Otago Museum, co-founder of [thedesignkids.org](http://thedesignkids.org)). Photographer: Fiona Clements.

Unstitched works with Urban Dream Brokerage Dunedin, which matches vacant retail spaces to artists, designers, businesses and community groups in conjunction with the property owners. When Unstitched popped up in one of Urban Dream Brokerage's vacant spaces, it drew attention with an inviting and eye-catching window display.

### UNSTITCHED 2016/2017

We unstash the fashion industry with our conversations and our community actions, and then stitch it up again through exchanges and sewing. Sharing skills and knowledge, we create a safe space to have a hard discussion, where love is offered instead of shame.

Businesses and media perpetuate the inherent problems in the fashion industry and the present fashion system. We create a vibrant space that looks towards a better closed-loop fashion system, by starting with creative ideas and small local actions. We must start somewhere, and Fashion Revolution provides a global conversation to achieve that. Unstitched enables access to a wider community of resources and skills, creating connections and new networks of practitioners and groups.

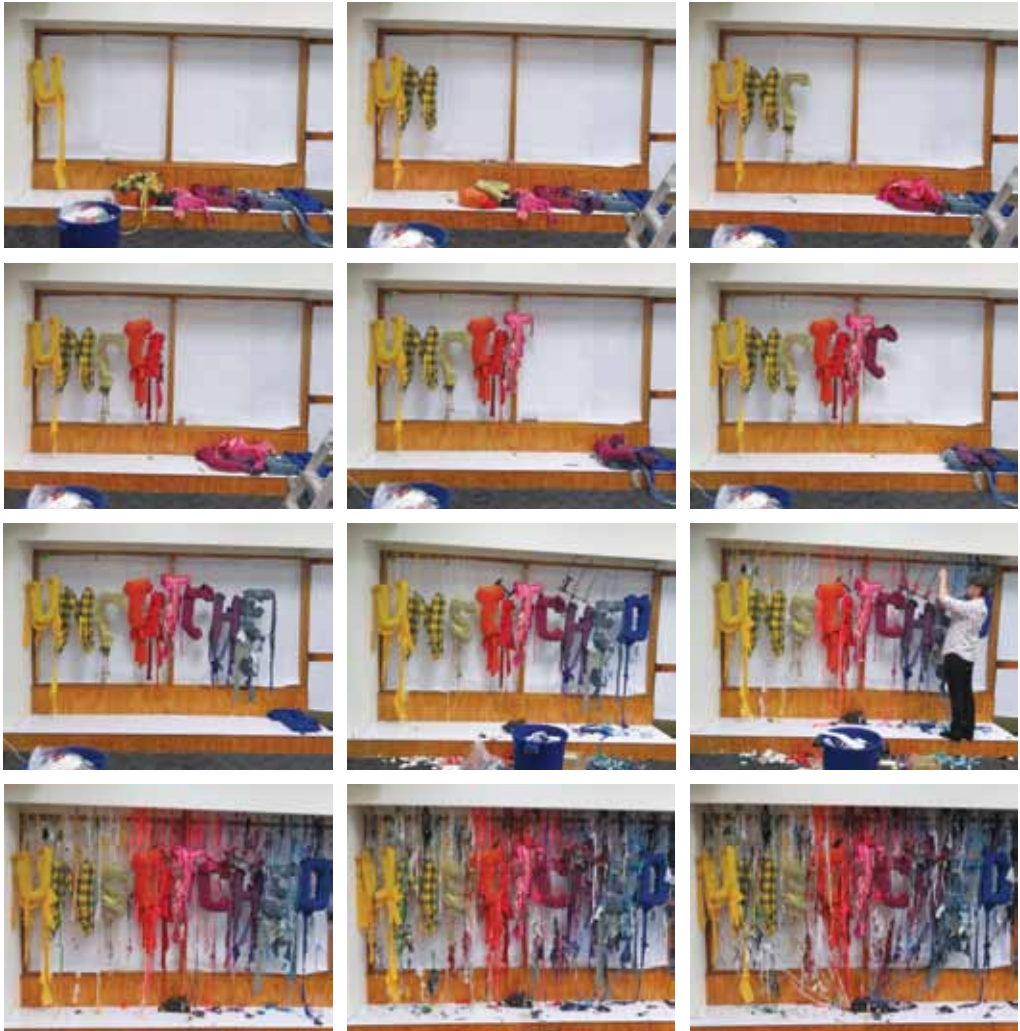


Figure 2. Unstitched, 2016, installation by Senorita AweSUMO and Craig Scott. The letters are made from upcycled textiles, stuffed with neoprene and other found stuffing, strung up and entangled with threads and other sewing accoutrements, including pieces of an old industrial Singer sewing machine. The strings come together in the machinery positioned below the letters, tangled into its moving parts. Photographer: Fiona Clements.

### UNSTITCHED 2017 – STITCHED UP!

Unstitched's 2017 window display uses plastic, textiles and plants to reimagine the transparency of a usual fashion window display. Instead of mannequins wearing the next big thing, plastic pockets in the shape of letters were created and filled with unused textiles to spell out "UNSTITCHED." The middle letter, I, is filled with a living specimen of New Zealand spinach, donated by the North East Valley community garden. In front of this are giant scissors, needle and a quick unpick made from cardboard. The needle is threaded with T-shirt yarn, which is stitched around the letters and comes from a large spool of thread. The scissor handles are also made from plastic and rescued textiles from T-shirts worn by staff at Re:Fuel Dunedin.



Figure 3. Unstitched, 2016, installation by Senorita AweSUMO and Craig Scott. Photographer: Fiona Clements.



Figure 4. Unstitched, 2017, installation by Senorita AweSUMO and MUNAYsisters. In 2017, Unstitched's window display was co-created by The Design Kids Dunedin ([thedesignkids.org](http://thedesignkids.org)) and Senorita AweSUMO. Photographer: Fiona Clements.



Figure 5. Unstitched, 2017, installation (detail). Photographer: Fiona Clements.



Figure 6. Unstitched, 2017, installation, inside view of window. Photographer: Fiona Clements.



Figures 7-10. Unstitched, 2017, installation, outside view of window.

The second window in the display was created using plastic sourced from the packaging of made-in-China garments in the fashion system. So much plastic is used just for packaging fashion items for transport to stores, where it is removed for display, and then the clothes are repackaged in plastic bags for transport by consumer. In the display, plastic bags have been transformed into a quilt of hearts, à la Just Atelier's logo. The three hearts in the middle have been made into pockets to collect our waste as we work over the month of Unstitched: Local Fashion Revolution. How full will they be at the end?

The month-long Stitched Up pop-up events attracted over 400 people to come and participate in sewing projects and conversations. Unstitched 2017 is continuing in the form of monthly Mend and Make Awesome sessions at Just Atelier's studios and pop-ups. Photographer: Fiona Clements.



Figure 11. Fi Clements (Senorita AweSUMO), Tannia Lee of Seen in Second-hand Land, and Sarah Lancaster of SewLove on Tour: "Stitched Up" lettering hangs above the Mend and Make Awesome space; this is where we stitch garments together, fabricated through many different forms of reuse. This lettering was reused from the 2016 installation, with the addition of a 'P'. Sarah Lancaster ([www.sewlove.nz](http://www.sewlove.nz)) parked her solar-powered mobile sewing truck in the Octagon to help advertise Stitched Up, and she and Fiona Jenkin ran an Op Shop Hop, that included Tannia Lee, as part of Unstitched. Photographer: Fiona Jenkin.

**Fiona Clements.** Pakeha, Kai Tahu, Clan Gordon, Craftivist, Zerowaste Textile Practitioner: Fiona graduated Bachelor of Design (Fashion) from Otago Polytechnic School of Design in 2011 and is currently completing a Graduate Diploma in Sustainable Practice (OP). Fiona designs under her own label Senorita AweSUMO and is also the co-founder of Just Atelier Trust.

*Global problem, Local solution*