

STEEP STREET

Rachel Blackburn



Figure 1. Collaborative textile patterns by Rachel Blackburn and Jason Aldridge.

“Steep Street” is a fashion label which formed in 2015 as a creative outlet for the fashion, art and music created by Jason Aldridge and myself. We make music and art with an emphasis on fun, positivity, street culture, colour, dreaming, clouds, aliens, cartoons, doodles and DIY. Creating individual pieces is an escape from ubiquitous fast fashion. To feel like I am creating something that does not exist in the mainstream is empowering and positive. Ideally, our designs incorporate artwork which represent the now, the future, love and life. They are pieces about living in your own ultimate fantasy worlds. I feel pure joy seeing people wearing these designs.

“Steep Street” as a creative collaboration had its beginnings in artist run spaces None Gallery and Glue Gallery. None is first and foremost a studio collective. It is part studio building and part art project-space. It has been a platform for projects and experimental events arising from its various tenants in the studio areas at various times.¹ Glue Gallery Shop was a space that has showcased artisan craft and artworks. Glue also had a separate gallery, that hosts individual artist shows, giving makers an opportunity to share their work with the wider community.²

Jason was experimenting with electronic music and together we formed the band Murdabike, for which we designed costumes for our performances. This grew to a broader interest in fashion and design. Soon I was designing clothes and textile patterns more generally. I love the effect of seeing a single design repeated to create a completely



Figure 2. Collaborative textile patterns by Rachel Blackburn and Jason Aldridge.

new visual effect. I was inspired early on by repeated digital images like Magic Eye and other computer generated graphics. I have always been drawn to patterned fabric design, being a 'fabricoholic,' and wanted to be able to create hand-made custom printed fabrics for clothing and interiors. More recently I have been incorporating my painting into the design repeats. Jason brings a more graphic design emphasis to the label, using logos and stencils. It's great when we combine our two different styles, employing my patterns with his prints.

We recently held an exhibition at the new Dunedin gallery 'Fresh 'n Fruity', also an artist run space.³ For the new artworks, I worked on repeats and experimented with airbrush on canvas, which was combined with some of Jason's graphic stencils. We then printed the same designs onto fabric. These canvas designs were created with clothing in mind.

I am a perfectionist and have had to learn to embrace the imperfections one gets when screen printing. The tonal differences and often serendipitous misprints can make great effects and I am learning to go along with these surprises. Each time I print something it's almost a kind of magic; the result may be quite different from the last. In this respect a lot of the clothes become 'one offs'. I like to mix things up, be flexible to the various potentialities and experiment with new designs. Fashion has become a medium for us to show our artistic style, encourage creativity and express our individuality.

Rachel Blackburn is a Dunedin School of Art School graduate who majored in electronic arts. Her past work includes painting, fashion and textile design and music performance. She has also helped coordinate the artist run space None Gallery and the cooperative Glue Gallery. **Jason Aldridge**, a.k.a. ISO 12, is a designer, artist, electronic musician and producer with a background in sound engineering and fashion (Label ,AKA) and was himself also a founding member of None Gallery.

1 <http://www.eventfinda.co.nz/venue/none-gallery-dunedin>

2 <http://www.eventfinda.co.nz/venue/glue-gallery-dunedin>

3 <http://www.eventfinda.co.nz/venue/fresh-fruity-gallery-dunedin>