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Getting knitty with it

By Helen Twose

Young women are knitting up a storm – but it isn't about crocheted doilies or knitted toilet roll covers.

Seeking design inspiration from pop culture and catwalk fashion, the new wave of crafters are taking techniques learned from grandma and giving them a subversive twist.

Wellington's Heather Barnes' crafting obsession began when the 21-year-old knitted a chunky scarf on "massive" wooden needles at the age of 16.

She uses a computer to design her own projects, posting pictures of the completed creations on an internet blog.

"I don't work off patterns. I can't understand them, so I kind of just make it up."

Unhappy at having no outlet to sell her knitted creations, Barnes started the Craftwerk market last year to provide a venue for hip, urban, crafty-types to sell their creations.

Barnes got the idea while "having a bitch" to her flatmate about the lack of markets in the city.

"Anything that was going on cost at least \$60 to enter it and they were out in the suburbs, and you had to get your own table and it took a real effort," she says.

"I was thinking 'well, I'm going to do something about it.'"

Originally called Bitchcraft and run in an inner-city café, vendors paid \$5 to set up on a table.

Expecting to spend an evening drinking and swapping items with other vendors, Barnes was surprised when the café was "flooded" with shoppers.

Barnes uses "guerilla poster-ing", a website and MySpace to promote Craftwerk and has seen it evolve from an alternative market for 20-something-year-olds "spending their student allowance" into a major event.

"The trendy kids have now got onto it," sighs Barnes, who is amused to discover "see you at Craftwerk" postings on MySpace.

Craftwerk is now also in Auckland, holding a market at Alleluya Café in St Kevin's Arcade on October 5 from 6pm.

Craftwerk has attracted the attention of design stores and galleries who send "scouts" to



PHOTO: HELEN TWOSE

WILD AND WOOLLY: Fran Stafford says knitting is back in fashion.

approach the vendors.

Barnes herself is hoping to exhibit her creations, which include a crocheted vagina and a teddy bear exposing his crocheted entrails.

The trend for younger women to learn to knit has been noticed by Fran Stafford at her Devonport knitting shop, Wild 'n' Woolly.

Stafford runs weekly knitting classes for those wanting to pick up needles.

"It's awesome – knitting has become incredibly popular."

She says "it's changed massively" from the days when lemon acrylic was a popular choice for babywear.

When Stafford moved from Britain four years ago, she says the store she now owns followed the traditional formula – rude, off-hand service, boxes of "hideous" stock stacked on the

floor and "loads of acrylic".

Stafford purchased it off the original owner three years ago when the store was "literally on its knees" and has since filled the store with her own taste in yarns and patterns, with one eye on fashion trends.

Regular customers include the "Gusto girls" who get together on a Saturday night to knit using super-chunky Gusto yarn over a glass of chardonnay.

A Karen Walker winter collection that featured knitted scarves saw a run on wool as teenage girls sought to recreate the look at a fraction of the price, says Stafford.

Stafford says that knitting is also extremely therapeutic.

"You need to knit. It's a great way of switching off, it's not expensive, it's legal and it's cheaper than the doctors."

AUT grads pack bags for Asia

By Mathew Grocott

In an effort to confront a lack of Asian experience in New Zealand's newsrooms, the Asia:NZ Foundation is sending three AUT University journalism graduates to Asia from next year onwards.

The internships, each worth \$2250, cover return airfares and initial living costs. Students have a choice of placements at either the *Jakarta Post* or *Chinadaily.com* in Beijing.

Charles Mabbett, Asia:NZ Foundation media adviser, says the internships are a great opportunity and an "excellent life experience".

"I encourage students to make

the most of it."

AUT graduate Emma Moore took an internship at *Chinadaily.com* earlier this year and now works at sister company *21st Century*, a youth magazine.

While at first she found the experience challenging she recommends students apply for the placements.

She says despite the growing importance of China as an economic giant, the country is not well understood in New Zealand.

"Working at *Chinadaily.com* is a great way to take a look at what is going on here and will give you far more insight than a mere holiday here."

It is a sentiment Mabbett agrees with. He says there is a

shortage of Asian voices in New Zealand newsrooms.

He says a reason for this is that a career in journalism is not seen as a desirable choice for many Asian families.

However, he acknowledges that a journalist does not need to be Asian to write stories about the Asian community.

David Robie, associate professor in AUT's journalism school, who initiated the project, says the internships are a great opportunity for new graduates and a significant development.

"The new Jakarta and Beijing internships will significantly strengthen our international training opportunities."

Six students have expressed interest in the internships so far.

Students win with rebates

By Lucy Vickers

"It was quite a pleasant surprise."

She says it was better being sent the money directly rather than credited because sometimes other bills need to be paid first and she can choose how to spend the money.

AECT chief executive Mark Bogle says for many of the recipients this year's payment was much more than their monthly power bill and paid to them directly.

Last year dividends of \$180 went out to 292,000 consumers, 6000 less than this year.

Bogle says the amount was calculated by from AECT's profits and then divided among its beneficiaries.

Since it was formed in 1993, AECT has distributed more than \$546 million in dividends.

ome students received a welcome cheque in the mail this week as residents of Auckland City and Manukau received \$93 million worth of dividends from the Auckland Energy Consumer Trust (AECT).

Nearly 300,000 consumers were sent cheques for \$310 which would normally be given as a credit on their power bill.

Anyone who was an AECT beneficiary before August 20 was eligible for the payout. AECT income beneficiaries are Vector customers residing in Auckland City, Manukau City and parts of Papakura District.

Dyani Baggenstos, a student at AUT University, was one of the recipients.