

Deadly Alumni: Juanita Page



This month we caught up with Deadly alumni, Juanita Page, a proud Gooreng Gooreng, South Sea Islander woman living on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country. Juanita completed her Associate Degree in Fashion Design & Technology and then continued on to complete the extra year in the Bachelor of Fashion (Design Technology).

Since completing her studies, Juanita has created [JOSEPH AND JAMES](#), a ready-to-wear menswear label based in Naarm.

How did your course influence your career?

I would say it cemented in me that Fashion Design was still what I wanted to pursue. I'd been keen on Fashion Design since I was 10, but your perspective changes when it goes from dreaming to actually doing the damn thing. Luckily for me I found it only pushed me further towards wanting to do this full-time.

What was your biggest takeaway from studying at RMIT?

Apart from the skills and knowledge earned, it was the people I met and community I was a part of that really made the experience worthwhile and valuable.

What are the top three things you have learned in your career?

Firstly, if you have a passion for it, you can surprise yourself of what your capable of. Secondly, dreams aren't just meant to stay dreams – give yourself the push to go out and live them, whatever it takes. You wont regret it.

And lastly, delegate! Don't do things alone, your community wants to help support you and be a part of the things you do, let them.

Tell us a bit about your business? How did you arrive at menswear?

[JOSEPH & JAMES](#) is a ready-to-wear menswear label based in Narm and was established with the ambition to inject an understated level of sophistication into streetwear. Taking cues from both street silhouettes and sartorial fabrics and detailings, the result is a considered amalgamation of the two disciplines.

When I was young, I became interested in fashion after being drawn into the romanticism of evening wear on red carpets and the wedding gowns that would appear at the end of couture fashion shows. However, when I began studying fashion design (in Brisbane at the time), the realisation dawned on me that everyone seemingly defaulted to creating womenswear. At that moment, I decided to explore menswear and found that I loved what I was designing and how it pushed me creatively.



What advice would you give other Indigenous entrepreneurs hoping to start their own business?

A fantastic organisation, Kinaway, is dedicated to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses. Link up with them, they have a great team.

Your business is your baby, and as the saying goes it takes a village. Find your community, your people that can do this journey alongside you, because no matter how capable you are you can't always do or know everything yourself.

I run this business with my husband, Ashford. We split the work and have areas that we each somewhat look after. This helps us to focus on those things as opposed to trying to split your brain across all the different aspects of the business. I have mad respect for anyone who solely runs a business by themselves—it's a huge task—but I have found it's beneficial to find those people who can be in your corner to help raise your 'baby' towards the goal of a growing, successful business. I've also learned that it takes so much more time and money than you think it will. No matter how much you plan, my advice is to always give yourself a good buffer for the 'just in case' aspects.

What are your plans for 2023 and beyond?

At the moment the focus is to keep at the brand and see where it goes. We just showed at Melbourne Fashion Week and have a pop-up store on Lygon St in Carlton opening this week, so who knows where this will go, but I'm looking forward to see where this road take me.



Can you tell us about your journey into University?

I knew I wanted to be a fashion designer, so getting to uni to study was only a matter of time. I had studied in Brisbane before moving to Melbourne, but the course I chose wasn't covered by HECS and in the end I could only afford to complete 1 semester. Then life got in the way and by the time I wanted to go back to study I figured why not go to the university that's rated the best when it comes to fashion – which was RMIT at the time. I applied, got accepted and then my husband and I packed everything and moved not knowing what may come. Now, almost 8 years after moving down here, I'm so glad we did. It's been a rewarding experience, for both of us.

What did you enjoy most about engaging with Ngarara Willim?

The connection to other mob was invaluable, especially being away from my own mob back home. Having deadly people around me made me feel connected, supported and seen.

What would your message be to our mob who may be considering studying at RMIT?

Ngarara Willim is a great hub for us mob to find community, especially if you're away from home if you study at RMIT. It's a place and service that made me feel more connected to culture and people and acted as a safe space at times too. The skills I gained through study helped me to get to where I am today, but the people and services I had access to through Ngarara Willim made an impact on me as well.

