



The yardage for this dress, created by Japanese designer Toshikazu Iwaya for Dress Camp, was inspired by a Stewart Russell artwork.



THINKING GLOBALLY

NOT ONLY DO HIS PRINTS CELEBRATE THE BEAUTY OF NATURE, BUT STEWART RUSSELL'S DESIGNS LOOK OUT FOR MOTHER EARTH. "ENVIRONMENTAL DECISIONS START FOREMOST WITH THE DESIGN PROCESS," HE EXPLAINS. "MY FIRST QUESTION IS ALWAYS, 'HOW WILL THIS BE PRODUCED?' I'M INCREASINGLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE TREND TOWARDS DESIGNING ON ONE SIDE OF THE WORLD AND PRINTING ON THE OTHER – IT REALLY LIMITS THE DESIGNER'S ABILITY TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THEIR DESIGN."

stewart russell

As his Melbourne studio, Spacecraft, celebrates its eighth birthday, we find out why textiles designer Stewart Russell continues to break boundaries

Over the hum of textiles machinery, Stewart Russell is explaining why he likes being indefinable. "People look at the depth of my work and ask, 'Are you an artist, a curator, a designer or a printer?' I really love that, it makes me feel that I'm doing something right." In fact, the Scottish-born enigma has been pretty much on target since landing in Australia eight years ago. "I wanted to steer clear of the conventional pathways," says Stewart. Basket weaving in Sri Lanka and screen printing in India eventually led him back to the UK, where he worked as director of London Printworks, a renowned screen-printing studio, and collaborated with fashion designer Vivienne Westwood on her London shows.

Stewart came to Australia with a vision for a studio that could stand on its own two feet. "I didn't want to rely on government grants," explains Stewart, whose former, statutory-funded London print room operated at a snail's pace. "Above all, I want Spacecraft to continue to be adaptable, light on its feet and constantly challenging the team to invent new ways of doing things. We don't fit into anyone's camp."



cutting edge

At Spacecraft, there are no limits to what creativity can produce. Born from this philosophy are their renowned backing cloth paintings. "We initially put it [the cloth] down to catch excess ink, but discovered that it was fast becoming saturated with print ideas." These "chance compositions" originally graced only the studio's walls, but are now in such demand there's a year-long waiting list. Visit www.spacecraftaustralia.com for information, and to see more of its fabrics (far left).

bite-sized art It's a long way from Spacecraft's usual oversized cushions and colossal framed prints but ArtPlay, Stewart's newest venture, is already making an impact. The tiny circular or hexagonal modules feature a kaleidoscope of colour. "The idea emerged with a desire to create a module to play with at home, something I could adapt to an awkward corner or grow to cover an entire wall." ArtPlay hexagons, \$80/set of 15, circles, \$80/set of 12.



WORDS VANESSA KEYS PHOTOGRAPHY (TOP RIGHT) JACQUIE MELVILLE (BOTTOM LEFT & RIGHT) ZOE ALI