

Great expectations

Across fields of fashion, wellness, art, literature and film, these nine local creatives have a big year ahead.

FASHION

Blake Sutherland

Flick through the fashion end of TikTok, and you'll inevitably come across a clip by Blake Sutherland involving the Sydney model and creative carrying out daily tasks, channelling looks from a cult fashion show. One video, titled "Taking out the trash in a Balenciaga autumn/winter '22/'23 way", has been liked more than 100,000 times.

"My first memories of runway shows were seeing them on TV in the 2000s," Sutherland says of his childhood. "I also had a really decent schooling on runway [shows] during the Tumblr era ... re-blogging pictures of models and shows for hours."

Sutherland's encyclopedic knowledge shines on TikTok, where his videos have received three million likes at the time of writing. But he's also a freelance fashion photographer and editorial stylist, making him a new kind of multidisciplinary creative for the online age – one who's comfortable behind the camera, as well as being his own muse.

"It's a huge benefit to be able to do the jobs of several different creatives," he notes. "It makes me a better creative overall – I can look at something and see it from multiple points of view at once."

Interest in Sutherland's work extends beyond social media. Last December, the Australian Fashion Foundation awarded him a \$25,000 scholarship, and this year he'll move to New York for a six-month internship. "I want to learn as much as I can, from as many people as possible and take every opportunity that comes my way," he says.

Knowledge aside, Sutherland's tongue-in-cheek content embraces humour, eschewing connotations of fashion being frosty. "I like to think anything can be made funny," he says. *Jonah Waterhouse*



Blake Sutherland.



A still life, far left, and a fashion shoot, below, both styled and photographed by Sutherland.

PHOTOGRAPHS: BLAKE SUTHERLAND. FASHION IMAGE: HAIR: WILLIAM WEBB. MAKE UP: SEAN BRADY. MODEL: NYLOW AJING



This image and below: Rory William Docherty's unisex work, including signature pieces with shearling.

Rory William Docherty

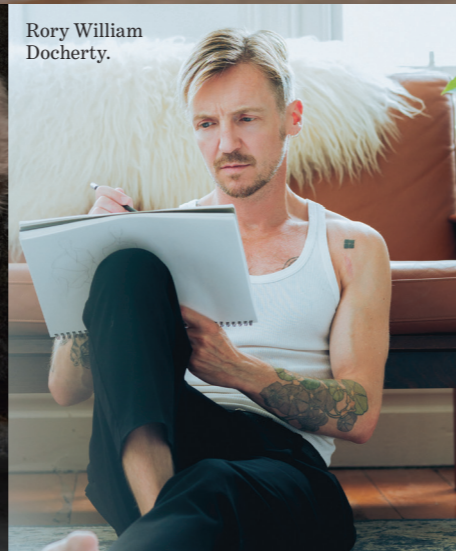
Rory William Docherty may be the newest New Zealand designer to show at this year's Australian fashion week, though his work reads as a melding of both art and fashion. That much is clear from his elegant, artisanal clothes, adorned with hand-drawn visuals, which bring to mind the striking beauty of his homeland.

"Each of [my collections] contains at least two prints stemming from my own drawings and paintings," Docherty says of his handiwork, which is imprinted on silk shirts, wool suits and Japanese cotton underpinnings; items that have become cornerstones at his 2017-founded label. "My original artwork will always be the foundation of the brand."

Given his childhood, illustrating nature comes easily to Docherty. "I grew up with Scottish parents in the New Zealand countryside ... throwing amazing parties," he recalls. An important annual event was Hogmanay – the Scottish term for New Year's Eve, a time that's synonymous with new beginnings. "Splashes of excitement anchored with reality are at the core of my brand, and me," he notes.

So, the prospect of showing a standalone collection as an Australian fashion week debut in May – less than a year after his first runway show at New Zealand fashion week – is an exciting new step. "I'm interested in evolving tailoring for a resort collection," he says, adding that the range will "celebrate clothes for the individual".

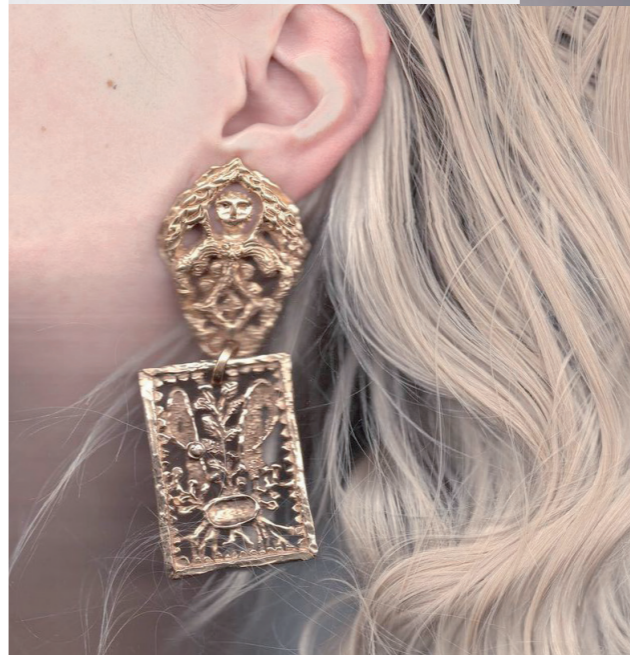
"I've always seen my work as something that can be worn by anyone, regardless of their gender, age, race or religion," he posits. "The pieces appeal to creative souls." *JW*



Rory William Docherty.



Jewellery from Rebekah Kosonen Bide's eponymous line and below, the designer in her studio.



Rebekah Kosonen Bide

For Rebekah Kosonen Bide, jewellery and memories are inextricably tied. "One of my grandmothers would wear enough bracelets to herald her entrance into a building well before she could be seen, and my other grandmother loves beauty and adornment," says the Perth-born jeweller and fine artist. Now based in London, her six-year-old brand makes one-of-a-kind necklaces, bracelets, earrings and brooches, mixing rare stones with jagged metals to evoke a mythical sense of beauty. A collaboration on designer Dilara Findıkoğlu's spring/summer '23 show, as well as recent endorsements from initiated stars like Caroline Polachek and Celeste, emphasise her cultural pull.

"I love working with stones from land I hold some connection to, such as Finnish spectrolite or Australian sapphire, and

boulder opal ... in a lot of pieces [it] can just look like a chunk of stone, which I like the feel of," she notes.

Kosonen Bide's work has an ardent fanbase (and is now stocked on Ssense), but one endorsement was particularly seismic. "When Gucci contacted me to work with them, that felt insane," she says, referencing her work on Gucci Vault, where the brand collaborated with emerging creators. "I thought it was a spam email at first."

Influences in Kosonen Bide's work extend from the Etruscans, to brutalism to German folklore that speaks to her fascination with art. "How I think of the wearable pieces I create is that they are works living on peoples' skin, rather than on gallery floors and walls," she explains. Like her grandmothers, Kosonen Bide knows the body is the best canvas there is. *JW*

HARRY FREEGARD, CHARLES LOCKYER, MARA SOMMER, JOSH SZETO



CULTURE

Madeleine Gray

Her debut novel *Green Dot*, about a hot mess of a twentysomething who ends up hopelessly enmeshed in an affair with her much-older, much-married co-worker, might have been the book of the summer. But Sydney writer Madeleine Gray is yet to spot someone reading it in the wild. "I was recently at a wedding and the guest sitting next to me was talking to her friend about my book, and I had to interrupt very quickly and tell her I was the author just in case she was about to launch into how much she hated it," Gray jokes. "Does this count?"

For Gray, releasing her first book has been "absolutely the stuff of debut dreams" with *Green Dot* having just been unleashed upon international audiences. "The wildest part, though, has been the ginormous amount of DMs and emails I've received from strangers telling me about their own affairs,"

Gray admits. "Some of the messages I've been sent are truly salacious." Gray approaches these DMs in the same way she approached writing her main character, the "zany and self-aware and naive and earnest" Hera: without judgement. "I had to like Hera to write her," she explains.

This year, Gray is juggling working on her second novel – currently about "the love affair" of female friendship, but ask her again in a few drafts – with writing screenplays for the television adaptation of *Green Dot*. Some other aspirations, both big and small: "I want to get a puppy. I want to learn more about the characters I'm writing. I want to do push-ups on my hands and not my forearms. I want to teach my stepkid how to swim." And, Gray adds, "I should want to get my driver's licence, but truly I just don't." *Hannah-Rose Yee*

CHRISTIAN CAPURRO, LILLIE THOMPSON, ZAN WIMBERLEY

Nina Sanadze

All art, in one way or another, reflects the times we live in. For Melbourne artist Nina Sanadze, observations of today's world are pieced together with her life experiences, which began in civil war-torn Georgia. "Creativity and ideas naturally flow to me with an undeniable sense of urgency that demands attention," she says. "This compels me to embark on typically challenging, impractical and substantial projects, which are often both demanding and deeply personal, leaving me feeling vulnerable and humbled."

This layered complexity is visible in her work, which is the subject of an exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) this year. Sanadze's installations are made of cement, 3D printing, polystyrene and stone, and embody jagged fragments of history with a topical poignancy. Take 2023's *Hana and Child*, a sculptural work involving 300 clay statuettes of mothers holding children; Sanadze was inspired to make it after seeing images of those displaced by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Compared to other materials Sanadze utilises, clay is relatively simple, but holds special significance. "As water evaporates, clay dries and decays, [and] the sculpture undergoes a constant evolution, eventually reaching its demise," she explains. "It is this transformative process that closely resembles our own human experience, leading me to refer to my raw clay sculptures as 'living sculptures'."

The NGV's exhibition will show Sanadze's use of multidisciplinary forms to emphasise complex human plights. "My installations refrain from delivering any preachy messages, but only questions," she notes. "They offer an opportunity to revisit, review, connect and contemplate history in a tangible and visceral manner." In other words, reflecting on the past, to create a better future. *JW*



Above: Nina Sanadze in her studio. Below: *Rethinking, reworking, reshaping ... history ... what are the possibilities ...* (2022) by Nina Sanadze.



Noora Niasari

For eight months when Noora Niasari was five, home was a women’s shelter in Melbourne with her mother, escaping family violence. Her memories of this time formed the inspiration for her wrenching debut film *Shayda*. “When writing a screenplay and bringing a story like this to screen, there’s a blurry line between memory and fiction that is inevitable,” she admits. “But what was most important to me was that the film felt emotionally truthful, rather than factually accurate.”

This emotional truth is resonating. *Shayda* garnered nine AACTA nominations, was longlisted as Australia’s international feature entrant at the Oscars, and saw Niasari nominated for a coveted Directors Guild Award for debut feature. Niasari describes the past year as a “whirlwind”. It has not been uncommon for people to approach Niasari in tears after seeing *Shayda*. “For so many people, the film has become this vessel for healing.”

Soon, she will commence production on her second film, another story spotlighting the lives of Iranian women. She is eternally inspired by female filmmakers, after “firsthand experiencing the immense challenges of making a feature film as a woman”, she explains. “It can be an uphill battle in so many ways you cannot imagine.” *HRY*



Filmmaker Noora Niasari. **Below:** Images from her debut movie *Shayda*, starring Zar Amir Ebrahimi (left) and Leah Purcell (right).



Nina Korbe

At just 25, First Nations soprano Nina Korbe makes her professional theatrical debut this month, playing the lead of Maria in *West Side Story* at the Handa outdoor opera on Sydney Harbour.

The Brisbane native, whose aunt is actor Leah Purcell, is a born performer. Having started classical training at 12, she then went on to graduate with distinction from both the Queensland Conservatorium followed by London’s Royal Academy of Music.

Korbe credits her mum, sister and aunts for inspiring her. “I have been incredibly grateful for my Aunty Leah, whose passion for honest truth-telling is present in every part of her work,” she notes.

A First Nations representative on the Queensland Youth Orchestra’s Reconciliation Board, Korbe wants to open up access for children, “arranging ways to enrich their experience and connection with the arts”. Looking ahead, she says: “One goal is to ensure I am ready to seize every role with joy and readiness. My main focus is always telling the emotional truth of my character so that it might resonate with those watching.” *Cushla Chauhan*

COURTESY OPERA AUSTRALIA, SARAH ENTICKNAP, NORMAN WONG, JANE ZHANG

BEAUTY

Kiyoung Sung and Marta Novovic

United in their commitment to curb plastic consumption and superfluous packaging in our beauty cabinet, ReMI co-founders Kiyoung Sung and Marta Novovic are dreaming big. “We imagined what skincare would look like for the next generation – our children and grandchildren who will not have the resources we have now. It wouldn’t just be plastic-free; it would be packaging-free,” says Sung who brings more than a decade’s beauty industry expertise to the Melbourne-based upstart.

The duo’s debut product – a first-of-its-kind “moisturiser stone” – seeks to solve that conundrum by eschewing single-use packaging (it’s housed in a NetZero certified ceramic box) while delivering a cocktail of concentrated native botanicals to the skin. “Solid skincare is a novel concept,” says Novovic, an aromatherapist, Reiki teacher and natural skincare formulator. “ReMI needs to demonstrate why this small, radical change is one worth making.”

Other big ideas? As well as plans to expand the line of multipurpose and waterless formulas this year, the pair continue to seek out sustainable solutions to problems that plague the industry. “We would love to see circular beauty entering the everyday lexicon, just as circular fashion has,” says Sung. “We need more consumers and manufacturers making choices that stop waste from being generated in the first place.” With Sung and Novovic at the helm, the future looks bright. *Remy Rippon*



Marta Novovic (left) and Kiyoung Sung.



ReMI’s plastic-free Moisturiser Stone, and above.



Georgia Grace

Let’s talk about sex. That’s what Georgia Grace – or gspot, as she is known to her 66 thousand-strong Instagram community – is championing through her work as a sex and relationships expert. Already this year, the Sydney-based educator has released a podcast, collaborated with media personality Abbie Chatfield on a sex toy, and submitted the manuscript to her first book. “It’s a guide to really good sex,” she says of the anticipated tome, slated for release in October. “It will be a fully illustrated, practical handbook, with real stories, useful information and all the tools.”

It’s the latest chapter in Grace’s mission to offer accessible, informed, sex education and dismantle tired taboos about pleasure; a movement she believes has shifted in recent years but still has a way to go. “Success is less about what I achieve and more about what I notice on a social and cultural level,” says Grace. “I want to see the conversations about sex continue to change. We’ve got a lot of momentum, but we’ve also got a lot to do.” *RR*



JANA LANGHORST