



Documentation credit Lucy Foster

NO. 13

Chelsea Hickman

Whole Gallery

This project is part of the Independent Arts Program for the 2021 Melbourne Fashion Festival

No. 13 is a solo show by emerging artist Chelsea Hickman. Troubled by the unfathomable amount of textile waste going to landfill in Australia, Hickman seeks to uncover the data of which garments are being discarded and why by undertaking a durational performance to count, sort and categorise 3000kg of textile waste.

Chelsea Hickman is an independent, multidisciplinary artist and fashion designer based in Naarm/Melbourne. Her practice is focussed on utilising textile waste and found object to address concepts of sustainability, throw-away culture and fashion industry ethics.

Sandie chats to Chelsea about her exhibition

Sandie: Chelsea, what is going to happen in the George Paton Gallery?

Chelsea Hickman: I am going to be bringing in hundreds of kilos of textile waste, old clothes that have been diverted from landfill. I am going to go through it to count, sort and categorise every single item in the pile. This will hopefully generate some data around what kind of garments and what kinds of brands are actually going into landfill in Australia. I am hoping that this research will activate some kind of inspiration for people participating in the fashion industry, but also fashion consumers, to think about what they are giving to op shops and throwing in the bin, so we can brainstorm ways that we can reduce textiles going into landfill in Australia.

Sandie: What will viewers see when they come into the gallery, what kind of equipment, or props are you going to be using and what will you be performing?

Chelsea: I am calling it a 'durational performance'. I am going to be in here during gallery hours with a table and an ironing board and some cupboards and some clothing racks. All of the clothing is going to be laid out and the art is going to be me going through each item and sorting it into the wardrobe on the wall. Hopefully the end result will be somewhat of a snapshot of, basically a domestic setting, but all of the clothing in all of the wardrobes has been saved, in a way.

Sandie: You could also see it as performing a kind of sweat shop worker's role.

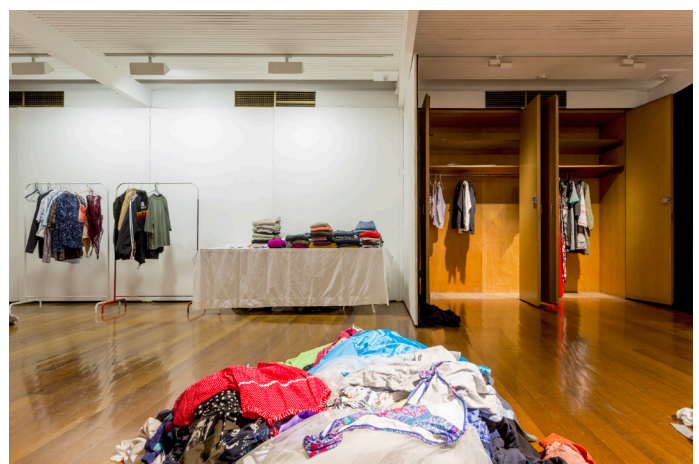
Chelsea: Yes, that's true. I am basing it on 'maintenance art', based on the type of work by American artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles, where it is an act of performing free labour. In a way, and I hadn't thought about it until just now, and I am standing here, in the gallery, looking at it, it's almost a feminist act, because there is the stereotype of women who stay at home and do the laundry and the cooking and the housework.

Sandie: It's the regular maintenance of your laundry.

Chelsea: Yeah, I am going to be in here doing all of this random laundry. I am doing laundry for dozens, maybe hundreds of people worth of clothing that's not even mine! I got it from landfill.

Sandie: And what happens then in the end? Where do the clothes go when you finish this act?

Chelsea: I am hoping that I will be able to use a lot of this clothing myself, because my art and design practice is based on upcycling secondhand garments and garments salvaged from landfill. So, I will be able to use a lot of the stuff in my own practice, and my own future work. But also, I am going to invite participants to take items from the pile and the wardrobe, as well. I am also happy for people to bring in their old garments as well to contribute to the pile. If they have things lying around home that they think are too damaged to donate to an op shop or things that they are wanting to get rid of, I am happy to take them.



Documentation credit Lucy Foster