

AUT

A FUTURE IN
TEXTILES



WHAT IS TEXTILES ABOUT?

What kind of fabric will we be using in 10 years' time? How 'smart' will they be? What materials will be commonplace, what crafts will be highly sought after? The potential of textiles keeps expanding as the merging of creativity, craft and technology continues.

Textile designers work with all types of fabrication and surface patterns, using digital and traditional tools and techniques, and drawing inspiration from art, science, craft and technology.

New technologies provide opportunities to take an experimental approach to design, push at boundaries and find new outcomes. Two examples of innovative uses of textiles are fabric that changes colour to reflect someone's temperature or blood pressure and a knee brace with soft flexible sensors to capture and help movement correction.

There is also ongoing innovation and creativity within the traditional use of textiles, such as the development of new methods of fabric creation, colour combinations, yarn development and surface pattern applications. High tech garments can be forged from materials that are manipulated electronically, sewn by computers, created without seams etc.

Are you excited and curious about the potential of technology and fabric? Are you creative with a strong sense of fashion? Do you have a good eye for colour, pattern, texture and detail? Then a career in textiles may be a great option for you!

OUTLOOK AND TRENDS

Bespoke and crafted textiles – High end, bespoke crafted textiles are sought after by the luxury fashion, homewares, interiors and lifestyle markets. There is an increase in consumers who prefer the longevity and originality of quality products to throw-away products. Consumers are also increasingly keen on textiles and products that come from the hand of an artist rather than a computer generated design, perfect as it may be.

Smart textiles – Performance enhancing textiles are starting to have a huge impact on athletic, extreme sports and military industries. Three examples of this include fabrics that improve athletic performance by helping control muscle vibration, textiles that protect wearers against extreme environmental hazards such as radiation or effects of space travel and fashion smart fabrics that light up or change color.

Health emphasis – Smart textiles are increasingly useful in health settings, such as a new electro conductive yarn that is used to create products to regulate body temperature. There are also wearable

textiles that enable the users to record real-time information about their body while doing activities. Experimentation is increasing with ongoing commercialisation of these textiles.

Eco-consciousness – People are more socially and environmentally aware than ever before. When purchasing a product, many want to know where and how it is made, what materials have been used and how they've been sourced. Designers must know classifications and standards for eco-friendly materials and fully understand their materials capabilities and limitations.

Global opportunities – Many textile designers based in NZ develop a global reach through social media, online purchasing etc. Currently the apparel industry in New Zealand is dominated by smaller, niche players such as Untouched World or Icebreaker who are driving innovation here, as well as developing an overseas presence.



Textiles artwork : Lucy Clements

WORK SETTINGS

The textiles industry in NZ is small with around 2,000 businesses, employing approximately 15,000 staff. Apparel is the largest sector within the industry. Most of the textiles industry is based in the Auckland, Canterbury and Manawatu-Wanganui regions. Australia and the United States are the largest export markets for NZ textiles.

Source: New Zealand Textiles

Graduates need to think laterally and keep their options open when looking at entry points into the industry – it takes time to get a designer role in an established business. While the textile industry is tiny in NZ, it is one of the largest industries in the world and a number of AUT graduates find good employment opportunities overseas.

The New Zealand textiles industry traditionally consists of five sub-industries: clothing, footwear, carpet, smart textiles and general textile products.

Many graduates work on a freelance basis, building local and global awareness of their textiles and products through websites, Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest and Tumblr.

Employers include:

Textile Design companies – Create and manufacture fabrics for interiors, product and fashion. Some are set up as consultancies providing design, sourcing and manufacturing advice for product designers, interior designers, fashion designers etc.

They can be large or small scale operations, eg Citta Design, Dilana, Born in Daylight.

Knitting and design manufacturing companies – Source yarn, then design and produce garments using knitting technology, eg Standard Issue, The Tin Shed, McDonald Textiles, Sabatini, Private Collection. Other textiles are usually manufactured overseas.

Design companies working in automotive, air-transport and marine sectors – Source and/or create and produce livery, interiors, carpets, eg Godfrey Hirst, Cavalier Bremworth, Inter-weave, James Dunlop etc.

CAREER ROLE EXAMPLES

Textile designer/Fabric designer – Creates fabric designs, patterns and colour combinations etc for woven, knitted and printed materials, drawing by hand or using computer-aided design (CAD). Produces sketches and designs, then creates samples for prospective customers, keeping up with current trends and production techniques. Presents range, does costings and buys and reviews fabric selections. Interprets current market trends and predicts future trends. Could be for fashion garments, furnishings, rugs, upholstery etc.

Textile design assistant – Works alongside a creative team, primarily in administration. Liaises with international fabric suppliers, ensures new season fabrics are entered into the database accurately, follows up queries. This role can be a stepping stone into more design driven roles.

Sample room textiles assistant – Produces textile samples according to design specifications, ensures accurate and efficient delivery of samples to customers, draws on working knowledge of fabrics and apparel. This role can be a stepping stone into more design driven roles.

Textile production co-ordinator – Plans production schedules and workflow to ensure the manufacturing plant runs smoothly and profitably. May be in charge of quality control to ensure all products are made to specification.

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

Technical skills

- Strong CAD and Photoshop skills
- Knowledge and understanding of constructed textiles, surface pattern design and knit programming
- Competent and knowledgeable with colour and texture in relation to fabric and scale
- Spatial design skills
- Ability to anticipate fashion trends in clothing and interiors
- Knowledge and practice with different processes and techniques of textile construction

General skills

- Excellent communication skills and able to effectively listen and communicate responses of team members, collaborators, suppliers and clients
- Problem solver who can work independently, take ownership of projects and deliver multiple, concurrent projects

PERSONAL QUALITIES

- A high level of creativity and curiosity
- Creatively and critically engaged

- Collaborative and able to relate to people from diverse backgrounds
- Strong eye for trend and colour
- Ability to prioritise when given multiple projects to manage

SALARY GUIDE

Salaries vary depending on industry sectors and whether the role is full time or freelance.

| | Salary (per year) |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Graduate/junior designer | \$35,000 – \$40,000 |
| Textile designer/ Fabric designer | \$45,000 – \$55,000 (2–5 years’ experience) |
| Senior textile designer | \$50,000 – \$70,000 (5 years +) |
| Sample room textiles assistant | \$35,000 – \$40,000 (entry level) |
| Textile design assistant | \$35,000 – \$40,000 (entry level) |
| Freelance rates | \$35–\$50 per hour |

Sources: Fashion Personnel, Careers NZ, payscale.com

Salary range is indicative of the New Zealand job market at the time of publication (mid 2016) and should only be used as a guideline.

THE AUT APPROACH

AUT specialises in printed and knitted textiles and apparel. The Textile Design Laboratory contains computer-aided design systems, digital fabric and garment printers, electronic intarsia (specialised multi coloured knitting technique), WholeGarment® knitting technology and electronic felting.

FURTHER STUDY OPTIONS

Design graduates can enter further study at postgraduate level, including a Master of Design, Master of Cultural and Creative Practice, Master of Creative Technologies, Master of Philosophy and PhD.

Research areas include the intersection between craft and technology, textiles for fashion, sustainable textiles, design methodologies for manufacturing processes, textile products for healthcare, knitwear, new business models for emerging fashion and knitwear designers.

BO AHN

McDonald Textiles production co-ordinator

Bachelor of Design in Textiles

"I really enjoy working as a production co-ordinator for McDonald Textiles, a manufacturer of possum merino knitwear and accessories with luxurious designs. It is a great place to see the commercial possibilities for textiles and to start to put my textile degree to use.

I am not just sitting in an office or behind a machine all day. It is a very 'alive' environment. I look after the make-up room that consists of around 10 staff, including machinists, washing and pressing, a packaging person and mender. Once the fabric panels or whole garments come off the computerised knitting machines, we turn them into wearable products. I co-ordinate the stages involved to prepare them for sale, such as washing, cutting and sewing, buttons and buttonholes, pressing and packaging. I also communicate with suppliers of components to ensure an adequate stock level of zips, buttons, leather, etc.

I do a lot of problem solving to maximise productivity in our department and keep garment quality at the highest level. I create weekly lead time reports and analyse potential problems delaying production. This involves constantly watching the flow of work within our department to ensure our production budget time is met for each product style.

I am keen to eventually get more involved in designing work here. Longer term, I'd like to try setting up my own small online business exploring another area of textiles. But right now, I'm happy to be gaining experience in the business of creating commercial garments.

It isn't difficult to get a job after graduating if you're prepared to take an entry-level job in the industry, but it is difficult to find a designer job as a graduate."

EMPLOYER COMMENT

"Bo has a strong design knowledge base and is prepared to learn and be trained in areas that are new to her. Graduates have to be passionate about their chosen pathway and understand there is a lot to learn from those with more experience in the industry.

Graduates need to be practical, innovative and commercially minded. No matter how amazing their design, if it is impractical or won't sell, we are not interested.

The first two or three years in the workforce are very formative years so it is important we, as a business, develop and encourage new staff through coaching and training.

To new graduates I say, be prepared to take initiative, but be open to guidance from others with more experience because in the beginning – inevitably – you will make mistakes. While studying, research the industry from a commercial as well as creative perspective and get as much experience of the commercial world as possible.

Sit down with potential employers and ask what they would be looking for if they were employing a graduate."

Brendon Judd

CEO of McDonald Textiles

USEFUL WEBSITES

Fashion Personnel (fashion and textile industry recruiters)

www.fashionpersonnel.co.nz

Trend Tablet – social commentary on trends

www.trendtablet.com

Global online site for following design people and projects

www.yatzer.com

FURTHER INFORMATION


To find out more about AUT, please visit our website

www.aut.ac.nz

FUTURE STUDENTS

Contact the Future Student Advisory team for more information: www.aut.ac.nz/enquire

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The information contained in this career sheet is correct at time of printing, August 2019.

