

SUMMERTIME
2015 - 2016

MTNS MADE

EDITION ONE
MTNSMADE.COM.AU

MTNS MADE

MTNS MADE is a cultural identity for the creative industries of the Blue Mountains region.

MTNS MADE was commissioned by Blue Mountains Economic Enterprise (BMEE), the peak regional economic development organisation for the Blue Mountains.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

MTNS MADE and Blue Mountains Economic Enterprise would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this land – The Darug and Gundungarra people.

We wish to pay respect to their Elders past and present and to emerging community leaders.

Cassiopeia, The Paragon Cafe and The Carrington Hotel.

SPECIAL THANKS



WE ARE
MTNS MADE

Head to the Hawkesbury
Lookout near the Blue
Mountains town of Winmalee
and you’ll find an ancient
carving etched into the rock.

Created by the Darug tribe centuries ago, The Flight of the Great Grey Kangaroo is still remarkably preserved to this day, and earns its place as one of the oldest known artworks in the region.

Conversely, the work of the creatives profiled here in MTNS MADE #1 represents the newest – a collection of designers, artists, film-makers, sculptors, actors, musicians, writers and more; all of whom have today made the Mountains their home, and — like the Darug and the Gundungarra people before them - all of whom have made the space, the sound and the colour of the Mountains intrinsic to their work.

When it comes to art, culture and creativity, we’ve always known that we have something special up here, although we admit that we may have been a little shy in telling you about it.

Perhaps that has something to do with how treasured our life is here. We have all the space in the world to create our own opportunities and to evolve our creative practice — and that space, nestled in over one million hectares of UNESCO World Heritage-listed landscape, feels so incredibly rare and precious.

While some of our MTNS MADE creatives were born in the region, many sought refuge from the noise, stress and constraints of urban life – which often had a restrictive effect on their practice. Here, with so much room to move – physically and mentally - there are no such limits.

Here, community and networks are in abundance, allowing us to all feel connected, not remote. Collaboration is welcomed and encouraged, not forced or contracted. We respect one another’s integrity and craft, and recognise our singular talents and unique voices. Here, we can make and we can play, and we can do it at our pace, in our own way.

We may not witness the same level of architectural change that is so prevalent in the city, but we know that the Mountains is transforming all the same. Here, we have twice as many people employed in the creative industries compared to the state and national averages. It’s clear that the creative community no longer feels that a regional location need be a barrier to their work. Indeed, within these pages, we set out to prove that it has an extraordinarily positive influence. The result is some of the most original and vibrant work that you’re likely to find in Australia, and even further beyond.

We know exactly who we are here, and now we want you to find out too. We are honest and we are strong. We are authentic and we are bold. We are MTNS MADE.

MTNS



Tohby Riddle
Katoomba
Illustration



Jenny Kee
Blackheath
Fashion



Tegan Bennett Daylight
Katoomba
Writing



Broken Chip
Bullaburra
Music



Matt Drummond
Katoomba
Film



Damion Hunter
Katoomba
Performance



Kevina—Jo Smith
Leura
Contemporary Art



Studio Ham
Blackheath
Design



Willow & Co.
Katoomba
Photography



Caitlin, Eloise & Georgia
Leura
Makers



Julie & Amanda
Blackheath
Art/Design

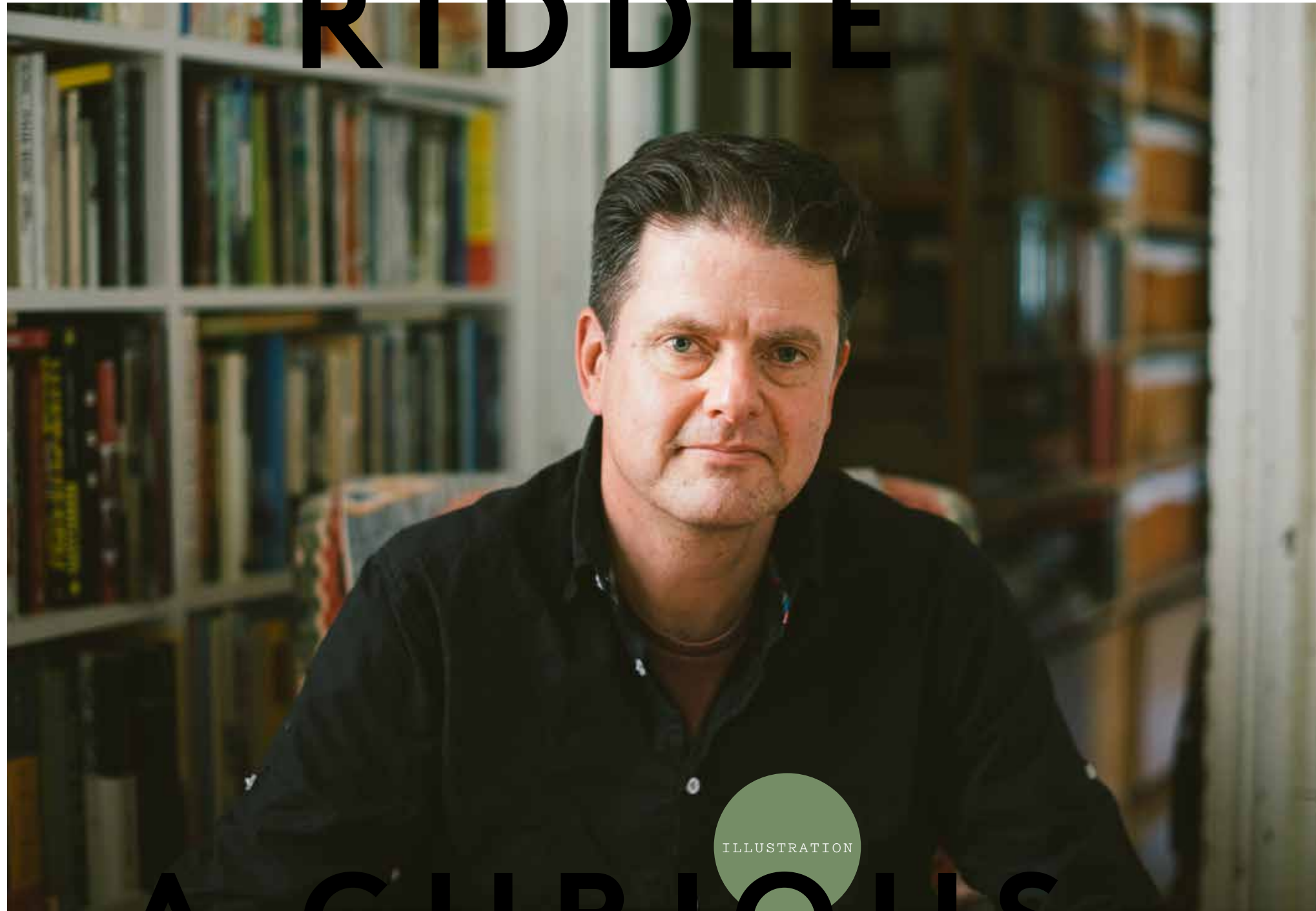


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MADE

KATOOMBA

TOHBY RIDDLE



ILLUSTRATION

A CURIOUS PLACE

“The sense of openness does something to you.”

“There’s a sort of pungency up here with the colours, the smells, the sounds, the way the sky behaves, that you do find you’re absorbing.”

WRITING



The need for more space was the driving force in the decision for Tohby Riddle’s move to Katoomba. With a third child on the way, Tohby’s small Bondi apartment could no longer accommodate his growing family so they returned to the place of his childhood holidays.

Tohby’s family owned a small weatherboard house in north Leura that was the site of regular weekend trips, back when the area was full of small dairy farms and orchards. As an adult he resumed this tradition with his own family when they were living in Sydney. “I came back up here one weekend, many years later, and remembered the smells and the atmosphere that I experienced as a child. I could still really identify with the place.”

On one such visit another weatherboard house caught his eye. “Around 1999 we came up for a short stay and this house was available for sale,” says Tohby. “I remember looking at the price and realising that the price of a house here was about the price of a garage in Sydney, so I just thought ‘I could afford that’, and I bought it really without thinking too much. The house was a bit derelict and so I’d come up at different times to work on it.”

Eventually, his growing family necessitated a change of scenery and they made plans to move. “It’s funny because around that time too it seemed like a few people were making the same move for the same types of reasons. The sort of crazy property boom happening in Sydney created this diaspora. As it turned out there’s a bit of a tradition of this happening, and it meant that there’s a lot of like-minded people living here.”

As such, Tohby and his family found themselves connected to the place almost immediately. “I’ve always liked urban spaces. That’s another reason why moving here wasn’t that hard, because there’s a sufficient amount of urbanism to keep you going ... It reminded me of Bondi in the

sense that you’ve got lots of bookshops and cafes and people from all around the world hanging around” says Tohby. “I think that’s why Katoomba does appeal to people from the inner west of Sydney.”

In terms of his working life, Tohby already a well regarded illustrator and author, has found that living in the Blue Mountains meant that he could concentrate on creating picture books full time. “I’ve found that I’m able to focus here. On a practical level I can work with less overheads too,” he says. “There’s a sort of pungency up here with the colours, the smells, the sounds, the way the sky behaves that you do find that you’re absorbing. It’s hard to be explicit, but intuitively the place has an impact. In (my book) **Unforgotten**, there are images of clouds flowing through the streets and that was an intuitive response to being around here, because even on a sunny day like this a cloud could go through your backyard. You get these strange little fogs and low clouds. Also there’s an autumn leaf sequence in the book, which uses one of the trees in my backyard. All these things find their way into my work.”

In addition to the natural beauty of the area, the built environment provides inspiration for Tohby’s work. “It’s an extremely idiosyncratic place with a quite eccentric history. It reveals itself slowly ... This place is a natural subject for psychogeography because there’s all these interesting ways you can circulate through the place, and discover weird relics of earlier usage.”

For Tohby, the Blue Mountains, and in particular Katoomba, has an uncanny ability to provide exactly what is needed when required. “If you’re on the lookout here you can find things that might inspire you or play a part in your work that you wouldn’t easily find elsewhere. Katoomba’s just been a place that keeps delivering, and strangely it just feels like whenever I need something, it just turns up.”

TOHBY.COM

BROKEN

MUSIC



BULLABURRA

CHIP

Listening to Martyn Palmer’s work as electronic artist Broken Chip, it’s almost impossible to disassociate its point of origin from the end result. Indeed, if ever there was a call for an official soundtrack for the Blue Mountains, Martyn’s music would be a wholly appropriate choice.

His Broken Chip project began eight years ago, when he woke up with a start on New Years’ Day and made a strong resolution to push his hitherto-unreleased music into the ether. Within hours, his first digital presence - a humble MySpace page - was launched from his bush block in Bullaburra.

While his early work (captured beautifully on **Pow Wow Seven** on **Feral Media**) was redolent with brittle beats and vestiges of post-rock artists such as Sigur Ros, his recent music reflects his maturing relationship with the environment around him. In releases such as 2014’s **Cold Air**, field recordings merge with ambient textures, drones and loops to create perfect moments of calm – all entirely attributable to his decade-long residence in the Mountains.

“Once you’re up here, you just feel removed from it all – you’re no longer in the rat race,” he says. “The air is different. It’s calm, it’s quiet, and it inspires me to do things creatively. I have the freedom to explore whatever I find interesting - the isolation allows me to concentrate.”

Martyn admits that, prior to his move to the Mountains ten years ago, his music *“wasn’t really melodic - just a lot of mechanical noise,”* inspired as it was by the native sounds of the city around him. Now, the same environmental forces work their way into his music, but the results are diametrically different.

“There’s natural sounds and rhythms that you hear within nature - the wind gushing through pine needles almost sounds like white noise. I’m totally aware of that outdoors sound, sonically speaking – and subconsciously it always seeps in. You absorb it, and it might soon be forgotten, but it’s in there and it will gradually come back to the surface at some point.”

If Martyn’s work succeeds in creating postcards of the Mountains in your mind, then that may well be due to his creative process – which often involves wandering

“The air is different. It’s calm, it’s quiet, and it inspires me to do things creatively.”

around the bush with his camera. *“I can capture a still shot of the top of the tree, some sunlight coming through, even images that are blurry and out-of-focus - all that makes me come home, look at a picture and make music to suit that image. I can’t imagine it would work for me down back in suburbia - I’d probably struggle to find something beautiful to take a shot of. It would be so much harder to do.”*

SOUNDCLOUD.COM/BROKEN-CHIP

KEVINA — JO SMITH



LEURA

ART

“I feel like a lot of it just comes down to a basic sense of comfort & peace.”

Kevina-Jo Smith has been making things ever since she can remember: *“Making a mess usually.”* Kevina’s entry into art began at TAFE in Melbourne and continued with her acceptance into the prestigious Victorian College of the Arts where she was exposed to the culture and business of art. *“It opened the art world up to me.”*

The next few years were filled with traveling between Melbourne and Sydney to curate shows and exhibit work, with several forays into the world of film production. But it was in 2011, shortly after she met her partner Tim (aka musician **Jack Ladder**), that the Blue Mountains came into her life. Looking to find something different at the time, *“Tim suggested that we try the mountains for six months and see what we thought.”*

Having never visited the area before, this ‘blind date’ take on house hunting was an unusual approach. After a few inspections and a chance meeting, they happened upon the house that was to become their home. *“We loved the house immediately, and that’s where we still live today.”* Since this time, both Kevina and Tim have been extremely productive, creating music, short films, and various art works.

With an ongoing interest in the Australian bush, Kevina’s art practice explores ideas of shelter and protection in relation to people and the environment. Her current work consists of wearable items, as well as large-scale woven pieces made from collections of found objects and consumer by-products.

Contemplating how life in the Blue Mountains has influenced her work, Kevina says, *“it actually made the work I do make sense. I always felt as though it doesn’t quite fit anywhere, and now that I’m experimenting with putting the pieces I make back into nature and just using the outdoors, something has clicked. I’m inspired by the natural environment, and also examining waste and showing waste, using it or re-using it, and being here has helped my work make sense. Being here has given me the space and confidence I need to now start to re-introduce myself to Sydney and Melbourne too.”*

Recently Kevina has opened her own store, **Candle of Vision**, in the popular shopping precinct of Leura Mall. *“It has been a great way to connect with the community. I have a few gorgeous supportive locals who come up regularly with encouraging words and advice.”*

Additionally, the large number of international visitors to her store serves as a constant reminder of the region’s unique character. *“We get so many visitors from around the world here because of that, and it can feel like those people value what we have here more than we do sometimes. It’s a reminder we need to preserve what we have.”*

INSTAGRAM.COM/CANDLEOFVISION/

ELOISE, CAITLIN & GEORGIA

FASHION

ILLUSTRATION



Caitlin Shearer



Eloise Maree Crossman



A

COMMON THREAD

FILM

LEURA

“There is a magical power to the place up here.”

A series of chance encounters brought Caitlin Shearer, Eloise Maree Crossman, and Georgia Blackie together from different parts of Sydney and the Central Coast. Yet despite their diverse personal styles and professions, the Blue Mountains provides a common ground as the three young women share a love of Norman Lindsay, Eleanor Dark, and both the landscape and the art-deco inspired urbanism of the region.

While they are still relatively new to the area, the three had been visiting for many years and enjoyed the indefinable quality of the landscape that nurtured their creative minds. *“It always felt different up here to anywhere else I had been. The temperature change was always noticeable. The crispness of the air always stayed with me. As a teenager I just thought it was a bit magic,”* says Caitlin.

All three note that the Blue Mountains is a place where they can enjoy the space and solitude it offers, but connect with an artistic tradition that has been part of the fabric of the region for decades. Eloise in particular has delved deeply into the area’s cultural history, which informs her work as a film and photo artist as well as her role as an assistant media producer at the Australian Museum: *“When we moved here, I made it my mission to look into the history of the place from an artistic perspective... The former life of the Hydro Majestic is really fascinating to me - but that’s just one aspect of what you can uncover here.”*

In addition to the creative inspiration that the place provides, there are practical aspects that have helped their careers flourish. The enterprising three now share a house together in Leura, which immediately became a space for brainstorming, making, and building empires. They also love the physical space they have found themselves in: *“We’re getting so much more space, extra rooms, we have a*

garage and the garden,” says Georgia.

Georgia notes that before moving to the Mountains, she was having difficulty balancing her personal life, her professional life as a photographer, and her desire to find more time to create. *“I was feeling so frustrated in Sydney about not moving forward and not getting enough done, and not being able to commit to my art making. I had to tell all my friends that I wasn’t moving away from them, but that I had to come up here as a commitment to art which I was just unable to make in the city at the time.”*

Interestingly, Georgia explains that her commute has now become a beneficial time to reflect and adjust: *“the train journey takes the place of having to do that ‘coming home’ ritual, and separating yourself from work and going into your creative space.”*

Caitlin also mentions the value of space, quiet, and low overheads as they have helped her transform her work as an illustrator into her own fashion label, **Caitlin She.** *“I’ve had more quiet time here than any other time in my life. Working from home has been a big part of that. It can be isolating to a degree, but that just forces me to make things happen and to make more of an effort to get out, and socialise, and go to Sydney - then you come back here and get back into it.”*

Happily for all three, the reality of living and creating in the Blue Mountains has lived up to their romantic fantasies. Their delight is infectious as they recount their experiences of foraging and exploring the natural abundance: *“Caitlin made this enormous apple pie exclusively from apples that we found around the neighbourhood. We couldn’t believe it,”* says Georgia.

Eloise sums up their feelings: *“We decided to move up here because we knew we’d find the landscape here inspiring, and it is, it’s therapeutic, and offers constant inspiration.”*

“What you see is actually our day-to-day lives, it’s just that the setting is so beautiful.”

PHOTOGRAPHY



Georgia Blackie

JENNY KEE

BLACKHEATH



“How blessed are we to live like this?”

Jenny Kee is a cultural icon known for her vibrant fashion and art that celebrates the Australian landscape and shaped our culture.

Born in Bondi, Kee spent much of the 60s pursuing life and art in London, but returned to Australia in 1972. What was initially intended to be a brief holiday, ended up as a permanent move home as Kee explains: *“almost as soon as we stepped off the plane, we could just sense an energy.”* The air was electric with hope and optimism, which was infectious. *“There was just this tribe of people, expatriates, who had gone to London and New York*

and Paris in the ‘60s and they were all returning, seven years later, feeling like us.”

A short six months later, Kee had established her fashion boutique Flamingo Park in the Strand Arcade and her creative collaboration with designer Linda Jackson was blossoming into a bold exploration of a national fashion identity. *“We were twin souls. Sydney did not have the style that London had, and so to find a kindred spirit in Linda, who’d been travelling all through New Guinea and Paris (she sort of went east while I was completely immersed in the west, in London), was amazing. We came together with an explosion of creativity.*



We didn’t sort of plot and say ‘we’ve got to start this Australian thing,’ we just used to come up to the mountains to get air, and breathe and experience beauty and the bush.

And the more we came up here, the more we got enchanted with the nature of this place.”

A few years later Kee moved to the Blue Mountains, permanently settling in Blackheath.

Kee reflects that this was prompted by a romantic dream *“to have a lifestyle where one could breathe and be creative in a most exquisite and natural environment. I fell in love.”* And this adoration for the natural world of the Australian bush has never left her.

“This has been 40 years of love for this country.”

Kee’s home in Blackheath, set high on the ridgeline overlooking the Grose Valley (within the Blue Mountains national park), is laden with Waratahs, her totem flower. Her gorgeous home built with recycled materials nestles into the landscape of the native regeneration she has nurtured into her garden.

Reflecting on her 40 years lived in the Blue Mountains; Kee says that she has seen many different groups of people come and go, each bringing a unique energy. For her, this continual flux keeps the community invigorated. Two recent arrivals are Kee’s daughter and granddaughter, the latter of which is quite taken with her new surrounds. *“She breathes the air and she says ‘clean air’. And she does it as a pure little girl that really knows that the air is different,”* says Kee.

“We have got this beautiful place that’s still intact, and I will fight for this place until the day I die.”

“It’s a real community in Blackheath, it’s a real community in Katoomba, it’s a real community in Leura, it’s a real community in Wentworth Falls. They’re all communities.”

Perhaps the most inspiring ambassador for the Blue Mountains, if not Australia, Kee muses on the pleasure and awe she feels every day living in such a magnificent and dramatic part of the world.

“This is a quality of life that is so extraordinary. We have got the most beautiful air. We have got the most beautiful landscapes. We have got an ancient valley out there that is 350 million years old. We’ve got the ancient flower, the Waratah, that is 40 million years old - it goes back to Gondwanaland... That’s extraordinary. We’re living on a precipice of ancientness, and everyday I look out there and every day I feel blessed as I sit and do my Buddhist practice... I feel humbled by living here. I’m part of the bush, and the bush is part of me.”

To be an internationally distributed feature filmmaker, you might think that you need to decamp and work the system in downtown L.A. Not so for Katoomba-based director Matt Drummond, whose debut feature **Dinosaur Island** has now sold to more than fifty countries worldwide.

It's fitting that when asked when he first moved to Mountains, Matt offers a highly specific reference point: "it was sometime around when **E.T.** was out." A life in film, kick-started with an awe-inspiring trip to see **The Empire Strikes Back**, will do that to you.

He started in the industry making slides for now classic **Pearl & Dean** advertisements — something he describes as "graphic design trial by fire" — before getting his hands on an early animation package, Infinity. "I remember creating an apple in 3D and thinking, 'I can see the possibilities here'."

Those early experiments eventually led to work on ABC's **Quantum** science program (now **Catalyst**) and a career-defining move into the documentary world — initially creating recreations of

the solar system, before moving into creatures and pre-historic animals.

It was, however, Arnold Schwarzenegger that changed Matt's life forever. "I saw *Terminator II*, and discovered that a particular piece of software had created the blast explosions. So I saved up, started a company, and bought the software. It paid for itself many, many times over - I kept getting job after job through the ABC and suddenly everyone in the ABC was talking to their mates around the world."

A later break, animation for a 12-part series of fictitious animal face-offs ("shark versus crocodile, anaconda versus jaguar, that kind of thing") allowed him to buy a converted church in Katoomba and build up a local production company, with all the talent and assets you would expect to find in a bleeding-edge movie hub.

A spell in Vanuatu convinced him that the South Pacific environment could easily double as many different far-flung locations, and he struck upon the idea for directorial debut, **Dinosaur Island** — a family adventure about a young boy stranded on an island with prehistoric creatures. With post-

“The only way to make it in any industry is to be where nobody else is.”

production completed in the Mountains, Matt has now sold the film to more than 50 countries, a staggering feat for an Australian animated feature that was 100% independently financed.

The fact that all of this can happen in the Blue Mountains is entirely due to Matt's outlook on life: "I think that the only way to make it in any industry is to be where nobody else is. Don't be trying to fit through the same door as a million other people. Go out and find a different one - find the path less travelled. The best thing possible is to have limitations, because limitations force you to think about things in a different way."

DINOSAURISLANDTHEMOVIE.COM

MATT

FILM

KATOOMBA

DRUMMOND

STUDIO

INDUSTRIAL
DESIGN

GRAPHIC
DESIGN

HAM

BLACKHEATH

“I hated the whole nine to five creative thing — who can be creative in that time?”

For most people, the idea of a tree-change symbolises a shift towards a quieter or simpler life. However, for artists and designers Hannah & Mark Surtees, the opposite is almost entirely true.

After migrating from England to Australia, the husband and wife team settled initially in Clovelly, with Mark setting up their design business in the

garage. "I was making all the furniture that I wanted to," explains Mark, "but it was more arty, and not that commercial. When we brought the business up here and found our place in Blackheath, that was actually a bit of a leg-up for things."

Blackheath not only gave the British ex-pats a chance to reconnect with the seasons, it gave them all the space they need to continue to drive their business, **Studio Ham** — an enterprise they describe as having "that particular blend of artistry and originality that's just the right side of 'what the...?'"

Their practice, now run out of an outdoor studio in their back garden, is balanced between the two pillars of commissions (furniture, lighting and installations) and original artwork. The former includes a large, and growing, body of work for the **Mad Mex** chain - the centre piece of which is Mark's impressive chandelier made from Corona bottles that can now be found in many stores across the country.

The latter, their original work, can now boast an award-winning sculpture in the mix. Earlier this year, Hannah developed two totemic sculptures for the fourth

annual **Sculpture At Scenic World** event - Australia's only rainforest exhibition, based in Katoomba and featuring works from all around the world. Her work, *Tall Tales*, won one of the major awards and an opportunity to exhibit at the flourishing **Blue Mountains Cultural Centre**.

Without a commute or, indeed, without having to be anywhere other than their own back yard, the duo find themselves having much more flexibility around their creative process. "Our creative work is really part of our lives and I actually like that. I hated the whole nine to five creative thing - who can be creative in that time? This lifestyle is perfect for me because I can do a bit of creative at any time, whenever it works," says Hannah.

"The benefits of working for yourself and working from home really suit us", agrees Mark. "You don't need to make as much money, you don't have the same overheads, and you can really enjoy the quiet times - those unassuming times where ideas pop in and pop out. You do your best thinking in those lucid moments - and here those moments just happen without you even knowing it. It's really effortless sometimes."

STUDIOHAM.COM.AU

WRITING

JULIE & AMANDA

BLACKHEATH



MANIFESTO FOR LIFE

“Here, I am focused and measured and calm ... I produce so much work.”

ART

“You can come here and look at the stars, and the physical environment and be amongst the quiet of it all — relish the lack of the city’s relentless pace.”

TEXTILE DESIGN



Painter, printmaker and designer Julie Paterson, is living the old idiom of ‘second time lucky.’ After a long spell of shuttling between Randwick and the Blue Mountains, she has now settled here full-time with her partner, writer and storyteller Amanda Kaye.

“I became focused the moment I got here twelve years ago,” she says. “I do work hard anyway, but here I am focused and measured and calm. I can just keep going and going and going, whereas in Randwick, it’s more frenetic - stopping and starting and getting distracted. Up here, I produce so much work.”

Her design and fabric-printing business, **ClothFabric**, features designs inspired by the local landscape, printed in small batches by hand in a shed in her backyard. What on the surface might sound like a small lifestyle business is actually a significant Australian design success story – over the last 20 years, Julie has created innumerable collections, sold through her former retail store in Darlinghurst, and now through **Ascraft** in Sydney and Melbourne, and has been featured in publications such as *Habitus*, *House & Garden* and *Country Style*. To cap off her anniversary year, Julie published her first book, *ClothBound* – a beautiful artifact that showcases her creative process and the story of her work to date.

Amanda’s early relationship with the Mountains may feel familiar to many Sydney-siders: “It’s the place Sydney parents drag their children to,” she notes. “Our family would come up for holidays when I was a little kid. We’d always go to Scenic World, go down on the Cable Car and come up the Scenic Railway. We thought that was the bomb!”

She later started to come to Blackheath as a student – visiting Federation Gardens almost every year for the last 25 years, co-incidentally located directly across the road from Amanda and Julie’s new house.

The escape route that the Mountains offer became increasingly attractive as her life went on. “I was sick of my job, and wanted to change everything. It was a total reboot. I wanted to be away from the city.”

“I was living in Tempe, literally living in a shed between the Princes Highway and the airport. I could sit on my back patio in the tiny, little square garden that I had and look at the orange glow of the airport lights in the sky and smell the AB gas. There’s a romance to that, but this is a very different feeling. You can come here and look at the stars, and the physical environment and be amongst the quiet of it all – relish the lack of the city’s relentless pace.”

Julie and Amanda’s lifestyle and homestead are clearly deeply cherished. So much so, that they decided to articulate their values in **The Imperfect Manifesto** – a document they created which underpinned the positive changes that were happening in their lives. “Everyone is born creative,” it begins, “and everyday is an opportunity to perform a creative act.” Beginning life of giant sheets of paper scrawled with crayon, the Manifesto is now available, printed on a Japanese *furoshiki* cloth, through Julie’s online shop.

The creation of the work, and its translation to a work of art in and of itself, feels rightfully ritualistic – an aspect of life that Julie and Amanda don’t shy away from.

“Every time there’s the full moon, we gather friends and go down to Govett’s Leap. When the moon comes up over the valley, you can see all the strata in the rock and the colours change. When we stand there, we’re hanging out in the same spot where Charles Darwin stood in 1836. That’s where he recognised that the earth was really old – a thought that he translated twenty years later into *On the Origin of Species*... So that place informs the way the entire world understands itself. Every time I go down there I’m moved by that experience – it’s astonishing.”

Tegan Bennett Daylight's latest book, **Six Bedrooms**, was recently lauded as "one of the best books of the year" by renowned indie book chain, **Readings**. While that's certainly a prodigious plaudit, it is somewhat unsurprising – particularly given that the Katoomba-based author was once pegged by the **Sydney Morning Herald** as one of Australia's "Best Young Australian Novelists."

Many writers talk of their process, their rituals and their diligence – a need to carve out space and time to devote to their craft. Moving to the Blue Mountains ten years ago certainly helped Tegan, along with her fellow-writer and husband Russell, to bring those concepts more readily into their lives.

"I'm a slow writer," she admits, "and being up here hasn't changed that. I think it is just easier here to cordon off my time. We've got a nice social life here, but it's not at all hectic. And the kids don't have hectic after-school lives, so it's just quite relaxed. We've got this very clean space between 9:00 and 3:00 where we can both work."

KATOOMBA

TEGANBENNETTDAYLIGHT.COM

That sense of space translates to Tegan's work as a writer. When pressed to define her style she defers to how others have described it: "I get out a lot of words like spare and controlled. I'm a very close editor of the work, so the sentences are carefully crafted."

"When you're up here, you're thrown back on yourself. When you're in a city, you're interested in the way things are changing all the time, and what's in and what's out. Up here, those things become a lot less important, and you therefore get selective in everything that you do. You just get selective in what you eat, what you read, how you write. I think all that has an influence."

Six Bedrooms reflects Tegan's childhood and teenage life growing up in Sydney, and reflecting on that period naturally helped to cement her feelings about her current life in the Mountains.

"One of the reasons that we live here is that we want our kids to live in a place where the pace is more like that of our own childhood. The kids can move around more freely, in the same way that we did. They can walk around the neighbourhood and they can own the space a bit."

“We want our kids to live in a place where the pace is more like that of our own childhood.”

We don't want them to feel as though there is a race to succeed, because we're not that interested in contemporary success."

She notes particularly that many of the friends that she's made in the Mountains seem to share the same positive outlook on life: "What they're actually interested in is life as you live it rather than the achievement of it, and the achievement is something that comes after the life has been lived well."

TEGAN

BENNETT
DAYLIGHT

WRITING

“It'll always be my home because it's my kid's home.”

ACTING

Damion Hunter's journey to the Blue Mountains began 5049 kilometres away on the other side of the country. Born in Karratha in the Pilbara region of Western Australia, it was his profession as an actor that brought him to Sydney, but love and family that drew him to his current home in Katoomba.

Growing up in a community dominated by mining, Damion's first taste of acting was in Year 8 with a part in the school play. While he initially embraced the fact that drama helped him avoid certain subjects at school, it was the alternative world that theatre opened up to him that really struck a chord. "The experience of being part of the theatre world was fun and I got to meet lots of interesting and unusual people, and I suppose it beat getting my head kicked in at footy training instead."

Following high school, Damion began his training at the **Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA)** and was subsequently accepted into the prestigious **National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA)**.

The move from Perth to Sydney also brought him together with his partner, who grew up in Springwood, and starting a family was the catalyst for his permanent move to the Blue Mountains. "Growing up I never moved once, which gave me stability and grounding and I want the same for my kids."

Engaging with the warm and diverse Mountains community and the creative nourishment it provides, Damion has been able to balance both his professional and personal interests.

He acknowledged that there was "a strong Indigenous storytelling culture here from the Darug and Gundungurra mobs, and I've been lucky enough to work with schools to connect kids with those traditions."

Fresh off the sets of the hit film **Wormwood: Road of the Dead** and acclaimed television series **Redfern Now**, Damion is currently writing a screenplay for a feature film set in the Jamison Valley, which he hopes to be able to put into production in the near future: "It is actually based on the ramblings of a hermit I met in the Valley of the Waters when I went walking one day. He had some strange stories to tell about the place, and on my way home I couldn't help but thinking, what if all that stuff was true? I just started writing after that. It's since become something very different, only using that experience as a minor part of the story, but that's where it came from."

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WRITING

MADE

WILLOW & CO.

LOVE STORIES

“This place just gives
you everything.”

KATOOMBA

PHOTOGRAPHY

For Grace and Tim Hobson, the Blue Mountains embody stories of love: their love for each other, the craft of photography, the place itself, and for the couples whose weddings they photograph. *“This place just gives you everything. We love the area, and our clients mostly come up here specifically to get married, because of the landscape,”* says Grace.

The couple met in Sydney. Tim had long held a passion for photography, drawn as he was to the technical aspects of the craft. During his time studying at TAFE, he met Grace and she quickly saw photography as the perfect opportunity to combine her love of art with a vocation. Their two complementary sensibilities now give their mountains based studio, **Willow & Co**, its winning combination of precision and poetry.

Often visiting the Blue Mountains on weekend trips, Grace and Tim were charmed by the dramatic scenery and laid back community, so much so that they moved to Katoomba in 2011. *“You just want to be part of it. Even just driving over the hill from our place to the supermarket and seeing the world open up - it’s just so incredible, especially with a little fog. It’s always changing too,”* says Tim.

While places like The Three Sisters, where people visit from all over the world, have an obvious appeal Grace and Tim embrace the opportunity to explore the wild beauty a little further afield. *“We’re always looking for new locations, and going on bushwalks. The place changes so often too, so it’s about staying in touch with that, and also finding great small spots in places you wouldn’t think to look in if you weren’t living here,”* says Tim.

Living on the boundary of the Blue Mountains National Park has been a distinct professional advantage for Grace and Tim as it is a popular romantic destination for weddings. Grace explains:

“When people travel up they want the full experience of what the mountains has to offer.” Willow & Co’s clients generally share a similar ideology and aesthetic, so it is not uncommon for Grace and Tim to take brides *“walking through the wilderness,”* traversing rocks, trees, and mountains to get the perfect shot. It is clear from their soft panoramic photos that take in as much of the topography and vegetation as possible, that Grace and Tim share their love of the natural beauty with their clients.

A key component to maintaining **Willow & Co** has been through the variety of channels the internet provides to connect with people outside of the mountains. Grace explains that much of their business *“largely comes down to SEO and social media. We blog and share our photos online, and we try to make sure we’re on the first page in Google. Social media is really important. We post a combination of lifestyle photos, wedding photos, and landscape photos and I think people outside the mountains just love to get a glimpse of what’s happening here. The couples that we shoot just love it and I think are quite envious of us living here.”*

In addition to what the region offers in terms of work, both Grace and Tim are quick to point out that the laid back lifestyle and the generous community is heartening. Grace notes that Katoomba provides a place to relax and recharge: *“We’re at a wedding almost every weekend for work, so it’s nice to be in a quiet place like that where you can really enjoy some downtime. We’re homebodies, but we really love going for walks, going to cafes. I think it would be great for people to become more aware of what’s here in terms of food and culture.”*

Tim agrees: *“With the work we do and our lifestyle, it would be so much harder for us if we were in Sydney. We know that we’re lucky here.”*

“It’s a place
that makes
you want to
get out and
take more
photos ... we
know that
we’re lucky
here.”

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MADE

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