

Upstarts

Making a brainwave business idea a reality is a dream for many of us. Discover the highs, lows and triumphs experienced by these women who are just doing it for themselves.

BY MADALENE CHU



ART ATTACK

Company Name: Kindergallery

Established: August 2007

Woman at the top: Fiona Lang

How it started: Fiona Lang has always been passionate about art but it wasn't until becoming pregnant that she began to look at art created specifically with children in mind. "I was able to find a few works here and there. But there was not any one place which aimed to collect them all together." So during her six months' maternity leave Lang sourced works from all around the world and set up an online gallery.

The pitch: "Kindergallery is about the visual artwork being, in itself, the source of inspiration for children," says Lang. "My aim is for children to respond to the works by developing their own narratives and acquiring the visual language of art and design in a stimulating and lasting way."

The greatest challenge: "Developing relationships with the artists across such a great geographical distance."

Biggest high so far: "Working with a team of wonderful artists who are outstanding at what they do."

Advice from someone who's been there: "Enjoy what you do in life and work to do it justice."

Future projection: To occupy a gallery space where young aesthetes can drop in, meet and discuss art over milkshakes and banana bread.

Contact: www.kindergallery.com



VIRTUAL FASHION

Company name: FrockShop

Established: April 2006

Woman at the top: Marnie Goss

How it started: In her former life as a London fashion press agent, a time-poor Goss would often turn to online shopping. However, after returning to Australia she discovered that there wasn't much online shopping choice, so she set out to create an online boutique.

The pitch: FrockShop stocks designs from established and emerging Australian designers as well as those of international heavyweights on its virtual racks. All items are giftwrapped and delivered the next working day.

The greatest challenge: "Keeping up with the technical side of the website. It was difficult to build a site which was easy to use and looked great. I decided it was one of those areas where you had to hire the best people to do it for you."

Biggest high so far: "Once we had so many people on the site and it crashed. While it was stressful, it also meant that the traffic on the site had far surpassed what we were expecting and that people wanted to shop with us."

Advice from someone who's been there: "Do your research, plan well, work hard and go for it. Life is too short to sit back and wonder 'what if?'"

Future projection: To grow the business, and continue searching for great new labels, locally and overseas.

Contact: www.frockshop.com.au



TEACHING BEAUTY

Company Name: The Beauty Tutor

Established: January 2006

Woman at the top: Sarah Donges

How it started: Working as a fabric, fashion and accessories buyer in London, Donges learnt how to recognise quality fabrics, different cuts and body shapes. After returning to Australia and becoming a cosmetics buyer at David Jones, she decided to pursue her own business, The Beauty Tutor.

The pitch: Let a pair of fresh eyes look over your wardrobe for some objective insights. Donges provides one-on-one styling services and delivers her honest opinion in a diplomatic way. With a diverse range of clients from 16 to 80 years in age, Donges also factors in your lifestyle, budget and personality when helping construct your new wardrobe.

The greatest challenge: Expanding but still providing the personal service that comes from a one-person operation.

Biggest high so far: "Working closely with clients on such a personal aspect of their lives. Most still ask me for advice years on."

Advice from someone who's been there: "Confidence is the key. You need to be comfortable and truly believe in your decisions."

Future projection: To be based more online, "which means I can look after more people and I am not restricted by distance".

Contact: www.thebeautytutor.com