



villagevibe

News and views from the heart of Fernwood

Downtown success from Fernwood design studio

Neighborhood quartet expands operations

>> STACEY CURTIS

With a secret Fernwood locale studio and a hot downtown store at 533 Pandora Avenue, Floating Gold Iceberg designs has been hard at work creating artistic innovations in clothing and accessories for men, women and children. Since the company's inception nearly two years ago, its four female co-owners (Laura Imrie; Angelica Reid; Cara Scott; and Jana Stevenson) have experienced exponential success and still maintained their essence, ethics and passion for what they do.

Floating Gold Iceberg, a name derived from a song from the 1970s rock group The Band, stemmed from friends meeting at Reid's large former Fernwood home. Eventually, the company outgrew the house. The young women rented studio space and shifted their focus from stocking other stores to opening and filling the shelves of their own store, which opened in May 2009.

"Growth is welcome," says Reid, FGI's lead designer, "as long as it doesn't mess with the art work and our business fundamentals." Everything FGI adheres to three principles: hand-made; hand-drawn; and produced in house. "We're happy to



In addition to its signature line, FGI's shop stocks wares from local brands, including Janamade and Dress Me Up. Photo by Johanna Henderson.



grow, as long as every [one of us] is happy growing."

The move from clothing design and production to opening their own boutique widened the creative bubble further. "Jana and I used to sell at the Moss Street Market," says Scott. Owning their own store affords the women this same opportunity to hear customer feedback. "The more we can satisfy our customers the more they come back."

While Scott performs hands-on screen printing and spearheads business operations, interacting with the customers allows her to bring that direct feedback into the studio and inject it into the group's design process. She describes the practice of crafting any one single piece as "a layering of

contribution."

Each FGI lady has their own favourite article: the feel-like-a-girl-in-your long john skirt; the "designer's dream" hot-ass vintage wool blend and handmade, lace slip lined kissey kissey skirt; and the wrist warmers Reid designed after purchasing her first road bike and experiencing the dreaded "up-the-sleeve draft." But top priority is how the clothing feels to customers. With well-cut and detailed designs, the FGI clothing satisfies a wide demographic. "It's a big deal to accommodate all the phases of a person's body. To give them something they can wear down the road."

Having achieved the sought-after combination of comfort and design, the FGI ladies' line includes a third element: art.

"It's essential that we're driven by the creative process; that's why we came together and that's how we explore pieces," says Reid. If [one of us] thinks a skirt needs three separate prints, then that's what it'll get."

Scott adds that "having an illustrator [Stevenson] on hand helps." After the group created the wear-it-five-ways circle scarf, Scott asked Stevenson to "jot-down" a quick how-to-wear-it illustration to include with the item at point of sale. Ten minutes later: a clothing label with style of its own emerged.

This inspired group claims to have met in the usual Victoria way: "two degrees of separation." Future plans include staying together and collaborating with other artists. ☺

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