



Laura Akins

Freelance Womenswear Designer with over 10 years of multi-product experience, focussing on sustainable product and solutions.

Falmouth, UK

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Links

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Languages

English (Native)

About

Lead Womenswear Designer with over 10 years of multiproduct experience in Outerwear, Wovens, Knitwear, Jersey and Swim with a focus on sustainable product and solutions. Over my career, I have gained experience in full time and freelance positions; which has taught me how to adapt quickly, work collaboratively and manage teams to establish and grow successful collections. In my most recent role as Lead Womens Wear Designer at Finisterre, we grew the gross profit for the womenswear department alone by 370% from 2018 to 2020. I believe in building better product for better business, focusing on sustainability and the future of our industry and planet. No product should be should be produced today without sustainability at its core and forethought of circularity for the future. I am passionate about people, community and culture; I believe in empowering and investing in the people that I work with, understanding the value of feeling valued. A sense of community and a good work place culture is essential to success of any company.

BRANDS WORKED WITH

- Finisterre
- Urban Outfitters
- Some Ideas
- Ricahrd Nicholl
- Sophie Hulme
- Banana Republic
- Chinti & Parker

Experience



● Lead Womenswear Designer

Finisterre | Jan 2018 - Feb 2022

- Collaboratively working with the Lead Menswear Designer and the design team to research global consumer, culture, market and trend.
- Leading the Creative Direction and Colour seasonally for all categories; Menwear, Womenswear and Accessories.
- Managing the design team to build a credible and innovative oer for Finisterre Womens, whilst ensuring all of the team have creative input, hitting all deadlines and exceeding KPIs - target in 2020 to grow FP Sales Mix from 38% to 51% - achieved 64%.
- Established a successful range of best sellers, growing the core oer through multiple colour skus and dierent fabrics and developing new products from the analysis of lessons learnt from best sellers.
- Developing a strong working relationship with the extended product team; Product Development, Buying and Merch and our factories and suppliers, allowing us deliver product with excellent fit, finish and quality, ensuring brand loyalty and desirability.
- Working collaboratively with the managers from the extended product team to establish critical path and timelines at the start of each season.
- Presenting final range, colour and concept to the founder and CEO during sign o presentations and to the wider company ahead of launch.
- Leading the design teams transition onto new PLM software in one season whilst supporting the extended product team during the process.

● Design Consultant - Womenswear / Menwear

Some Ideas | Feb 2017 - Jan 2018

- Working closely with Some Ideas Ltd. a creative concept studio providing design consultancy, leading the direction of all knitwear ranges and building onto the woven and jersey ranges for new brands.
- Providing in-depth research to develop initial concept through to sketches, technical drawings and tech packs with the required timeline.
- Developing colour, yarn, fabrication and trim palettes to present to clients, ensuring the collection is coherent.
- Leading fittings to ensure all garments look and fit as they were envisioned and are finished to a high standard within the required budget.



● Freelance Knitwear Designer

Urban Outfitters | Mar 2016 - Jul 2017

- Leading the knitwear design team, outlining key mood, colour and trends each season, to inform new techniques and interesting silhou-

ette.

-Working closely with the knitwear buyer to ensure an exciting and varied range is developed, whilst also identifying key drivers for the season through producing in depth key items research packs using Adobe In-design.

-Creating detailed hand sketches and CADs through Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop to producing detailed tech packs for all styles, outlining gauge, yarn, technique and finish.

-Directly working with factories and suppliers in the UK, Europe and the Far East, handing over new styles and advising on any queries to produce the very best product possible, quickly and efficiently, creating an excellent rapport for the company.

-Working closely with the garment tech during fittings, advising on construction and finish to produce a well executed product.

-Establishing structure into the knitwear team, creating range plan boards to outline each muse, season drop and factory, to obtain clarity throughout the team and managers.

-Managing the team to work efficiently and effectively to exceed targets, whilst encouraging the development of new skills and knowledge.



● Freelance Womenswear Designer

Chinti & Parker | Oct 2014 - Feb 2016

- Working closely with Creative Directors and Design team to establish key trends and stories for the whole range; Knitwear, Wovens and Jersey.

-Producing detailed research for mood, silhouette, details and finish, along with sourcing base fits.

-Creating detailed hand sketches for all categories for weekly design presentations with the team and heads of the company.

-Developing swatches and samples for both knitwear and wovens, to indicate ideas for finish and detail.

-Producing detailed technical drawings using Illustrator of all final designs and creating detailed specification packs, outlining construction and finish for prototypes, including initial measurements for the factory to develop from.

-Leading hand overs to pattern cutters, factories and the production team to produce prototypes and salesman samples.

-Developing artwork for jacquards and print, using Illustrator or Photoshop, including the development of colour way options.

-Attending fabric and yarn fairs, sourcing new and exciting materials, keeping price point and customer in mind.

● Freelance Designer - Womenswear + Menswear

Richard Nicholl | Apr 2014 - Oct 2014

- Working with Richard and the design team to research and develop themes for the upcoming season, for Womenswear and Menswear.

-Outlining stories within the research and producing initial sketches to present in sketch reviews with the Creative Director.

-Working closely with the Pattern Cutters to develop sketches into 3D shapes and full toiles, attending fittings to develop the silhouette and suggest possible changes to construction and fit.

-Sourcing and directing print artwork for the season, including the development of colour ways, working closely with the Graphic Designer.

-Creating detailed specification drawings and packs, outlining construction and finish for all prototypes.

-Liaising with factories on development of prototypes, to ensure all products are finished to high standard and for their arrival to be inline with the critical path.



● Assistant Womenswear Designer

Sophie Hulme | Nov 2012 - Apr 2014

- Assisting the design team with research for the season, researching specific themes and developing new ideas whilst staying on trend.

-Producing artwork for print, develop design and colour ways, arrange with the printers to receive strike os.

-Produce artwork for jacquard and intarsia knitwear to scale.

-Developing designs through pattern cutting and toiling, working very closely with the Head of Atelier, working from sketches to basic shapes and silhouette, right through to final detailed patterns.

-Assisting the Head of Design and Head of Atelier in fittings, taking notes and making alterations to patterns and toiles.

-Organising all patterns to be sent to grade, working with the graders to enable them to understand the patterns and construction, in order for the patterns to be graded correctly.

-Liaising with new factories, working closely with them to ensure an understanding of all tech packs, talking through all patterns, garment construction and details.

-Creating technical drawings on Illustrator and Photoshop, producing artwork for all hardware for both RTW and accessories, ensuring the correct scale and dimensions.

-Produce patterns to sample bags and small leather goods, determine size and shape and illustrate details and positioning to the factory.



● **Paid Intern**

Banana Republic | Jun 2011 - Aug 2011

- Producing research to inspire key themes, new shapes and stitches seasonally, sourcing vintage, current garments and archive samples.

-Researching and designing embellishment, producing artwork and layouts for technical packs to send to factories for sampling.

-Creating detailed tech packs, including technical drawings for garments.

-Opportunity to gain an understanding of the production of such a large and well-established brand, through collaborating with other teams.

-Established an understanding of Banana Republic's customer and how to design for them.

Education & Training

2009 - 2012

● **Kingston University London**

Fashion Design BA (hons) Womenswear and Knitwear, Fashion Design Womenswear BA (hons):