

news: ideas

GET TO KNOW

ALEXANDRA RIGGS

Oobi Baby & Kids owner Alexandra Riggs admits to a passion for textile design and says she's always dreamed of designing fabric and fashion for babies.

'My first business was product design and development, and even though I was selling in Top Shop in the UK and other brilliant stores, my greatest achievement was getting into my first baby store and selling out in the first day!' she enthuses.

Here Alex explains how she came about creating these adorable knee-high booties.

What is the Oobi criteria for creating kid's clothing?

The questions we always ask are: Is it comfortable? Is it fashionable? Is it unique? I think the knee-high booties in particular tick every box.

What inspired you to create knee-high booties?

Knee-high booties were the invention of mixing the foremost idea of comfort with the fun part of fashion design. I wanted to create a pair of indoor and outdoor scuffs that were comfortable and slouchy, but still stylish. Plus I loved the idea of a quirky piece of fashion, which was reminiscent of *Pippi Longstocking* and Dr Seuss' stories – some of my favourite books as a child.

I see the knee-high booties as the Australian version of the New Zealand wellington boot. They're a laid-back item of clothing and are made using a stocking knit and 100 percent natural fibres so they have stretch and wearability.

What can we look forward to next from Oobi?

We're always so excited to launch a new range and this Winter we've looked to Scandinavian and European folk designs. This season's styles are straight out of a Winter wonderland with pom-poms, comfy knits and sweet designs.

Oobi Baby knee-high booties, \$39.95. For stockists phone 02 9310 1112.



MY BUSINESS

Starting your own business may be hard, but Anna-Lisa Backlund proves it's also rewarding

Graphic artist Anna-Lisa Backlund began making badges after noticing how many people used them to promote their work on graphic design blogs.

'I do the illustrations on the computer, print them out on a laser printer, then make the badges up with the machine. It's simple to use but it's quite labour intensive so I only make about 50 at a time,' she says.

Anna-Lisa started creating designs that kids would like such as kittens, puppies and other baby animals, but soon discovered mums were buying them for themselves. She then began making patterned badges with both adults and children in mind.

The badges are \$5 each, or four for \$15, and customised name badges are available with any purchase over \$20. Visit anna-lisa.com.



NEW! TREND WATCH

Angela Anderson from kidstylefile.com.au, a designer kids' gear online resource, fills us in on the popular trade show LIFEinSTYLE/KIDSinSTYLE

Ever wondered how stores come across fantastic new products? The answer is "trade shows". These events are put together for industry members to allow them to see, touch and talk about the products, and place their orders for the coming season. What the buyers decide is hot is what you eventually see in stores.

In February, 200 of the best brands on the market showed their wares at LIFEinSTYLE/KIDSinSTYLE in Sydney, a trade show dedicated to showcasing the finest products for adults and kids. The trends coming through were neutral palettes based around Scandinavian folk designs, natural birch wood, nature themes with birds (particularly owls) and screen prints.

There was a distinct move towards environmentally friendly and ethically produced products, with organic cotton fibres and the use of new, innovative non-toxic materials and dyes a big focus.

Although the show was demarcated into children's and adults' products, the crossover demonstrated that designers are integrating their product design philosophies into a holistic "lifestyle" aesthetic that's firmly committed to making great products for kids.

Take a look at Angela's multimedia slideshow in our new Trend Watch section at mychildmagazine.com.au.



tinybird.com.au



nordicdesignshome.com.au



roseandlilly.com.au

ECO LIVING

Mother of two Deanne McIntosh investigates the effects of BPA

Parents are increasingly turning to organic food for their children and watching out for additives, but should we also worry about the bottles and cups we use? Lots of recent media coverage on the effect of Bisphenol A (BPA), a chemical used to make polycarbonate plastic, has many parents looking for alternatives.

BPA is a synthetic oestrogen that could have a link to an increased risk of obesity, ADD, brain damage and even cancer. Baby bottles are a particular concern because BPA appears to leach into food and drink from containers, especially when heated.

The scientific jury is still out on the full effect of BPA, but if you'd like to take precautions for your little ones you'll be glad to hear the number of alternatives is growing. Companies like Medela and MAM, for example, claim their plastic baby bottles are BPA-free. Many mums are also turning to eBay to buy products otherwise only available in the US. The manufacturer of Green to Grow bottles, for example, says its products are BPA- and phthalate-free. Phthalate is a chemical that could potentially disrupt the baby's hormone system. At press time you could buy three Green to Grow bottles on eBay for around \$47 including postage.

Of course you could skip plastic altogether and go for glass, which can be recycled once your baby finishes with bottles. Jannine Barron from natureschild.com.au sells around 60 glass bottles a week but receives only around one complaint about breakages a year. Jannine points out toddlers are more likely to be a concern than babies when it comes to dropping the bottles. The glass bottles, from Happy Baby, cost \$8.95 each.

Nature's Child also sell the popular Sigg water bottles from Switzerland, made from lightweight aluminum, from \$32. Plus you can buy a small, stainless steel Ecotanka with a sippy attachment for \$35. Thermos has also recently released its Foogo range of kids' products in Australia, including insulated stainless steel sippy and straw cups. Insulated cups have the added advantage of slowing bacterial growth.



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TALKING TEXTILES

The Isoki team explain why they enjoy creating products from cotton canvas

Many of us opt for cotton when buying our clothing and accessories but are unaware of its amazing origin. The cotton plant is native, but is not limited, to tropical and subtropical regions of the world. It was first cultivated in India, where it's been grown for more than 6,000 years.

Cotton canvas is a natural fabric woven from cotton, and offers durability – which is essential in a parenting accessory. The team at Isoki use it for all of their products because it's a classic fabric that works well under many conditions. 'We love cotton canvas for its natural beauty and performance. It's fantastic to print on, achieving sharp definition in the fabric design concepts of choice,' they say. 'Plus the texture of the fabric expels a wonderful rustic, raw, natural appeal.'

The Isoki collection includes these portable Petite Travellers, \$39.95 each, which can carry one bottle, wipes and nappies, and have an external pocket to secure small necessities. Another wonderful product is the Reversible Hobo Bag, \$189.95, which has an adjustable strap so it's easy to carry over the shoulder, across the body or over a pram, while the metal feet protect the base from hard, wet surfaces. Visit isoki.com.au to select your styles.



WHAT A GREAT IDEA

Here's how one mum turned her child's love into a successful business

Patrice Callaghan was inspired to start up her own business when she noticed her four-year-old son Jack's love of cowboy boots. 'I realised there was a gap in the market and looked into how I could sell them in Australia,' she explains. Cowboy Jack provides a range of gorgeous leather handmade boots direct from the US for children aged from 12 months to 10 years. 'My favourites are the Fire Engine Red and the Original Distressed Tan boots – both of which are unisex,' says Patrice. To find out how you can let your little one step out in style, visit cowboyjack.com.au.

WEBSITE REVIEWS

BEBITO

Juggling a family can be very demanding, so bebito.com.au has collated an Australia-wide online service that allows parents to make contact with nannies and babysitters in their local area. Bebito provides quick and easy access for parents to find child care tailored to meet their individual needs.



I CANTOO

Created by qualified health professionals, icantoo.com.au is a fun and practical site devoted to assisting in the development of your child's life skills in play, learning and self-help. Browse their articles, search through their activity collection, or even purchase a toy or two from their educational toy shop.



COCOON PETITE LIVING

With a huge range of children's clothing, maternity wear, accessories, homewares, toys and gift ideas from the top brands, cocoonlyving.com is the site to visit. Plus it's easy to navigate and the gorgeous design makes it oh-so-welcoming. There's even a helpful sizing guide so you can choose the right garments.



NOW THAT'S A CLASSIC!

US company Kid Kustoms has created a range of prams inspired by classic automobiles for your tot. The Roddler is a new release borrowing its design cues from the glitzy grandeur of automobiles from the 1950s. Choose the style – Signature, Classic or Kustom – that suits your taste and budget. See them all at kidkustoms.com.



MY FIVE FAVOURITES

Bébé's Carey Brauer fills us in on her all-time, most-loved products

Carey Brauer is mother to Liam, aged four, and the founder of Bébé, a Melbourne-based store that offers an extensive range of toys, furniture and decor that meets the needs of today's modern parents. Here are five of Carey's favourite products for mums and bubs that are available in store or online at bebeonline.com.au.

1 LITTLE HOUSE BLANKETS These have been my favourite blankets in store for three years running. Made from merino wool, they're super soft and the colourful designs are very modern. I'm proud to say I even have one as a throw on my couch at home.

2 HUG-A-PLANET GLOBE Finally a baby and toddler toy that's not only educational and fun, but so meaningful. Liam enjoys proudly naming the countries where his grandparents and cousins live – as well as the most efficient routes to get there!

3 SVAN HIGH CHAIR This is definitely my pick for high chairs – no plastic, just timeless wooden design and the key element of longevity. It grows with the child from six months right through to six years, so they can make it their own, which is very empowering.

4 MERINO KIDS GO GO BAGS Merino is such a versatile fibre as it draws heat and sweat away from your baby in Summer and insulates them in Winter. Natural fibres are so important for those earlier months, and for peace of mind, nothing compares.

5 OFFI CHALKBOARD TABLE For parents who love form and function, a stylish, kid-size chalk table is just the treat. Made with a durable chalkboard surface and a metal bowl in the centre for chalk and eraser storage, its sturdiness and easy-to-write-on surface make it a Bébé favourite.



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