

# SUNDAY READ



Home again . . . Rudolf Ramseyer has returned to Launceston after years in the Sydney fashion industry.

Pictures: PHILLIP BIGGS

HE has designed 1000s of bikinis for national corporations and worked for Tigerlily and Dotti. Now Rudolf Ramseyer has returned home to Tasmania. The dressmaker and tailor has opened his own couture store in the Launceston's iconic Holyman House and plans to teach classes in the studio. MANIKA DADSON reports.

## Artist tailors to perfection

**F**OR a long time, Rudolf Ramseyer didn't feel comfortable with the idea of being a "fashion designer". "People who were calling themselves fashion designers at that time would pick what Paris Hilton and co were wearing in *Who Weekly* and say, I want that style in this fabric," Ramseyer said sitting in his new Launceston studio last week.

"I've worked as a pattern designer in a place like that and I thought, 'that's not design, that's range co-ordination'."

So instead of being a fashion designer, Ramseyer prefers the term fashion artist, as what he does is create one-off works of wearable art.

And he has brought his talents back home to Launceston, after living and working on the mainland for 20 years.

Ramseyer, who emigrated to Tasmania from Switzerland

when he was 14, studied fashion design at TAFE in Launceston before moving to Sydney.

He entered many competitions through his studies including the national Du Pont Lycra Award, which he won, and which introduced him to the fashion world.

"The award presentation was in Sydney at the Hilton," Ramseyer recalled.

"There were drinks and canapes after the show and I was approached by an Asian couple who had a factory in Surry Hills and they said would I like to come and have a look."

The company needed a pattern maker and so after Ramseyer finished his TAFE course, he left Launceston "with a suitcase and a sewing machine to an uncertain future".

Ramseyer worked at the Surry Hills factory designing bathers for Kmart and Big W for five years.

He also studied night courses at the Whitehouse Institute of Design.

When the Surry Hills factory was sold in 2000, Ramseyer became the quality assurance liaison at swimwear brand Tigerlily and spent his days "travelling around the suburbs visiting makers, garages and sweat shops".

"When I found out how much they were getting paid per garment I thought 'Oh my God, that is such a rip' and they're selling these for a 1000 times more," Ramseyer said.

"I was in a transition period where they were finishing off that season and then they were outsourcing all the production."

So after a different stint working for Dotti, Ramseyer decided to go out on his own.

"I started making a few garments for friends and thought, 'hey, there could be something in this'."

“he left Launceston ‘with a suitcase and a sewing machine to an uncertain future’”



"I started in one room of the house. I had a sewing machine and an ironing board and as flat mates were moving out, I'd take up more and more space in the house and eventually I had the whole house devoted to my living quarters and my business."

Making in his Sydney home was Ramseyer's life for more than a decade, but after his father died in 2013, he decided to bring his talents home.

Ramseyer moved back to Launceston in May and has just finished setting up his couture business, Rudolf Couture, in three rooms in Launceston's iconic Holyman House.

He said while he specialised in one-off designs — like creating wedding dress and suits — he also re-constructs garments and does tailoring.

Ramseyer, who is qualified VET trainer and assessor, dreams of one day having his own fashion academy in Launceston, but for now will stick with teaching sewing, tailoring, pattern drafting and advanced pattern garment construction classes.

His classes started this month.

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