

SOLOMON STREET FAQ - Lauren Crago

Who are the founders/What inspired you to start Solomon Street?

Solomon Street was founded by me in 2017 after finishing Graphic Design at Uni SA. I always had a passion for drawing so when I found that you could put drawings on fabric, it kind of all fell into place. I started out small by hand making and selling sketchbooks and cards at local markets in Adelaide but the goal was always to grow into a clothing focused business, which hero-ed ethical manufacturing and sustainable materials. On the other hand, I felt this immense calling to re-assess the direction of my life and what I really wanted to use it to accomplish. I wanted to create something that filled a gap in a market (eco fashion with bold prints) while redirecting consumerism to do good in society and help create a better world. We now use our profit to support female entrepreneurs in developing countries out of poverty through a micro-lending fund.

Where are the Solomon Street clothes made? By who?

At Solomon Street, All our garments are Australian made. We have two talented ladies who create, cut and sew our cotton and linen garments by hand in our retail/workshop space here in Adelaide. Our swim and leisure wear are made by an ethical clothing Australian accredited manufacturer. All our clothes are made using ethical processes and the environment at the forefront of our business and minds.

What kind of textiles do you use and why did you choose them?

Our current, Summer Linen range uses a cotton/linen blend of fabric. We choose to use these textiles as both cotton and linen are natural fibers that break down over time, causing little to no harm to the environment, which we love! They are also great fabrics to wear as being naturally derived fibre, the fabric is breathable and wears in beautifully. Cotton and Linen are both durable which means they will last you for seasons and years to come.

Our swim and leisure wear ranges use organic cotton jersey, and Econyl. With the exception to a plastic free business, the Econyl fabric (recycled nylon) we use is a circular economy synthetic made from old fishing nets. It is amazing quality and is rated to the same colour fastness as your standard non-recycled swim fabrics.

We have a range of Tees which are printed in Melbourne but most importantly made by hemp! Using Hemp to make fabric is super beneficial for our environment as Hemp is fast growing and uses significantly less water than other fibres, is naturally pest resistant and fast growing.

Do you do anything to reduce waste in the production of the clothing?

Sustainability is apart of our general business activity and is a huge priority for our team. We believe that even the changes that just one person or one business makes, contribute majorly to the health of our world. We are mindful during our cutting processes with how much waste we are creating and spend time making sure we maximise our fabrics. We cut each piece individually which means we can maximise the fabric use and significantly reduce offcuts. All our large offcuts are used to make our topknots, and We collect all our smaller offcuts and send them away to be recycled and broken down to be remade into fabrics.

Who would you say your main target audience is?/ who would wear your designs?

Our main target audience is conscious of the impact they leave on their world and others around them. They have a strong sense of social justice and do whatever they can to contribute positively back to society and help those less privileged than them. Solomon Street has an incredible community around us,

our customers are more friends than customers as we all share the same values and appreciate fun clothes!

When did your fashion journey start and how?

My fashion journey started only very recently. After reading the book 'Chapter One' by the brand Thankyou, the appeal of starting a business with a significant social impact drew me towards the business model of a 'social enterprise'. Working up until this point as a graphic designer, my fashion journey coincided with the beginning of Solomon Street. I have always enjoyed sewing, it has been such a fun journey of intense learning for me.

Did you train? If so, what difference did it make to your career choices?

I Studied graphic design at UniSA until 2015, with a year focused on illustration. I have always wanted to run my own business, I just wasn't sure in what area. I worked briefly as a graphic designer before deciding that it wasn't for me. Having an interest in illustration and finding textile design at the same time as learning all about social businesses culminated in the birth of Solomon Street. Even with a creative background, I've discovered that the business aspect of operations is something that comes quite easily, whereas I am glad I studied what I did as it has given me the technical and critical thinking skills required to run a creative business.

Why start a new label. What did you feel was not being addressed in the fashion industry that you could deliver?

For a long period, businesses in the fashion industry have been driven by profit without consideration for their social and environmental impacts. We exist for a purpose. We are an eco-fashion label making bold prints with a difference. Being a sustainable and ethical business means we are conscious of things such as which fabrics we use in our garments and who we choose to manufacture our line. As for the social aspect we are providing funds for a microlending scheme that gives financial assistance to small businesses and causes in developing countries. Solomon Street is really just a facilitator of change, we also conveniently make cool clothes.

"Solomon Street" is a cool name. Where does it come from?

The namesake of Solomon Street is a cool little row of drinkeries in the Adelaide CBD, where I was working as the Solomon Street journey started. I was surrounded by such a beautiful group of people who lived with such a stance of love and compassion which was such an obvious but revolutionary idea for me as a 22 year old. I thought 'this. I need to create something that spreads this (love and compassion) all over the world.'

Ethos behind the brand?

Our motto is 'Clothes with Impact'. They have impact through the original and vibrant prints that I create, but also create impact with our microlending scheme; the same dollar helps an infinite number of people. So far we have supported 17 women who have businesses in various industries. We want to level the playing field by creating a perpetual fund and a new economic and social model for socially minded communities.

Who is the ideal Solomon Street client?

Our customers are conscious of the impact they leave on their world and others around them. They have a strong sense of social justice and do whatever they can to contribute positively back to society and help those less privileged than them. Solomon Street has an incredible community around us, our customers are more friends than customers as we all share the same values and appreciate fun clothes!

Biggest market so far?

Our biggest market to date was Finders Keepers in Melbourne at the end of last year. Leading into the summer, Finders Keepers was a great launch point for the current summer linen range, and there was some serious restocking of our bathers! I have found that the people of Melbourne are very receptive of the prints, and even more so our sustainability and social focus!

How do people find out about your label? Word of mouth? On line? Brick-and-Mortar?

Most of our interstate customers find out about Solomon Street through social media. In Adelaide, it has generally been through word of mouth. I've heard from numerous people at markets say that they heard about Solomon Street through a friend or a post shared through social media.

What's the single most important thing people should know about your label.

Clothes that help people. Helping the wearer of our garments look and feel good, and also helping those who need a little extra support.