

Interview with the rising star of British Millinery Keely Hunter

Description

I met Keely Hunter through a mutual friend going by the name of Mr Hat. A dear friend of mine, and my former lecturer who is now head of Art and Design at the University of Bedfordshire was looking for a consultant from theâ?? millinery industry to help him set up a new course structure and pick out the right equipment for the university, so I called upon Mr Hat who in turn summoned the wonderful Keely Hunter to the table. Bright, graceful, poised and to the pointâ?? were the first impressions of this young and head strong millinery British Designer. I knew nothing about her work, but I was instantly taken by her confidence and charm. Her hats are a mix of elegance, quirkiness and style- really pushing the boundaries of predictable shapes and materials of the headwear world. No wonder that she appeals to a huge range of clients from the East London street kids to celebrities and the poshâ?? ladies of the Royal Ascot.

Influenced by architecture and engineering Keely Hunter explores conceptual design and couture techniques which she manifests into innovative millinery on one side of the spectrum, right through to exciting new take on recognisable styles with a twist for ready to wear. Trained at Central Saint Martins and Kensington & Chelsea College, Keely worked under various couture milliners and accessories designer Fred Butler before establishing her own label. Her work has been featured in a number of high end

publications such as Vogue, Marie Claire, Tatler, Harperâ??s Bazaar amongst others.



TATLER HONG KONG Keely Hunter Double Disk Percher/ Styled by Santa Bevacqua

MK:â?? Who is Keely Hunter?
KH: Keely Hunter is a milliner inspired by architecture and engineering with a passion for using innovative materials and techniques.

MK:â?? What is it about hats that drives your passion? Tell us a little about your story on how you started in millinery.
KH: I see hats as a kind of wearable sculpture and Iâ??m driven by taking the creative freedom you find in that medium and applying it to millinery. My

interest in hats probably stems back from my childhood. My mother was a hairdresser and I was always interested in dressing the head.

MK: What has been the highlight of your career?
KH: Being invited by Stephen Jones and the British Fashion Council to show at London Fashion Week as part of the Headonism initiative and being the first milliner ever chosen as a Selfridgeâ??s Bright Young Thing, the storeâ??s annual show-case for up and coming young designers.



Photography The Photo Emporium/ Selfridges/ Bright Young Things 2013

MK: What important lessons would you advise someone who is thinking of staring out their own business within the fashion industry?
KH: You need to be ready to work hard. Iâ??m never not thinking about my business and itâ??s something you have to prepared for.

MK: What do you love most about your job?
KH: The creativity. Having the opportunity come up with new ways to create modern yet accessible headwear is something I never tire of.









AW/ 14 Keely Hunter THERMAL BRIDGE Photography Benjamin Madgwick/ Stylist Daisy Newman/ Hair Tori Hutchinson/ MUA Francesca Brazzo

MK: What has been most challenging?
KH: Never having a day off. Itâ??s important to find time to recharge and thatâ??s not always easy to do when running your own company.

MK: How has technology altered the way milliners work today? Talk us through the journey from idea to finished hat.
KH: Everything starts with sketching and mood boarding. I still keep physical mood boards but Iâ??ve been finding Pinterest increasingly useful simply because of the amount I can store on a board. The tech part comes in when I want to realise a sketch into an actual piece. A lot of my stuff often requires some planning and design and the materials I use canâ??t always be cut by hand, so once I have a piece in mind I want to make, I then do a lot of work with programs like Adobe Illustrator.



de Magalhaes

MK: How do you choose the materials you work with? How important are natural materials to you personally?
KH: Iâ??m driven by a desire to innovate with my choice of materials so Iâ??ll use everything from new man-made materials, including perspex, foams and rubbers, and then mix them with more traditional and natural materials like felts, structured knits and even wood.








AW/15 Keely Hunter A FOURTH WORLD

MK: Tell us a little bit about your working environment. Do you have your own studio? Do you share with other creatives? How important is it to you to be part of a team?
KH: I mostly work on my own at the moment in a home studio but I bring in help when I need it, especially in the run up to fashion week.

MK: Do you have a mentor who guides you? How important is apprenticeship in millinery?
KH: I wonâ??t be where I am today without having had some incredible teachers and mentors along the way. I worked for couture as well as fashion milliners and I assisted accessories designer Fred Butler for a few years. And obviously the support from Stephen Jones and the BFC I currently get as part of Headonism.

MK: What does success mean to you?
KH: For Keely Hunter Millinery to keep pushing the idea of what British Millinery can offer internationally.

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Date Created
May 9, 2015
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