

Case study number: 11/2011

Project Title: Student Design Project

TDL Partner: Charles Parsons Ltd

Contact: Meg Sinclair

Website: www.charlesparsons.com/fashion

Project Period: June 2011 – November 2011

Partner Profile: Charles Parsons is a leading New Zealand textile company that specialises in developing their own designs, sourcing, manufacturing and supplying a wide range of fabric choices. They supply New Zealand and international businesses from boutique fashion designers through to a variety of industrial and manufacturing mass producers. Established in 1915, Charles Parsons has some 100 employees across New Zealand and Australia as well as representatives in other countries. The company is represented on the Fashion Industry New Zealand (FINZ) board and takes an active role in the New Zealand fabric and fashion industries.

Project background: Charles Parsons has a long standing relationship with AUT and the Textile and Design Lab. The idea for this project began when Charles Parsons' designer Meg Sinclair attended a TDL short design course in Photoshop Design for Textiles. While there, Meg observed the AUT textiles and fashion students' design work and realised the potential for their input for a 2012 summer collection of digital prints. With AUT co-operation, Meg developed a project to commercialise selected designs from AUT textile design students for a Charles Parsons range. Meg supplemented the student designs with her own work to make a more comprehensive range. From the students' designs, Meg expected to buy about twenty, which she deemed suitable for her clientele. These designs would form part of a Charles Parsons range and would be offered to clients in New Zealand and internationally.

Project Description: Senior lecturer in textile design, Angela Fraser, developed a brief with Meg for the AUT textile design students. The designs had to meet high standards and be suitable for a new 2012 summer print collection for Charles Parsons. Students therefore needed to consider the prevailing fashion market trends. The students were to produce three or four digitally printed fabric samples and present them professionally on fabric hangers. The sample prints were produced with high quality digital printing using the TDL's Shima Seiki SIP 160F digital printer.

Project Methodology: Meg Sinclair approached AUT lecturer Angela Fraser with a proposal to work together. The project would give students industry experience, with the potential of a financial reward if their designs were selected and sold on to their clients. Charles Parsons would gain fresh designs on high quality digitally printed fabric and help to raise the profile of the young upcoming textile designers.

Angela and Meg developed a brief for second year textile design students, which Angela streamlined and adapted her 'live' digital print curriculum to include the project. Meg visited classes regularly to talk about industry standards, meeting fashion and textile trends, and to see the students work as it progressed. Meg also brought various textile designs that Charles Parsons had purchased recently to show the students what the market was currently selling. She also explained why they purchased these designs.

Angela and her students developed a professional presentation method and discussed the trends that they thought would be

suitable for Charles Parsons. They called the collection "Defined Print". Angela taught the students digital image manipulation and ways to evaluate which images would have successful outcomes when digitally printed. The students also learnt how to map their design onto a virtual body to provide an indication of what the design would look like on a garment.

The TDL produced over ninety sample prints, which the students then prepared for the presentation to Charles Parsons. This was attended by Meg Sinclair and one of her colleagues from their Fashion Fabrics Division. After the presentation Meg and her colleague chose over 40 of the students' designs to include in their collection for sale to industry. A student will receive approximately \$400 for each design that is sold.

Feedback: Angela and Meg were impressed with the quality and number of designs the students produced. Students gave good feedback about the project, appreciating the experience and the chance to earn some money for their designs. Meg commented, 'The students' art works were highly skilled, they performed well and their work was professionally presented. I was very impressed that students' art works were as good as those offered by commercial studios'. Students presented their work on digitally printed fabric with visualised images that will help Charles Parson's clients to understand how each would appear in a finished product. 'Feedback thus far is really positive', she added.

Charles Parsons' management and sales team were very happy with the quality of the work and they are considering further projects in conjunction with the AUT and the TDL. Meg suggested that future projects might be instigated a little earlier in the year as once the samples have been produced, there is still a lot of work required in getting them commercially printed and ready for the season's production schedule.

Insights: Meg noted that digital printing is understandably more expensive in New Zealand than from their Asian sources. However, the reciprocal relationship Charles Parsons have with AUT is of great value to both organisations.

Outcome: Meg thinks it will be positive for Charles Parsons to continue working with AUT students and the TDL. She indicated that a key outcome of this project for Charles Parsons is that they discovered a huge potential benefit to be connected with the TDL. They can produce original printed art works designed by AUT students instantly, which benefit her company, AUT and the students.

Conclusion: While the TDL has built a strong profile supporting print design development and sampling with industry and also working with students, this project was significant in bringing these two groups together in a way that supported and profiled AUT students' work and assisted a New Zealand company in developing innovative local product. In 2006, when the TDL invested in digital textile printing technology, the main aim was to develop greater capability and value for New Zealand industry and education. While AUT graduates have gone out to work in industry and subsequently introduced companies to the design potential and advantages of the digital print and knit technologies available at the TDL, the Charles Parsons Student Design Project has linked AUT textile students with a leading New Zealand fabric supply company and given their original digital textile designs and skills an international showcase.