

BEN MCCUAIG

DESIGN (STYLING & CREATIVE DIRECTION), WHITEHOUSE INSTITUTE OF DESIGN

Senior School Subjects

- Year 11: English, General Mathematics, Visual Communication Design, Sociology, Religion, Media Units 3+4 Early Advancement.
- Year 12: English, Further Mathematics, Visual Communication Design, Sociology, Studio Arts.

Why did you choose these subjects? My main motivation for choosing these subjects was because I enjoyed studying art. Every single subject I did was scaled down, but for me I knew I would only do well doing these subjects as I was passionate about them. Also, in Year 11 I worked out which university I wanted to go to; the degree I was interested in didn't require a specific ATAR score, applicants were selected through an interview and portfolio. Doing three Year 12 art subjects meant I had prepared a great body of work to get into the course.

What resources did you use to choose subjects? I asked a lot of older friends interested in creative subjects and those I knew who had done the subjects I was thinking about. Also doing a Year 12 subject in Year 11 allowed me to develop relationships with older students and learn about the subjects they were doing, and also make closer relationships with the arts staff.

What was your course like? My course was very broad. It covered both written and practical components. My theory subjects were business, design in historical contexts, and IT. These classes were invaluable, especially business, as I learnt a lot about how design companies operate. It also covered Visual Merchandising, Interior Design, Fashion Design, Event Design and Photography (which I loved), with a lot of group work, practical classes and creating industry contacts.

What were some of the best parts of your course? As a collective, our year produced our own runway event for charity with over 200 guests, celebrity hosts, models and photographers. This was something I found particularly rewarding- working with a large team, learning about what goes into producing an event on this scale, booking models, catering, staging etc. This particular component was my favourite part of the course, and without knowing it, pushed me to realise interests in an area of design and production I didn't previously know I had. On top of this, we had lectures with different industry professionals on a regular basis, learning about different areas, gaining contacts and information from people I would never had access to otherwise. Our teachers were also very knowledgeable, with one of my teachers having previously worked for Vogue Italia and another for Vivienne Westwood.

How did your senior school subjects prepare you for your course? They gave me the confidence in my design abilities. I knew what I liked, what I didn't, and what my design strengths and weaknesses were.

What are you doing now in your graduate position? My full time position is currently working for the Head Office of an Australian mens luxury suiting brand called Rhodes & Beckett. I really enjoy the work and it's definitely an area I can progress in. I also am contracted by an event company called AMMEvents, where I manage runway events. I started with this company in Melbourne as an unpaid volunteer three years ago whilst I was at university and now I have worked my way up to the position of event manager. A few shows I have managed so far are Hugo Boss Menswear Runway, Chadstone Shopping Centre Spring Runway Show and a style workshop with Olivia Palermo. One thing I've learnt in the design industry is you are never too good for any job. Starting off as a volunteer is a must, and the only way to get anywhere is to prove yourself.

What do you enjoy about your job? Event work is a great way to meet people, be interactive and still be surrounded by designers and those in the industry. I personally love organisation and working with people, so it allows me to still fulfill my design interests whilst being involved in hands-on and interactive environments.

Course information: Bachelor of Design (Creative Direction and Styling), Whitehouse Institute of Design, <http://bit.ly/1WrZEOT>