

Q&A



Karen Radley

New womenswear show Scoop made its debut at London's Saatchi Gallery in February this year with an impressive line-up of bridge and premium collections and arguably the chicest exhibition environment of the season. Nick Cook catches up with the show's founder Karen Radley to talk about her move from exhibitor to organiser, and to find out more about this season's event.

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Nick Cook: How would you describe the concept of Scoop, and how does it differ from other UK shows?

Karen Radley: The womenswear shows we have in the UK clearly serve their purpose, but none of them tap into what I would describe as the upper end of the contemporary womenswear market. I'm not talking about catwalk brands, which don't take part in exhibitions, but about second lines, bridge collections and the smaller niche designers who don't necessarily have representation in the UK. Scoop is very much about creating an environment that reflects the ethos of these brands, and a show where labels don't have to fight for attention alongside labels from other market sectors. Some of the most interesting international shows such as Tranoi in Paris, White in Milan and Coterie in New York already operate at this level, and it seemed strange that London, one of the true international fashion capitals, didn't have its own event.

NC: What inspired you to make the transition from selling womenswear to organising a womenswear exhibition?

KR: I've always loved exhibitions. My father was the founder of dress label Radley, and went on to buy Quorum, the company behind the likes of Ossie Clark and Alice Pollock, so I grew up in the fashion industry and love the buzz and excitement of trade shows. I took part in my very first show in Copenhagen during what was supposed to be a year out before going to university but, like so many, I got bitten by the bug and never looked back. Each season I'd be travelling to Dusseldorf, Munich, Paris and New York where, as well as the main shows, there were always niche events taking place in hotels and alternative venues which, for the type of design-led collections we were selling, were often the most interesting. Many years later, after taking a break from fashion, I came back into the industry as an agent, and it was around this time that I started to realise that there simply wasn't an event in London that catered for the area of the market in which the brands I was working with operate. That's when the idea for Scoop started to take shape. I had a



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conversation about the concept with a friend who works in the exhibitions industry, and he suggested I consider launching the show myself.

NC: What was the reaction to the initial concept?

KR: We had a great response right from the start, and it was clear that a large number of brands and suppliers had been having the same thoughts as me. It also seemed that the timing was right for the launch of a new show for this area of the market. There's been so much talk over the last few years about retailers trading up in terms of the kind of labels they're stocking, and seeking out brands that will differentiate them from the middle market and the high street in terms of design, quality and price. At the same time, not every store can become a designer womenswear store, so the area that we're covering is of huge interest right now. I hear so many retailers saying they're looking for "something new and different" that it's almost become a cliché, but we hear it so often because it's something that's so difficult to find. With Scoop, we want to create a showcase for both international names and new designers, where visitors are guaranteed to see something they haven't seen elsewhere. Retailers don't necessarily have the budget to scour the international shows for new names, but they love the idea of being able to see them in a focused environment in London.

NC: The first edition of Scoop took place in February this year. How was it received?

KR: The response was fantastic, with both exhibitors and visitors feeling that the show had come at exactly the right time. Because so many brands immediately understood the concept, we were fortunate to have a very strong line-up, with the likes of Betty Jackson Two, Marella, i-Blues, Sara Berman and American Retro showing with us in February, and brands such as The West Village, Petrovitch & Robinson, Ruth Tarvydas and Plein Sud Jeanius. This in turn brought in a high quality of buyer from both the independent sector and the major stores, including Harvey Nichols, Selfridges, Liberty, Harrods and Fenwick. Everyone I spoke to said they'd found something new at the show. And everyone loved the venue of the Saatchi Gallery, which seemed to add its own dimension to the whole experience.

NC: What are the plans for the second show in August?

KR: The venue and overall feel of the show were so well received that we're not looking at making any major changes there, but we will be opening up additional space and adding new names. Brands showing with us for the first time in August include Transit, Just In Case, Magdalena, Lie Down I think I Love You and Candice Cooper, which are very much in line with the concept of offering international names alongside smaller niche lines. Given that February was our first event, we're also keen to increase the number of visitors for August and, as well as an extended brand list, we'll be adding new events for buyers. An English tea party will be held from 3.30pm on the opening Sunday, and a cocktail party will kick off at the close of the show on the second day. Both events are open to all visitors and exhibitors.

NC: How would you like to see Scoop develop in the future?

KR: The whole concept of Scoop is that it's clear and focused in terms of the area of the market it represents, so we're far more interested in having the right brands and attracting the right retailers than we are in doubling the size of the show every season. In terms of labels, I think there are certain areas of the market that are particularly interesting to UK retailers right now, so going forward I'd love to see more labels from the US, for example, taking part in the show. We're also looking to develop the show as an international showcase for new British labels. We had some great young British labels in February and more coming on board for August, and they're a very important part of the show's identity. |

INFORMATION

- The next edition of Scoop takes place at London's Saatchi Gallery on 7-9 August
- The debut event in February this year featured around 75 womenswear and accessories collections, including a number of brands showing for the first time in the UK
- Located on the Kings Road in the heart of Chelsea The Saatchi Gallery is one of the UK's best known art venues and a key launch pad for new talent
- The majority of artworks remain within the gallery during Scoop, creating what organisers describe as a unique environment "where fashion meets art"
- Buyers can find out more about the August event and register to visit the show at www.scoop-international.com