



The inaugural 1975 Newton-John Award recipient the Hon. Allan Morris presented the 2012 Newton-John Award to Linda Bergskas.

2012 NEWTON-JOHN AWARD RECIPIENT

LINDA BERGSKAS

Director and CEO Guanabana Designs

Bachelor of Visual Communication Design 2002

Faculty of Science and Information Technology

Ms Linda Bergskas is the Norwegian-born designer and businesswoman behind rising fashion label Guanabana Designs, which debuted at Australian Fashion Week in 2010.

Linda's unique style is heavily influenced by her affinity with animals, nature and exotic cultures. She is a gifted artist and a trained graphic designer, who turned her creative attentions to fashion in 2003.

Using her own artworks as inspiration, Linda creates unique pieces defined by their detail, use of colour and graphic prints. Influences of time spent in exotic locations are captured in her collections.

Since Linda's first selling trip in 2007, Guanabana has gone global. Guanabana now produces four collections each year and is stocked in more than 100 stores in Australia, Japan, the US and Norway. Excelling in a fiercely contested market, the label has featured in 41 magazines and other publications worldwide and is worn by numerous high-profile celebrities, including tennis great Serena Williams and local novocastrian and former Miss Universe Jennifer Hawkins.

FROM NEWCASTLE TO THE WORLD

By Linda Bergskas

Twelve years ago, Linda arrived at Sydney Airport, a confused Norwegian from a small village – a stranger in a strange land – about to discover that “they’re a weird mob”. Her story is one of overcoming challenges and making a life in Australia.

At the airport, I walked into a kiosk to buy a bottle of water, and after pouring the dollars I had onto the counter for the shop assistant to pick what he needed, he said as I left “see you later”. Not realising it was a friendly saying, I responded by saying “NO!”.

Then, looking around confused wondering about how to get to Newcastle, a stranger offered to carry my luggage.

I did not understand what the stranger was saying so I shooed him away thinking he was trying to steal my suitcase.

Many more misunderstandings followed, however, it did not take me many more days to realise that Australians were just very friendly and that I wanted to make it my home. I could see opportunities here that I would not have had at home.

After battling through Uni, I struggled to find work as my English was still a hindrance,

so I decided to create my own job. Being a fashion designer had always been a big dream, but I never thought it would be a realistic way to make a living.

Being young, free-spirited and willing to take a risk, I started up my own retail store sewing some of my own products. Two years later I set up a factory in Bali, followed by a wholesale and distribution centre in Australia with in-house reps supplying my brand to fashion stores nationwide and internationally.

It has been a combination of very hard work, a lot of fun, lots of travel, amazing experiences and life lessons that have shaped me to become a far more capable person that I ever thought I could be.

My business has changed from being a hobby that provided a bit of money to a serious business. My biggest challenge is that as the business grows, the pressure grows, the financial responsibilities grow and the creative mind gets challenged. Now, my focus is to find a way to allow myself more creative time but, most importantly, finding the balance between work and family as I recently became a mum.



Linda with her husband Surian and baby Sol in Bali, where her label's manufacturing operations are located.



Victoria Secret model Shanina Shaik carrying an albino snake at Guanabana's Fashion Week show.

Guanabana
designs