

# The Economist

Education, education, education

PAGES 13 AND 27

Hedge-fund investors, watch out

PAGES 11 AND 73-75

Species of anti-Americanism

PAGES 23-25 AND 51

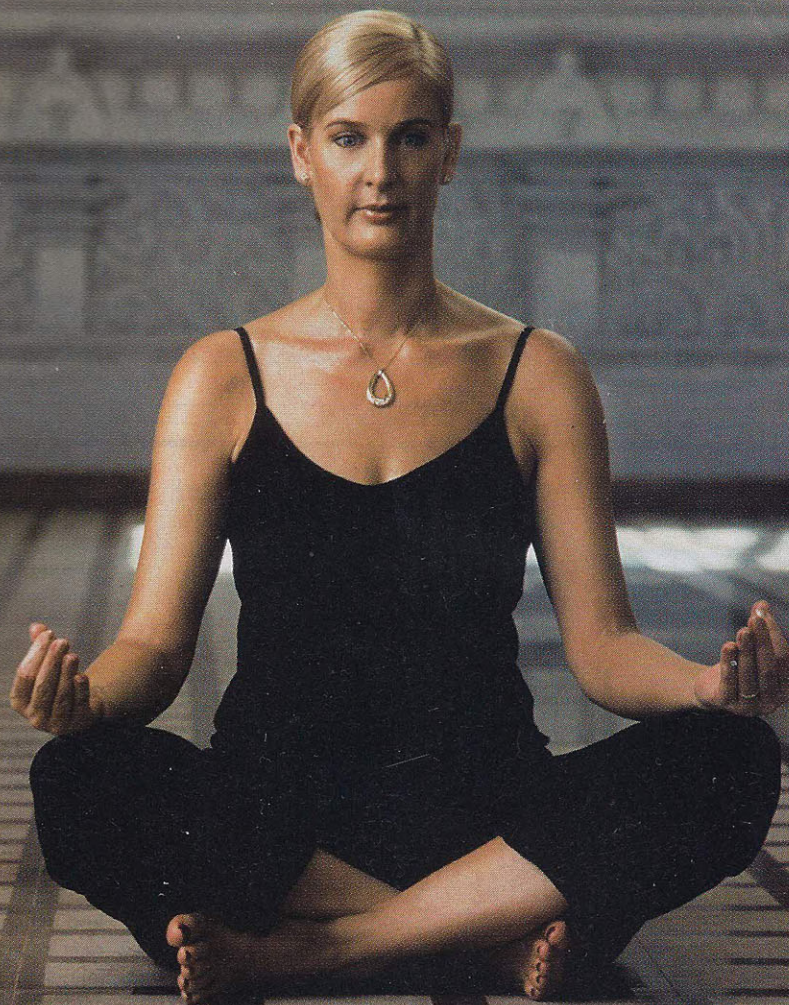
**A SURVEY OF NEW YORK**

AFTER PAGE 56

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**“Position yourself  
for success in  
Singapore.”**



Lucy Pollock's clothing line for stylish kids, Lucie+Oscar, has won the hearts of consumers in Asia. This mother of one has turned child's play into a high-profit business with her chic European-inspired designs.

"I've worked all over Asia, but it is only in Singapore that I've found the ideal environment to juggle my personal and professional life with ease."

Pollock, a graduate of the prestigious Central Saint Martins, started her career with Parisian haute couturier, Christian Lacroix. The next fifteen years saw her jetsetting around Asia as a fashion design consultant, with a client base that included UK retail giant Next. The experience has paid off. Lucie+Oscar is now sold in six countries in Asia. All these in just six years.

The secret of the label's success? Great designs at affordable prices. Pollock and her business partner Fiona Henderson have established a solid base in the island republic while manufacturing from cost-effective regional locations. They see Singapore as a springboard to the world. The perfect launch pad to spread their wings and break into the promising new markets around the world.

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# FABRIC

Lucie + Oscar owner and designer Lucy Pollock's love for fabrics and textures is evident in her colour-rich home

# Fanatic

for putting fabric and texture together and making it work."

Just as her work involves working with fabric, Lucy's home also bears testimony to her hobby of collecting material.

**S**avvy mums would have heard of the Lucie + Oscar brand of children's wear. Tucked away in a corner boutique at Level 3, Raffles City Shopping Centre, this line of locally-designed quality clothing for kids has been such a hit with mothers that it's expanding quickly into the region as well.

Currently, Lucie + Oscar has a second outlet at Forum The Shopping Mall, and also retails in-store at Takashimaya and Robinsons. The brand is now also available in Hong Kong and three other outlets have opened in Malaysia this year.

Behind the business is Lucy Pollock, co-owner and designer. Lucy holds a Masters degree in fashion design from Central St Martins, London. It was her love for fabrics, and her frustration when she could not find the right clothes here for her son Oscar, who was born and raised in Southeast Asia, that drove her to the idea of starting Lucie + Oscar in 1999.

"The beautiful clothes I found were either too highly priced or just not practical for the humid Asian weather," she sighs. "So I saw an opportunity to produce children's clothes with a design edge, yet with a mass market appeal.

"I have been interested in fabrics since I was young," the attractive 38-year-old continues enthusiastically. "My mother tells me that when I was younger, I actually turned one of her tablecloths into a skirt and went out in it 10 minutes later! I guess I have always had a knack

## Textured Interiors

Lucy moved into her East Coast home several years ago with her husband Roger, and son Oscar, who's now six-and-a-half years old. The tall French windows that open out to her garden are dressed with sheer curtains to let the sunlight flood in, while framed pieces of fabric and scarves adorn the walls. Lucy is also very proud of





her large sofas, which she upholstered in lovely antique fabric.

"Fabrics give a home texture and character," she says. "I like the way my Barcelona armchair, which is upholstered in leather, sits well with the lime green sofa to create an eclectic but modern feel."

When Lucy entertains at home, she tries to keep the mood natural. Her dining room opens out to a patio overhung with lush

greenery and filled with flowering plants. It also features a wrought-iron dining set upholstered in a unique silk fabric.

"Quality fabrics really give you value for money because they are made of better weaves and last longer," she says. "My dining chairs were upholstered in 1999 and they still look brand new."

The semi-vegetarian also makes an effort to maintain a healthy lifestyle. "I try to keep

**Lucy (centre) and her partner, Fiona Henderson (right), chat with friend Kimlan Cook in Lucy's eclectic dining room. Opposite page, from top The spiral stairway greets visitors when they enter the light-filled home; sheer drapes, rich carpets and cushions of various textures make Lucy's bedroom a comforting haven.**

my skin clean, exercise and eat healthily," Lucy says, adding that she tries to eat plenty of vegetables, plus seafood and her favourite local dishes like *popiah* and *tauhu telur*.

Although work is important to Lucy, she's dedicated to her role as a mother too. "As parents, we're responsible for bringing up a decent social being," she says. She's glad that she can work from home as she gets to spend more time with Oscar.

Besides working together with him – "he reads or draws while I sit at the drawing board" – she also supervises her son's TV-watching time. "Children shouldn't be fed information from the tube," she says firmly. "If you don't nurture their capacity to be creative, it will never happen. Oscar likes music, he also draws a lot and he enjoys fantasy playing."

As the head of United International Pictures' regional office, Lucy's husband, Roger, travels often. "I have to travel quite often myself, but Roger and I make sure that one of us is at home with Oscar," she says. "We've explained to him that we have to travel in our work, so he understands. But we make it a point to be with him on his important days, such as birthdays and the school sports day."

### Mummy Mafia

Lucy began retailing her first range of kids' wear, affordably priced

from \$16, on the internet. Within a year, they received such overwhelming response from mothers that Lucy and her partner, Fiona Henderson, opened a store. "Fiona and I call it the 'mummy mafia'," she laughs.



Clockwise from top  
Chairs upholstered in different fabrics give the breakfast room a modern feel; Korean chests lend an Asian touch; many of Lucy's framed pictures feature fabrics; some of the many family photos displayed.

"We didn't realise the power of word-of-mouth until then. We didn't even advertise, but obviously, we hit the right market niche!"

The brand now features four to six

collections a year. And by year end, Lucy plans to roll out a line for girls aged between 10 and 16 years. "Our website is doing very well, and we are setting up links with Japan too. We are also looking into franchising our Shanghai and KL stores. Our aim is to market Lucie + Oscar as a global business brand."

Lucy's designs are always tested on kids first. "They know best whether a certain item is comfortable," she reveals. "All our clothes are machine-washable – it makes no sense to dry-clean your children's clothes as this is both expensive and time consuming."

It's clear that Lucy loves her house and is committed to her work. "I feel that everything in my life has led to this. I am just so lucky to be doing something that I really love!"

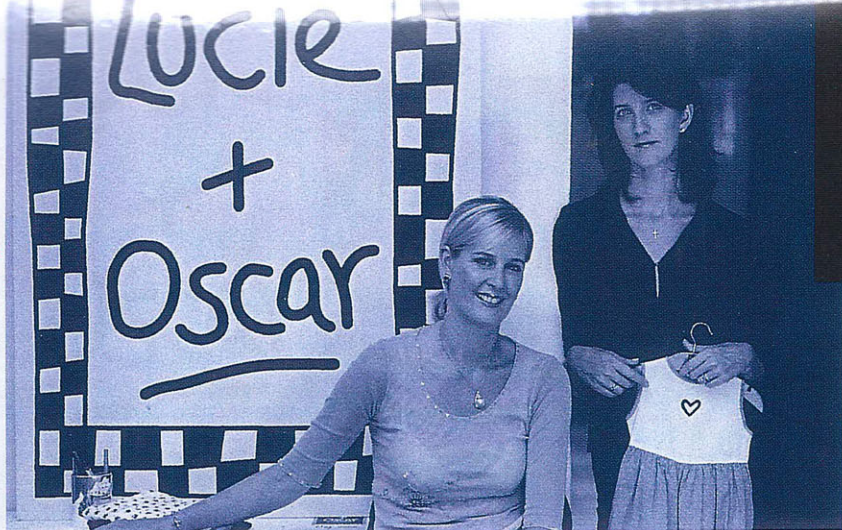


## Buying KIDS' CLOTHES

Children grow out of their clothes so fast, it's worth knowing what to look out for when buying for them. Here, Lucy gives her tips:

- ★ **NATURAL FIBRES** Some kids can get rashes from reaction to synthetic fibres like nylon, so choose natural fibres for comfort.
- ★ **PRACTICALITY** Pick machine-washable clothes – dry-cleaning is both expensive and time consuming.
- ★ **MULTI-FIT** Stretch fabric and items with elasticised waistbands give value for money.
- ★ **MIX AND MATCH** With clothes that are easily mixed and matched, kids get a freedom of choice and get to be creative with their dressing.
- ★ **UV PROTECTION** Kids have delicate skin, so UV-protective fabrics are important especially with swimwear. Fabrics with SPF 50 are used in Lucie + Oscar's swimwear.
- ★ **DESIGN DETAILS** Things like a well-placed ribbon, a nicely-trimmed hem or a pretty collar are all little design details that give an outfit a special touch.

**Lucie + Oscar offers fresh, chic affordable children's wear and has arrived in Malaysia! Partners Fiona Henderson and Lucy Pollock chat to Michelle Jones and reflect on how their vision became a reality.**



**i**

P E R S O N A L I T Y

## New in Malaysia and *dressed for success*

**T**he inspiration for Lucie + Oscar came from Lucy Pollock's desire to clothe her son Oscar, now six years old, in the modern "French" style that she loved. She was unable to find stylish children's clothing made from high quality fabrics within an affordable price range. Using her 20 years of experience in the fashion industry Lucy created a sample range and showed it to Fiona Henderson, who had been facing the same difficulties with her daughters Holly and Mimi, now aged seven and five respectively. Fiona has a strong background in managing small businesses and immediately recognised the value and potential in Lucy's idea. After thorough research a business plan was devised and Lucie + Oscar, reasonably priced designer wear for children from 0-8 years, was born!

"Starting a business is hard work," Fiona explains, "but a strong business plan is the best start as you can focus on your goals and not become side-tracked. Any business venture should be fully researched and you should try to do something you are familiar with, it should always interest you. We've put our hearts and souls into Lucie + Oscar for three years now and by sticking to our business plan we've managed to turn a vision into a profitable business. We're on track with nine retail outlets planned by July this year and a total of 14 will exist in Asia by December 2003."

The clothes are simple yet modern, using largely 100% cottons which make them comfortable to wear and easy to look after. "Our emphasis is on design details and quality fabrics" says Lucy. Currently Lucie + Oscar is available in Metrojaya and Isetan, as well as Hong Kong and Singapore. These plans are in line with the company's major objective to develop an identifiable global brand. And while they're concentrating on the South East Asian market at present, plans are in place to offer licenses/franchises to Australia, the US and South America. Europe is on the cards for 2005.

Four collections are produced each year, the latest released just this month, but Lucy's goal is to develop a total of six collections annually. "Some children's wardrobes are completely Lucie + Oscar. As many mother's know, leaving your children to dress themselves is often a disaster, but with our range, which is all coordinated, children can be left to dress themselves. Freedom of choice is important to a lot of children and means getting them ready for their day is an easier task. There's also a plan to release a teenwear line in the near future, which has kept me busy."

Lucy and Fiona recall how frustrating it was to search for appropriate children's swimwear. Often they'd return with a dreaded black suit featuring pink fluorescent stripes! As a result swimwear is a popular section of the range and features fashionable pieces in light colours that also include UV protection. All of the fabrics used for clothing and swimwear have been tested by Oscar, Holly and Mimi to ensure they are comfortable and easy to move around in.

Being mothers, the duo understands the high cost of clothing rapidly growing children and suggests that if you buy quality it certainly will last. Also, by layering children's clothing and using a base wardrobe of separates including overalls, dresses, pants and tops you can then mix and match. Oscar, Holly and Mimi are all growing up with the business and have active roles; Oscar is extremely proud of his Mum and frequently offers input, Holly is interested in fashion design - often submitting sketches to Lucy for approval! And Mimi has shown an interest in photography obviously inherited from her mother. Fiona has been able to express her love for photography by taking the colourful images shown in their catalogues. After a frustrating shoot with a professional photographer, Lucy spied some gorgeous photographs of Holly and Mimi in Fiona's home and they both realised that those images were exactly what they wanted. The photo shoots have now become a fun family excursion rather than a chore.

Lucy and Fiona have a tight knit team that includes a "fantastic" Operations Manager as well as a creative Web Master who oversees the huge amount of business won through their website. In fact, mail order and online buying ([www.lucie-oscar.com](http://www.lucie-oscar.com)) helped Lucie + Oscar break into the international market and is still extremely popular. Another marketing tool has been mothers themselves. "Through 'Mummy Mafia', word of mouth has become our best advertisement!" Lucy explains.

While their business is all consuming both Lucy and Fiona agree that they love what they do and "working" isn't necessarily an accurate description. With a common vision and firm goals they're looking forward to the future and dedicating themselves totally to the business which, as Lucy explains, has given them so much in return. "The first time we saw a child dressed in Lucie + Oscar was very exciting. From then on the potential of the brand was realised and we've never looked back."

# the balancing act

Who says you can't mix business and motherhood? Lucy Pollock and Fiona Henderson, the two mums behind designer kidswear shop, Lucie + Oscar, are living proof that it may be a balancing act but it's well within the realm of possibility.

**j**uggling a full-time business and motherhood is not easy but if you're prepared to put in the hours, it can be done, say Lucy Pollock and Fiona Henderson, partners of the childrenswear company, Lucie + Oscar.

Says Lucy: "Parenthood is such a conflict. It's a wonderful mixture of all the things you aspired to – your beautiful baby, your career, your husband, your own interests – without the time or quite often the energy to do any of them properly.

"Having a child definitely changes your outlook and your priorities, which is why the ideal for so many career Mums is flexibility of time."

"For former working Mums who choose to stay at home, the joy of parenthood may come with a huge loss of self-confidence and the loss of their own income can also be incredibly frustrating. Hormonal upheavals and sleep deprivation can certainly dull the brain."

"But thankfully, having your own business and working within your own time frame allow you to get back into the work mode."

When Lucy and Fiona started Lucie + Oscar, they had both come to this conclusion but from different angles.

Lucy had just finished a two-year contract running the fashion department in Lasalle-SIA College of the Arts and wanted more time with her young son, Oscar. Fiona, a freelance writer, wanted to return to using her financial experience, but also wanted to be around for her



daughters. From a casual chat, both women realised that most of their children's clothes were bought on trips abroad, and yet the majority of these clothes were being manufactured in Asia!

They found that the modern European-style clothes they liked were very hard to find here at reasonable prices. With Lucy's expertise in fashion and Fiona's experience in running the financial side of companies, they decided to start their own label.

The hallmark of Lucie + Oscar is well-thought-out, well-made everyday children's clothing in 100% cotton. All the fabrics – tactile, child-safe and easy to wash and maintain – cater to children.

The swimwear designs are modern and fun but also tested for sun-protection and carry a UV rating. But most importantly, as consumers themselves, Fiona and Lucy have ensured that the prices are very reasonable, ranging from \$20 to \$50.

Two and a half years down the line, they now have two retail outlets – in Forum the Shopping Mall and Raffles City, with a third in the pipeline. They also sell through mail order and the Web ([www.lucie-oscar.com](http://www.lucie-oscar.com)) and have begun wholesaling around the region and Australia.

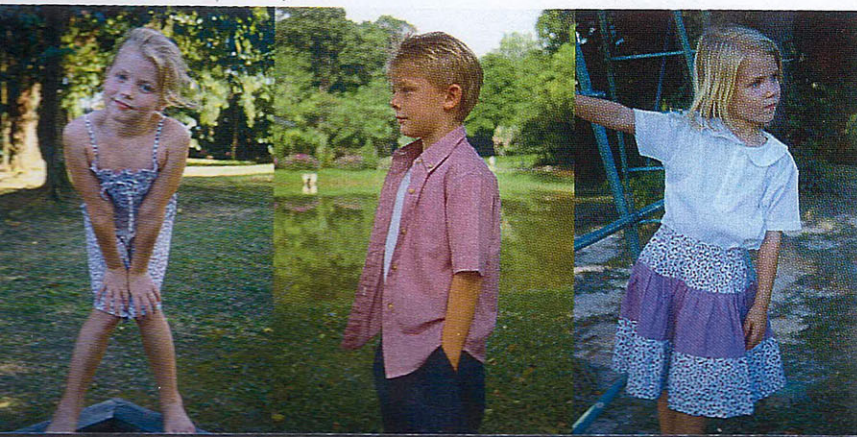
Although they will happily admit that the first year was tough – trying to make fundamental decisions about the business whilst carting stock around and doing nursery school pick-ups – they now have a business which is up and running, and they can still maintain a healthy balance in their lives. On most days anyway!

**Lucie + Oscar**

**Retail Outlets:**

#02-01, Forum the Shopping Mall . Tel: 734 6028.

#03-30A, Raffles City Shopping Centre. Tel: 336 8048.



White blouse, \$16.  
Blue cardigan, \$27.  
Checked skirt, \$27.  
All by Lucie & Oscar.



**GIRL**

White tee, \$10,  
Checked shorts, \$20, both  
from Lucie & Oscar.

Blue sweater around  
shoulders, \$23, from  
Mothercare.

**BOY**

Blue shirt, \$115, and white  
pants, \$109.  
Both from Papermoon.



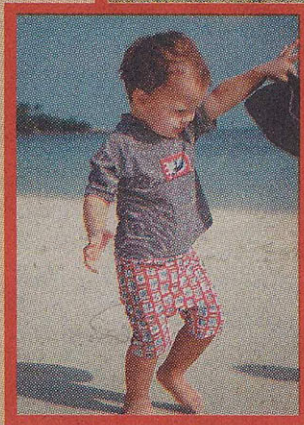
- \* Photography: Eric Chun
- \* Art Direction: Mei-Z
- \* Styling/Hair & Make-up: Eileen Koh  
(Impact Models)
- \* Models: Joe, Pominca, Fang Rong



(( HEY! ))

## Kids' stuff

*Togs for tots is one of the few bright spots on the retail horizon. We tell you why small is the new BIG...*



Lucie + Oscar has clothes with a modern twist for children. They are child-friendly in terms of style and material.



**FEATURE**  
JOANNA HUGHES

girl, or the too-cute-for-words little hipster outfits that made many little boys too ashamed to be seen in public.

Forget clothes that need to be dry cleaned, or that bring down the wrath of parents if you (gasp) play in them.

Clothes that scratch, that pull, that tug, that make going to the loo a dodgy proposition. Clothes that are cute but cost a bomb.

### [ ] Niche market

Mrs Henderson and Mrs Pollock knew each other socially, but it wasn't until 1999 that they were chatting about the gap in the kids' clothing market. As mums themselves (Mrs Henderson has two girls, Holly, 6, and Mimi, 4, and Mrs Pollock has the eponymous Oscar, now aged 6), they had trouble finding clothes that both they and their children liked.

"We wanted clothes akin to modern French style," says Mrs Pollock. "But we also wanted them to be reasonably priced and well-made and clothes that kids would want to wear. Clothes that could be washed and that kids could put together themselves."

Lucie + Oscar bills itself as "designer childrens wear" but design alone isn't enough to secure success. Clothes are made of cotton and cotton jersey, cut to UK sizing, but with plenty of kid-friendly details, like elastic half-waistbands.

The prices, (\$34 for a cotton pinafore dress) put the brand comfortably between high end designer and discount store clothing.

The clothes seem to please kids as well as parents: They're cute but not embarrassingly twee. "My daughter Holly likes to put together outfits, and many times we'll put sample designs out on a table to see how kids react," says Mrs Henderson.

Once, when the two women were debating whether to put a decorative heart on the front on a denim dress, they asked a four-year old, who promptly moved the heart to the side. "Children are very much part of the business," say the partners.

**W**ITH two outlets here and another in Hongkong, Lucie + Oscar, the Singapore-based hip-but-not-too-hip kids clothing brand, would be considered a success even in a good economic climate.

Add in two more outlets due to open next month and in April — and we're talking Orchard Road outlets here — and you have a retail bestseller.

According to designer and co-founder Lucy Pollock (the Lucie of Lucie + Oscar), the success of the line is due in large part to the latest designer accessory, "a child".

Whether you're a tai-tai with maid and child in tow, or a working mum juggling briefcase and baby nappies, or a stay-at-home mum trying to look serene despite a wildly unhappy toddler hanging from her arm, you want your kid to look good.

### [ ] The modern look

According to Lucy Pollock and her business partner Fiona Henderson, mums now want kids to look modern.

"We want children to look like children," says Ms Pollock, 37, who holds a masters degree in fashion design from the very prestigious St Martin's College of Art in London (the same school that produced Stella McCartney among others).

Forget the stick-out-to-there crinoline skirted dresses that tormented many a little

## Mum's shopping guide

OUTSIDE of departmental stores, where can you go for stylish, well-made kid's clothes?

Here's a helpful list:

The prime hunting ground has to be The Forum on Orchard Road, which is home to some of pricier but oh-so-trendy kiddie clothes.

■ **Kids 21, DKNY Kids, Guess Kids, and Bennetton Kids:** All within easy stroller distance. (Try not to get run over by pram-pushing maids on the weekends!)

■ **Takashimaya/Ngee Ann City:** Also home to kids wear deluxe, with DKNY Kids on Level 3 of Takashimaya, Bennetton Kids on Level 5 of Ngee Ann City and Country Road Kids in the Country Road women's wear store on Level B1 of Ngee Ann City.

■ **Pois at Scotts Shopping Centre:** The place where tai-tais pick up slinky evening wear is getting into the kid-as-accessory act with a selection of clothes for the under-10 crowd.

**STYLE FILE**  
By Ong Soh Chin

# Kids can have style, too, no kidding

WHO says kids cannot be fashionable? Certainly not Lucy Pollock and Fiona Henderson, two Mums who got together to create Lucie + Oscar, a kids' clothing range available at its two boutiques at Forum The Shopping Mall and Raffles City.

Priced affordably between \$15 and \$50, the clothes, made out of 100 per cent cotton, are designed by

Pollock, who has 18 years' experience in the fashion industry.

The Singapore-based brand has secured agents for distribution recently in the United States, and its founders are intent on global success.

But meanwhile, Lucie + Oscar is having a sale, with many items at 50 per cent off, so hurry on down for some fun bargains.



*Straits Times - Life!*

*Thurs. May 3rd 2001.*

Whether your little tyke's an aspiring Prince Charming or a dainty damsel, Lucie + Oscar has the gear.

# family

NOVEMBER 2001

only with kids company

shoes, pajamas, party dresses and even swimwear and Ivy appreciates the simple, classic European designs. Explains Ivy: "When you go to regular department stores, you always get the same clothes and same brands. Lucie + Oscar's European designs are something different. Their look is very sweet."

Ivy also finds the prices more affordable than some other brand names. The only drawback: she wishes she doesn't have to wait so long for the new designs to come in.

Things she purchased: Pretty, floral puddle-jumpers or gumboots (\$38) and pink checked PJs (\$34).



# All Wrapped Up



P E R S O N A L I T Y O F T H E M O N T H

**Lucy Pollock's sense of style has taken her from London's prestigious art academy, St. Martin's, to Christian Lacroix's Paris atelier and on to Asia and Singapore. Here she has orchestrated the Republic's first fashion degree and is about to launch her first childrenswear line, Lucie & Oscar. Helen West talks to a style guide.**

With a passion for fabric and fashion, and creative talent that followed where her heart led, London fashion designer Lucy Pollock graduated from the treasured dressing-up box of her childhood and set off on progressive course that has brought her a long way, not only in her chosen profession, but also from her native England.

After completing a bachelors Degree in Fashion and Textile Design at Ravensbourne College of Art and Design, Lucy went on to do her Masters in Womenswear Design at the prestigious St. Martin's School of Art in London. From there she went straight to the world's fashion capital, Paris, to work as a designer with French couturier, Christian Lacroix. She later booked a ticket for Asia; initially Hong Kong, then Thailand, followed by Korea, and, since 1994, Singapore.

After a decade in Asia, the synthesis of East and West is evident in Lucy's designs, the oriental influence tangible in their form, colour and fabric. While Asia has added greatly to the richness of her palette, it was during her time with Lacroix that she really learned about colour and texture. "I'm a fabric snob", she says, "I know a quality fabric when I see one", and indeed the east has provided her with a wealth to choose from.

Singapore suits Lucy down to the ground. "Work-wise its been fantastic for me in Singapore", enthuses Lucy, who, in addition to running her own design business has found in teaching another outlet for her creative talents and expertise. "Teaching is something I wanted to do years ago but living in Korea and Bangkok I couldn't because of the language barrier. But as soon as I got here I started teaching fashion at Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and later was asked by Temasek Polytechnic to compile the fashion section of their Apparel Design Diploma". Her "proudest achievement education-wise" came about through her work with LaSalle SIA College of the Arts where she completely revamped and expanded the scope of the Fashion Diploma courses, and was the prime mover in setting up Singapore's first Fashion Degree course, which begins this July. No small feat considering her initial agenda. "When

I went to LaSalle they gave me six months to decide whether I closed the Fashion Design Department or keep it open".

Michael Field, Dean of LaSalle's Visual Arts Department speaks of Lucy in glowing terms. "As a teacher she is dynamic and professional, earning both respect and affection from her students and colleagues. She has injected life and excitement into the fashion programme, developing rigour and a very strong sense of professionalism".

Her work at LaSalle done - having achieved what she set out to do - Lucy is all set to launch "Lucie & Oscar", her first range of children's wear and a project that is very close to her heart. It's been on her mind for years, but more so since her son Oscar, arrived on the scene. It addresses the gap she found in the market for reasonably priced, European-style, well made, quality children's clothes that will stand up to a lot of washing and wearing and still look great. "I've done all the testing of the market through having my own little chap," she says.

"I love change, I like to have many projects on the go as they all bounce off one another and spill over into other facets and avenues of creativity and self expression. I enjoy working with lots of different things - jewellery design, interiors, accessories and photography". In addition to designing her range of children's wear, Lucy is currently in the process of making a pilot show for a TV fashion programme, as well as discussing the possibility of becoming a fashion consultant with



the Singapore Art Museum while writing articles for magazines and of course, continuing to design haute couture, made-to-measure, "occasion wear". Lucy admits to missing her students and wanting to return to teaching. "Teaching is very important to me - I find it so rewarding, in giving you get so much in return, it's a two way street". Nevertheless, she is adamant that "creative people should not sit in institutions full time - you must be stimulated in the working world to be able to pass current knowledge on to the students. My priority for now is getting Lucie & Oscar marketed and known, then moving on to the next project. That's me, create, learn and move on".