



## FASHION MOBILE SEWING COMPANY

Karin Arts and Mariëke Biegman are best known as the crafty women behind The Netherlands' *Mobile Sewing Company*, but they're not limited to being nifty on the old Singer; they're also accidental anthropologists.

Arts and Biegman travel the world with two retro bicycles, each attached to a sewing machine. They set up shop on street corners and invite members of the public to donate a piece of clothing, which they then redesign or embellish, all while the interested individual pedals to power their sewing machines.

The *Mobile Sewing Company* affords Arts and Biegman many international travel opportunities, including a trip to Perth this year to participate in the *Perth International Arts Festival*. On their travels, the pair has encountered an array of odd and unique individuals, many of whom have let Arts and Biegman makeover a garment of their choice.

Arts explains people in different countries react very differently to the *Mobile Sewing Company* – some choosing to strip bare on the street, while others opt for privacy first.

"In Spain, more men than women come up to us and they're really easy. They will pull off their clothes and will stand there in their underpants; in Holland, that wouldn't happen. In Holland, we put people in a dressing room but in Spain it's just voila!" she laughs.

After meeting while performing street theatre in Europe, Arts and Biegman forged a strong friendship, which saw them experience a shared love for the environment, costuming and travel.

"In 2000 we were working together somewhere in Luxembourg and we said to each other 'it would be really good to have our own profession that we could bring to the street because most street performers have a skill, like juggling, but we didn't really have a skill, our skill was making costumes. So we thought it would be nice to find a way to bring that

skill to the street. About four years later, it developed into the *Mobile Sewing Studio* we have now."

Though the pair rely solely on retro bicycles these days, they once used Mopeds to do the pedaling for them.

"We started off with Mopeds; that was because we were lazy and we had a festival in Holland, which is always really windy, so we thought 'oh man, we have to cycle all the way up to the hills, let's just use Mopeds'. We did that for two years then we missed contact with the people, the audience, because what happened with the Mopeds is people came and dropped off their clothes and then rushed off to see other things in the festival then they would come back to pick up the clothes. With the bikes, you have contact with people because you can only sew when someone's pedaling; it's really nice to have that contact. Also, we don't need electricity, we have everything with us.

"In Europe, it's really coming together now because people are into alternative energy and things without electricity. It's very simple to see when someone is pedaling."

**The Mobile Sewing Company will set up shop in the Murray Street Mall on Tuesday, February 24, and Wednesday, February 25 (from 11.30am - 2pm); at Central Park on Thursday, February 26 (from 11am - 2pm); in Murray Street Mall on Friday, February 27 (from noon - 2pm); at Beck's Music Box on Friday, February 27 (from 10.30pm - midnight); in the Hay Street Mall on Saturday, February 28 (noon - 2pm); Beck's Music Box on Saturday, February 28 (7.30 - 9pm); at the Perth Writers Festival Family Day on Sunday, March 1 (11am - 2pm); or at the Perth Writers Festival on Monday, March 2 (11am - 2pm).**

