Anything but Uniform | The story behind our new look

Start of transcript.

We open on two people having a drink in a British pub. The individuals are New Zealand Fashion Designer Emilia Wickstead, and Ta Moko artist Te Rangitu Netana.

Te Rangitu Netana: I've got a question for you.

Emilia Wickstead: Yeah.

Te Rangitu Netana: Were you scared of me? Because I was scared of you.

Emilia Wickstead: No, I wasn't scared of you. You were scared of me?

Te Rangitu Netana: No, I was totally like, oh my God.

We hear light-hearted chatter. The documentary headline appears over a visual of a cosy pub "Anything but Uniform – the story behind our new look".

We see the front of and old British pub in Notting Hill London. Bright coloured umbrellas and flowers adorn the exterior. We are then back inside the pub with Emilia Wickstead and Te Rangitu Netana. They are laughing and enjoying each other's company. A directors clapper board appears, and the conversation continues.

Emilia Wickstead: The minute that I heard that I'd been, you know, been chosen. I was like, okay, I want to contact Te Rangitu. I want to work with him, and I tried to call you and then I tried to email you and then I tried to email someone else and there was like no answer. I was like, oh my gosh, he doesn't want to work with me.

Te Rangitu Netana: I'm sure for you, it's a childhood kind of dream.

Emilia Wickstead: I think I actually applied and wrote emails to Air New Zealand even before this even came about being like, if you ever need a new uniform, I'd really love to do it. And here we are.

The director's clapper reappears.

Producer: Slate 10, take one.

A new frame appears featuring a man sitting in a chair in a white studio with big open windows. The man is Tim Blanks, Fashion Journalist.

Tim Blanks: It's much harder to be creative and exciting with something as rule bound as a uniform.

A mannequin is shown, in the centre of the studio, clothed in a calico sample of a dress. The dress is the silhouette of Air New Zealand's new uniform.

Tim Blanks: ...and you've got the pure function of a uniform.

We see a close up on the bodice of the mannequin, highlighting the garments neckline. Tim Blanks then reappears sitting in his chair in the white studio.

Tim Blanks: You've got the symbolism of the uniform being called upon to convey the essence of a whole country. And then you've got the people who are wearing this uniform, they have to look good. So, I can imagine. It takes a certain kind of person.

The visual changes to a workroom, we see mannequins, sewing machines and garment presses. Emilia Wickstead is chattering away with those working in the room. Emilia Wickstead and Tim Blanks review design boards that show sketches of the uniform print and swatches of fabric. They converse and view the details on different garments.

Tim Blanks: That's an incredible thing. The depth of detail that you recall, I mean, the fact that the linings are different for all the different levels of staff.

Emilia Wickstead: Yes.

Tim Blanks: Like these, are Kiwi feathers.

Emilia Wickstead: Yes. The Kiwi feathers, the Kiwi feather is the most prestigious feather. So, when you wear something on your shoulders, when you adorn a Māori cloak, it's all about prestige. It's all about the responsibility.

We now see Emilia Wickstead with the mannequin clothed in the calico garment. She is showing us the garment's neckline. She explains how it is modelled off the tūi bird. We see different pictures of New Zealand's native tūi bird, Emilia ties the necktie of the garment on the mannequin.

Emilia Wickstead: When I designed many of the different neck lines. It was sort of like, which one were we going to do? The tūi knot one? The tūi knot was all about the tūi bird. When we think about the feathers and the uniform that we've used and in linings and on the print design, it all intertwines. It actually took us, I think like three months to get this drape, perfected.

We are back in the cosy pub in Notting Hill Emilia Wickstead and Te Rangitu Netana are chatting. In between their conversation we see close ups on details of the garments.

Emilia Wickstead: But then with all the prints, do you remember getting every purple to match. I think that I felt like that almost took a year. When I'm talking about it, it doesn't feel stressful. But that was incredibly stressful.

Te Rangitu Netana: I think you lived through that.

Emilia Wickstead: I really lived through that. Do you remember you had to redraw an entire print?

Te Rangitu Netana: I do remember? It took so long.

Emilia Wickstead: It was the kaka feather. But it was worth it.

We see Te Rangitu Netana standing in front of a series of brightly coloured buildings in Bristol, UK. We are then in his studio. It is dimly lit and there are various pieces of art framed on the walls. Te Rangitu Netana is showcasing his hand drawn prints. They are beautiful water colour drawings of intricate green feathers. We see him draw koru and kōwhai flowers in blank ink.

Te Rangitu Netana: So, we needed every kind of feather to be an individual feather. We were working with pencil and then watercolour, and it didn't quite work, so I had to redraw, re draw, and we finally got it down and it looks beautiful. I love looking at the way that our traditional culture is used to empower ourselves.

Te Rangitu Netana: Everything that we wore had, there was a reason, and I want to really bring that meaning into my work. So the kōwhai, the flower that's recognisable as a New Zealand flower, adding little tiny koru and little dots. I was playing with different mediums on black and if it was going to be on a garment, you would see the highlights pop.

We are back in the cosy Notting Hill pub with Te Rangitu Netana and Emilia Wickstead, cutting between the conversation between the two and Te Rangitu's sketches.

Te Rangitu Netana: I love how things are inside for the person.

Emilia Wickstead: Yeah.

Te Rangitu Netana: Especially the pepeha. Overall, all people that come from Aotearoa understand those mountains, those rivers, and they're wearing that.

Emilia Wickstead: I feel like we've spent a lot of time thinking about our people. That has been at the forefront of our minds in this entire project.

A fitting room appears, we are back in Auckland New Zealand, there are different garments visible around the room. Air New Zealand staff enter the room, we see excited reactions as they see the new Air New Zealand uniform for the first time.

Te Rangitu Netana: But to get a true understanding of if we are successful is seeing people's reaction to what they see.

Staff member 1: It's so nice.

Staff member 2: Cute!

Tailor: The Matariki Stars...

Staff member 3: Ahh, Matariki.

Te Rangitu Netana: I think it's a monumental thing to be able to celebrate Matariki, and it's such a beautiful way of celebrating our people that have passed before us. Our crew that wear it are going to feel.

We are back in the cosy Notting Hill pub with Te Rangitu Netana and Emilia Wickstead

Emilia Wickstead: I am scared of people's opinions. I always am. I feel that it feels so right. I think that's when it's going to be so momentous to, yeah, see it all together.

We see Lake Hāwea in New Zealand, it's early morning the light is dim. It is the morning of the uniform photo shoot. We see photographers setting up and Air New Zealand staff members in the new uniform. A man starts speaking, it is Derek Henderson, Fashion Photographer.

Derek Henderson: Look where we are. Beautiful spot in New Zealand Lake Hāwea.

Emilia Wickstead: What we want everybody in New Zealand to feel, is to feel empowered. And we sometimes forget the power of dressing and what it can do, how it can make you feel, and the confidence that it can give you? I hope it's going to feel emotional.

We see various scenarios of the uniform being photographed against vast open uniquely New Zealand landscapes. Those wearing the uniform look strong, empowered and happy. The visuals then shift to close ups of details of the uniform, the tie, embroidery on the sleeves, the fabric and the print.

Emilia Wickstead: I hope that they talk about it. I hope that then all of these things sort of enter a global stage. It will be for sure one of my proudest moments. Yeah.

We are back in the Notting Hill pub.

Te Rangitu Netana: Well that's a cheers to that.

Emilia Wickstead: Do you have time for another one?

The Air New Zealand logo appears.

End of transcript.