



Introducing Uno, the one-cup bra that embraces asymmetry

Architect Katy Marks launches lingerie for the post-mastectomy body

"I just want some clothing that I can wear with the body I have, and if no one else is going to make it, then I will."

– Katy Marks, founder, Uno



Katy Marks wearing Uno. Image by Tara Darby.

Katy Marks is an award-winning architect, the founder of Citizens Design Bureau, and a cancer survivor. Throughout her professional career, she has specialised in addressing real-life problems by designing intelligent, practical solutions that are infused with beauty and which give people joy. Now, she is bringing this approach to a very different sort of challenge: the lack of empowering women's lingerie for the post-mastectomy body.



Every year, 55,000 women in the UK are diagnosed with breast cancer, and 14,850 undergo a mastectomy. Of these, 69% choose not to undergo reconstructive surgery afterwards – many of them put off by years-long waiting lists or the possibility of further health risk. This means that the number of women adjusting to life with one breast increases by more than 10,000 every year*.

The underwear on the market for this expanding contingent of women is almost exclusively designed to conceal the loss of a breast – to restore symmetry to the body in the service of societal beauty norms and standards. After her own mastectomy, Katy found most post-surgery bras were either soft but unsupportive to her breast or had tight underband elastic that was painful over scar tissue, and irritated skin that was tender after radiotherapy. Most of all though, she hated the feeling of wearing clothes that made her feel that her body was something to be ashamed of.

“I was coming to terms with having one breast and didn’t want to live in hiding for several years while waiting for reconstructive surgery. At first my scar looked brutal and puckered. I cried a lot in changing rooms, but at some point I looked at myself in the mirror and thought ‘I just have to learn to like my body’. I reasoned that there must be thousands of women like me but I couldn’t understand why I’d never seen anyone else openly asymmetric. I realised that so many women are hiding: wearing baggy t-shirts and uncomfortable prosthetics – feeling like they have to look ‘normal’ to be a woman. I have two sons. I didn’t want them to see me feeling ashamed. It was important to me to show them that difference is OK, beautiful even.”

– Katy Marks

Having the trauma of losing a breast compounded by the frustration of not being able to find an appropriate bra led Katy to challenge the assumptions about what, how and who we define as ‘beautiful’. Rather than hiding what had happened to their bodies to meet societal expectations, why shouldn’t women feel confident, empowered, and sexy in their new figures? There is no reason why the loss of a breast should equate to a loss of feminine identity. No one should feel ashamed at living through, or with, cancer. Katy stresses that women have so many different experiences of cancer and there is no right or wrong decision about whether or not to have a reconstruction, but it simply seemed crazy that so many thousands of women who had decided to remain flat had nothing to wear that was designed for their asymmetry.



Image credit: Tara Darby

As an architect, Katy is experienced at developing design solutions to everyday problems, and this was no exception – a bra, after all, is essentially architecture for the body. Designing a bra for a single breast entails specific engineering challenges. Asymmetric bras twist in unusual ways, consideration of how fabrics touch sensitive skin is paramount. Katy sketched designs, cut up and sewed together bras to create one-cup prototypes, and commissioned custom versions from bespoke lingerie maker Rachel Kenyon. These were beautiful creations but Katy was determined to make the innovation accessible to as many women as possible.

With the help of lingerie specialists Aimee McWilliams, Sarah Raskino and Maxine Wells, Katy developed a series of patterns that could be produced affordably and at scale. The result is Uno – a range of ingeniously engineered, elegantly form-fitting bras and bikinis that help women rebuild their love for themselves after a single mastectomy, rejecting received ideas of beauty in favour of one which accepts and celebrates the asymmetric body.



Image credit: Tara Darby

“Creating Uno has made me feel that it is possible to look in the mirror again and feel like myself.”

– Katy Marks

Katy has worked hard to source fabrics that are sustainable, non-toxic and incredibly soft. Uno bras are made in the UK from innovative fabric derived from wood fibres combined with stretch satin to give a sleek silhouette. The bikini is made from recycled ocean plastics. Both will be released in a variety of colours and styles over the next few months, with inclusive sizing up to a FF/G cup and versions for left and right breasts. A gentle compression strap covers scar tissue, with a contoured cup for the breast, combining comfort and support with an elegant aesthetic that is confidently asymmetric.

At a time that can be stressful and traumatic for women, Uno bras offer a practical solution to the reality of living with the loss of a breast while empowering women to redefine beauty, comfort and confidence on their own terms.

The Uno range will be available to order at unobra.co.uk. Katy also plans to release open-source patterns for download, enabling women all over the world to take



advantage of Uno's revolutionary approach to post-surgery underwear, whatever their budget.

Follow Uno on Instagram at @_unobra.

*Statistics from Breast Cancer Now:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/43029/pdf>

Notes for editors

Uno

Uno is a range of beautiful one-cup lingerie that loves your asymmetric body.

Whereas most post-surgery underwear is created with the aim of hiding the loss of your breast, Uno is about embracing asymmetry and falling in love with your body again. It is also about support, healing and feeling wonderful. No more adjusting prosthetics and hiding in baggy t-shirts. Uno bras and bikinis are designed to feel and look stunning from the beach to the bedroom and everywhere in between.

Available to order from 1 Dec at unobra.co.uk

Follow Uno on Instagram at @_unobra

Follow Uno on Facebook at facebook.com/unobraltd

Katy Marks

Liverpool-born, London-based architect Katy Marks co-founded the pioneering coworking concept Impact Hub in 2003, and founded Citizens Design Bureau – an award-winning team of architects, interior designers and new-enterprise strategists – in 2013. She and her team collaborate with inspired, forward-thinking organisations and individuals, distilling complex briefs to create spaces with functional clarity, woven with ingenuity and joy. The practice was named Public Building Architect of the Year at the 2022 Building Design Awards for its work on Manchester Jewish Museum.

citizensdesignbureau.net