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Fashion Design Process

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**How do you select or adapt your environment to best suit your modes of designing?
What is essential?**

My floor loom takes up a considerable amount of space, and I am fortunate to have a home-based workroom for my looms and sewing machines, along with an abundance of yarns and everything I need to create. I am in my happy place when working there.



Carol Oldfield



**What 2D-3D methods or techniques do you use to explore ideas (photography, models, drawing/sketching, reading, reflection)?
How do these work together?**

Sketching is a big part of my initial garment design process, usually starting with a concept, then developing variations, and finally refining – a system I was taught while studying for my Bachelors and one that I have found works well for me. Weaving follows a different path, however, with the need to design a fabric suitable for the finished garment. This can involve multiple testing of yarns and weave structures before I can weave an actual fabric. I will then often drape the fabric, sometimes using a half-size mannequin, to test the combination of fabric and garment design. At this stage I will use photography to document different looks; this allows me to continue draping while having a resource to refer to when deciding what works best.

Do you develop a collaborative working partnership and, if so, how?

Until now, my practice has been my study, with collaboration coming in the form of conversations with my peers, weaving colleagues and tutors as to how best to achieve my research project aims.

How do you describe the 'research' that you do as part of your design process?

Lots and lots and lots of reading! I'm a real bookworm and love to see how other people approach the issues of sustainability and slow fashion – whether it's weaving magazines from the 1970s and 80s or discussions on how to slow the fashion growth cycle which leads to massive waste and pollution.

I'm an avid people-watcher – I enjoy 2 garments on people, seeing how they work and how they move, getting ideas for silhouettes and shapes and how they might inform garment designs for my own fabric.

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What is most meaningful stage of designing for you and what happens at that moment?

I have found a eureka moment can happen after I have woven the fabric. Although I will have spent a lot of time prior to this stage – designing the garment and calculating and weaving the fabric – sometimes those initial plans need to change when it is draped on a mannequin and tells me what it wants to become.



Do you have sources of inspiration that you always revisit?

I have been creating shape on the loom with specific yarns and weave structures, and enjoy the way the final fabric moves and flows over the body. I am excited about the results I have been achieving, and would like to explore this further in my work, now that my Masters study is complete.

What is the most enjoyable part of designing for you?

Having woven for over 20 years, I have always loved seeing the finished fabric and am always amazed that "I have made this!" Since I have started to use draping as a design tool, I love listening to the fabric 'talk' to me as I place it on the mannequin. It almost has a life and mind of its own.



What fuels your design ideas?

My practice has two distinct areas of design – that of my handwoven fabric, and then the garments I design and create using that fabric.

Having recently completed my Masters in textiles, I have come to appreciate the importance of research, so my design ideas often start with the person who will wear my garments – her preferences, her fashion style, her lifestyle, what she likes to wear and how and when she wears it. Although in saying that, as a weaver I am a very tactile person – I love texture and the feel of fabric, particularly handwoven fabric, so that will sometimes drive my designs.

I'm very invested in sustainability. Because I weave fabric for my garments, I don't want to waste this precious commodity, so I'm looking for ways to minimise wastage.

Who are the practitioners who you feel have influenced your design processes – mentors, teachers, colleagues, designers and writers?

As part of my research, I looked at three weavers who worked with handwoven fabric – Virginia West, Kang Hyun An and local weaver Christopher Duncan. For my garment collection, I looked at the work of three local designers whose work reflected the preferences of my target market, as well as having sustainable ethics in line with my own. From a weaving point of view, I have also looked closely at the work of Ann Richards and Lotte Dalgaard; both have worked with creating shape and texture on the loom with innovative yarns and weave structures.

Carol Oldfield had been a passionate weaver for 20 years. Carol has a Bachelor of Media Arts in fashion and a Master of Arts (Textiles) (distinction). Her practice is centred on creating quality garments for a contemporary New Zealand market using sustainable techniques, while honouring the ancient craft of hand weaving.

What role does collaboration have in your designing? When you need to work with others, how do you go about the approach and working together?

I am a team of one, but find feedback from my peers is invaluable. I haven't had the opportunity to collaborate with other creatives yet, but I would love to work with like-minded designers in the future, completing my outfits with accessories that align with my natural, sustainable ethos.