

scope

Contemporary Research Topics

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Fashion

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The series *Scope (Art & Design)* aims to engage discussion on contemporary research in the visual arts and design. It is concerned with views and critical debates surrounding issues of practice, theory, history and their relationships as manifested through the visual and related arts and activities, such as sound, performance, curation, tactile and immersive environments, digital scapes and methodological considerations. With New Zealand and its Pacific neighbours as a backdrop, but not its only stage, *Scope (Art & Design)* seeks to address the matters which concern contemporary artists and arts enquirers in their environments of practice.

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FASHION TODAY AND TOMORROW: CONSIDERING AN INTERCONNECTED GLOBAL SYSTEM OF CHALLENGES AND PROMISE

Simon Swale, Jane Malthus, Margo Barton

The twenty first century has already witnessed dramatic, often traumatic changes and the world in 2017 continues to be one of many challenges and tribulations. In many ways the closing years of the twentieth century seem like simpler times which have since been displaced by rapid technological developments, incessant war and political turbulence, and geological disasters whose causes may be speculated as the resulting from our own neglect of the warnings of global warming.

Fashion, as a signifier of the zeitgeist, remains a barometer for our times. The twenty-first century has brought some changes for the fashion system itself, but not necessarily ones better for the world. For some it may seem flippant to compare the travails of a frequently perceived narcissistic fashion industry to the great issues with which the world is currently faced. Yet as this special issue of *Scope - Fashion* most ably demonstrates, the issues and the problems of the global fashion system are commensurate with the problems of the world: the impact of globalisation the correlating rise of communications technology are today being felt across all human experience.

The fashion industry provides stark examples of problems which compound those of refugees of wars and climate change: migrant workers who labour, and perhaps die, in illegal sweatshops; effects of disposal of textile manufacturing effluent; textile or garment waste flung to supposedly far corners the planet. It highlights relationships between industry and governance in a world that continues to shrink even as it remains often unfathomably large. Yet it can also provide creativity, opportunities and stories of socially responsible success.

Far from wishing to appear only bleak, we are delighted to present in this special issue, a sample of perspectives that provide hope for the future. Indeed 'hope' does not do justice to the many transformative projects discussed within, which are already making small but significant changes to our industry which will improve the lives of people around the world for the better.

At a time when fashion could be considered a significant signifier for global consumerism, it is worth recognising that the vast majority of the papers you will find between these covers seek to rebuild or establish fashion's potential as a social force for good. While most mainstream coverage of the fashion industry tends to focus on that specifically twenty-first century phrase, "fast fashion" – and its counterpart, "slow fashion", it is inspiring to read of work and projects that disrupt the prevailing homogeneity in global fashion, and prioritise the maker, the wearer, and most importantly, the relationships between the two.

Valuable conferences and symposia exist for dialogue in New Zealand: notably the recent "End of Fashion" international conference in Wellington in December 2016; the annual symposium of the Costume Textile Association of New Zealand and the former annual Fashion Industry New Zealand (FINZ) conferences. Much of the work published here was developed from presentations at the first 'Metamorphosis' fashion symposium, organised by the editors, and held on Friday 24th March, 2017 at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery in conjunction with iD Dunedin Fashion Week. This symposium sought to facilitate discussion amongst the local, national and international community of fashion students, educators and industry members, to raise and discuss the most important concerns, trends and

innovations of our field. Both the 'Metamorphosis' symposium and this current edition of *Scope* benefit from perspectives beyond New Zealand's boundaries, an important aspect that reflects the realities of the international fashion education system and our belief in presenting a global perspective.

We opted for alphabetical order by author in this volume so that readers can dip in, out, and across topics to make connections relevant to them. Some (of the many) synergies that gave us optimism include the potential for cross-cultural and geographical collaboration, and global interaction that respects differences as it seeks similarities. Barton et al's project reflects New Zealand's developing relationship with Asia, especially China. The need for cultural understanding and knowledge, even within our own countries, also brings attention to the power of collaboration. Bhandari relocates us to India, and alerts us to the importance and encouragement of traditional craft practices, while MacEwan reports on another local method for knowledge and skill transfer; that respects the need for a global focus. Alternatives to the current fashion cycle that stress sustainability, social responsibility and ethical practice are growing in number: In this volume examples include Bray's reflection on her own designer-maker process and slow fashion practice and Clements reporting of her (and others) activity in raising awareness. Differences in detail but consensus in the need for changes to the fashion system that will benefit the planet link the responses of all our contributors to the issues raised, whether they are academics, recent graduates or fashion activists, and in Dunedin, Auckland or Chennai.

We hope you enjoy this collection of articles and reports. The editors plan to continue facilitating dialogue on improving the fashion system with future iterations of 'Metamorphosis' and special fashion issues of *Scope*. There are plenty of fashion topics and interrelated problems and opportunities that all members of the industry can address and work together on, extending our commitment to improvement, not just for fashion, but for humanity also.

FUNCTIONAL FASHION DESIGN: TRANSFORMING PROCESSES TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES

Tania Allan Ross

Functional fashion is an area of design where clothing and accessories result from a process of designing that is dictated by the user's specific requirements: functionality, wearability and desirability.

Moving beyond the mainstream fashion industry, driven by seasonal collections, to a user-centred functional “design thinking” approach, a number of fashion designers are tapping into specific user groups to concentrate on a more customised clothing design framework. With the user at the centre of functional clothing design activities, wearable products are designed, tested and manufactured to address detailed wearer needs and preferences. Consideration is given to details such as physical abilities, body shapes and sensory capacity. This user-centred process works towards fulfilling consumer needs that are often overlooked by ready-to-wear fashion – which is essentially a product of the designer's creative endeavours, informed by mass-market design assumptions such as standardised sizing and trends where consumer satisfaction is primarily confirmed by the rate of purchase.

THE FUNCTIONAL CLOTHING DESIGN PROCESS

The functional clothing design process – as initially outlined by American apparel design professor Susan Watkins in *Clothing: The Portable Environment*¹, and revisited in her *Functional Clothing Design: From Sportswear to Spacesuits*² – originated in a demand for clothing to meet a specific need. Watkins developed her problem-solving design process to help students engage in apparel design. Watkins places substantial emphasis on user needs; this requires the designer to have a full understanding of the user, their environment and their activity before beginning the design process.³

Once the creative problem is identified and defined, a design solution is thoroughly explored through many areas of possible investigation. Literature searches to find out more about the scope of the problem, as well as observations and interviews involving clients/users in real-life environments, help identify user preferences and tolerances. Existing clothing designs are reviewed through market surveys. The data collected from these varied assessments becomes design criteria. Garment specification priorities are set – and sometimes discovered – through the ranking of design criteria. Prototype garments (toiles) are developed and wear-tested to assess whether they meet the established criteria. Throughout the development process, the user remains key in providing feedback which implements change, refining the design.

Apparel design educators Jane Lamb and M Jo Kallal have developed a model for assessing user needs and wants which emphasises the development of creative thinking. Functional, expressive and aesthetic (FEA) user needs and wants are assessed to inform the identification of the creative problem and design criteria. “We realized that we wanted a general framework that could be applied to the design of any type of apparel, including garments intended for people whose needs are not routinely met in the marketplace and therefore have been considered special.”¹⁴

At the core of this model is the intended target customer (user). Clarification is sought through research into user needs and wants within the context of the intended environment and activity. Culture envelops the target customer

in Lamb and Kallal's FEA Consumer Needs Model: "Culture influences what users consider as acceptable options for resolving various design problems."⁵ Designers must be aware of cultural implications when developing a user profile, demonstrating an understanding of the customer's needs regarding clothing.

The FEA model establishes the requirements and desires of the target customer as design criteria, and these are identified through research into functional, expressive and aesthetic factors. Functional considerations relate to utility, such as protection required for the use-situation, thermal and tactile comfort, overall fit and ease of movement. Expressive considerations require the designer to be aware of the message the garment is communicating about the wearer. Aesthetics deals with the 'beauty' of the garment, a factor which is consistent with mainstream fashion design processes and includes consideration of design elements such as silhouette, texture, colour and pattern. Lamb and Kallal's model places an additional focus on aesthetics; meeting customer-specific differences through addressing body and garment relationships, the designer considers the user's specific body shape, physical abilities and sensory interactions with apparel products.⁶

Lamb and Kallal point out that their FEA model can be applied to existing design process models – specifically, those developed by Hanks, Belliston and Edwards (1977) and Koberg and Bagnall (1981). Combining features of these existing models, Lamb and Kallal describe a stepped design process, beginning with problem identification, preliminary ideas, design refinement, prototype development and evaluation of the new garment, and ending with implementation. This design process model has affinities with the FEA model, as it too may return at any stage to refine prior steps – they rarely proceed in a linear manner. Applying the FEA model at the problem identification stage, the designer defines the FEA criteria for the target consumer in the context of the problem situation. Then later during the toile evaluation process, each prototype is judged on its success in meeting the functional, expressive and aesthetic needs specified for the garment.⁷

When the functionality or performance of the garment or accessory is at the forefront of the design process, clothing design may readily cross over into the domains of medicine, protective wear and performance sports. Adjustments can be made through enhancing body shape and providing support and contouring, which help address the issue of wearer vanity as well as performance, enabling and therefore improving the quality of life for many elderly, infant and disabled users.⁸

EMERGING FUNCTIONAL FASHION DESIGNERS

In recent years, a number of emerging fashion designers have been making positive contributions through taking up the challenge of tackling functional clothing problems. Seeking to solve complex or less common wear issues, these contemporary designers often work with clients who live differently, think differently and consume differently – they may be individuals who are differently abled and/or differently shaped. Historically, these fashion consumers have repeatedly reported that it is a struggle to source clothing and accessories to fit their specific body shapes, physical abilities and sensory capacities; this inability to access appropriate apparel frequently impacts on their daily life.⁹

Lucy Jones, a recent graduate of the Parsons School of Design, The New School, New York, credits her introduction to solution-based garment design to one of her lecturers, who challenged her to "design to change the world." Jones was inspired by the needs of a disabled relative, and began interacting with a number of potential fashion consumers who use wheelchairs.¹⁰ Through user-centred research methodologies including focus groups and interviews, she identified that the anatomical needs of this potential target market were as important to them as aesthetic considerations and emotional comfort. Jones set about designing a collection specifically for self-propelled, seated, disabled people in collaboration with a fit model (user). She called her graduate collection "Seated Design." Jones' modular pieced garments won her the prestigious Parsons Womenswear Designer of the Year Award in 2015. Since graduating, Jones has continued to build her career as a functional fashion designer, working towards "marrying style and function in the realm of mainstream fashion."¹¹

Tokyo-based fashion designer Takafumia Tsuruta recognised a need for clothing that is both fashionable and functional. His mission statement is to create fashion that everyone can enjoy – both the wearer and those viewing his garments.¹² For example, his Braille-inspired garments incorporate varied sizes of polka dots as pattern, using the Braille tactile writing system to communicate to both the wearers and onlookers. Readers of Braille are able to touch the garments and enjoy the slogans, whereas sighted viewers can ponder the subversive, large-scale, strategically grouped polka dot messages from a distance. Tsuruta debuted his label Tenbo (Feel Stylish) during Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week, Tokyo, 2015. Tenbo has been described as a quirky label with designs that are trendy and easy to wear for both disabled and able-bodied consumers.¹³ While Tsuruta clearly has fun with scale, pattern and colour, his label has purposeful design features such as oversized knee pockets for wheelchair users to store their phones. Many of his garments are reversible, enabling the wearer to reflect their current mood through fashion. Tsuruta incorporates his clients in his design process, often specialising in made-to-measure alongside his more mainstream off-the-rack garments.¹⁴

FUNCTIONAL DESIGN QUALIFICATIONS

The Open Style Lab (OSL) based at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is an international design centre which specialises in delivering research-based educational experiences, one of which is offered as part of the Parsons School of Design MFA Design and Technology programme. Founded in 2013, the OSL provides the opportunity for its learners to engage in design-for-all through inclusive design thinking methods. Each ten-week course utilises an interdisciplinary approach involving working in teams to develop accessible clothing for a user with a disability, such as multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, neurological problems, or for a wheelchair user. Each collaborative team comprises three postgraduate students studying either design, engineering or occupational therapy. Lecturers, mentors and judges from academia and industry help the student teams to connect with clients and manufacturers while they are working to develop a functioning, wearable solution with a purposeful aesthetic.¹⁵

One focus of this design challenge is the requirement for the teams to incorporate emerging assistive technologies and healthcare solutions within their design process. Once a team is formed (through an application process), they are introduced to their client and asked to collaboratively evaluate the client's needs. After thorough analysis of these specific needs has been completed, design opportunities are identified. A research question is formulated with guidance from academic and industry mentors. Fabrication and construction of prototype design iterations are explored, followed by user testing. All the stages of the design process involve the client, both inside the OSL facilities and in real-world situations. A public showcase of the final wearable solutions is judged as a competition at the completion of the course.¹⁶

Through education, the OSL is working to increase awareness of the importance of making style accessible to people of all abilities, by encouraging emerging designers to use multi-disciplinary, innovative design thinking practices alongside a user. Within this teaching environment, student designers are encouraged to consider not only how their design outcome meets the fashion needs of people with a certain disability, but also to assess the potential of moving beyond this niche market to a larger market.¹⁷

FUNCTION MEETS FASHION

The New York-based fashion label ADAY prides itself on investing in technically advanced activewear fabrications. Their multi-disciplinary design team aims to merge the two worlds of fashion and function. Other contemporary fashion labels' experience of borrowing high-tech textiles (originally intended for extreme sports) for ready-to-wear and haute couture collections inspired ADAY to design and develop an apparel range using fabrications that can perform as activewear, but that also mimic the natural qualities of their favourite classic fabrics, such as silk. ADAY produces fashionable clothing incorporating the (albeit hidden) active properties of technologically advanced fabrics and construction methods, enhanced stretch and bonded seams, skilfully panelled fitted garments, and leggings

incorporating hidden pockets to carry a phone and bankcards. These collections are described as beautiful as well as useful. Garments in the ADAY range claim to blend the wear comfort of extreme sportswear with the look of leather and silk.¹⁸

As ADAY strives to produce versatile fashion that will survive the test of time, their collections are season-less, with a sustainability focus. The house uses small production runs with short cycles, thus giving the design team the ability to act on feedback from wearers quickly, enabling them to constantly refine, improve and update their products. Through the ADAY website, users are also invited to get involved in the design process; as “wear testers” they can give feedback on wearables ADAY is currently working on.¹⁹

There can be no question that aesthetically pleasing design is an integral part of success in the fashion industry.²⁰ In the traditional fashion design process, the designer knows best and users’ or consumers’ needs and desires are not considered as worthy of serious investigation, as target market segments are predetermined. However, fashion designers and educators who are engaging in innovative functional design thinking practices are likely to experience a more inclusive relationship with consumers. This provides opportunities to broaden the scope of wearer groups beyond those that they may interact with as part of the traditional fashion design system and to produce apparel and other wearables that meet the functional, expressive and aesthetic needs of consumers. The mainstream fashion industry could learn much from such user-centred design approaches in the light of its expressed desire to act more inclusively and ethically.

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- 1 Susan M Watkins, *Clothing: The Portable Environment* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1984).
- 2 Susan M Watkins and Lucy E Dunne, *Functional Clothing Design: From Sportswear to Spacesuits* (New York: Fairchild Books, 2015), 3.
- 3 Susan M Watkins, “Using the Design Process to Teach Functional Apparel Design,” *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 7 (1988), 10.
- 4 Jane M Lamb, and M Jo Kallal, “A Conceptual Framework for Apparel Design,” *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 10:2 (1992), 42.
- 5 Ibid., 43.
- 6 Ibid., 43.
- 7 Ibid., 44.
- 8 Deepti Gupta, “Functional Clothing – Definition and Classification,” *Indian Journal of Fibre & Textile Research*, 36 (2011), 322.
- 9 Kate Carroll, “Fashion Design and Disability,” in *Fashion Design for Living*, ed. Alison Gwilt (London: Routledge, 2015), 153.
- 10 Chantal Fernandez, “Parsons Student Lucy Jones is Using Fashion to Create Social Innovation,” *Fashionista*, 21 May 2015, <http://fashionista.com/2015/05/lucy-jones-seated-design> (accessed 17 March 2017).
- 11 <http://www.lucyjonesdesign.com/> (accessed 17 March 2017).
- 12 <http://en.tenbo.tokyo/about/> (accessed 26 April 2017).

- 13 "Takafumi Tsuruta: Not Bound by the Convention of Disability;" *The Girl with the Purple Cane*, 25 March 2015, <http://www.thegirlwiththepurplecane.com/2015/03/25/takafumi-tsuruta-tenbo/> (accessed 17 March 2017).
- 14 *Tenbo*, <http://en.tenbo.tokyo/about/> (accessed 26 April 2017).
- 15 "Open Style Lab – Creating Clothing for People of all Abilities;" *Open Style Lab*, <http://www.openstylelab.com/> (accessed 18 March 2017).
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Meg Miller; "The MIT Lab That's Quietly Pioneering Fashion for Everyone;" 15 August 2016, <https://www.fastcodesign.com/3062726/the-mit-lab-thats-quietly-pioneering-fashion-for-everyone> (accessed 30 July 2017).
- 18 "Technical Clothing for Everyday Life;" ADAY, <https://www.thisisaday.com/#/> (accessed 15 March 2017).
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Minyoung Suh, Kate Carroll and Nancy Cassill, "Critical Review on Smart Clothing Product Development;" *Journal of Textile and Apparel, Technology and Management*, 6:4 (2010), 10.

ANYTHING COULD HAPPEN – A PRIME MINISTER'S SCHOLARSHIP, ASIA FASHION STUDY TOUR

Margo Barton, Jane Malthus, Annette Cadogan and Erin Broughton

The Prime Minister's Scholarship for Asia (PMSA) is a programme for study and work abroad in Asia funded by the New Zealand government and administered by Education New Zealand. Ten PMSA recipients from Otago Polytechnic's School of Design spent six weeks in China immersed in a collaborative project that centred on sustainability and fashion.



Figure 1. Eight of the ten 2017 PMSA recipients. Photograph: Megan Martin.

The project was appropriately called "Anything Could Happen" (ACH), sharing a name with an exhibition of Dunedin fashion designers and artists in Shanghai and evoking the lyricism of Dunedin Sound band The Clean. The project was multifaceted and the outcome undefined, and the students were selected from the Polytechnic's communication and fashion design programmes. These young designers and the accompanying fashion faculty split their time between the "Anything Could Happen" exhibition, held in Dunedin's sister city Shanghai within the walls of Yu Gallery in Yuyuan Garden; working collaboratively on a fashion outcome with students from three Shanghai fashion institutions; and building relationships with various tertiary education providers in Shanghai, Shenzhen, Hong Kong and Beijing.



Figure 2. Students, faculty and printer selecting paper stock for the catalogue at New Zealand Central, Shanghai, China, May 2017. Photograph: Margo Barton.



Figure 3. Students hang the work of Anita de Soto at the Yu Gallery, Shanghai, China, May 2017. Photograph: Margo Barton.



Figure 4. "Anything Could Happen," Yu Gallery downstairs gallery, Shanghai, China, May 2017.
Photograph: Margo Barton.



Figure 5. "Anything Could Happen," Yu Gallery upstairs gallery, Shanghai, China, May 2017.
Photograph: Margo Barton.



Figure 6. Yuyuan Garden, Shanghai, China, May 2017. Photograph: David K Shields.



Figure 7. The "Anything Could Happen" curatorial team: Dr Margo Barton, Antony Deaker and Dr Jane Malthus. Photograph: Joyce Huang.

ANYTHING COULD HAPPEN – CONTEMPORARY ART AND FASHION FROM DUNEDIN

The project both began and ended at Yu Gallery. The "Anything Could Happen" exhibition acted as bookends for the project and reflected the essence of the project as a whole. A collection of works from 45 Dunedin artists and designers was exhibited for a brief but valuable month in the metropolis of Shanghai, and garnered much media attention in China. Students and faculty worked on the exhibition, including preparing the catalogue and posters for print, and carefully unpacking, displaying and later packing away the artefacts which showcased contemporary art and fashion from Dunedin. "Anything Could Happen" was curated by Dr Margo Barton, Dr Jane Malthus (both from the School of Design at Otago Polytechnic) and Antony Deaker (Dunedin City Council).



Figure 8. Students speed-design-dating to form groups. Photograph: Margo Barton.

ANYTHING COULD HAPPEN – SUSTAINABLE FASHION DESIGNING

The Otago Polytechnic students worked closely with students from International Fashion Academy (Paris) in Shanghai, Shanghai University of Engineering Science, and Shanghai College of Art and Design over three weeks on the “Anything Could Happen” cross-cultural sustainable fashion designing project.

The project built on the Shanghai Dunedin Sister City Fashion Communication Project, which has been operating yearly in October and November since 2012, in addition to the 2008 Ute Shoot, a one-off project which also explored fashion communication. These previous projects have enriched the fashion design, fashion communication and cultural understanding of the participants – students, staff and their respective institutions. Problem Based Learning (PBL), a learner-centred strategy applied notably in medical teaching, was utilised as the project structure for both the Shanghai Dunedin Sister City Fashion Communication Project and the Ute Shoot. PBL was selected as the learning methodology for ACH, as it offered participants flexible application of knowledge, experience and collaboration.¹

At the beginning of their fashion design study journey, emerging fashion designers are often individualistic in their approaches, as opposed to designers in fashion businesses who predominantly work in teams. The Shanghai Dunedin Sister City Fashion Communication Project highlighted a model of individuals defining their goals and working as individuals within a team. By contrast, the ACH Fashion Designing Project was designed to be truly collaborative, utilising face-to-face interaction from the outset; participants experienced the entire design process together physically, from the brief development stage through to presenting the designed outcome. According to Cheng and Kvan: “Successful collaboration is characterized by a high quality of interaction that advances joint objectives. This requires careful scheduling so that time is allotted for developing rapport.”²

Students from the four institutions collaborated, conceived and created to devise three quite different cross-cultural design solutions together. Studio sessions were planned to bring fashion and communication designers and faculty together to work collaboratively on fashion designing a product (for example, a fashion or accessory collection or textile design) or a service (for example, a fashion show, fashion app or fashion consultancy). The design outcomes included reusing materials to create accessories, zero-waste patternmaking for jackets, and an ethically conscious fashion application. Most importantly, Barton correctly anticipated that “our connectedness within China and Shanghai will result in exchanges of ideas and expertise, and will present our students and staff with opportunities to learn overseas and become culturally aware.”³



Figure 9. Discussing design. Photograph: Margo Barton.



Figure 10. Corey Adams presenting his app concept to the panel, Shanghai, China. Photograph: Margo Barton.



Figure 11. New Zealand and Chinese-based students work together in the textile studio, Shenzhen Polytechnic, June 2017. Photograph: Morgan Yang.

Through this project, students gained new knowledge of sustainability and culture. Taylor Pearce (Fashion Design) stated that she had gained “new understanding, I’ve realised a new importance on sustainability. I’ve realised how important it is and how you can do little things, and how subconsciously we do little things that are a more ethical practice without realising [that sustainability is] a bigger part of what I do than I thought.”

VISITING CHINESE DESIGN SCHOOLS

The groups visited the following institutions: Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology, Donghua University (Shanghai), Shanghai College of Art and Design, Shanghai University of Engineering Science (SUES), International Fashion Academy Paris in Shanghai (IFA Paris), Shenzhen Polytechnic and Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

The students and faculty from Otago Polytechnic visited campuses in Shanghai, Beijing, Shenzhen and Hong Kong and attended the China Graduate Fashion Week in Beijing. For Holly Kumboroff (Communication Design), the universities she particularly enjoyed were “Shenzhen [Shenzhen Polytechnic] and Hong Kong [Hong Kong Polytechnic University] – but more so Shenzhen, because we gained such an in-depth understanding of their polytechnic and I felt like I learned the most there – not just about arts but about China and the history.”

CROSS-CULTURAL FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY SHOOT

The students and staff on this trip always needed to be agile and responsive to the various opportunities that came their way. One opportunity was a cross-cultural fashion photography shoot undertaken with one of the exhibiting artists from the “Anything Could Happen” exhibition. David K Shields (<http://www.davidkshields.com/>), a notable international fashion photographer, undertook a collaborative fashion shoot for Black Magazine Online (<http://www.blackmagazine.co.nz>) that focused on collaborating with and promoting emerging talent from China and New Zealand. The shoot crew included fashion designers from Shanghai University of Engineering Science (SUES), IFA (Paris) in Shanghai and Otago Polytechnic, with models from SUES, as well as Otago Polytechnic photography assistants and fashion faculty.



Figure 12. Cross-cultural fashion photography shoot in Xinzha Road area, Shanghai, China, May 2017.
 Designer Taylor Pearce, Otago Polytechnic; model Han Zhuhui from SUES.
 Photographer David K Shields; photography assistant Holly Kumbaroff.



Figure 13. Cross-cultural fashion photography shoot in Xinzha Road area, Shanghai, China, May 2017.
 Designer Guan Xin, SUES; model Li Zhenfeng from SUES.
 Photographer David K Shields; photography assistant Holly Kumbaroff.



Figure 14. Cross-cultural fashion photography shoot in Xinzha Road area, Shanghai, China, May 2017. Designer Corey Adams, Otago Polytechnic; model Li Zhenfeng from SUES. Photographer David K Shields; photography assistant Holly Kumbaroff.



Figure 15. Cross-cultural fashion photography shoot in Xinzha Road area, Shanghai, China, May 2017. Designer Li Dan, SUES; model Han Zhuhui from SUES. Photographer David K Shields; photography assistant Holly Kumbaroff.



Figure 16. Cross-cultural fashion photography shoot in Xinzha Road area, Shanghai, China, May 2017. Behind the scenes with Photographer David K Shields. Photograph: Margo Barton.

The fashion shoot occurred within a block between Xinzha Road and Suzhou Creek, the area surrounding the youth hostel where the PMSA team and David K Shields stayed. To our eyes, this district seemed authentically urban Chinese, unspoilt by the overt Westernisation apparent in the busy tourist areas of Shanghai. The authenticity of the surrounding environment was a key element in the imagery that resulted, and the interaction with the local Xinzha Road residents while the shoot was underway added to this unique experience.

Corey Adams (Fashion Design), one of the designers featured in the fashion shoot, stated:

(I) had always wanted to launch my own business within Eastern Asia, and I feel like the six weeks that I have spent here has given me a larger understanding of how it operates and how to set myself up better than if I was coming in blind. It's also given me first-hand knowledge of how different trends operate here. It helps me have a business model that is more successful and sustainable than going in with just the thoughts of what works in New Zealand.

Through participating in the Anything Could Happen project, emerging fashion and communication designers, and the students and colleagues of the participating design schools, will be better placed to become active participants in a culturally savvy global community of fashion professionals. We see this entire programme of six weeks as providing students and staff with a window into Chinese fashion design practices, as well as a mirror to reflect on their own. The students agreed that the experience was invaluable for their education and development as young designers, in ways that will profoundly affect their designs and careers.

Margo Barton is Professor of Fashion at the School of Design, Otago Polytechnic, Dunedin, New Zealand. Her teaching practice draws on her research with a focus on fashion communication, fashion events and exhibitions, design projects and cross cultural collaborations at undergraduate and post graduate levels. Margo is actively involved in the wider fashion communities in New Zealand and internationally in her roles on the iD Dunedin Fashion Week executive board, and as a member of the executive committee of the International Foundation of Fashion Technology Institutes.

Jane Malthus is a part-time senior lecturer in the School of Design at Otago Polytechnic, New Zealand, an independent dress historian and curator and a part-time professional practice fellow at the University of Otago. She has qualifications in Clothing and Textile Sciences, History and Fine Arts. Her research focuses on social, cultural and historical questions about nineteenth and twentieth century dress, often involving material artifacts in the Otago Museum collection, where she has been an honorary curator for over 30 years, or in the Eden Hore Collection.

Annette Cadogan is a senior fashion academic and designer at the School of Design, Otago Polytechnic, Dunedin, New Zealand with a research and teaching focus on the development of prototypes for both fashion & product design. Annette teaches pattern & garment technology, product development and production planning in the Bachelor of Design program often focussing on underwear, swimwear and accessories. Annette's research is focussed on collaborative projects with researchers and external stakeholders on a diverse variety of projects such as Cactus Outdoor; Innovation Workspace OP, NOM*d, Shocktop and Jane Venis (performance artist).

Erin Broughton is a final year Bachelor of Design student studying communication design at the School of Design, Otago Polytechnic, Dunedin, New Zealand. Erin is also the Music Director at Radio One 91fm, Dunedin; and has a Bachelor of Art majoring in English from the University of Otago.

- 1 CE Hmelo-Silver; "Problem-Based Learning: What and How do Students Learn?" *Educational Psychology Review*, 16 (2004), 235-66; Henk G Schmidt, Sofie MM Loyens, Tamara Van Gog and Fred Paas, "Problem-based Learning is Compatible with Human Cognitive Architecture: Commentary on Kirschner, Sweller; and Clark," *Educational Psychologist*, 42:2 (2007), 91-7.
- 2 Nancy Cheng and Thomas Kvan, "Design Collaboration Strategies," paper presented at the Fifth International Conference on Design and Decision Support Systems in Architecture, 2000.
- 3 Margo Barton, "Prime Minister's Scholarship Asia application", 2016.

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR SOCIAL ENTERPRISES: THE ROLE OF DESIGN IN EMPOWERMENT

Vandana Bhandari

ABSTRACT

Social entrepreneurship has played an important role in the development and livelihood of people in different areas of India. This article presents new directions for a social venture to achieve the goals of an organisation. It proposes that collaborative innovation between designers and social enterprises can become a means of empowerment.

In 1988 Sadhna, a social enterprise, was conceived with the aim of providing rural and urban slum and tribal women from Udaipur with alternatives for income generation and empowerment. The main objective of Sadhna, a women's handicraft organisation, has been to create a sustainable and independent world for its artisan members. One of the challenges it faced was to make products of good quality with market appeal. The dynamic and enduring forces behind the fashion industry created a threat to this objective of building a sustainable enterprise.

With a history of nearly two decades, the organisation has now come to a stage where it needs to innovate in order to maintain itself. One of the important ways in which this can be accomplished is to introduce design as an essential part of product development.

This paper aims to demonstrate that design is an effective and efficient means of expanding the capacity of artisans and that it enhances their understanding of the potential of new markets. A case study approach is used to understand how design is important as a means of creating livelihoods for women artisans through craft intervention projects run by design institutes and professional designers. The reflections and analysis offered suggest ways of making design interventions economically viable, socially equitable, culturally sensitive and environmentally responsible.

INTRODUCTION

Social entrepreneurship has played an important role in the development and subsistence of people in different areas of India. This paper proposes that collaborative innovation between designers and social enterprises can become a means of empowerment. According to Shashank Shah,

Social enterprises are organizations that have created models for efficiently catering to basic human needs that existing markets and institutions have failed to satisfy. [They] combine the resourcefulness of traditional entrepreneurship with a mission to change society. In the handicraft sector, social enterprises generate opportunities for creation of alternative sources of livelihood for rural populations that are predominantly dependent on the agricultural sector.¹

Sadhna, a women's handicraft enterprise, is one such social enterprise, and provides a sustainable and independent environment for the women who form this organisation. Its operations are located in Udaipur, a city in the western Indian state of Rajasthan, and its environs, a district which has a large tribal population (mainly the Bhil and Garasia tribes). The organisation was established to provide permanent work and alternative incomes for women working under the umbrella of Seva Mandir, an NGO which has been working for 40 years with the rural population in

Udaipur: Today, Sadhna has 700 members in 49 groups spread over 16 locations in and around the city. Each group comprises of 10-20 artisans, and numbers are growing. Sadhna's operational area includes the villages of Delaware, Madar, Sheeshwi, Karol Colony, Ratakhet, Manoharpura, Khanjpeer, Bhuwana, Godwa-Jhadol, Bhinder, Fatehnagar, and Kankroli, all situated in the Udaipur region.

In the early 1980s, household income in this region was solely dependent on rain-fed agriculture and there was pressure to initiate income-generation activity that would involve women. In 1988, Seva Mandir decided to explore and introduce non-farm-based income generation projects and, after several efforts, surveys and studies, the NGO decided to teach local women embroidery skills – mainly patchwork, appliqué and basic running stitches (tanka embroidery). Seva Mandir started its patchwork programme by training 15 women. This initial cohort became Sadhna in 2004.

The key feature of the organisation is that members are taught the skills of embroidery – unlike other traditional craft clusters in India, where the artisans involved have a hereditary skill. Typically, when a designer works with artisans, they possess a knowledge bank with years of expertise and are capable of adding great value to their finished products on their own account.² At Sadhna by contrast, as the result of constant engagement with new artisans, varied levels of skill and tacit knowledge of the craft and organisation co-exist, and thus 'hand-holding' becomes a valuable tool.

Sadhna actively coordinates with other organisations working in the field of handicrafts, such as SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association) in Lucknow and SASHA in Kolkata, and organises exposure visits for its women artisans to such organisations. Sadhna is run as a professional enterprise and remains a trust-for-profit social brand, whose main goal is to reach out to as many women as possible. Members are supported to become economically independent through exposure to skills, design knowledge and the formation of collaborative groups, rather than to earn large profits per se.

The artisans involved with Sadhna create textile products using handwork techniques such as appliqué and running stitch on kurtas (tunics), saris, home furnishings and accessories. Sadhna sells its products through retail showrooms and also caters for B2B orders. It produces products for both the domestic and export markets and also sells through exhibitions in different venues.

The organisation has been instrumental in changing the lives of its members, who previously had limited exposure for their work outside their immediate social environment. The impact has been so positive that the artisans involved have become confident enough to make their own decisions within the family, as well as to interact with other socio-economic groups. It has also empowered the women economically, resulting in marked improvements in their social status, awareness of education, healthcare and family life.

One of the key reasons for the continued success of Sadhna has been its engagement with professionals such as designers, who have introduced both explicit practical solutions and implicit social functions into the organisation. Right from its early stages, Sadhna realised the importance of professional management in boosting outputs. The role of design is progressively becoming fundamental to creating innovation ecosystems and in improving productivity and market reach, which is so important in the modern economy. As it has grown, Sadhna has been engaging with designers in different ways. These collaborations have led to many changes in the organisation, and a few of them are discussed below.

INTRODUCTION TO NEW SKILLS

Sadhna is constantly working on new designs, colours and the variety of its offerings in order to create new products. Previously, appliqué was the mainstay of Sadhna, but this was soon expanded to include the traditional tanka work of the region. Today, skill development training is always available the artisans, enabling them to enhance

their understanding of finished products in terms of their design and marketing potential. Design workshops are organised with professional designers who guide Sadhna members to create product designs that incorporate innovation and practicality, as well as a creative combination of traditional and contemporary features, which in turn helps improve efficiency and boost quality. By these means, new marketing linkages are established which increase sales further.

Participation in this creative process helps the women to be involved in more than just labour; they also learn valuable marketing and design skills. Quality assurance and the introduction of superior finishing techniques in the stitching and fit of garments has also become a focus of these workshops.

LONG-TERM INTERACTION OF DESIGNERS WITH SADHNA AND ITS ARTISANS

While the importance of design in the social sector is widely acknowledged, often the financial outlay involved becomes difficult to justify and sustain. In the initial years of the group, designers were engaged for very short periods. Typically, a workshop of 10-15 days was held where the designer would work with artisans to develop a product range. This presented several challenges, including the difficulty of producing pieces of the same design value and quality after the designer had left the project. In the group's early years, this led management to see design as a failure and designers as a waste of precious resources. It was only when designers started to be involved for longer periods that their contribution was recognised as an asset and began to be acknowledged. Although management was open to the concept of design, integrating it into the system was a slow process.

The design engagement at Sadhna followed a participatory approach where designers built a rapport with the artisans, gradually coming to understand their skill set, capacity and motivation to work. This process also led to the social, economic and personal growth of the artisans as some began to engage with design. It was observed that when women regularly attended workshops aimed at creating new collections, they participated by giving their opinion of the designs being made. For example, if the thread colour in a pattern was too tonal, they would say that the contrast should be greater so that the stitching could be seen by the customer.³ There was an increased interaction with design issues, whether styling, motif or colour.

The designers engaged had textile and fashion backgrounds and had been trained by the National Institute of Fashion Technology and other leading design institutes. Some began working as interns and others were approached to undertake short workshops. A few were subsequently absorbed into Sadhna as employees and are now responsible for a multitude of functions in addition to design.

DIVERSIFICATION OF PRODUCTS

Initially, the products made were for domestic use and included cushions, bedspreads and other home furnishings. Designers with an advanced understanding of sizing, patternmaking, construction techniques and fashion trends introduced clothing into the product mix. This was a faster-moving category than home products and enhanced the company's customer base.

GREATER FABRIC CHOICE

In the early years, Sadhna used local fabrics which included poplin, cambric and block-printing fabric from Akola, a city in Maharashtra state in central India. As designers with wider experience started to engage with the group, they introduced new, more fashionable fabrics. Innovation was also applied to local fabrics. For example, traditional block-printed fabrics from Akola were redesigned with new motifs and varied placements. A secondary benefit of this was a revival of techniques which traditional block printers had stopped practising.

INTRODUCTION OF COLOUR

Colour is an integral part of an individual's visual interface and is considered to be one of the key attributes of fashion. In the initial years, the women used black-and-white thread on differently coloured cotton or block-printed fabrics, which were sourced from Akola. This gave them a distinct identity, but limited variety in the product. As the organisation started to engage with design professionals, a larger colour palette was introduced in the product range.⁴ One relatively easy way to update and modernise a traditional craft without moving away from its core is to introduce colour. It was found that varying the colour palette significantly for each collection could be achieved without making major changes in the skills of the artisans involved and the essence of their craft. Since the women were used to a single style of working, small changes like colour were easy for them to adapt to and accept. The introduction of a varied colour palette also allowed the concept of the changing seasons to be incorporated and greater variety to be brought into the collections.

EXPANSION OF MARKETS AND MARKET AWARENESS

One of the first challenges that the Sadhna designers faced was to ensure that new markets were identified. In the early years, products were sold through exhibitions which were held locally. From here, the group's merchandise started to be sold at Dilli Haat (a marketplace in Delhi), the Nature Bazaar in Dastkar (a market fair for artisans), and then to big retailers like Fab India and other outlets. Today, Sadhna sells its products through its own website (set up in 2015), in addition to other outlets.

It became vital to ensure that the products being designed were appropriate for the market segment which they were targeting; the designers' understanding of this was crucial. For example, in the early years designers worked with artisans to create exquisite products with very fine craftsmanship. However, customers often did not place as much value on the fine techniques employed as on the perceived value of the product. Such products could not be sold widely in the markets and thus became unviable. As the brand caters to a particular market –ready-to-wear – simply creating beautiful products, which would be appropriate for a boutique, was not feasible. The understanding of customers and markets which well-trained designers bring to the organisation is thus invaluable.

The other major change in the organisation started to come when, in addition to designers, Sadhna began to work with retail consultants who connected them with retailers like Fab India. This changed the functioning of the enterprise in many ways; one of the key changes was that work became continuous rather than seasonal.

INNOVATION WITH LIMITED SKILLS

Another challenge faced by the designers who have worked with Sadhna is that although the skills of the women artisans involved are of good quality, their skill set is limited, as tanka, appliqué and patchwork have been the focus of training programmes. It is a challenge for the designer to ensure that, each season, the products that the group make have a freshness and allure for the customer. The majority of artisans treat their income from Sadhna as supplemental, and so encouraging a culture of timely delivery is often a challenge. Among the other challenges faced by designers is the ability of the workers to adapt to new styles. They are comfortable with routine work and when contemporary styles are introduced they are often hesitant to make rapid transitions.

CONCLUSION

Most craft organisations face the challenge of maintaining a balance between the authenticity of their traditional craft techniques and aesthetics and meeting the demands of the modern consumer.⁵ Sadhna is in a unique position as the craft the artisans use is a taught skill and they can work closely with the market as long as the goal of social empowerment is met.

There exists a fundamental social and economic disconnect between the artisan and the market – for a customer to purchase a product it must make economic and aesthetic sense. The designer thus plays an important role in engaging with artisans and sensitising them to market needs on a continuing basis. They translate the value of the product, which will have an appropriate space in the market as long as it is viable, as only the market can sustain craft on a large scale.

The approach to development in craft has to be customised to local needs. It is essential to connect with the artisan and while training may improve skills, any interaction with a designer should result in enhancement at different levels for the artisan. The success of design in a social organisation depends on giving fair credit to the crafts person as well as the community, which in turn leads to an enhanced sense of pride, innovation, self-sufficiency and improved economic and social status, which is the goal of social entrepreneurship.

Vandana Bhandari is a Professor at the National Institute of Fashion Technology, New Delhi. Extensively published in journals and magazines, Dr. Bhandari has also authored and compiled books on fashion and textiles. Her works include: *Celebrating Dreams: Weddings in India* (1998), *Textiles and Crafts of India: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Manipur* (1998), The NIFT Millennium Document titled *Evolving Trends in Fashion; Costume, Textiles and Jewellery of India – Traditions in Rajasthan* and *Jewelled Textiles: Gold and Silver embellished Cloth of India*. She is guiding doctoral research and currently leading a national social innovation project for empowerment of artisans.

- 1 See Mukti Khair, Shashank Shah and Kundan Madireddy, *Innovation in Tradition: Rural Livelihood Creation in the Indian Crafts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University South Asia Institute, 2017), 9.
- 2 See Sharmila Wood, "Sustaining Crafts and Livelihood: Handmade in India," *Craft + Design Enquiry*, 3 (2011), 89-100.
- 3 Jaya Bhatt in conversation with designers from Sadhna. Interview, 2015.
- 4 Ritu Suri in conversation with designers from Sadhna. Interview, 2015.
- 5 Khair, Shah and Madireddy, *Innovation in Tradition*.

CREATING A SLOW FASHION COLLECTION – A DESIGNER–MAKER’S PROCESS

Ariane Bray



Figure 1. Ariane Bray, NZFW Collection, Lookbook image.
Model: Lily Van Buskirk. Photograph: Dylan McCutcheon-Peat.

ABSTRACT

This paper considers sustainable practices in the fashion industry that address my core brand values of environmental ethics, while supporting a strong brand identity for my label. While investigating sustainability in the fashion industry, I was presented with the opportunity to show at the New Zealand Fashion Week (NZFW) Graduate Show which debuted in 2016, presenting top emerging designers from around the country. The creation of my collection has been analysed using the method of reflective practice to consider how a brand with my values might operate within the New Zealand fashion market. Supporting these reflections, I examine key ideas behind slow fashion, a designer-maker method, and commercial sustainability in the context of both local and global fashion labels. These approaches endorse transparent business conduct to achieve improved conditions in the textile industry from production through to a garment's end of life. My research has informed the outcomes for an eight-outfit collection showed at NZFW in both design and production aspects. The result was a collection that aimed to take a holistic design approach and have lasting value for each wearer – thus avoiding the unnecessary textile waste that the planned obsolescence of fast fashion products generates.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this project has been to ask the question: *How can I, and how did I, as a designer planning to operate in the New Zealand fashion market, retain my brand values of slow fashion and a designer-maker method, and also be commercially sustainable?*

The project has been evaluated using the method of reflective practice. Indicators of success would be twofold:

1. Develop and show a collection which is material evidence of my brand values.
2. Create guidelines for my practice as a sustainable practitioner in the future.

The results of my project will form a part of an ongoing dialogue on sustainable practice and will be of use to fashion students, fashion educators and practitioners and the wider realm of designer-makers who wish to integrate sustainability into their commercial design practice.

As a designer, I aim to maintain a strong brand identity while promoting my core brand values of environmental sustainability and ethics. There is a clear market opportunity in the endeavour to produce clothing that is grounded in these principles; today, consumers are moving towards ethically produced fashion, a fashion subculture that is rapidly gaining prominence.¹ This viewpoint is supported by design theorists who use "ethical fashion" as an umbrella term covering the treatment of clothing workers, environmental impact and the effect of clothing post-use.² In this paper, I will use the term ethical fashion to focus on the treatment of workers in the production chain, rather than the broader meanings used by other commentators.

VALUES: ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AND ETHICS

I felt compelled to respond to the negative side of the fashion industry during the final year of my Bachelor of Design after attending a workshop on zero-waste fashion³ that revealed the true environmental impact of the fashion industry. In garment production, 15-20% of textiles end up on the cutting-room floor – unused and sent straight to landfill.⁴ This information led me to research further and discover that the global textiles industry is the second most environmentally damaging industry in the world.⁵ I began my research into environmentally sustainable design through exploration of zero-waste patterncutting, slow fashion and the use of sustainable fabrics.

The term "ethical fashion" can be ambiguous, as ethics are transparent and therefore are not a commodity. A patent emphasis on ethics – as with fair trade and organic products – can signify that a business is ethically run. However, many

companies take a pick-and-mix approach to ethics that allows them to maximise the “ethical” trend while masking other areas that show a less responsible attitude. For example, a business could be certified organic but still utilise cheap production methods that exploit workers. Companies aiming to benefit from the trend of ethical fashion often make changes that are compatible with a traditional Western model of consumption, such as being seen to implement better standards in the production chain. However, due to the lack of transparency in the production system, these standards cannot be guaranteed without inspectors present. This discrepancy allows a business to put on an ethical face while ignoring deep-seated issues such as animal welfare, the use of toxins in personal care products, and body image – as dealing with such issues would require a fundamental change in Western cultural practices. As consumers, it is important to research whether the business we are dealing with takes a responsible approach as a whole.

Events like the Rana Plaza factory collapse in Bangladesh have put an international focus on the production of clothing, leading to media exposure of the widespread corruption in the global fashion industry.⁶ Ethical problems, however, begin much earlier than garment production. Studies indicate that villagers in cotton-farming areas with high levels of pesticide use are developing increasing rates of cancers and birth defects.⁷ These problems are going largely unnoticed – only 9% of the brands studied in Baptist World Aid’s 2015 *Australian Fashion Report* were aware of the conditions in which their cotton was produced.⁸

At the production level, the extreme economic competition between companies means that production costs are driven down, resulting in subsistence wages for those who make their clothing.⁹ However, the popularity of ethically driven clothing brands such as Kowtow and Reformation suggest that consumers are aware of and are interested in buying ethical alternatives. This is supported by studies that reveal that many consumers understand that over-consumption does not satisfy – they are choosing a more ethical consumerism and garments produced in ways that do not negatively affect the production chain or consumers themselves.¹⁰

SLOW FASHION

To understand slow fashion it is necessary to first understand fast fashion. The apparel industry is dominated by a fast fashion approach, characterised by minimising production costs and encouraging the mass consumption of cheap but on-trend products to increase profit. There are benefits to this approach, as low prices allow for wide accessibility, allowing those who cannot afford high-end designer fashion to buy into trends. However, while there are short-term benefits, the fast fashion method of consumption can lead to customer dissatisfaction as retailers urge customers to buy more whenever the next trend becomes available. Fast fashion has economic benefits as, by responding rapidly to consumer wants, companies are able to exploit the customer’s willingness to pay for trendy products.¹¹ The downside of this system is that it relies on rapid consumption and obsolescence of products which, while creating revenue, exploits natural resources and workers and encourages wastage on a massive scale.¹²

Slow fashion aims to provide an alternative to this system by focusing on products that will look good for a longer time and that have been created by holistic methods; consumers are becoming increasingly interested in this option.¹³ Slow fashion is a design methodology that developed out of a need for clothing that has a smaller environmental and ethical impact than fast fashion. Dr Hazel Clark has investigated whether a slow fashion approach can offer a sustainable solution for fashion; her interpretation of slow fashion is best articulated in her own words: “Valuing local resources and distributed economies, transparent production systems with less intermediation between producer and consumer; and sustainable and sensorial products that have a longer usable life and are more highly valued than typical ‘consumables’”¹⁴

The value placed on the local raises issues within New Zealand, where it is difficult to source a variety of locally produced fabrics, as the majority are still imported. Without being present on-site, it is difficult to ensure that workers are being treated ethically and that environmental impacts are being considered. This aspect can be controlled in certain areas by producing garments locally, as many New Zealand designers do. However, without factories and wholesalers being completely transparent in their conduct, it is difficult to ensure that the desired standards are being



Figure 2. Ariane Bray, *Quiet Spectacle*. Photoshoot at an ancient water town, Shanghai.
Models: Shanghai University of Engineering Science. Photograph: Amy Politt.

met. With these issues in mind, New Zealand designers must consider which areas they *can* control.

Slow fashion offers a way for clothing to be more authentic; combining this with other design approaches presents an opportunity to further increase the value of a responsibly sourced and produced product.

DESIGNER-MAKERS

The designer-maker approach complements descriptions of slow fashion, which parallel the farmers' market system by which local producers sell directly to the community.¹⁵ A designer-maker is an individual who designs and makes garments in small batch quantities, usually using some prefabricated materials. This method is appropriate for someone in the early development stages of their brand, as without the resources to take on multiple employees the designer must take a hands-on approach, often becoming business manager; designer; machinist, visual communicator and creative director rolled into one.¹⁶

A designer-maker is similar to a craftsperson, as both take a hands-on approach to their work. The main difference lies in the designer-maker's ability to outsource production; for a craftsperson, personal involvement with production is crucial.¹⁷ Items made by a designer-maker will inherently have a high cost, as the individual needs to sustain themselves and production is highly labour-intensive. This contrasts strikingly with fast fashion pricing, but embodies a very different value proposition. Higher-priced, more holistic products can lead to fewer purchases and less wastage, as the wearer is less likely to dispose of something that cost them a good deal, especially if they understand the reasoning behind the price. Such garments are more likely to be gifted or passed on to the next generation when they are no longer worn by the original purchaser.¹⁸

COMMERCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

While it remains crucial for me to undertake my practice in a socially responsible way, it is equally important that this approach allows for commercial sustainability. While slow fashion principles encourage the production of garments with longevity, in order to sustain a business it is necessary to build customer loyalty – to have customers return and continue purchasing products. Designers must therefore have a clear picture of their target market and the products their customers will purchase and, while each designer takes a different approach, the strength of one's brand identity remains key.

Although I have indicated that my personal design style aims to avoid passing trends, it is important to be aware of macro trends that reveal people's attitudes to various issues and lifestyles as well as to current political, social and economic concerns. My embracing of ethics and sustainability align with the growing global demand for ethical fashion.

A close relationship between producer and consumer – encouraged by both slow fashion and designer-maker practices – offers a pathway for higher levels of consumer satisfaction. When a product begins to feel less new and exciting, easy access to the designer provides an avenue whereby the garment can be adapted rather than disposed of.

COLLECTION PLANNING

The NZFW Graduate Show provided me with the opportunity to completely re-evaluate and build on my 2015 collection, "Quiet Spectacle." I began designing with the same concept and colour palette, following an extensive process of research, reflection and design. The result was eight completely new looks, that drew on earlier garments in completely different ways.

When I reflected on my collection for NZFW, I considered the balance between commercial appeal and aesthetic impact. Whereas "Quiet Spectacle" consisted of heavy layering, I made the decision to keep layering to a minimum for the NZFW collection as I felt it distracted from what was underneath. I wanted each piece to be wearable in an everyday context, and therefore selected fabrics that I like to wear myself in everyday life: viscose, wool crepe, silk and linen. While I was keen to source ethical fabrics, due to the dearth of ethical fabric wholesalers in New Zealand, time constraints for sourcing overseas, and the inclusion of several pieces from "Quiet Spectacle," I was unable to



Figure 3. Ariane Bray, *Quiet Spectacle*, 2015, graduate collection. Models: Roseanna Bray and Alex Burns.
Photograph: Dylan McCutcheon-Peat.

access ethical fabrics for NZFW. In future, it will be important to source ethically produced fabrics that are available in bulk to allow me to produce garments commercially.

“Quiet Spectacle” was characterised by the difficult and labour-intensive textile manipulation of drawn thread. Mindful of the commercial context of NZFW, I minimised the garments with this type of textile and incorporated a premade textile that had been woven with a similar look. While the original manipulation was done to display the craft-like connection to a garment made by a designer-maker, it is not feasible to produce such pieces in bulk due to the time it takes to create them. One challenge for my next collection is to create and incorporate a textile manipulation or other feature in the collection that adds interest in a similar way and is commercially sustainable.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this project has been to reflect on theories of slow fashion, designer-making and commercial sustainability in order to guide my future practice as a fashion designer in the New Zealand market.

The first of my original aims was to develop and show a collection which would stand as material evidence of my brand values. At NZFW, I created a collection of eight outfits designed through reflective practice on my previous work which incorporated the findings of the literature I had researched. The design outcomes reflected my brand value of environmental sustainability through high-quality finishing and fabrics used in timeless pieces intended to replace today’s throw-away approach with an investment in the buyer’s wardrobe.

Ethics have been considered through my personal production of the collection – I was able to ensure both quality production and my own personal wellbeing as the producer. I created each garment by hand, maintaining the close relationship that a designer-maker has with their products; I also commercialised the textile manipulation for a more realistic approach to the craft side. My inability to source fabrics with environmental and ethical production guarantees means that this is an ongoing goal for my future practice.

My second aim was to create guidelines for my practice as a sustainable practitioner in the future. My Honours year project began with the intention to develop a collection created using ethically and environmentally sound fabrics. However, being selected for NZFW meant that the project had to be rethought – it became an extension of my graduate collection, encouraging me to reflect and grow rather than starting afresh.

I believe that the entire production chain should be treated fairly; this includes both fabric production workers overseas and those in local garment construction. Ideally, I would source fabrics locally to ensure that standards are being met. However, due to their lack of availability in New Zealand, trust must be placed in accreditation services used by overseas wholesalers such as Fair Trade and Social Accountability Accreditation.

As I grow my brand, I intend to be more involved in the ethics behind my products by developing relationships with producers. I believe that environmental considerations should be embedded throughout the entire chain to make clothing as sustainable as possible. These practices will be gradually become second nature and guide my future conduct. Following my observations on commercial sustainability, I plan to create a space where I can offer customers a personal service and continue selling previous seasons’ products to prolong the life of a garment.

I understand that it is not possible to implement all elements of slow fashion and designer-making and at the same time achieve instant commercial viability, and that through a commitment to ongoing development I can improve my personal and professional approach to these values and needs. Along with my commitment to using ethically produced fabrics, I seek to consider the end life of my garments through methods that both increase value to the consumer and revenue to the producer, and reduce wastage and unsustainable behaviour.

Ariane Bray is a Dunedin-based designer with a strong focus on slow fashion and designer–maker methods in her practice. Ariane has shown collections in Shanghai, New Zealand and at several iD Dunedin Fashion Weeks. Since graduating with a Bachelor of Design (Honours) in March 2017, she has worked in the local fashion industry. Alongside this, she continues her own practice with the aim of developing her portfolio for further career and study opportunities.

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UNSTITCHED: LOCAL FASHION REVOLUTION DUNEDIN

Fiona Clements

Unstitched, a Dunedin initiative, takes the form of a series of practical workshops (held in 2016 and 2017, so far) open to the public, with the aim of sharing the skills and processes involved in creating, maintaining and re-purposing contemporary fashion.

The workshops are run by Just Atelier (Fiona Clements and Fiona Jenkin), who set up their sewing machines, tables, mending library and education resources in various spaces so people can come to a safe space to participate in practical mending, knitting, upcycling, soft-toy making, making garments and gifts for others – and also to discuss hard questions about the global fashion industry. Learning and sharing skills and information, connecting and networking are thus facilitated, with the aim of encouraging conscious fashion consumption by spreading awareness and inspiring better environmental choices in clothing.

Fiona Clements, who also makes unique, environmentally friendly fashion under the name Senorita AweSUMO, is a working committee member of Fashion Revolution, a global movement calling for greater transparency, sustainability and ethics in the fashion industry. Fashion Revolution believes that fashion can be made in a safe, clean and fair way where creativity, quality, environment and people are valued equally. They recognise that problems in the fashion industry are global, but address these with local solutions – such as Unstitched – to engage communities in socially and environmentally positive fashion initiatives.

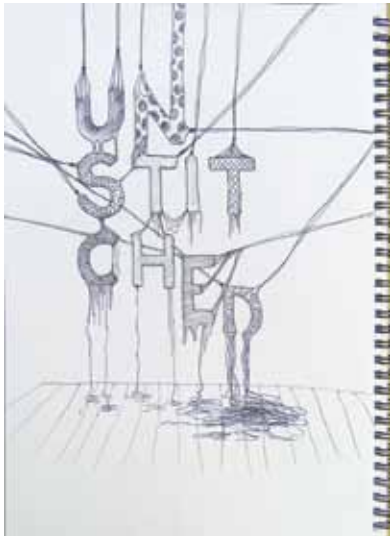


Figure 1. Inspirational drawing for Unstitched installation, 2016, by Craig Scott (Head of Design Otago Museum, co-founder of thedesignkids.org). Photographer: Fiona Clements.

Unstitched works with Urban Dream Brokerage Dunedin, which matches vacant retail spaces to artists, designers, businesses and community groups in conjunction with the property owners. When Unstitched popped up in one of Urban Dream Brokerage's vacant spaces, it drew attention with an inviting and eye-catching window display.

UNSTITCHED 2016/2017

We unstash the fashion industry with our conversations and our community actions, and then stitch it up again through exchanges and sewing. Sharing skills and knowledge, we create a safe space to have a hard discussion, where love is offered instead of shame.

Businesses and media perpetuate the inherent problems in the fashion industry and the present fashion system. We create a vibrant space that looks towards a better closed-loop fashion system, by starting with creative ideas and small local actions. We must start somewhere, and Fashion Revolution provides a global conversation to achieve that. Unstitched enables access to a wider community of resources and skills, creating connections and new networks of practitioners and groups.

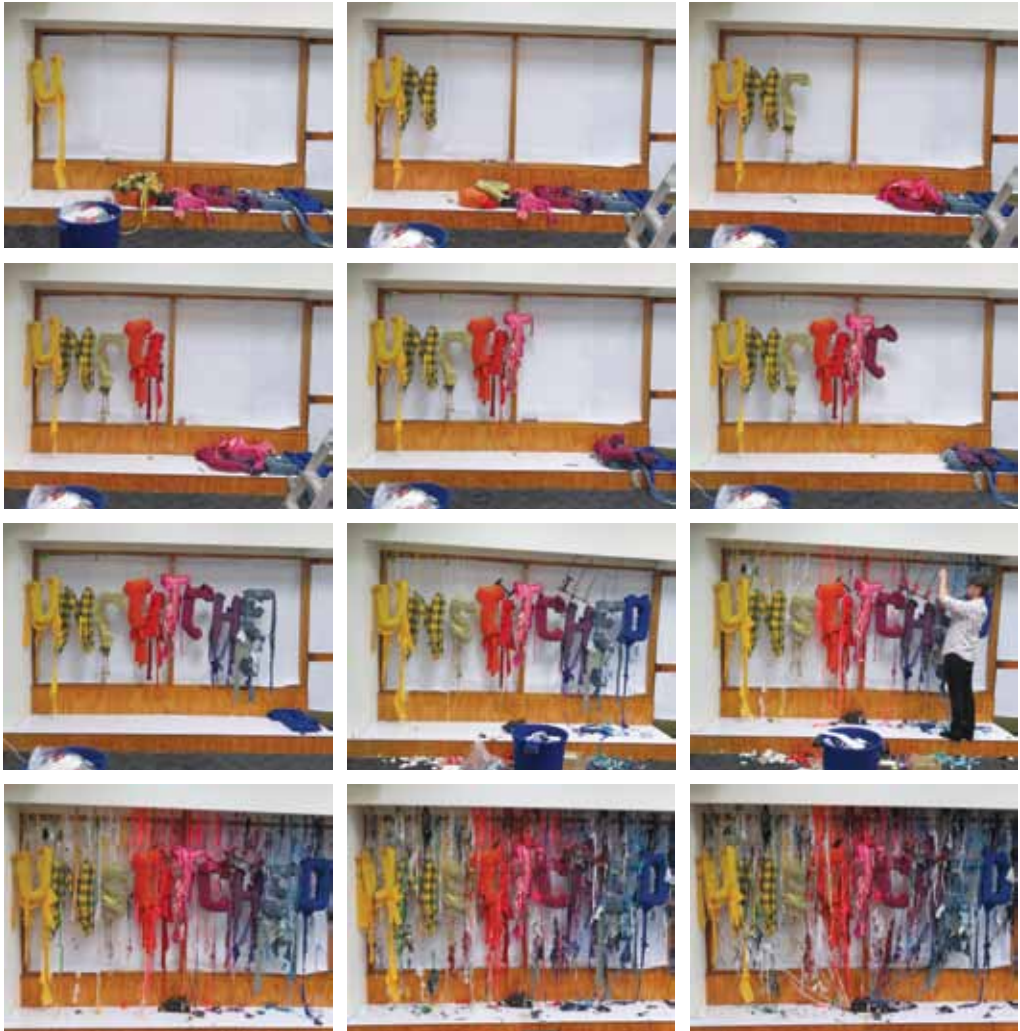


Figure 2. Unstitched, 2016, installation by Senorita AweSUMO and Craig Scott. The letters are made from upcycled textiles, stuffed with neoprene and other found stuffing, strung up and entangled with threads and other sewing accoutrements, including pieces of an old industrial Singer sewing machine. The strings come together in the machinery positioned below the letters, tangled into its moving parts. Photographer: Fiona Clements.

UNSTITCHED 2017 – STITCHED UP!

Unstitched's 2017 window display uses plastic, textiles and plants to reimagine the transparency of a usual fashion window display. Instead of mannequins wearing the next big thing, plastic pockets in the shape of letters were created and filled with unused textiles to spell out "UNSTITCHED." The middle letter, I, is filled with a living specimen of New Zealand spinach, donated by the North East Valley community garden. In front of this are giant scissors, needle and a quick unpick made from cardboard. The needle is threaded with T-shirt yarn, which is stitched around the letters and comes from a large spool of thread. The scissor handles are also made from plastic and rescued textiles from T-shirts worn by staff at Re:Fuel Dunedin.



Figure 3. Unstitched, 2016, installation by Senorita AweSUMO and Craig Scott. Photographer: Fiona Clements.



Figure 4. Unstitched, 2017, installation by Senorita AweSUMO and MUNAYsisters. In 2017, Unstitched's window display was co-created by The Design Kids Dunedin (thedesignkids.org) and Senorita AweSUMO. Photographer: Fiona Clements.



Figure 5. Unstitched, 2017, installation (detail). Photographer: Fiona Clements.



Figure 6. Unstitched, 2017, installation, inside view of window. Photographer: Fiona Clements.



Figures 7-10. Unstitched, 2017, installation, outside view of window.

The second window in the display was created using plastic sourced from the packaging of made-in-China garments in the fashion system. So much plastic is used just for packaging fashion items for transport to stores, where it is removed for display, and then the clothes are repackaged in plastic bags for transport by consumer. In the display, plastic bags have been transformed into a quilt of hearts, à la Just Atelier's logo. The three hearts in the middle have been made into pockets to collect our waste as we work over the month of Unstitched: Local Fashion Revolution. How full will they be at the end?

The month-long Stitched Up pop-up events attracted over 400 people to come and participate in sewing projects and conversations. Unstitched 2017 is continuing in the form of monthly Mend and Make Awesome sessions at Just Atelier's studios and pop-ups. Photographer: Fiona Clements.



Figure 11. Fi Clements (Senorita AweSUMO), Tannia Lee of Seen in Second-hand Land, and Sarah Lancaster of SewLove on Tour: "Stitched Up" lettering hangs above the Mend and Make Awesome space; this is where we stitch garments together, fabricated through many different forms of reuse. This lettering was reused from the 2016 installation, with the addition of a 'P'. Sarah Lancaster (www.sewlove.nz) parked her solar-powered mobile sewing truck in the Octagon to help advertise Stitched Up, and she and Fiona Jenkin ran an Op Shop Hop, that included Tannia Lee, as part of Unstitched. Photographer: Fiona Jenkin.

Fiona Clements. Pakeha, Kai Tahu, Clan Gordon, Craftivist, Zerowaste Textile Practitioner. Fiona graduated Bachelor of Design (Fashion) from Otago Polytechnic School of Design in 2011 and is currently completing a Graduate Diploma in Sustainable Practice (OP). Fiona designs under her own label Senorita AweSUMO and is also the co-founder of Just Atelier Trust.

Global problem, Local solution

CONSIDERING YOUR AGE: A STUDY OF HOW WOMEN ABOVE THE AGE OF SIXTY EXPRESS THEMSELVES THROUGH FASHION

Divya N

“Considering your age, you dress well and still look beautiful.”

This is the number one compliment my mother has been receiving ever since she turned 60, three years ago. Disenchanted by our obsession with reading youth as beauty, I vowed to examine the nuances of the relationship that exists between fashion and age. What motivates a fashionable senior woman to dress the way she does? How does society regard a well-dressed senior woman? Is fashion only for the young? Or does it have a place for the elderly?

Last year as I found my first grey hair strand, I realised that I too was ageing. As the importance of a conversation on ageing dawned on me, I reached out to seven ordinary, well-dressed women between the ages of 61 and 74 seeking understanding. Hailing from varying geographical locations, financial and educational backgrounds, these women were willing to spend money to look and feel good. I chose women who are not encompassed within conventional fashion studies, but still wear stylish clothes and make choices with regard to them.¹ A series of semi-structured interviews backed by secondary research elicited information about style influences, consumption patterns, ideals imposed by the society, cohort effect, zeitgeist, and the expectation these women have from brands.

THE FASHIONABLE SENIOR WOMAN

According to Magdalena Kondej of Euromonitor, over-65s makes up over 9 percent of the world's population. Though media often portrays ageing in a negative light, 60-plus women are fitter and more energetic than ever.² They are no longer satisfied by just living out their lives by performing traditional, age-appropriate roles. They are not sitting in rocking chairs waiting for the end;³ they want to live life to the fullest, as is the spirit of the times. In a telephone conversation with the author, Judith Boyd (74, ex-nurse and hat-store owner from Denver, Colorado, USA) expressed her wish to travel, explore new relationships and strengthen existing ones. Nina Fletcher (66, a polymer clay artist from the UK) believes in enriching her life by learning new skills. “I go out often with friends and enjoy dressing up for it,” she says in an email.

Senior women are self-aware, having experienced various ups and downs in life. They are mindful of their personalities, their likes and dislikes, and are not interested in compromising on their happiness. They embrace their flaws and acknowledge their issues while trying to be an exquisite version of themselves. A few of them feel the same as they did in their twenties, while others are confident now more than ever.⁴ Robin Showstack (61, jewellery-maker and ex-hospital clerk from Belmont, Massachusetts) does not associate with the word ‘elderly’ and prefers to be called ‘mature’ or ‘senior’ instead. These third-agers no longer consider themselves a grey market, but a golden market.⁵

CULTURAL CONSTITUTION OF AGE WITH REGARD TO FASHION

In her book *Fashion and Age*, Julia Twigg (2013) discusses how, throughout history, certain forms and styles of dress have been deemed appropriate – or more significantly, inappropriate – for people as they age. Older women, in particular, have been subject to social pressure to tone down; to adopt self-effacing, covered-up styles.⁶ Time and again experts have argued over whether a woman should “dress up” for herself or to elicit a reaction from someone else. Adding age to the mix complicates the matter; because of the further interrogation of what is the expected reaction and who is it being elicited from.⁷ In a personal discussion with me, Viji Hariharan (63, homemaker from Chennai, India) said: “My children see me only as their mother and experience angst when I try something new. They forget that I am my own person too.” Invariably, fashion comes under scrutiny due to its inescapable linkage with a woman’s sexuality. While a teen considers wearing a bralette to be cool, a mature woman considers wearing it shameful. This makes me question if there is an age limit or a ceiling up to which a woman can showcase her sexuality – and beyond which it is prohibited.

On the other hand, I understand that with age comes the opportunity to dress with great sophistication.⁸ In Hariharan’s opinion, the elderly must dress elegantly and modestly according to their age. However, she is quick to point out that being modest does not translate to being overly conservative. Apart from Indian wear, her wardrobe includes Western wear such as pants, tops, T-shirts and jeans. However, she draws the line at skirts and dresses, because these are items of clothing that are typically associated with adolescent girls in India. In a personal interview, Jayanthi Mukundan (62, homemaker from Chennai, India) insists that seniors should wear whatever that suits their body type. Nonetheless, her conditioning stops her from looking at senior women as sexual beings.

Growing up in a culture that encourages even younger women to feel ‘shame’ when showcasing their bodies, I wonder if the relationship between age, fashion and sexuality is addressed differently by different cultures. As Hariharan explained: “Most Indian women lose their right to dress the way they want after marriage. Their appearance, particularly clothing, is defined by how their husband or in-laws want them to look. I regard myself fortunate that my husband supports my fashion escapades, [but] many do not even get a chance to explore themselves, even in their youth.”

Showstuck, however, is devastated when age-appropriate dressing is suggested. She points to designers and icons who “dress young” like Betsy Johnson, Diane von Furstenberg and Anna Wintour, asserting that fashion has no age boundaries. In an eloquent email interview with me, Josephine Lalwan (66, former PR manager and blogger on “Chicatanyage” from St. Tropez, France) describes the need to adapt trends to suit one’s own body. Boyd and Fletcher too believe that everyone, regardless of age, should express themselves as they wish, in spite of the rampant ageism that is prevalent in society.

SENIOR FASHION ICONS – SHAPING IDENTITY IN LATER LIFE

A notable increase in senior fashion models in the Western world occurred in 2012. Older women were portrayed as inspirational figures, vibrant and empowering in their own right. Lanvin featured the then 62-year-old Tziporah Salamon and the 82-year-old Jacquie Murdock in their Fall 2012 campaign. Photographer Marsha shot Jacky O’Shaughnessy as the brand ambassador for American Apparel’s Advanced Basics line, while Juergen Teller photographed 60-year-old musician Leslie Winer for Vivienne Westwood’s 2013/14 campaign.⁹ As Dolce & Gabbana made their global audience oo and aah over their advertisements by casting a trio of adorable grandmothers in their spring 2015 campaign, at 62 model Marie Helvin stunned the world with her fit and well-toned body during a lingerie shoot for JD Williams’ Fall 2015 50 + collection.¹⁰ Iris Apfel, 95, a senior fashion icon with her “more is more – mad fashion ideology,” established the trend of seniors wearing multiple statement jewellery pieces and eclectic



Figure 1. Fashionable senior women captured in a candid moment. Photographer: Divya N.

clothes.¹¹ This trend stimulated senior style bloggers, Instagramers and influencers to showcase eclectic senior fashion. Ari Seth Cohen's website "Advanced Style" is acclaimed for encouraging women to be stylish, creative and vital at any age. "We're working to reclaim the word 'old,'" he says. "People are ashamed of that word; they don't want it to be used. There's a huge culture of fear around aging and a whole world of anti-aging. It makes it difficult to fight."¹²

In India, there are very few senior fashion icons, except for actresses like Hema Malini and Jaya Bachchan and dancers like Dr Anitha Ratnam. Even when glamorously made up, they are portrayed as modest and elegant in advertisements, emphasising their age-appropriate looks. Elderly women in Indian TV serials are either shown wearing garish makeup and jewellery or drab, understated attire, pigeonholing them as regressive stereotypes.¹³ Why does this disparity occur? Is the West more appreciative of a mature woman than the East?

"We are instructed to dress and behave in a specific way early on in our life; a woman from a good family must constantly appear respectable, more so as she grows older," says Vijaya Narasimhan (63, homemaker from Chennai, India) in a personal interview. While she explores eclectic jewellery, trendy prints and vivid colours, she chooses to be swathed modestly in sarees. "There is a definitive ambiguity in this clothing that helps blend in with the society," she feels. All things considered, Mukundan too believes in maintaining decorum with concealing silhouettes at her age. Unusual colours, attractive fabrics, prints and one-of-a-kind jewellery items transition her look from fading to fabulous.

FASHION AND THE AGEING BODY

We live in a world of fashion dichotomy, where designers showcase their expensive collections on teenagers or and twenty-something models when their real customers are much older. Design students, too, often create collections for the 18-21 age group, citing the experimental nature of this segment. They consider anyone above 40 to be old

and boring. To rectify this bias, in 2016 JD Williams launched a “Fifty plus fashion week,” where fashion students designed collections specifically for senior women. Models aged between 50 and 87 walked the ramp.¹⁴ Sadly, this event has failed to improve age diversity in succeeding ramp shows at fashion weeks. During the 2017 London Fashion Week, five senior models including Jilly Johnson (63) and Janie Felstead (65), led by JD Williams, held a demonstration calling for the wider use of older models at runway shows.¹⁵

Fashion icons, however, represent only a tiny fraction of women over a certain age. While a few real women consider them as their inspiration to look good and stay fit, a majority of senior women are skeptical about their looks. According to a YouGov study carried out in 2016, over half of all British women over 50 did not feel confident about their bodies. In addition, they felt that they were ignored and unrepresented in TV, magazines and the fashion industry. They thought that high-street brands encourage women to dress younger than they are instead of catering to their needs.¹⁶ The effects of ageing, such as greying thin hair, flabby arms and torso, sagging breasts and teeth loss, forces them to shy away from contemporary styling that makes the body its focus.¹⁷ “My peers wear leggings and form-fitted clothing, but I am uncomfortable in them,” point outs Hariharan, who alters readymade X-Large clothing for comfort. The popular media treats ageing as negative, and the marketing of new products and services in the skincare, cosmetics and hairdressing sectors has also propagated the anti-ageing phenomenon.¹⁸

However, the desire to appear fashionable at all times motivates senior women to consume a nutritious diet, stay fit and groom themselves well, aiding their physical and emotional well-being in the process. To paraphrase Ashton Applewhite (2016), author of *This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto against Ageism*, ageing and beauty can and do co-exist – ageing doesn’t always have to be about depression or death.¹⁹

SENIOR FASHION STYLE INSPIRATION

“Growing up, the fashion and lifestyle magazines of the 1960s and 1970s were major influences,” according to the women I interviewed. Driven by peer pressure, they have undeniably wavered through the years, only to find themselves longing to stand apart from their peers with their unique styling. Boyd’s choice of looks is governed by her exposure to world culture through her travels. To embellish her hats, she draws inspiration from nature and art. For Showstack, the jewellery designer, the materials and colours she uses in her jewellery impact her personal style. Unconventional components like glass-eye beads and beetle wings have become a part of her style due to their uniqueness.

All seven women interviewed reject TV shows and cinema as a style influence, put off by the confirming (even regressive) images of elders portrayed. This is quite surprising, given that the majority of the day-time TV viewing audience are seniors. They are nevertheless influenced by advertisements – on TV and in email newsletters – which are gradually, as they say, becoming progressive in using older models.

THE SHOPPING PATTERNS OF INTERVIEWEES

Apparel – price, uniqueness and quality

Financial and social status contributes to where, what and how a senior woman shops. Hariharan, Showstack and Boyd all favour affordability and variety over quality. They prefer to shop at street markets and thrift stores or buy directly from local artisans rather than investing in heirlooms pieces or branded items. The products must work for the ‘here and now.’ “There is beauty and magic in styles from every era,” says Boyd, who is a fan of recycling clothes from estate sales, “especially since they focus on quality materials and intricate details.” Mukundan, Fletcher and Lalwan, on the other hand, vote for style and quality over price as a reflection of both their personal style and social status.



Figure 2. Dressed to kill: marrying conformity with eclectic style. Photographer: Divya N.

Accessories and jewellery

As women grow older, their emphasis is on comfort rather than just style. Except for Lalwan and Boyd, the interviewees chose shoes based on comfort. Soft materials, orthopedic supports and footwear with a good grip are preferred. On the other hand, Boyd and Lalwan experiment with heels and boots that match their clothing. "Accessories are everything. They are the soul of an ensemble. I seldom leave the house without a hat," claims Boyd. Fletcher creates matching polymer clay jewellery to wear with every top of hers. Lalwan, through her blog "Chicatanage," helps women to style simple ensembles with classic jewellery. Mukundan, Narasimhan and Hariharan reminisce about the days their ears supported large dangling earrings. But at the mention of handmade necklaces with statement pendants, their eyes light up. "The pieces do not necessarily have to match," they say, "but simply complement the outfit."

SENIORS AND FASHION BRANDS

What do women over a certain age want from brands?

Fashionable seniors might say they wear what they like and what they feel comfortable in. What does this mean for brands and designers? In order to tap into this market, brands must focus on three areas: sizing, styling and senior-centric communication.

Elderly women's bodies can develop drooping shoulders, sagging breasts and wide hips and thighs, which make them uncomfortable in standard-size clothing that is meant for young women with firm bodies. Alteration of extra-large clothing, wearing loose, shapeless clothes, and total customisation are the only available options. Even after spending a lot of time, money and energy, the results are never quite satisfactory and hardly ever fashionable, according to respondents. Thus, age and shape related sizing (as with kidswear) or in-store fitting could be considered for the elderly.

Senior style is in its nascent stages, particularly in India where there are only a handful of individual designers catering to this segment. As Boyd claims, even in the US only a few affordable retail brands are catering to seniors. "I want to be a fabulously dressed senior; I don't want to pretend that I am younger," said Hariharan, expressing disappointment over the fact that Indian brands rarely design stylised Western wear for older Indian women. Casting aside stereotypes associated with colours like pink or gray, Lalwan feels that brands should create designs that are sophisticated and classy without making them boring. However, not every senior woman is looking for mature designs. Showstack is vehemently against age-specific fashion. "No one wants to look older," she declares. "I want to dress 'young,' as I am young at heart."

Fine jewellery brands often use senior models to establish values of quality and trust. Even the costume jewellery sector is more mindful and responsive to the needs of seniors than apparel brands, offering high value via customisation. Using older models for advertising campaigns would create a stronger connection with third-agers. Lalwan and Mukundan suggest that brands could design their online stores and apps to be senior-friendly. Features like 'try at home,' provided by online jewellery stores like Caratlane and Bluestone in India, or 'cash on delivery' (COD), which is standard practice in restaurants, supermarkets or pharmaceutical stores, would enable them to shop without leaning on youngsters in their family for help.

With the growth of the ecommerce sector in India, there has been a mushrooming of businesses that scam their buyers by displaying catalogue images of fashion products on their social media channels or websites, but sell low-quality knock-offs of the same items. This makes senior women (more than their younger counterparts) wary of online shopping. While big online players like Myntra, Jabong and Flipkart offer COD, the money still has to be paid before unboxing the product. By offering trials at home before payment, websites and brands could drastically reduce the paperwork involved in returns and exchanges and create better customer relationships in the process.

LEARNING FROM OTHER SECTORS

In sectors like health and finance, the elderly have been a traditional market, with special products to focus on their needs. With world trip packages for retired couples, pilgrimage trips and women-only trails, the travel sector too has been focusing on the senior segment. The cosmetics industry, too, despite its emphasis on youthfulness, has been making great strides in skincare, haircare and makeup products for seniors. Real estate is also gearing up, with senior-living communities and serviced apartments. Overall, the focus is on freedom for seniors to live life on their own terms. The fashion industry could benefit immensely from building a comparable strategy, without dismissing ageing as a fad.

CONCLUSION

As women age, the relationship with their bodies change and fashion must be fluid enough to transform accordingly. Senior women, much like their junior counterparts, seek beautiful, inspirational fashion imagery in the age, shape and size that they can relate to. The challenge for the retail fashion industry is to recognise and cater to the growing market segment of 60-plus women. The fashion business is slowly but surely undergoing a metamorphosis of sorts, with young designers and startup brands creating merchandise for women over a certain age. Bigger brands, too, would be wise to communicate with seniors about what they want and need: which seems to be to live life to its fullest and leave behind a fashionable legacy.

Divya N is a jewellery-maker, fashion designer, design educator and mixed-media artist. She works as assistant professor in the department of Fashion Communication at the National Institute of Fashion Technology, Chennai, India. She blogs about culture and jewellery at www.jewelsofsayuri.com.

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FASHIONING IDENTITY AND THE ART OF BRICOLAGE: STUDIO-BASED RESEARCH METHODS AND REFLECTION-IN-ACTION IN FASHION DESIGN

Sharlee Ghent

I am, as researcher, a bricoleur, a maker of patchwork, a weaver of stories, an assembler of montage.

Ainslie Yardley¹



Figure 1. Sharlee Ghent, hand-knitted over dress.
Model: Cecily Reed. Photograph: Tamarat Saikerd Sri.

INTRODUCTION

This paper describes my recent Honours year project in Design (Fashion), which I completed at Otago Polytechnic. The purpose of this project was to develop and expand my skill base relevant to my design philosophy, which is based on the critical theory of bricolage and reflective practices. In this project, I explored an amalgamation of avant-garde and ready-to-wear clothing, creating an aesthetic that could be described as "apocalyptic streetwear." My intention was to capture the drama that avant-garde commands, while simultaneously achieving a wearable, ready-to-wear outcome. Key themes were a relaxed fit and fabric manipulation. To achieve this, I employed multiple elements of textile design that interest me: bleaching, devoré, hand painting, hand knitting and hand embroidery.

Bricolage – a French word meaning 'making-do' – is about using what is around you to create something new. As a design method, bricolage is established within the modes of assembly, generating new meanings through this process. Bricolage is a resourceful and creative approach to gathering knowledge and materials. The evolving nature of bricolage gives the inquirer scope to take small chunks of research or authentic life experience from various places and piece them together. Whether in an organic fashion or as an ordered process, constructing a 'whole' body of work which has been assembled from different perspectives can be more relevant and meaningful than traditional approaches for those who are more comfortable with an evolutionary approach to designing. I am happy to use bricolage and 'chance' methods, as my design process relies on spontaneous action through making. Drawing on a multitude of tools, themes and experiences, inspiration remains in a constant state of flux.

Bricolage embodies the notion of impromptu action and a 'what if' design philosophy. My first step when designing is dedicated to retrospective thought, to reassessing past tools and materials used, and to re-evaluating practical steps in relation to previous experiences. Conceptually, I focus on drawing parallels between my own experience and my bricolage-based identity, and the designs I create using a bricolage process, reflective practices and studio-based research methods. Critical reflection on a sequence of events during the process of learning and development is the key concept of reflective practice. To retain information based on a past action, we must analyse the intended purpose of that action and evaluate its results. Reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action² have become essential processes throughout my design development, and ensure that my design outcomes are coherent, wearable and marketable.

BRICOLAGE

Christopher Wibberley has researched the use of multi-method approaches, in particular bricolage, in the research undertaken by his health, social care and education students at postgraduate level.³ In the context of teaching and learning, bricolage refers to the refinement and/or innovative development of new systems. Wibberley explains how a range of craft-based metaphors have been used to define the action of bricolage: sewing, montage, weaving and collage are all considered apt descriptions of the way researchers bring together their knowledge, tools and materials to create a new kind of order. According to Wibberley, the process of bricolage is about the "reworking of material into a different and often artistic form, forming stories which are seen to provide portraits of life experienced."⁴ The bricolage process can be brought together in a constructed order, like the way a patchwork quilt is pieced together from a variety of fabrics to form a structured whole. The result could also be presented as disjointed and inharmonious, much like collage, expressed as a clash of elements and juxtapositions expressive of a mindful yet chaotic result. For Wibberley, bricolage implies "engaging in a process out of which numerous outcomes can potentially emerge."⁵ The final outcomes of this process can be delivered in multiple ways.

Challenging tradition by utilising the 'no one way' approach of the bricolage model to suit my own design perspective is empowering. Bricolage design processes and reflective practices provide me with the opportunity to resist and challenge conventional fashion ideologies and to construct my own designed identity through the medium of fashion. Permeating my design practice is an absolute belief that design fluctuates between logical making methods and conceptual leaps of the imagination. Through making and then stepping back to reflect on where design

development can take me, I have realised my research aim of developing a refined knowledge of bricolage and reflection-in-action as a design research methodology.

According to Joyce Yee and Craig Bremner, the bricolage action of re-appropriating and combining elements into new and authentic outcomes mirrors the processes used by some designers.⁶ In my research practice I have used bricolage as a design process; working within the realms of my personal aesthetic, it has become relevant to my identity, which I also consider to be constructed through a bricolage process. Identity, I believe, is inherited and learned from one's individual interpretations and responses to recent and past life events. It is these roots in personal history that support identity, and through new experiences our identity is strengthened. J Sanchez-Burks believes that people who successfully manage to combine multiple and even opposing social identities are better at compiling diverse sets of knowledge to improve their "creative performance."⁷

Bricolage has connections with cultural processes that can also construct identity. Claude Lévi-Strauss defined the bricoleur as someone who proceeds in an improvisatory fashion, and the bricolage process as an activity based on adapting to, and interpreting more meanings from, "being" in the world.⁸ This statement also describes my personal identity, which has always been based on the principle of adaptation, while also referring to my physical design methodologies.

Wendy Knepper extends the definition to what she calls cultural bricolage.⁹ While agreeing with Lévi-Strauss, through examining the cosmopolitan nature of the modern world and how our identities are influenced by other cultures, Knepper identifies a more contemporary understanding of "being" in the world. She describes cultural bricolage as encompassing "identities, linguistic transformations, and aesthetic practices that have been shaped by the fragmentation and intermixture of various traditions."¹⁰ What results is a designed identity made up of meaningful experience and personal interpretation of the world around us.

In life, we are constantly adjusting ourselves on the basis of experience and what we learn from our surroundings, in order to inject more meaning into our existence. Lévi-Strauss identifies this kind of re-imagination of existing ideas, coupled with our current surroundings or at-hand tools, as a "meaning-making" form of bricolage.¹¹ Fashion is an extension of this concept: clothes are things that display meaning and invite questions about identity. Fashion can be seen as a kind of performance, referring to experiences based around the body,¹² acting as an artefact of culture and playing a silent yet profound role within social commentary.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

As a designer, I rely on reflective practices and evolutionary design. I begin with an improvised style of designing based on a knowing-in-action approach, courting surprise, followed by conscious reflection on the many outcomes possible. I take inspiration from what is around me and fashion new meanings from the elements at hand. Donald Schön discusses how humans act and react through spontaneous and unthinking actions as we go about our daily lives, and how our decision-making is based on the "soup of knowledge" in our heads.¹³ This process, which Schön calls knowing-in-action, is consistent with intuitive design processes. *Reflection-in-action*, as Schön phrases it, is a more conscious approach to what we do and is often used in conjunction with *knowing-in-action*. Schön asks us to look past technical rationality, which has been described as binary thinking within professional knowledge. He suggests that "knowing" is a fundamental constituent of resourceful action.¹⁴

Bricolage and reflective practice share the process of attempting one thing, stepping back and reflecting on that action, then trialling another. Throughout my process, I challenge the well-worn traditions and order of garment creation. I want to rethink the design tradition whereby first we research, then we sketch and finally we make. The questioning of these tasks undermines their place as the foundation on which design practice is based, and opens up new possibilities for alternative design practice.¹⁵ With this in mind, my design practice relies predominantly on the act of making, allowing me to think on my feet, experience 'surprises' and then reflect on the design direction I

want to take. This brings subjectivity, and consequently the unforeseen, along with it. The methods of the bricoleur epitomise the investigative practices that I find are critical to my creative processes.

In short, I believe in a design model that values diverse making methods and reflection-in-action as a valid approach to designing and design research. Design outcomes are often eclectic and reveal a juxtaposition of styles involving a variety of practices and materials. Formulating the design rationale, or the 'why', can be a process which is only developed in hindsight.¹⁶

Schön also discusses tacit knowledge: the idea that we know more than we can say.¹⁷ We may not be able to express in words how we know something, or how we do something; we act intuitively, on hunches or informed guesses. Informal and unquantifiable ways of knowing are part of a practice-led process, as opposed to something that has been predetermined or defined. Design decisions led by impulse can lead to swift changes. Experiments offer multiple forms of expression, and generate perspectives which are not pre-thought, but led by action and re-action. This approach allows the designer to develop strategies and new theories as they go.

Schön further suggests that we do not dwell on expected outcomes; rather, when our actions do not occur in a foreseen way, we tend to reflect on the moment more profoundly. As these unexpected design signals or surprises occur, they become knowledge or part of the tool-set for the bricoleur to store within their memory bank.¹⁸ Authentic knowledge which is unthought-of prior to improvised notions becomes a meaningful experience, one that can undo negative thinking when pre-planned design falters. Those who practice bricolage are reliant on their own experiences and their own history of events in everything they do. Bricolage allows for adaptation and appropriation; to reconstruct or deconstruct all our acquired knowledge and work without an imposed hierarchy or specific method.¹⁹

Re-evaluating elements and details within my work is a constant process. For example, experimenting with how leftovers from one piece might enhance another garment, while also adding coherency to the overall collection, is one way I use bricolage, reflection-in-action, and sustainability concurrently, creating something with new meanings.²⁰

FASHION AND BRICOLAGE

Dick Hebdige explains how the concept of bricolage can be used to illustrate the construction of subcultural style.²¹ Hebdige describes bricolage as "[b]asic elements [that] can be used in a variety of improvised combinations to generate new meanings within them."²² The Punk movement is an example of this. As Punk sought to disrupt tradition within society, fashion was its most overt tool. Objects were borrowed from mundane contexts and their meanings were reorganised to express a Punk critique of how 'modernity and taste' should be approached.

It is arguable that the Punk movement sought to foment unrest and reveal social subordination by drawing on a symbolic representation of the English working class. By using the tools and knowledge around them, Punks used a working class identity to parody English history and traditions. They reassembled order into a chaotic aesthetic, creating a bricolage of details that were used to expose an oppressive class structure. Punk was a bricolage process, a curated identity of personal expression and anti-establishment ideas.

THE STUDIO PROJECT: PROCESSES, METHODS AND RESULTS

Customisation of fabrics was fundamental to my project, and this involved a range of applications: bleaching, *devoré*, hand knitting, hand embroidery and painting on fabric. Improvised design is essential to the way I produce, and I work in no logical order, favouring bricolage and reflection-in-action as design methods. Combining elements of drape and traditional patternmaking techniques, I embrace a no-hierarchy, no-rules approach to how I assemble my designs. Altered fabrics provide different perspectives; in a design sense, composition can be unlimited and endless.

The designer is not the sole dictator of the process; modified fabric has limitations, which for me prompts surprise design directions. I would not have been able to foresee, or sketch out, all the design ideas that these altered fabrications offer. The character of these fabrics dictates how I physically interact with them, and I react to what is before me.

BLEACH

I had worked with bleach to create my own unique fabrics on a previous project. I was able to reflect on this experience, and for this project I undertook further experimental work that created fabrics that had further meaning for me. As each random length of fabric was altered, I would see more in it. I found that thinking on my feet was the only way to navigate through this process. Grabbing clothes pegs and hanging the fabric on the line was a brilliant move – now I had won back some control! I could see the fabric as a whole, which meant I had the opportunity to study the composition of the picture created by the bleach and add to it by scooping handfuls of bleach solution and running it down the fabric as I saw fit.

Bleaching was a pleasing process, both aesthetically and as a design method. Rapid-fire, instant results appealed to the hands-on, bricolage style of designing I love most. The haphazard character of these bleaching techniques complemented the concept of bricolage. This everyday cleaning product imposed new meaning on mass-produced fabric, with a range of results.

I worked with both viscose and silk fabrics, and assumed that the silk would talk to me as viscose did. So as I checked the silks from time to time and saw no visible change occurring, I thought, more bleach! Then it happened – the silk was screaming at me. The bleach/water solution was warm and getting warmer; and as I removed my expensive silks I saw that they had been burnt. Shock turned to grief, then came anger. This was followed quickly by overwhelming



Figure 2. Sharlee Ghent, bleached viscose jersey.
Model: Cecily Reed. Photograph: Thamarat Saikerd Sri.



Figure 3. Sharlee Ghent, bleached cotton knit top.
Model: Cecily Reed. Photograph: Thamarat Saikerd Sri.

happiness, when I began to handle the silks after washing them. The simple act of draping them onto mannequins provided the necessary insight into how these half-destroyed fabrics could become something special. Suddenly I could see hemlines, albeit ragged and burnt, coupled with simple silhouettes to accentuate the complicated textile.

This serendipitous moment would provide a trickle-on effect for my project that would aptly show how I work; entrenched in chance and bricolage methodologies and high on reflective practice, a bricoleur is by definition fluent in adaptation.

DEVORÉ

Devoré is an interesting technique. It uses a paste that after applying, drying and ironing, dissolves cellulose (plant-based) fibres in the fabric that are then washed out. Holes of individual design remain in varying states. If the fabric is a blend of non-cellulose and cellulose fibres, the non-cellulose material is left behind.

Inspiration for my *devoré* pattern came from an old plastic washing basket, the sides of which I utilised to make a stencil. Malcolm Barnard describes the bricoleur as "[s]omeone who undertakes a wide variety of tasks and who is forever making do, not necessarily using either the correct tools or the proper materials."²³ The fabrics that resulted from the washing basket template are not only an example of bricolage action, but also of a successful outcome. The balance of structure and fragility achieved is analogous to bricolage as a design method. The *devoré* pattern was applied to the fabric with no prior thought as to what the final outcome would be. The pattern was created randomly, working on composition as I went.



Figure 4. Sharlee Ghent, the White Room dress, devoré and embroidery. Model: Cecily Reed. Photograph: Thamarat Saikerd Sri.



Figure 5. Sharlee Ghent, cotton knit top with devoré application. Model: Cecily Reed.
Photograph: Thamarat Saikerd Sri.

KNITTING

Using unconventional materials is a major part of my interest in knitting textiles. I utilise a variety of needle sizes, and knit fabrics with the purpose of draping garments. My needles are homemade and range from the inner tubes of fabric rolls to a wooden sword and a handcrafted wooden needle. I am interested in experimenting with scale through the medium of knitting. I do not plan how many stitches I will use or even the pattern, preferring to improvise and changing the needle size as I go, responsive to what I see appearing before me. What I have discovered through experimental knitting is that a row of very large stitches needs to be followed by a row of small stitches to give the piece stability, thus dictating the use of some form of pattern. Length is usually dictated by the amount of yarn I have available, and what will be needed to complete a particular 'look.' The garment is designed as I hand-sew it together.

CONCLUSION

Discovering bricolage as a design methodology gave me a feeling of belonging, a sense that I finally had a place somewhere within the context of learning styles. No longer an outsider or alone in my process, I felt strangely at ease, with an increased confidence that my design process is actually a real thing. It has a definition, is justified, has purpose and is meaningful.

I make first and think with my hands, working in a fluid and impromptu fashion. I use previous knowledge gained through experience in conjunction with reflection-in-action, and I figure out the 'why' as I go. Getting too tied up in concepts can be a time-waster. Some of us work through our ideas without really understanding why we might be doing something until further into our design process, when we start making connections between our past and present work. Only then, after we have found rhythm, direction and commonalities within diverse and unique methods, do we start to see a story emerge.

The stand-out aspect of my research was that learning according to a no-hierarchy, no-set-rules methodology can result in completing work to a skilled standard. Working in a spontaneous manner throughout my design process did not mean that I was not working within some form of pre-planned structure. Just because each garment and design stage was not thought out and determined in a logical or traditional beginning-to-end fashion did not mean that my outcomes lacked coherency. Using bricolage and reflective practices as a design methodology was an experimental research approach. The purpose was to prove that a successful collection could be created through the use of impromptu and diverse design methods, with the emphasis on designing through making.

The emotional connections with my design work created through physical making methods have been vital throughout my process. Feeling invested in my process has been key to staying inspired and driven to complete the design activity. A process based on logical order can be restrictive and leave the student feeling disconnected from their work. Observing my collection as a whole during exhibition, I realised how much valuable 'making' information I had retained purely from the process of making. Through the use of repetitive making methods, I now feel confident in my processes.

I also feel that I have developed genuine knowledge and empathy in regard to guiding students, providing learning options that could be more authentic for some students through the processes I have researched. Logical or traditional design methods clouded my natural learning style, and I have now found solace and renewed confidence through my personal design processes. My hope is that students with similar learning habits might be better understood and nurtured through my research and reflection.

Sharlee Ghent graduated Bachelor of Design (Honours) from Otago Polytechnic School of Design, majoring in Fashion, in 2016. She is currently completing her Master of Teaching and Learning (MTchgLrn) at the University of Otago.

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FROM PLANET TO PEOPLE – HOW FASHION EDUCATION CAN CONTRIBUTE TO A MORE ETHICAL AND SUSTAINABLE FASHION FUTURE

Tracy Kennedy and Caroline Terpstra

INTRODUCTION

As educators, we believe we have a responsibility to ensure that our graduates are able to contribute to a more sustainable fashion industry. In order to facilitate meaningful learning experiences that support this goal, we must understand what influences student behaviour and motivates them to act.

This paper compares feedback from two cohorts of second-year Bachelor of Design (Fashion) students – the first in 2008¹ and the second in 2016. Students completed a survey after learning about sustainability and ethics within the wider fashion system. This learning experience took the form of lectures, studio-based projects and a semi-commercial project focusing on sustainable business models.

The survey design encourages students to reflect on their own values and decision-making process as they navigate the ethical dilemmas and complex issues surrounding sustainability and the fashion industry. The survey results inform recommendations for fashion educators about learning and teaching strategies that will support students to become sustainable fashion practitioners.

CONTEXT

The Bachelor of Design (Fashion) at Otago Polytechnic is an established and globally ranked fashion degree and is included in the Business of Fashion top 50 Global Fashion School Rankings 2016.² In the first year of the degree, students gain an understanding of design as a discipline and an enabler in society. In second year, students examine contemporary design issues and research practice. They are encouraged to respond to these issues and consider their relevance to their own design practice. The third and final year is directed at helping students articulate their own design philosophy and direction.

Sustainability is one of Otago Polytechnic's core values, and shapes everything from operations and teaching to engagement with businesses, communities and other institutions. With the goal that every graduate will have the skills and knowledge to become sustainable practitioners in their chosen field, each programme is committed to embedding sustainability effectively into the curriculum. Rather than teaching sustainability in isolation, the Bachelor of Design (Fashion) has embedded sustainability into the assessed learning outcomes of every paper in the three-year degree. The fashion curriculum has been adapted to reflect significant changes in awareness and attitudes towards sustainable practices within the fashion industry since 2008.

The learning experience referred to in this paper includes an introduction to a range of contemporary design issues including ethics and sustainability. Students apply this learning to a semi-commercial, team-based project that

requires them to collaborate with a local retailer and form a small fashion business. Assessed project outcomes include demonstration of sustainable design processes and practices and a sustainable business model. Students critically evaluate their design choices throughout the project, while considering their own attitudes and values regarding sustainable and ethical practices in the fashion industry alongside those of the commercial marketplace.



Figure 1. Final presentation of semi-commercial fashion project to retail collaborator; 2016.³ Image: Otago Daily Times ©.

It has taken some time for the fashion industry to take heed of warnings sounded in the late 1990s. Despite an initial focus on the impact of fibre and fabric processing on the environment and material provenance in the 1990s and 2000s, we now see that the fundamental cause of unsustainability in the fashion industry is exponential growth and consumption. Universally referred to as “fast fashion,” these current issues are succinctly addressed by Tamsin Lejeune in a recent article in the online Ethical Fashion Forum.⁴ Lejeune asks whether “fast fashion” can be sustainable and presents an overview of the challenges facing the industry and an evaluation of positive solutions.⁵

The world's largest summit on fashion sustainability, held in Copenhagen in May 2012, gathered more than a thousand key stakeholders in the industry to discuss the importance of making the fashion industry sustainable. The resulting Copenhagen Fashion Summit, held annually, continues to challenge the industry with a global fashion agenda and an imperative to “mobilise the international fashion industry, to transform the way we produce and consume fashion.”⁶

In the eight years between our two surveys, the world has witnessed the collapse of the Rana Plaza building in Bangladesh in April 2013, a tragedy that cut short the lives of 1136 garment workers. That disaster focused worldwide attention on deathtrap workplaces within the garment industry and the plight of garment workers forced to work for low wages to meet the ever-increasing demand for fast, cheap fashion. Odhikar, a Bangladesh-based human rights organisation founded in October 1994, has conducted a comprehensive investigative report into the Rana Plaza collapse.⁷

Ethical practices and workers' rights continue to be a highly visible challenge for sustainable practice in the fashion and textile industry, highlighting the ongoing need for education around the Triple Bottom Line framework,⁸ the encouragement of transparency within business models and accountability across the sector.

Closer to home, Baptist World Aid Australia has conducted research into worker exploitation in the fashion and electronics industries. Since 2013, the organisation has produced the *Australian Fashion Report – The Truth Behind the Barcode*.⁹ This report sheds light on how individual companies are addressing the issues of forced labour, child labour and exploitation. Companies are graded from A to F based on the strength of their labour rights management systems to mitigate the risk of exploitation in their supply chain. In 2015, New Zealand retailer Glassons scored an F in the workers' rights, monitoring and training, and traceability and transparency categories for not disclosing its practices. In the 2017 report, Glassons received a B- average grade overall, with an improved C- grade in the worker empowerment section, acknowledging that it is making significant inroads into improving its supply chain transparency and traceability.

Internationally, high-profile designers such as Stella McCartney and Vivienne Westwood are challenging the existing fashion system through sustainable business models, sourcing of alternative materials and transparent supply chains. McCartney and Westwood use interviews¹⁰ and public "protest" to exert their influence and highlight worker exploitation and environmental issues in the fashion industry.¹¹ Sustainable fashion bloggers are a relatively new form of social media influencers and are followed by thousands online. Fifty of the best have recently been recognised by Green Match, a UK-based sustainable energy organisation. Green Match acknowledged bloggers who "focus on sustainable fashion and really put time and effort in inspiring others in a creative manner" as part of the Go Slow Awards 2016.¹² Ecouterre, soon to merge with its original website Inhabitat,¹³ was created by fashion activists and creates up-to-the-minute content that tackles ethical issues and showcases innovation in sustainable design.

In New Zealand, designers such as Kowtow and Kate Sylvester continue to integrate sustainable practices and transparent supply chains into their business models. Kowtow focuses on sourcing organic materials and on ethical working conditions in fibre, textile and garment production.¹⁴ Kate Sylvester takes an holistic approach to all aspects of business and is a member of the NZ Sustainable Business Network.¹⁵

SUSTAINABLE LEARNING AND TEACHING

In 2008, academic writing and research on the learning and teaching of sustainable practice in higher education was limited to a handful of researchers.¹⁶ A growing interest in ethical and sustainable practices in the fashion industry has led to a growth in the number of academic and industry (practice) based commentators writing about this topic and discussing how higher education, the fashion curriculum and the industry can address these issues.

The 1990 Talloires Declaration¹⁷ encourages higher education institutions internationally to address issues around sustainable literacy. A ten-point action plan was established as a framework to provide institutions with strategies for integration of sustainable principles into the curriculum. To date, this has been signed by five hundred higher education institutions worldwide.

In his 2015 book *Higher Education for Sustainable Development*, Kerry Shephard highlights the barriers to sustainable integration and reconsiders past research and discusses current paradigms and practices in higher education.¹⁸ Shephard introduces new ways to integrate sustainability into teaching and learning using what he calls Grounded Theory Methodology (the construction of theory and new paradigms through the analysis of data). Shephard's model for higher education is "a system designed to help students to achieve this enlightened state of struggling" (to question their own ability to make sense of diverse information through critical thinking).¹⁹ He describes the model as the parts of a jigsaw puzzle, due to the complexity of the stakeholders and their roles. These stakeholders include university heads, management, curriculum developers, teachers and students. He writes of the importance of critical thinking as a learning outcome that allows students to interpret information in a meaningful way, and highlights an

“increasing awareness that community engagement provides high-impact learning opportunities for students.”²⁰ Shephard further underlines the importance of a constantly changing paradigm for sustainability integration in higher education, a position developed from earlier research by himself and others.²¹

Cosette Armstrong and Melody Lehw (from Oklahoma State and Kansas State Universities respectively) explore how textile and apparel educators are integrating sustainability into their curricula. They conclude that despite current barriers such as a lack of resources and institutional support, curricular content limitations and a sometimes hostile fashion industry, “the future holds ample promise for the acceleration of integration if supported by mechanisms such as continuing education and professional development as well as some philosophical shifts within the discipline.”²²

Since the early 2000s, Alison Gwilt, Sandy Black, Kate Fletcher and Lynda Grose²³ have all produced comprehensive and accessible texts on the subject aimed at fashion practitioners, students and teachers. These include articles, resources, case studies and best-practice exemplars, and inform the reader of new knowledge and sustainable design methods for positive change.

This body of research, writing, publication and commentary on the integration of sustainability in teaching, the implications for higher education and the benefits for the fashion industry is a growing one. As educators, we can ensure that this body of knowledge is accessible to students in order to support them to become sustainable practitioners.

METHOD

In this context, a reflective survey explores how students learn about sustainability and then interpret and apply their knowledge to current and future decision-making. Questions are designed around four main themes:

- Current knowledge, awareness of sustainability in a fashion industry context
- Sources of information on the environmental and ethical impacts of the fashion industry
- Use of sustainable practices
- Ethics and decision-making

Of the 11 survey questions (Appendix 1), the first seven are closed-ended, using either a Likert scale rating system or picklist to determine attitudes and behaviour, allowing responses to be readily quantified and analysed. The final four questions are open-ended questions that add depth and context, but are also less quantifiable and comparable than the closed-ended questions.

The survey was first conducted in 2008²⁴ with 29 second-year Bachelor of Design (Fashion) students, and was repeated with 16 students from the 2016 Bachelor of Design (Fashion) cohort. Both groups completed the surveys after completing a similar learning experience. In this paper, we compare the post-experience survey results from both cohorts to track changing patterns of behaviour. Neither set of results was tested for statistical significance due to the small sample size, so we have focused on emergent trends and patterns.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

More students in the 2016 cohort rated their awareness of sustainable practices within the fashion and apparel industry as strong (15% increase over the 2008 cohort). When asked about the priority issues affecting the fashion industry today, half of the 2016 cohort listed fast fashion/mass consumption, while this did not feature at all in 2008.

Both cohorts highlighted issues such as the environmental impact of fabric dyeing, and of garment production in general as well as unethical labour practices in the industry.

The 2016 cohort were much more likely to be influenced by designers and more likely to look to friends, family, social media and tertiary study when sourcing information on the environmental and ethical impacts of the fashion industry (Figure 2).

Both cohorts felt positive about the future of the fashion industry and its ability to incorporate sustainability into practice. All students in both cohorts said they would incorporate sustainable approaches into their design practice, nominating strategies and approaches such as sourcing of sustainable fabrics where possible; using natural fibres; considering garment life cycles; zero waste patternmaking; ensuring ethical working conditions; and avoiding the use of harmful chemicals and dyes in fabric production.

When asked to consider how environmental and ethical issues impact on the work of a fashion design student, the 2016 cohort indicated stronger agreement with the statement “to a great extent” than their 2008 counterparts (Figure 3).

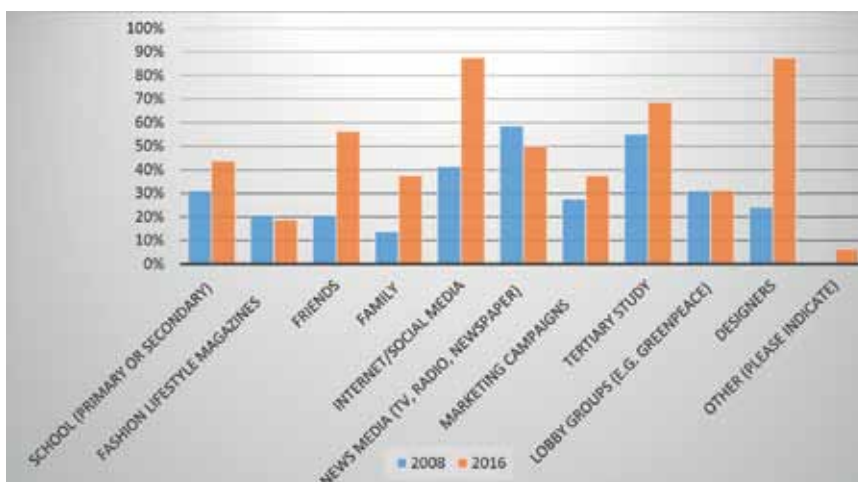


Figure 2. Sources of information for students on the environmental and ethical impacts of the fashion industry, as elicited by the surveys.

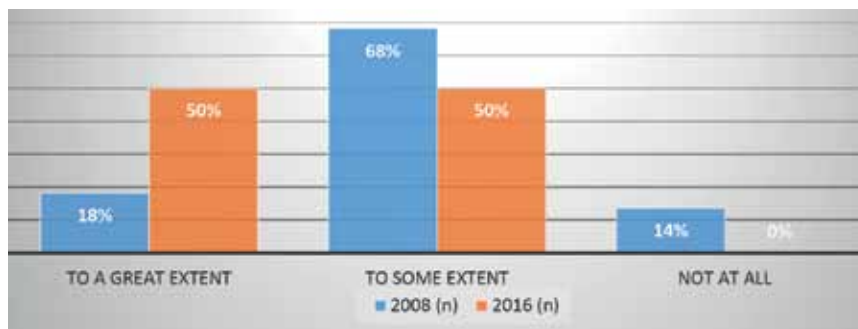


Figure 3. How environmental and ethical issues affect the work of fashion design students, according to the surveys.

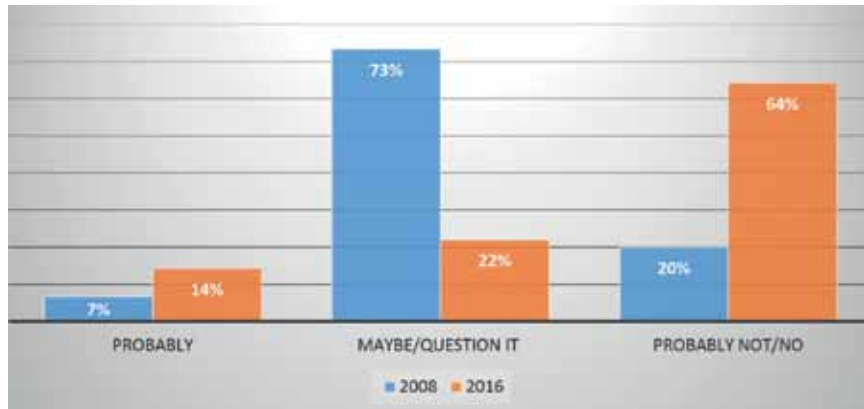


Figure 4. Responses to a request to engage in unsustainable practices as a student, according to the surveys.

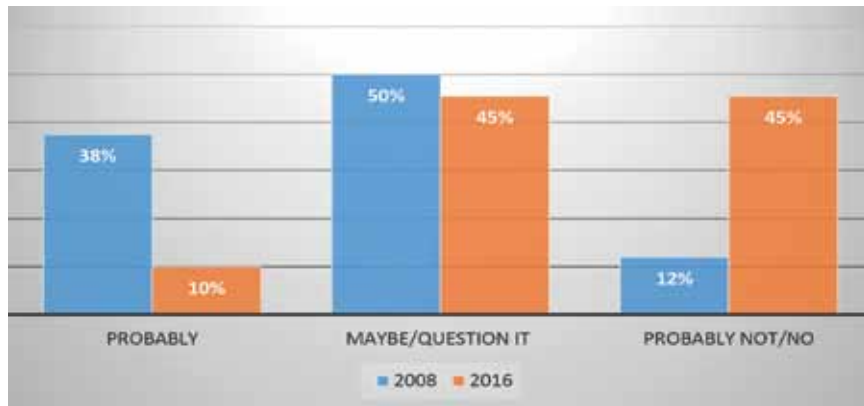


Figure 5. Responses to a request to engage in unsustainable practices as a new graduate working in the fashion industry, according to the surveys.

Students reflected on how their own values help them navigate some of the ethical dilemmas and complex issues they are likely to face as participants in the fashion industry. When asked how they would react to a request to engage in an activity as a student considered to be unsustainable practice, significantly more of the 2016 cohort said they would take a stand and not agree to participate in the activity, with a corresponding drop in those who may participate or question the activity. (Figure 4)

Positioning themselves as new graduates faced with the same situation – i.e., a request to engage in an activity as a student considered unsustainable practice – students from the 2016 cohort were more likely to strongly question or not participate in the activity, with a corresponding decrease in those who would participate. (Figure 5)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Students learn best in an environment that supports personal engagement, discovery and reflection. To achieve this we need to acknowledge what influences, motivates and inspires them to act, and allow them to question and challenge norms and pre-conceived ideas about sustainability.

If designers are exerting more influence over student opinion, more use can be made of industry-based collaborative projects, guest speakers, online interviews and podcasts in programme design and delivery. Educators should encourage the critical use of Web-based research and social media channels as a valid source of information for students working in the tertiary environment. At the same time, students require support to filter and critically evaluate sources and information in order to develop an informed personal response to challenges facing the fashion industry. Resources that provide unbiased information on industry practices, such as the Baptist World Aid report and the Ethical Fashion Forum, are a valuable tool for educators wanting to develop understanding and encourage in-class debate and discussion.

Institutional membership of fashion education and industry networks ensures that students gain access to reliable, current and relevant information. Sustainability needs to be part of business-as-usual and contextual to the fashion industry, embedded in the learning outcomes and applied in a meaningful way through assessed projects. If sustainability is a stand-alone subject, students may fail to make connections with their fashion industry context.

Finally, we maintain that students must leave tertiary education armed with tools and strategies to create positive change and with confidence in their ability to contribute to a more sustainable fashion future.

APPENDIX I

Reflective Survey on Sustainability in the fashion Industry

The information collected for this survey will be used solely for the purpose of research to improve teaching. Participation is entirely voluntary, and no personal information is collected. Your decision to participate in this survey or not will have no bearing on your academic progress. All completed surveys will be destroyed once data is collated.

Please indicate by ticking the appropriate box	very strong	strong	medium	weak	very weak
Question 1					
How do you rate your current knowledge of sustainability?					
Question 2					
How do you rate your current awareness of sustainable practices within the fashion and apparel industry?					

Question 3	Yes – I know about it	Yes – I've heard of it but don't know much about it	Never heard of it
Are you aware of the following concepts?			
Carbon footprint			
Reduce/Reuse/Recycle			
Triple bottom line			
Cradle to grave			
Cradle to cradle			
Social responsibility			
Fair trade			
Sustainable design			
Slow fashion			
Ethical fashion			
Closed loop production			

Question 4	
Where do you get information on the environmental and ethical impacts of the fashion industry?	
(tick any relevant sources)	
School (primary or secondary)	
Fashion lifestyle magazines	
Friends	
Family	
Internet/Social media	
News media (TV, radio, newspaper)	
Marketing campaigns	
Tertiary study	
Lobby groups (e.g. Greenpeace)	
Designers	
Other (please indicate)	

Question 5	To a great extent	To some extent	Not at all
Please indicate by ticking the appropriate box			
How do environmental and ethical issues affect your work? (as a fashion design student)			

Question 6	Already do	Would consider doing	Would not consider doing
Using the following list of actions, please indicate whether you:			
Seek out information on environmental issues relating to design			

Question 7	Hopeful	Undecided	Not hopeful
How do you feel about the future of the fashion industry and its ability to incorporate sustainability into practice?			
Please indicate by ticking the appropriate box			

<p>Question 8</p> <p>What do you perceive to be the priority issues affecting the fashion industry today? (Please list in order of most important to least important)</p>
<p>Question 9</p> <p>If you were asked to engage in an activity as a student that you considered to be unsustainable practice, how would you react?</p>
<p>Question 10</p> <p>If you were asked to engage in an activity as a new graduate working in the fashion industry that you considered to be unsustainable practice, how would you react?</p>
<p>Question 11</p> <p>Do you intend to incorporate sustainable approaches into your design practice? If so, how would you go about this?</p>
<p>Thank you for participating in this survey – Caroline Terpstra & Tracy Kennedy</p>

Tracy Kennedy (MFA (candidate), PGCert Design, BDes (Fashion), Grad Dip FA (Textiles), GCTLT (Teaching)) is Senior Lecturer in Design (Fashion), School of Design, Otago Polytechnic. Sustainable models within the fashion and textile industries and technology that encourages positive change are a major focus of Tracy's research and teaching practice. Her teaching in the Bachelor of Design program includes textile design, product development and professional practice, as well as coordinating student showcase and community liaison projects.

Caroline Terpstra (MDE, B.AppMgt, Dip.HSci, NZDipBus) is acting head of the College of Art and Design at Otago Polytechnic. With a background in fashion, teaching and design leadership, Caroline uses design thinking methods to develop more collaborative decision-making processes in the workplace. Her role in an applied tertiary education environment has led to an interest in how students benefit from experiential and multi-disciplinary learning.

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INVESTMENT PIECE: CO-DESIGN STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT THE EMERGING DESIGNER SECTOR OF THE NEW ZEALAND FASHION INDUSTRY

Lisa McEwan

ABSTRACT

Over the past 20 years, fashion education has transitioned from skill-based instruction offered by technical institutions to an increasing number of design-led degree programmes offered by universities. While universities are delivering acclaimed talent in this area, graduates in many parts of the world face career uncertainty.

In New Zealand, the recent shift towards globalised supply-chain manufacturing has had a significant impact on the local clothing industry, with a two-fold effect on fashion graduates. Not only are there fewer employment opportunities, but there is also a diminishing number of industry training grounds – historically, a fundamental source of 'real world' training for emerging designers prior to the launch of their own businesses. This scenario highlights a need for the development of strategies to support fashion design graduates wishing to continue working in a creative capacity in their chosen field.

This paper presents an ongoing research project that utilises a participatory action research methodology, engaging stakeholders in the co-design of strategies to address this need. Underpinned by a human-centred design thinking approach, the project brings industry veterans and emerging designers together in the trial and evaluation of a series of prototype workshops developed in response to recent shifts – notably the change in tertiary education focus, an absence of government-funded initiatives and a decrease in the availability of traditional industry training grounds.

Environmental and social sustainability concerns are likely to disrupt current fashion consumption patterns, and a return to some level of local production may play a part in this scenario. For this to succeed, existing knowledge must be preserved. The project aims to provide a viable, economically independent model that supports knowledge transfer, skill development and the generation of meaningful work for both industry veterans and emerging players in the local independent designer fashion sector.

INTRODUCTION

New Zealand has not been immune to job losses in the apparel industry that have occurred throughout the developed world as a direct consequence of economic deregulation.¹ Increased importation of low-cost fast fashion has significant impact, both in terms of career prospects for fashion graduates and the marginalisation of existing garment workers.² Stakeholders representing both of these groups are the focus of this paper, which discusses an ongoing participatory action research project, involving end-users in the co-design of strategies to improve employment opportunities within the sector. Underpinned by a human-centred design thinking approach, the

project brings industry veterans and emerging designers together in the trial and evaluation of a series of prototype workshops developed in response to recent shifts – notably a change in tertiary education focus, an absence of government-funded initiatives and a decrease in the availability of traditional industry training grounds.

Future disruption to current apparel consumption patterns is likely to rely on the provision of alternative fashion product, designed to respond to current environmental and social sustainability concerns. A return to some level of local production may play a part in this scenario. For this to succeed, existing knowledge within local communities must be preserved. The project aims to provide a viable, economically independent model that supports knowledge transfer, skill development and the generation of meaningful work for both industry specialists and emerging players in the local independent designer fashion community.

GLOBALISED FASHION: PRODUCTS AND PEOPLE

Prior to the large-scale economic deregulation of the late twentieth century, the dominant model of New Zealand fashion production was one in which local manufacturing thrived, protected by tariffs on imported products.³ In 1987 the tariffs levied on imported clothing were set at two separate rates: 65% and 40% (specific to the particular clothing type). Successive tariff reductions saw an influx of internationally branded garments, with clothing imports increasing from NZ\$129 million in 1985 to NZ\$480 million in 1996.⁴ This trajectory continued, with some local manufacturers also moving production offshore, and between 1989 and 2012 a six-fold increase in the volume of clothing and footwear imported into New Zealand was met with a corresponding decline in local fashion manufacturing, with employment in the sector falling 60% between 2000 and 2011.⁵

Prospects for garment workers in developing nations are also a source of concern. Low wages and sub-standard and often highly dangerous labour conditions⁶ remain evident as the dual pressures of the global economic downturn and trade globalisation continue to converge, intensifying competition for the consumer dollar.⁷ While mass-production remains the domain of the developing world, manufacturing jobs in the developed world are increasingly being replaced with “hobby jobs,”⁸ with adults employed in the lower-skilled service and retail sectors traditionally occupied by youth workers.⁹ Although to the uninitiated, the manufacturing sector may not appear particularly appealing to young job-seekers, the argument is made that the potential for creativity, skill acquisition and specialisation within the fashion industry provides rewarding opportunities.

Such opportunities can only be realised if there is demand for locally produced fashion. Apparel spending in New Zealand has increased marginally since deregulation, but certain staple fashion items have become significantly cheaper.¹⁰ As in other parts of the developed world, much of this fast fashion is discarded into landfill.¹¹ But just as consumers have embraced locally produced food in recent years, a corresponding shift has begun to take place in the clothing sector, with an increased availability of value-added garments that embrace traceable localised production, and where workmanship and quality are paramount.¹²

REMODELLING THE RAG TRADE

Fashion education in New Zealand has also undergone a shift in recent years, with a transition from skill-based instruction, as offered by technical institutes, to design-led university degrees.¹³ While academic environments are successful in nurturing excellence in design talent,¹⁴ the university setting poses a challenge to the provision of ‘real world’ learning. At AUT University, fashion projects conducted in collaboration with industry partners place emphasis on the development of design work to international standards. Certain limitations prevail, however, and it is rare for students to gain sufficient experience in the more procedural aspects of the industry. This focus on design has given rise to criticism by industry advocates that current graduates lack the practical skills required by the sector.¹⁵

Such disapproval is not new – in the 1980s many industry players were critical of technical qualifications, calling for a return to factory floor tuition. However, this continuing criticism fails to address such considerations as the aspirations of fashion students to achieve advanced qualifications, commensurate with those being gained by their peers in other disciplines. More importantly, it fails to recognise the nurturing of design talent and critical thinking skills that occurs within the university setting. These are, arguably, the precise attributes needed by emerging designers entering a space of diminishing job opportunities in an industry faced with inevitable change.

Historically, fashion graduates seeking to work in a creative capacity within the industry would develop this expertise by working alongside industry specialists in established firms. Employment within these organisations allowed graduates to reach industry-competency levels prior to the launch of their own ventures. The knowledge gained not only boosted capabilities within these new enterprises, but also ensured that new players were well placed to impart knowledge to future generations. Changes in the nature of tertiary fashion education (with less focus on applied skills), together with diminishing opportunities within traditional workplaces (for both employment and supplementary training), highlight a critical, unmet need – providing opportunities for the development of alternative scenarios for skill development and knowledge transfer.

PROJECT INCEPTION AND FRAMEWORKS

Initial engagement with a variety of fashion practitioners – academics, industry veterans and emerging designers – led to the concept of developing a new framework for the dissemination of fashion industry knowledge. The project's goals were to support the viability of fledgling fashion businesses through a model that was, in itself, viable. Analysis of existing support networks available to this user group determined that current offerings failed to comprehensively address end-user needs. Engagement with export-focused design institutes was deemed to be cost-prohibitive; general business mentoring services were unable to provide fashion-specific advice; and all externally funded incubators in the country had ceased to operate. Given the current financial climate, incubators are unlikely to be re-launched in the foreseeable future, and formal fashion industry networks, faced with declining membership from a weakened industry, are also facing closure.

Demands for meaningful work, considered against the backdrop of increasingly globalised production, placed this project within the arena of “wicked problems”¹⁶ – a term used to reflect the difficulty of addressing such issues, given their complexity and, indeed, the likelihood that they will remain insoluble. The complexity of the fashion employment issue indicated that an optimistic approach would benefit the enquiry, and design thinking, an internationally recognised innovation model, was identified as a useful framework for this undertaking. The design thinking approach circumvents typical convergent thinking processes (in which a solution is chosen from a range of possible options), and encourages divergent thinking – using techniques such as empathy, brainstorming, rapid-prototyping and the suspension of devil's advocate cynicism – as a means of exploring unconventional possibilities.¹⁷ It also focuses on the notion of human-centered design, which places end-user needs foremost in the design and problem-solving process.

A desire to address end-user needs in an authentic setting meant that the project also lent itself to a participatory action research methodology. Action research seeks to find resolutions to real world problems and is typified by engagement with stakeholders in the location of the issues to be addressed.¹⁸ An iterative process of action, observation, reflection and revision is undertaken, with successive research cycles seeking to build on the knowledge gained. The method is characterised by its democratic nature, with stakeholder participants involved in both defining specific problems, at the outset, and in the co-design of research activities throughout the investigation process.¹⁹ This stakeholder focus placed the investigation within the domains of social innovation, which promotes the involvement of community participants in the search for new solutions for issues affecting them;²⁰ and social entrepreneurship, which utilises market-based skills, but places stakeholder value before shareholder profit.²¹

PARTICIPATION AND CO-DESIGN

Initial research undertaken with industry specialists corroborated our concerns about an impending knowledge gap. An interview conducted with the owner of a local independent fashion-production company highlighted a disconnect between the industry-standard requirements of the production manager and the expectations of emerging designers.²² Discrepancies between sample garments and the correlating patterns appeared to be an ongoing source of tension between the parties. Researcher experience suggested that essential pre-production assessments were not being undertaken. The production service did not purport to offer this, and it became evident that the designers lacked awareness of systems and checks required in this phase.

Following a user-centric approach,²³ stakeholder feedback was sought from a small group of emergent designers as to the difficulties they faced in the foundation years of their businesses. A questionnaire was provided to examine four key areas of their businesses – viability, desirability, feasibility, and also their core business offering. As expected in a highly competitive industry, profitability was a key concern. However, the results indicated that while all of the designers had confidence in their core product, two had concerns about the feasibility aspect of their businesses. These participants clearly identified a lack of access to industry specialists, and discussed their unfamiliarity with time-proven industry systems. In contrast, the third designer, who expressed confidence in this area, had launched her business after several years of designing in a workroom setting alongside industry veterans.²⁴

Brainstorming activities were then used to explore possible solutions to the knowledge gap currently being faced by this community. Particular consideration was given to the tension between the budget constraints of prospective end users and the probability that eventual offerings would need to exist within market contexts. Delivery within a group setting to divide the cost of engagement was suggested, leading to the concept of facilitated workshops that would bring emerging players together with industry veterans.



Figure 1. Tabulated results of the designer questionnaire.

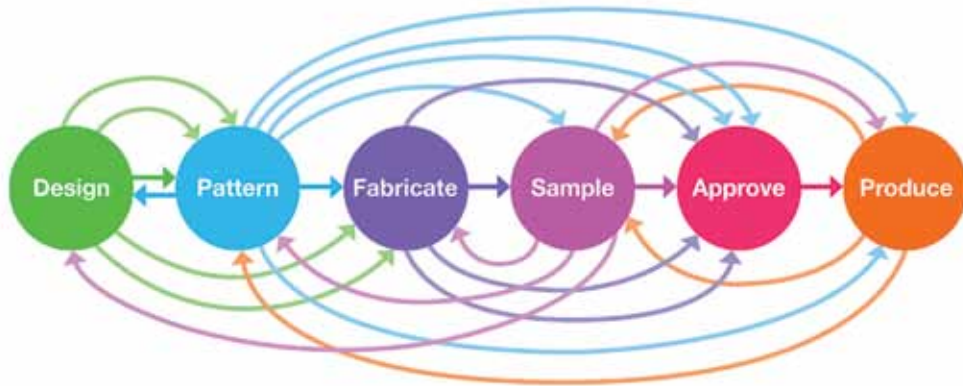


Figure 2. Diagram illustrating a six-stage fashion product development process.

Given the findings from the questionnaire, it was decided that the initial workshop would focus on fashion industry pre-production processes, or the procedural requirements for taking a given design into bulk production. Considerations in this area include correct and cost-effective manufacturing techniques; fabrication, colour and sizing variances; fabric testing; trim sourcing and availability; and pattern approval processes. Systematic errors made in any of these areas can potentially mean that investment in design development and bulk fabrics is not realised as profit, if faulty fashion product cannot be sold at optimum price. Given the competition that emerging designers face from low-cost imported product, such losses have significant consequences for the profitability and, indeed, financial survival of these vulnerable start-up enterprises.

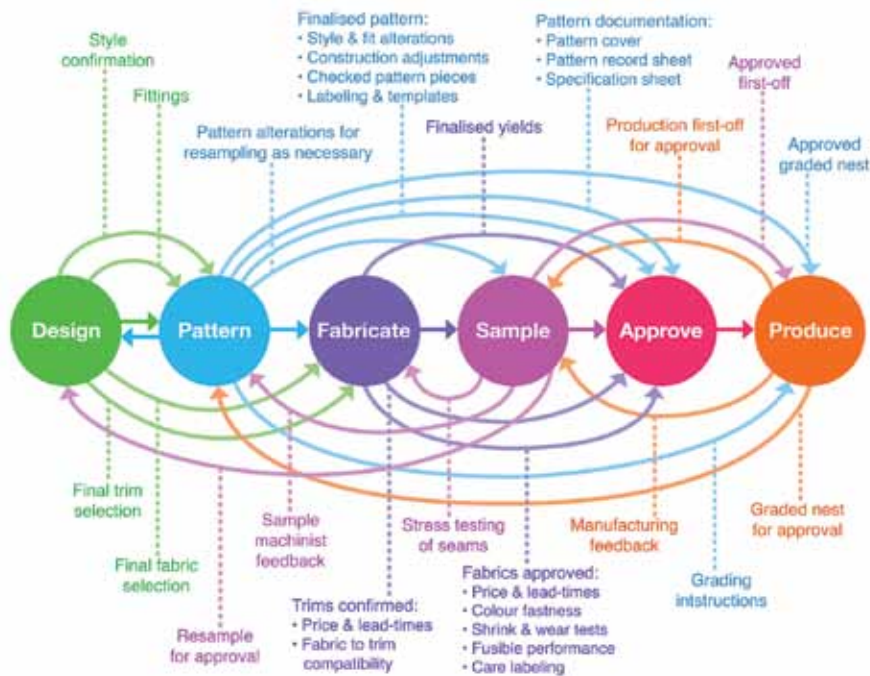


Figure 3. Fashion pre-production approval process showing details of specific roles, relationships and tasks.

In response to stakeholder concerns, the researcher mapped a classic six-stage garment development process to illustrate the interactions required during the pre-production phase. The diagram was initially devised to identify the key stages and key actors involved in the process. During the mapping of the stages, the complexities of the relationships between the actors became apparent, indicating a need for further decoding of the processes.

Figure 3 identifies specific tasks in the process. These have been colour-coded to link the task to a specific stage; for example, the shrink-testing of textiles is coded as pertaining to the *Fabricate* stage. It should be noted that although the six stages – *Design*, *Pattern*, *Fabricate*, *Sample*, *Approve* and *Produce* – indicate areas of specialisation, many of these, such as *Design* and *Pattern*, may overlap and in some cases, particularly within small businesses, be the responsibility of a single individual. The named stages are shown in a chronological progression; however, the task links (as indicated by the curved arrows) are multi-directional, with certain tasks revisiting a previous stage. For example, information gathered during the sewing of a garment (in the *Sample* phase) may highlight the need for pattern adjustments – information that would then need to be passed back to key stakeholders in the *Pattern* stage.

Complex flowcharts have been used to map product development processes in various manufacturing scenarios, such as engineering, for decades.²⁵ However, apart from examples relating to supply-chain manufacturing,²⁶ researcher experience suggests that such mapping of fashion development processes is rarely used, or taught, within the apparel sector; and I believe that dissemination of this information would be of significant benefit within the fashion-manufacturing arena, particularly to emerging players. The flowchart diagrams developed through this research are not intended to be all-encompassing, nor do they seek to indicate a required arrangement of relationships and responsibilities – rather they seek to identify the types of concerns relevant to fashion production processes, upon which an individual enterprise could build a system tailored to their business.

WORKSHOP #1

The initial workshop was conducted in the design studio of one of the participating designers. Participants included a group of emerging designers; a sample machinist with over 40 years of industry experience; and two academics, each industry veterans in their own right. Brainstorming was again used to draw out participant concerns and to encourage optimistic exchange about future scenarios.

Concerns around financial constraints prompted a discussion about avoidable costs, such as those incurred through unexpected problems arising during production. The host designer was able to provide sample garments and patterns used in a production run that had been fraught with difficulties. Interaction between the facilitator and the sample machinist highlighted the crucial role of industry specialists in identifying likely issues, and the role of pre-production checks in circumventing such problems was explained. Participants were provided with documentation that included the production flowchart and various systems used to capture information for implementation during the production process.

The use of real-world examples lent a sense of authenticity and relevance to workshop activities. Participants were also given hypothetical problems to solve, and engaged with industry specialists to prototype workable solutions. This highlighted the benefits of workplace collaboration, particularly with industry expertise at this advanced level.

WORKSHOP #2

Profitability was also a key concern for emerging designer participants. Although generic business courses are widely available, fashion manufacturing faces particular issues that impact on financial planning and cash-flow – such as continually changing product lines and materials; competition with supply-chain manufacturing; and the need for meeting strict, season-based delivery schedules. A second local designer took part in the subsequent workshop, sharing her financial planning strategies and monthly timeline with participants. Of particular note was

her revelation that although her business had experienced rapid success and growth within the first eight years, she had resisted offers to use global supply-chain manufacturing, citing working conditions as the deciding factor.²⁷ Workshop participants had the opportunity to question the designer about her decisions, and gained insights into strategies for improving start-up fashion business viability.

Ongoing discussions throughout both of the workshop sessions signaled a departure from traditional training and instruction methods. This contributed to a sense of shared voice and served to highlight the collaborative and participatory nature of the workshops.

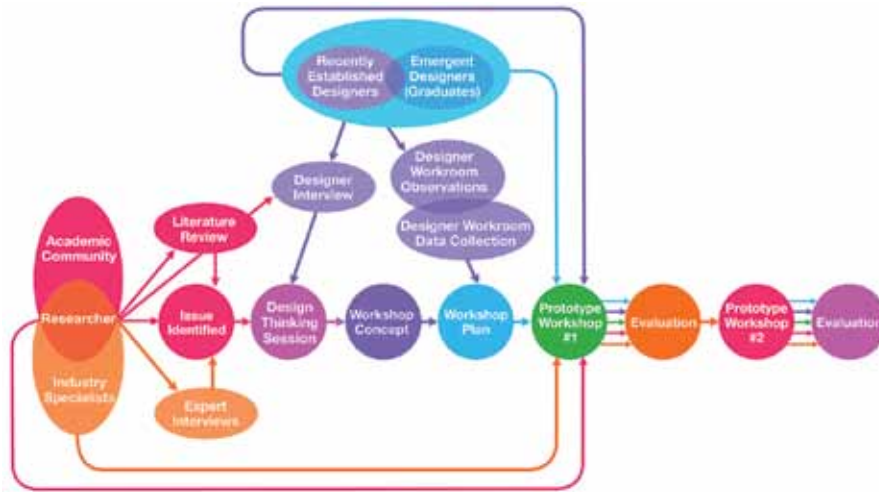


Figure 4. Flowchart depicting co-design processes and stakeholder involvement in the development of workshop trials.

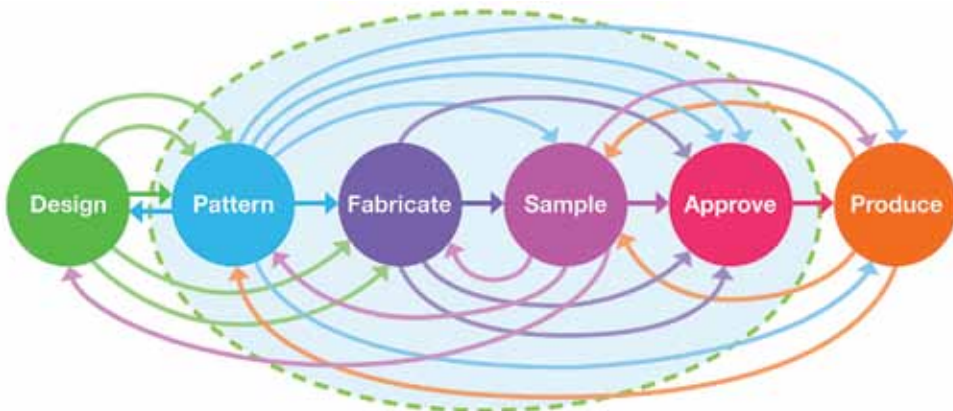


Figure 5. Diagram highlighting the pre-production area (between the design and final production of garments) identified in this study as requiring increased levels of understanding.

DISCUSSION

Critical to the evaluation of the prototype workshops was participant feedback, which served to determine themes and modifications for future trials. At the end of each session, participants were asked to share their reflections on the day's activities – those aspects that they had found beneficial, elements that could be improved, and whether the workshop framework was the optimal platform for dissemination of industry knowledge. Participants were unanimous in their approval of the format, confirming that workshop delivery was preferred over alternatives such as an industry handbook or online delivery. A motivating factor for participant subscription to the workshop model was the sense of isolation that many had felt during the foundation phase of their businesses. Gaining 'insider knowledge' of the imperatives associated with pre-production procedures was cited by the host designer as being one of the most useful aspects of the first session. She anticipated implementing protocols to improve operations, and expected that the knowledge she had gained would enhance company culture.

Further positive outcomes were noted as a result of the initial trial. Two of the participants offered their own workrooms as venues for future workshops, and networking opportunities proved beneficial – three designers were keen to employ the services of the sample machinist, and newer graduates were eager to continue contact with the more established designers. During the initial scoping study, the initial group of designers had stated that any sharing of knowledge on their part would be circumspect, subject to any perceived adverse impact on their own businesses. However, during that session, and again during the workshop trials, several instances of spontaneous collaboration and information-sharing between the parties were witnessed, signaling a willingness to support a collective sense of empowerment.

The use of industry-based participants lent credibility to workshop activities. In New Zealand, the declining apparel industry means that there is a surplus of industry specialists, many of who are semi-retired and likely to be open to part-time work opportunities. Considerations around commercial viability required that the workshop model address the cost of engagement with these experts and with other professionals involved in the sessions (such as established designers and fashion educators). Design thinking optimism prompted the consideration that these parties might command a professional hourly rate, volunteer their time for free, or indeed consider a remuneration arrangement somewhere between these two. Using workshops to divide the cost of engagement met with approval, with participants indicating that paying a nominal fee to attend workshops would not prove prohibitive, particularly if there were no ongoing financial obligations.

The workshop scenario offers individual clients (and the broader fashion community they exist within) well-defined benefits. Knowledge acquired would support both individual employability and the viability of new business ventures. Rewards for industry specialists might well be less tangible. While it is unlikely that permanent, full-time work opportunities would arise from the workshop scenario, the author believes that these actors, many of whom have experienced a sense of marginalisation through fashion industry redundancies, enjoy being engaged in creative work and experience satisfaction from mentoring and sharing knowledge. In this way, workshop involvement might well provide them with enhanced opportunities to receive esteem for their expertise. Together with a level of negotiated remuneration, such work opportunities could arguably contribute to a sense of eudaimonic well-being that enhances the quality of life for these actors.²⁸

While the workshop scenario was initially developed to exist outside of an academic framework (and it is deemed imperative for authentic learning purposes that it remain so), it is acknowledged that there are benefits to retaining links with universities. For as long as New Zealand's apparel industry infrastructure remains in its current state, compromised by diminished investment and ongoing company closures, universities serve a vital purpose. As well as offering access to cutting-edge technologies, universities are able to provide research funding to support new initiatives and, most importantly, are able to act as a conduit between industry and emerging players.

Recent attempts to facilitate a third workshop highlighted one significant issue. While the facilitators were able to successfully secure established designers and industry specialists to take part, there was some difficulty in

communicating with emerging designers, particularly as to what needs they would like met in terms of a focus for the workshop. Significant time was involved in this recruitment and determination aspect, to the detriment of time available to develop workshop content. On reflection, the project would benefit from a third-party organisation acting as a conduit between emerging players and university facilitators. New Zealand no longer has an active fashion industry body, and the author believes that this situation needs to be addressed.

CONCLUSION

The financial feasibility of local manufacturing (fashion or otherwise) in a globalised marketplace remains in question. In New Zealand, the declining apparel industry has impacted on a variety of players. Scores of graduates (and current students) are vying for fewer jobs; fashion educators are questioning their role in this scenario; and industry veterans are facing enforced retirement. Social innovation strategies such as the workshop scenario outlined in this paper could play a role in the provision of meaningful work for these actors.

It is anticipated that eventual workshop offerings would exist within market contexts. This is largely to ensure a level of financial independence, thereby removing reliance on governmental or benefactor support. However, it should be noted that this framework does not seek to satisfy the dominant profitability and growth criteria that has epitomised recent decades. In contrast to traditional notions of wealth-creation and market leadership, it seeks merely to be self-sufficient and to provide suitable recompense for the expertise offered by industry specialists. The success of social innovation initiatives such as this rests largely with the local communities involved – end-users keen to engage with offerings and facilitators motivated to foster this engagement. The model would also benefit from the development of a new, relevant industry body that could act as a conduit between facilitators and end-users.

A primary incentive for the wider adoption of the proposed model is the present-day risk of intergenerational fashion industry knowledge being lost to the New Zealand independent designer community. The retention and transfer of specialist knowledge and expertise is crucial to the survival of fledgling businesses within this sector. As a growing awareness of ecological and social sustainability impacts on consumption patterns, these actors may well be required to define future fashion scenarios. For their collective vision to be realised, investment in new frameworks for the dissemination of this knowledge remains critical.

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DISS/PLAY – T-SHIRTS AS MOBILE MEME

Leigh Paterson

The term Diss/Play refers to the use of design features on T-shirts to communicate messages and the ways in which the wearer is able to “diss” (a colloquial term meaning to be contemptuous of someone or something) or play with ideas. In this essay, a variety of examples will be used to explore and investigate how T-shirts can be viewed as a form of social commentary that displays and spreads culture. Richard Dawkins’ concept of meme includes the notion that the capturing of ideas or memories is re-articulated in the display of culture. In this paper, I unpick and explore the use of T-shirts as communication devices which produce, display and communicate ideas and memories.

T-shirts are a cultural node to help explore how fashion and communication design concepts are related through graphic expression or mark-making, defined in this context as visual forms that are used and combined as image(s) and/or text. T-shirts provide a physical surface where the transmission of ideas and sharing of culture can be revealed in the act of display. These garments’ ability to capture and communicate culture mimics the ability of new media platforms to spread information through forms commonly known as memes. T-shirts that reference and reflect culture could therefore be considered a form of mobile meme.

T-shirts have the ability to aid in the promotion of ideas, allowing culture to be marketed, co-opted or commodified through graphic expression and mark-making. In this respect, a T-shirt’s surface can be viewed as a platform with a unique ability to ‘speak’ to and for the owner, raising the question of how T-shirts are viewed and disseminated by the public at large. Messages are transmitted via the wearer in their everyday context, and have the ability to spread through the wearer’s circulation in the public arena. A T-shirt in this respect is both a fashion artefact and a communication device. Hence it is important to recognise the unique power that a T-shirt may have as a worn entity to communicate to audiences and spread messages.

T-shirts create platforms for a wide range of ideas to be displayed. Wearers’ identities or personalities can be expressed and aligned to the graphic content on display. Fashion mediates this practice between the body and the message by communicating to audiences via these worn garments, reflecting and replicating the function of advertising and print culture traditions. T-shirts allow fast forms of consumer-generated communication content by everyday citizens – forms which can create new ideas about branding and consumerism within and beyond fashion. The intersection of communication and fashion design in this context throws light on the ways in which culture is being referenced through worn visual forms. While this phenomenon is not new, the nature, style and delivery has changed. The promotion and range of graphic content has been facilitated by technology in terms of manufacturing, distribution and consumption of pop culture to audiences.

T-shirts can reveal highly responsive social and cultural actions and behaviour through their ‘worn commentary,’ facilitated within the function of fashion. The ability of fashion to be transient, fast-moving and referential allows such a worn communication experience to fit into habitual and participatory action and information exchange. In this sense, T-shirts might operate as transmitters of culture. There are few barriers in the creation and production of content on a T-shirt – an idea, a permanent marker and a blank T-shirt can provide an opportunity to comment on the world. The production and consumption of worn messages or commentary that references culture through the wearing of T-shirts in this sense parallels the way a meme operates.

This referencing of culture through the production of memes is discussed by Ryan Milner in *The World Made Meme: Discourse and Identity in Participatory Media*. Milner identifies cultural practices and pop culture discourses that embody fashion elements, and describes this form of narrative as “polyvocal” in reference to the ways in which collaborative identities are formed and produced and how they reflect social agency.¹ Aspects of culture and agency including conflict, consumption, appropriation and subversion can be explored through the production and consumption of T-shirt content. The ways in which T-shirts can be used to promote and explore culture reveals the influence of design behaviour regarding how a message, idea or memory might be spread to an audience.

Both self-referential and performative in nature, the messages on T-shirts are distributed on and through bodies as their host. Bodies can therefore morph into a graphic form analogous to a screen, whereby the host ‘projects’ transitory information; the body as host displays a message on a T-shirt, which in turn feeds off and informs culture at large. The ability to choose and change what to wear, and when and where to wear it, demonstrates the wearer’s powerful ability to communicate a message or idea that connects and reflects culture. Individual wearers can promote their morals and ethics in this way, thus mimicking a newsfeed through spontaneous displays.

METACONSUMPTION: MEMES AND THE CONSUMPTION OF IDEAS

Because memes generally operate in a digital context and T-shirts typically require a body to host them, I am taking a certain liberty in combining analogue and digital technology traditions to describe how T-shirts might function as mobile memes. The internet is generally considered the space in which meme culture is produced and consumed – but this could change. Over time technology could mediate the wearing of pixels on the surface of a body – closely integrating analogue and digital platforms. For this reason, future technology may also see the body operating as a graphic surface. There are growing instances where online/offline culture is being referenced and produced simultaneously in the wearing and sharing of T-shirt content. Memematic culture is blurring the online and offline distinction due to the way in which content is copied and popular culture is referenced and shared. Mobility arises due to the physical context of wearing a T-shirt and its public circulation, while the digital claim arises because a T-shirt can be seen as inheriting traits from online meme culture due to the copying and sharing of pop culture content that can be viewed in a public context. Ultimately the mobility of the wearer and the transmission of cultural ideas are facilitated via the T-shirts.

In this respect, mobile memes could be viewed as a transitory form of fashion, as a T-shirt allows ideas to be displayed and distributed freely and generally without restriction. The transitory element allows infinite repositories and replications of cultural forms and information to operate under analogue and digital traditions, influencing and referencing each other simultaneously through the practice of communication and fashion design. Over time, the distinctions and referential interplay between analogue and digital could be viewed as creating a kind of dynamic imprecision due to the transitory nature of the ideas displayed on T-shirts.

With this in mind, I would like to posit that bodies are a type of host that can be used as commodified space where ideas are exchanged and can grow. A mobile meme. A space whereby communication design and cultural capital can be referenced, replicated and regurgitated indefinitely as a form of worn commentary and identity in the style of a meme through the practice of fashion.

While the ideas that might be expressed on a T-shirt could be inherent to the wearer; the worn display allows third parties to be engaged in the translation of a message. This could be interpreted as a dialect that fashion can help facilitate through a continuum of cultural ‘conversations’ via these shirts. It is a dialect that is facilitated, transmitted and translated through imitation and adaptation, dependent on cultural conditions and lived experience. In this sense, T-shirts create and distribute ideas in ways which highlight a transaction between wearer and audience – a T-shirt can ‘speak’ to an audience, both literally and figuratively. A T-shirt is a platform that can display or transmit cultural messages and values which again may be seen speaking to audiences through graphic content.

Richard Dawkins discusses memes in relation to human culture as a soup, a form of cultural transmission that moves from brain to brain, allowing ideas to be shared and propagated: "Fashions in dress and diet, ceremonies and customs, art and architecture, engineering and technology, all evolve in historical time in a way that looks like highly speeded up genetic evolution, but really has nothing to do with genetic evolution. As in genetic evolution though, the change may be progressive."²

T-shirts can display cultural phenomena that might change and evolve through the experience of the wearer. Dawkins' theory could be used to negotiate this worn experience, particularly when considering how ideas drawn from culture are given the opportunity to spread. This can be seen in the work of Katharine Hamnett's slogan-bearing T-shirts, which mainstreamed the display of personal political affiliations and declarations through the function of fashion. Hamnett used her body as a political surface during a face-to-face meeting with Margaret Thatcher in 1984. Hamnett wore her T-shirt, which referenced public opposition to the siting of Pershing missiles in the United Kingdom, as a protest device. The slogan stated boldly: "58% Don't Want Pershing." On this occasion, her T-shirt functioned to confront the issue and disassociate Hamnett from Thatcher and institutional politics.

Hamnett's T-shirt was clearly a Diss-Tee. The experience of worn fashion as a form of campaigning, to protest or to promote an idea, would later inspire the production of a series of garments known as slogan T-shirts. Hamnett has commented on the nature of T-shirts stating "I wanted to put a really large message on T-shirts that could be read from 20 or 30ft away," she says now. "Slogans work on so many different levels; they're almost subliminal. They're also a way of people aligning themselves to a cause. They're tribal. Wearing one is like branding yourself."³ Fashion's ability to display dissent in this way can be viewed as a powerful vehicle for creating change and cultural evolution by reframing an idea. In his book *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, Dick Hebdige explored how lived experiences helped create collective meaning: "Social relations and processes are then appropriated by individuals only through the forms in which they are represented to those individuals. These forms are, as we have seen, by no means transparent. They are shrouded in 'common sense' which simultaneously validates and mystifies them."⁴

It is therefore important to reflect on the role that T-shirts play in social negotiations. A T-shirt speaks to individuals and could be considered a point of reference where culture is concerned. T-shirts allow a dialogue to begin – hence the social role of the T-shirt in its public display is not linear in translation and transmission. Rather, a T-shirt is an opportunity for culture to spread and evolve in forms that are difficult to control.

Herein lies the balancing act that fashion undertakes when attempting to communicate. Feminist perspectives, for example, can be communicated in many different ways and in terms that might be seen either to celebrate or denigrate its advocacy. In the style of Hamnett, in 2016 the House of Dior released a T-shirt proclaiming, "We should all be feminists," a declaration borrowed from author: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.⁵ In an explanatory statement, Maria Grazia Chiuri, head designer at Dior, said: "My position in a house as influential as Dior, but also my role as a mother, reminds me every day of my responsibilities and the importance of my actions."⁶ The repackaging of Adichie's text, and Chiuri's position in repackaging feminism to be sold back to consumers who wish to align themselves with gender politics, is fascinating. This is a form of metaconsumption – a transaction that might be explained as the referencing or display of an idea that fits with a consumer's or wearer's world view. Both Hamnett's and Dior's T-shirts reveal different ways in which an idea might be communicated to gather support and rally for a cause.

By contrast, anti-feminist T-shirts are to be found for sale on websites such as redbubble.com, which sells an opposing view to consumers. T-shirts stating "Ask me about how your feminist agenda is cancer" and "This is what an anti-feminist looks like" provide contrasting dialogues and gender politics that reveal their wearers' opinions and positions. The opposing narratives and contrasting ideologies displayed by different T-shirts and worn by different wearers is analogous to a billboard or a twitter post. The space that exists between the communication of the message, the display of the garment or artifact and the audience in regard to the body gives rise to a form of negotiation, evolution and solidifying of ideas and culture relative to the host. In this context, the accepting or

rejecting of ideas relates to the complex social relations that Hebdige identifies insofar as it reveals how fashion can be seen to simultaneously validate and mystify popular culture.

Hamnett, Dior and Redbubble's translations of their respective positions relative to cultural-political discourse via the medium of T-shirts allow the operation or spread of messages and reflects cultural dialects in regards to the exchange of ideas. These worn iterations communicate ideas in a polemical context and translate and replicate messages and metanarratives. The renegotiated terms in which messages are curated, viewed and redistributed within the public sphere allows the exploration of ideas, including how they are perpetuated through the operation and function of fashion. While few would disagree that fashion has a role to play in communicating narratives, Bourdieu reminds us that things as "seemingly shallow as entertainment, fashion, and even food are in fact immensely important to the creation and dissemination of cultural capital, and are therefore of immense importance to public life."⁷ Through the consumption and distribution of worn narratives, ideas and positions are solidified and negotiated in the public sphere. In this sense, slogan T-shirts borrow from communication design and political campaigning to simultaneously contextualise and decontextualise their messages through a worn form of contradictory political propaganda, that can reflect opposition, irony and parody.

T-SHIRTS AS MICROPHONES

Fashion thus hosts a matrix of narratives that are worn on bodies to communicate beyond sheer aesthetics – a T-shirt is a microphone, a platform and a movement. Fashion and communication design can capture and promote spontaneous acts of citizen reporting or citizen journalism, which can be challenging in its construction and display. A T-shirt and its memematic iterations can be seen in terms of either the democratisation or destruction of the communication of ideas via the production of worn fashion. Steven Heller discusses design and its social ability to create division and hatred in an article published in *Eye* magazine and aptly titled "Designing Demons:" "Propaganda precedes technology as a means to soften otherwise rational minds into malleable clay."⁸ Heller points to Marshall McLuhan's 1964 book *Understanding Media* to explain how varying forms of pictures and words can express differences in ideas, which can then be used to whip people into a frenzy; contradiction is an integral part of making meaning in messages.⁹ Putting such ideas onto a T-shirt can either improve or erode the transmission of the message because of the personal proximity of the medium to the host and the mobility of the medium/host in creating an audience.

McLuhan's theory of the transmission of messages and cross-pollination of ideas was substantiated in the 2016 US presidential election. Celebrities with high public visibility and influence campaigned for their preferred candidate through the wearing of T-shirts. Both presidential candidates employed strategies that utilised worn propaganda to advance their cause. Marc Jacobs, for example, designed a T-shirt specifically for Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton, which was then strategically worn by celebrities for political gain. Images of celebrity wearers were reposted and reported online. Anna Wintour, Katy Perry and Lena Dunham were prominent wearers who functioned as mobile billboards as a result of their social media visibility. Perry was captured wearing a T-shirt similar to Jacobs' that stated: "Hillary Clinton is a badass." T-shirts were thus used to communicate with audiences in the negotiation of change, and bodies were seen politicking through fashion artefacts. Prominent public figures employed social media strategies to literally wear their idea of change and to create and distribute conversational prompts.

In this sense, fashion is performative and referential and can be a powerful driver of change in the political sphere. The experience of Australian activist Iain Fogerty illustrates that when politics intersects with fashion, things can be confronting and provocative. In 2015, Fogerty wore an "I'm with stupid" T-shirt near Liberal National Party campaigners during the Queensland election campaign and was subsequently arrested for causing a public nuisance.¹⁰ This "cultural mutation" (a phrase borrowed from Dawkins' *The Selfish Gene*)¹¹ permitted the replication of an idea through fashion as a public relations exercise. Its aim was to draw attention to, promote and perhaps control dissent and open up other avenues of speculation and conversation to advance an issue.¹² Fashion and

communication design reflect this cultural mutation because of their ability to facilitate change and allow new ideas to present themselves beyond perceived control. T-shirts operate as a mouthpiece, offering the chance to provoke and promote ideas that form cultural statements derived from other cultural statements.

The promotion of provocative cultural statements replicated and appropriated on T-shirts as graphic forms can also be seen in a range of T-shirts designed by New Zealand clothing firm Mr Vintage in 2009. The garments were inspired by 1994 images of murder accused David Bain, in which he was shown wearing what was deemed to be unfashionable knitwear. This became a point of national conversation at the time, so much so that sweaters that resemble the same brightly coloured, homemade knitted jersey aesthetic are still colloquially referred to as “Bains.” Mr Vintage produced screen-printed T-shirts that replicated the knit pattern involved. Although their stated aim was that the company only meant to comment on a “crime of fashion,” fashion industry heavyweights condemned the T-shirts as a tasteless gimmick. “World” fashion label founder Denise L’Estrange-Corbet said people should remember that the trial was about “the murder of his family.” “If proceeds from the sale of the T-shirts go towards his trial, then I think it is a good idea. If not, then it’s a cheap way for a brand to lever publicity off something which so shocked New Zealanders.”¹³ The attempt to copy and parlay facets of popular culture in the reclamation and regurgitation of graphic content shows how swiftly culture at large can redefine itself.

T-SHIRTS AND TECHNOLOGY

Beyond such provocations, issues arise not just over the content but also regarding the structure and interface of information-harvesting through technology. Bodies have become a highly active stage whereby ideas are promoted or commodified in both analogue and digital contexts. Individuals use both fashion nodes and their physical bodies to respond to and galvanise popular rhetoric and collective capital in various spaces. The self-referential documentation of paradox, parody and ‘drama’ has seen T-shirts become vehicles for airing one’s ‘dirty laundry’ online. Shame and bad behaviour are reclaimed as individuals are seen wearing their (literal and figurative) misfortunes on T-shirts in their respective digital environments. They are not seeking to remove or hide their embarrassing life events; on the contrary, they are displaying and promoting bad behaviour via social media.

Model Sarah Snyder and actress Winona Ryder, both high-profile American celebrities who have had very public run-ins with the law, have generated public exposure through the media using T-shirts as communication devices. In September 2015, Snyder, the then girlfriend of actor Jaden Smith, was charged with the theft of a luxury bag. She subsequently posted an image on Instagram of herself wearing a T-shirt of her mug shot. In 2001, Ryder became the face of the “Free Winona” campaign designed to support and communicate her arrest for shoplifting following a mental health struggle. The campaign’s creator, Billy Tsangares, commented: “This type of humour is a way to be political without necessarily taking a stand that’s going to offend somebody. This gives people an expression that is radical and at the same time meaningless.”¹⁴ Both Snyder and Ryder were making fun of themselves by wearing T-shirts created to spread and share information that related to their personal capital.

Exposing one’s life as a branded individual builds personal or social capital in a contemporary environment facilitated by technology. Interestingly, even if what is being communicated is seemingly socially unacceptable, the capturing and recording of information on a T-shirt nevertheless reveals the ritual of story-telling and memory-making.

In this sense, nodes of conversations and communication design content as information are being continually shared and redefined. In 2016, University of Connecticut students Lexi Fragola and Jessica Zharnest created and wore T-shirts as Halloween costumes that combined all the sexually explicit texts (sexts) they had been sent via social media. Their exploits were profiled and spread on the Internet via a variety of pop culture websites. In 1966, the late Alan Dundes, a folklorist at the University of California, Berkeley, coined the term *latrinalia* to refer to the graffiti and mark-making found in restrooms. We have gone beyond the toilet door in sharing cultural capital through design – the anarchic commentary traditionally inscribed in and on public toilet doors is an analogous form of the graphic phenomena that is now being reconstituted through fashion and technology.

Like text on a toilet door written by faceless or anonymous scribes, the trail of communication does allow freedom of expression. But it also reveals something inherently problematic about the nature and type of communication exchanges. The display of everyday experiences through fashion creates new pathways to reference, replicate and borrow culture, and gives new life to old circumstances through replication of information – in the style of a meme. As a consequence, the everyday nature of pop cultural messages – in this case, sexual text messages – prompts reflection on social interactions, information that can be shared, and more importantly, on how the regeneration of content on T-shirts might begin to influence public discourse.

Where pop culture is concerned, T-shirts may well continue to mimic the digital screen, and vice versa and allow the idea of a meme to expand and redefine itself in the future. The future challenge to fashion may involve issues surrounding the physical – will fabric become obsolete and will individuals wear pixels? And as analogue and digital platforms potentially become more closely entwined, how all of this will matter to the practice of fashion and communication design will perhaps become increasingly interesting.

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VIRTUAL FASHION BUSINESS INCUBATION: NURTURING NEW ZEALAND DESIGNER-MAKERS AND SMALL-SCALE SLOW FASHION

Brittany Pooley

Demand quality, not just in the product you buy, but in the life of the person who made it.

Orsola de Castro¹



Figure 1. Bijou Studio, 2016, <https://www.bijoustudio.co.nz/about/>.

INTRODUCTION

This article summarises the ideas advanced in my recently completed dissertation, undertaken as part of my Honours year course studying Design at Otago Polytechnic. It encapsulates my final design outcome, the creation of the Bijou Studio website, and discusses how this came about.

Bijou – defined as something small and delicately worked – was developed as a virtual fashion incubator to meet the needs of local designer–makers operating as slow-fashion practitioners in start-up and small businesses in Aotearoa New Zealand. It aims to educate, communicate and validate the culture of slow fashion and small-scale entrepreneurship, as well as support and promote designer–makers who fit into that ethos.

As part of my Honours thesis, I started work on Bijou Studio with the help of many local collaborators and contributors. I identified a need for free education to fill the daunting gap between completing tertiary study and entering a small-scale fashion enterprise. Designers reported graduating from their tertiary studies with strong design knowledge and a high level of technical skill for designing and making, but lacking the business knowledge they needed to start their own businesses. Bijou Studio emerged from design research, and seeks to address real-world fashion business problems by collaborating with people from the fashion industry, friends, local businesspeople, creators, makers and scholars. It is a collaborative venture that exists as an online studio, blog and retail store and is an ongoing project that will constantly change course as new research and ideas come to the fore.

Keywords: slow fashion, designer–maker, fashion incubator, business incubator

METHODOLOGY

The theoretical framework I used to create and guide Bijou Studio focused on understanding how New Zealand designer–makers can be slow practitioners and how slow fashion can benefit them by adding perceived value to their brands. My Honours thesis sought to address the research question: *What do New Zealand fashion designer–makers need both economically and creatively to start and sustain their own small businesses?* In response to this question, I considered contemporary practices in the fashion industry and located deficiencies in our knowledge of fashion business start-up. I selected four methods that coalesced as a methodology to develop my proposed conceptual model: a review of the secondary research and literature; a focus group, with six slow fashion designer–maker practitioners as participants, with scenarios that concluded the focus group questions; reflective practice through user feedback; and my own practice as a designer–maker, through which all my research is informed.

DESIGNER–MAKERS AND SLOW FASHION

Bijou Studio is a platform for designer–makers who operate as slow fashion practitioners. According to Gale and Kaur, a designer–maker is “someone who designs and produces items in small or batch quantities, usually operating as an independent or in a small business context.”¹² This term seeks to highlight the fact that not all designers make each piece or product themselves, but rather develop the initial design through making processes. To understand the correlations between designer–makers and slow fashion, it is imperative to recognise the core values surrounding slow fashion. Reflecting on Hazel Clark’s three constituents of slow fashion,³ Pookulangara and Shephard note the importance of “[p]lacing value on local resources and economies, transparency in the production system, and creating products with a longer usable life.”¹⁴

Designer–makers are using these three components of slow fashion as guidelines to inform their practice. For example, local New Zealand label *NOM*d’s* design team aligns with Gale and Kaur’s definition of designer–makers, and simultaneously acts in accordance with some of Clark’s constituents of slow fashion, such as supporting transparency in local production. The company achieves this through the decision to keep manufacturing on-shore

in New Zealand, working in partnership with the organisation Child Labour Free and providing transparency of production by communicating this information publicly via social media platform Instagram.⁵ Writing for the website *Not Just A Label*, Dickson, Carlotta and Grover state that slow fashion's "values are not meant to be a one-size fits all solution, but they can encourage creativity and be adapted."⁶ In this case, designer-makers can benefit from being slow fashion practitioners as they are, in part, already achieving the goals of the movement due to the scale of their design and production.

Four themes emerged from my review of the secondary research and literature: designer-maker practice; sustainability through slow fashion; business incubation for small business start-up; and virtual business networks. When I considered these themes together, they provided a body of knowledge that informed my research to develop a framework for slow fashion designer-makers to guide them in sustainable practices that also sustain their businesses.

This provided a guide for the questions that would drive the next phase of my project: a focus group. My focus group consisted of six participants: two undergraduate students, two postgraduate students, and two graduates of the Bachelor of Design at Otago Polytechnic. Conducting this focus group allowed me to identify a number of needs encountered by designer-makers entering small fashion business start-up in New Zealand. Although some aspects of business were covered in the participants' tertiary education, there were deficiencies in these designers' knowledge that needed to be addressed to facilitate a smoother transition between tertiary education and small business start-up.

Their needs could largely be divided into five themes: education, technology, commerce, resources and communication. Considering these themes, I recognised that these needs could be addressed by the construction of a virtual fashion business incubator. Such an incubator would address these gaps in knowledge by conducting ongoing research and providing a centralised platform for small business start-up resources. Primarily, this should include information about the inner workings of small businesses in New Zealand, yet it could also incorporate key contact information, industry opportunities, pricing formulae, and guides for ethical practice. This information needed to be delivered in small, digestible pieces that do not overwhelm the user and in a language that designer-makers can relate to.

My research sought to develop an alternative, sustainable, focused rationale to inform the way we perceive fashion design as a means of guiding both emerging and existing designer-makers, as well as consumers, to approach fashion with a more sustainably and ethically conscious ethos. The materialisation of this research has been the launch of my website and virtual fashion incubator Bijou Studio, which aims to foster local designer-makers in starting and sustaining their businesses in New Zealand.

BIJOU STUDIO

Bijou Studio (<https://www.bijoustudio.co.nz>) comprises four main sections: blog, incubator, designer-makers and retail. The *Blog* features a series of short interviews accompanied by short films and photographs featuring designer-makers, small-business owners, and other people active in the New Zealand design community. It is designed to endorse the ideas and businesses of like-minded practitioners and to educate readers through storytelling. The *Incubator* page contains a conceptual model that informs designer-makers how to start and sustain their businesses. It provides free, accessible tools to existing and aspiring small-business owners.

The *Designer-Maker* page introduces the designer-makers featured on Bijou Studio and communicates their values, philosophies and aesthetics. Its intention is to create a greater connection between designer-makers and consumers. Bijou Studio's designer-makers are curated according to their efforts to promote ethical fashion. The website uses ethical guidelines and corresponding iconography to acknowledge each designer's design values. The *Retail* page is the ecommerce extension of Bijou Studio; its purpose is to promote and sell fashion products made by small, slow-fashion New Zealand designer-makers and to generate revenue to sustain Bijou Studio as a business. It

currently stocks a number of slow-fashion designer-maker brands: Ariane Bray, Amy Dunn, Joseph Hollebon, Dylan Peat, Winifred by Kenya Quin and the site's independent brand, Bijou Niche.

In an effort to engage with the community and ensure that slow fashion is talked about, Bijou Studio and its designer-makers participate in the Fashion Revolution initiative. The revolution seeks to make changes in the fashion industry, believing that "fashion can be made in a safe, clean and beautiful way where creativity, quality, environment and people are valued equally."⁷ We promote this concept through a series of photographs featuring the slogan "I Made Your Clothes," an initiative of the Fashion Revolution organisation.⁸ We will continue to contribute to such movements and initiatives to help others trying to achieve similar goals to our own.

Bijou Studio is a website and tool that can be utilised by design educators, students at high school and tertiary levels, entrepreneurs, and emerging and existing fashion industry designer-makers to better understand their practice and assist them in starting and sustaining their own businesses. It is intended to be a supplementary resource that contributes to a wider body of knowledge and that guides designer-makers as they start up their businesses. Part of this initiative's success lies in its collaborations within the local community.



Figure 2. Bijou Studio designer-maker Kenya Quin demonstrating support for Fashion Revolution.
<https://www.bijoustudio.co.nz/about/>.

For this project, I engaged with many academics and creatives to build a cohort of like-minded contributors that help shape Bijou Studio. The team consists of graphic designer, Joseph Hollebon; editor, Lewis Rarm; blog photographer and social media consultant, Hennessey Griffiths; editorial photographer, Thamarat Saikerd Sri; videographer, Edmund Smith; illustrator, Olivia Andrews; musician, Finn Petrie and myself, Brittany Pooley, as creative director. These multidisciplinary collaborations allow Bijou Studio to be diverse in its implementation of ideas.

Bijou Studio is made for designer-makers by designer-makers. Because of this, it was important that Bijou Studio as a brand adopted an aesthetic that would captivate its users. The collaborative efforts of key contributor Joseph Hollebon allowed for Bijou Studio's branding and web design to have visual appeal, while also being easy to access, navigate and utilise as a free resource. Bijou Studio's aesthetic adopts the uncultivated textures of nature. It is minimal and contemporary, reflecting its goal to facilitate online access to knowledge. Our partnership with local florist Ayla Hawkins, combined with grain-filtered imagery, harnesses images of nature and reflects our ethical ethos.

CONCLUSION

At Bijou Studio, it is our goal to show designer-makers in Aotearoa New Zealand that being both creative and business-savvy do not need to be mutually exclusive, and that conducting business can be a creative act in itself. We identify and celebrate the small steps that designer-makers are making towards slow-fashion practices, and we understand that it can be difficult to produce products that are 100% ethically sound. Our critique of fast fashion and exclusionary practices is articulated by celebrating the attempts of local designer-makers to enact small and slow practices. We continue to research how designer-makers can realign their design strategies to incorporate a slow fashion ethic. The information we provide is aimed at understanding designer-makers' needs in a business context and to build strategies that can aid them in starting and/or sustaining a small-scale label.

Bijou Studio proudly differentiates itself from other business and fashion incubators through its inclusive positioning as a free online platform. The site has continued to flourish since my graduation, and is active as an incubator, blog and store that sells products and tells the stories of New Zealand designer-makers. Come visit us at www.bijoustudio.co.nz.

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- 1 Orsola de Castro is a founder of the Fashion Revolution initiative. See *Fashion Revolution*, <http://fashionrevolution.org/>.
- 2 Colin Gale and Jasbir Kaur, *The Textile Book* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 49.
- 3 Hazel Clark, "SLOW+ FASHION – an Oxymoron – or a Promise for the Future ...?" *Fashion Theory*, 12:4 (2008), 427-46.
- 4 Sanjukta Pookulangara and Arlesa Shephard, "Slow Fashion Movement: Understanding Consumer Perceptions – An Exploratory Study," *Journal of Retailing And Consumer Services*, 20:2 (2013), 201.
- 4 Sanjukta Pookulangara and Arlesa Shephard, "Slow Fashion Movement: Understanding Consumer Perceptions – An Exploratory Study," *Journal of Retailing And Consumer Services*, 20:2 (2013), 201.
- 5 Margi Robertson, "#Childlaborfree," *NOM*D Instagram*, 2017, <https://www.instagram.com/p/4po4HUTSLi/>.
- 6 Maureen Dickson, Carlotta Cataldi and Crystal Grover, "The Slow Fashion Movement," *Not Just A Label*, 24 Oct. 2016, <https://www.notjustalabel.com/editorial/slow-fashion-movement>.
- 7 *Fashion Revolution*, <http://fashionrevolution.org/>.
- 8 Ibid.

RESPONSIBLE FASHION CONSUMPTION: MODULAR SENSORY INTERACTION

Sue Prescott



Figure 1. Sue Prescott, *Tui Jabot*, 2017, silk organza, Lycra, LED lighting. "Fashion Perennials," LUX Light Festival 2017, Wellington, New Zealand. Photograph: Sue Prescott.

Reducing clothing consumption is a current challenge facing the global fashion industry, requiring urgent action and a response to consumer desire for a more sustainable fashion future. Emerging and experienced designers, small businesses and large companies are all exploring a range of fashion processes to effect such change, from traditional patterns of action through to more radical approaches. In her Fashion Ecologies Project, Kate Fletcher discusses how slowing down the fast fashion cycle is encouraging consumers to take more responsibility for their clothing, asserting that knowledge is the key to enabling such responsibility.¹

With a desire to revitalise consumer interactions and responsibility for clothing, my installation "Fashion Perennials" was created to expose the sheer beauty of garment-making processes to consumers and to 'slow down' fashion. Asked her opinion of slow fashion, Kate Fletcher answered: "It's an opportunity for us to have our cake and eat it: to be nourished by fashion and nature."²

In this fashion installation prepared for the LUX Light Festival 2017 held in Wellington, New Zealand, components of garments grow in a forest where Lycra trees are stretched taut, reaching for the sky and decked with epiphytes constructed of pockets, collars and cuffs, while the scent of wood emanates from the bark-covered floor.

Amid the widely recognisable details of clothing, less recognisable elements of garments are suspended between the 'trees': shirt fronts, back dresses, stray plackets, lone sleeves and bodice yokes. Pieces fit together and interchange to create multiple garment options. This modular approach aims to offer garment versatility and longevity through the potential to continually reinvent clothing, thus reducing the desire to consume.

The diaphanous qualities of unbleached woven silk organza and cotton lawn fabrics used in these garment pieces enable a transformation through lighting, drawing in the gaze of the viewer. Curious stares arise from an audience as they puzzle over the lit tree columns, visually linking shapes and details, relating a piece to the human form, or imagining a garment.

During everyday interactions with clothing, rituals such as making, wearing, ironing, folding, mending and washing become integral to consumer interaction, enabling close engagement and sensory experience with clothing as it is handled. However, in a society where fast fashion and high speed prevail, there is less opportunity for sensory engagement and appreciation of clothing; making and mending have become scarce, and washing is often carried out in a washing machine rather than done by hand. Ironing and folding may be reserved for the few garments intended for a particular occasion, with fabrics that cannot be hurried into a closet. As clothes age, their beauty becomes less realised; they are relegated to trash in many instances, sent away to become rags or shipped to developing countries in need of clothing, transferring the disposal problem to another nation. In *The Sustainable Fashion Handbook*, Sandy Black comments on a significant barrier to fashion being sustainable – we do not allow clothing to become "old or unfashionable without attracting prejudice."³

The role of function in clothing is changing to address new societal needs. The interchangeability of the garment elements in "Fashion Perennials" can be applied to circumstances where transient communities require flexibility of function in clothing and living conditions. In the Better Lives Lectures 2017, the themes of "society," "nature" and "power" were explored through a fashion and clothing lens. Professor Helen Storey presented her installation "Dress for our Time," and discussed the project that she carried out with the Za'atari Refugee Camp in Jordan and how displaced communities are new kinds of societies.⁴

In the context of climate change, "Fashion Perennials" celebrates the everydayness of clothing while considering 'nature' in the life of the garment beyond its wearing. As an antithesis to the over-production of fashion and the multiple seasonal drops to major high-street retailers, "Fashion Perennials" opens a dialogue aimed at dissuading the perpetuation of consumer culture and the fast fashion system, and replacing them with greater inclusivity and positive change. Through organisations such as Fashion Positive, "cradle to cradle" principles of fashion aim to "transform one material at a time" in the quest to create a community of designers and suppliers to "identify, optimize and certify the building blocks of the industry."⁵

Exposing an audience to the elements of garments, offering beauty in their partial state, in their potential to become complete or in their aesthetic possibility may anchor a memory of a past garment that was made or mended, where value was added, not removed, through its aging, and where relationships with our garments helped us understand ourselves better as consumers.

Sue Prescott is a senior lecturer and programme leader (Fashion) at Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand. Her research and design work sits somewhere between fashion and technology, and combines themes such as sensory engagement in fashion and costume with reflections on migration, identity, sustainable fashion and technological progress. Sue exhibits locally and internationally.

- 1 <http://fashionecologies.org/>.
- 2 <http://katefletcher.com/fashion-and-sustainability-faqs/>.
- 3 Sandy Black, *The Sustainable Fashion Handbook* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2012), 69.
- 4 <http://sustainable-fashion.com/blog/the-better-lives-lectures-2017/>.
- 5 <http://www.fashionpositive.org/>.

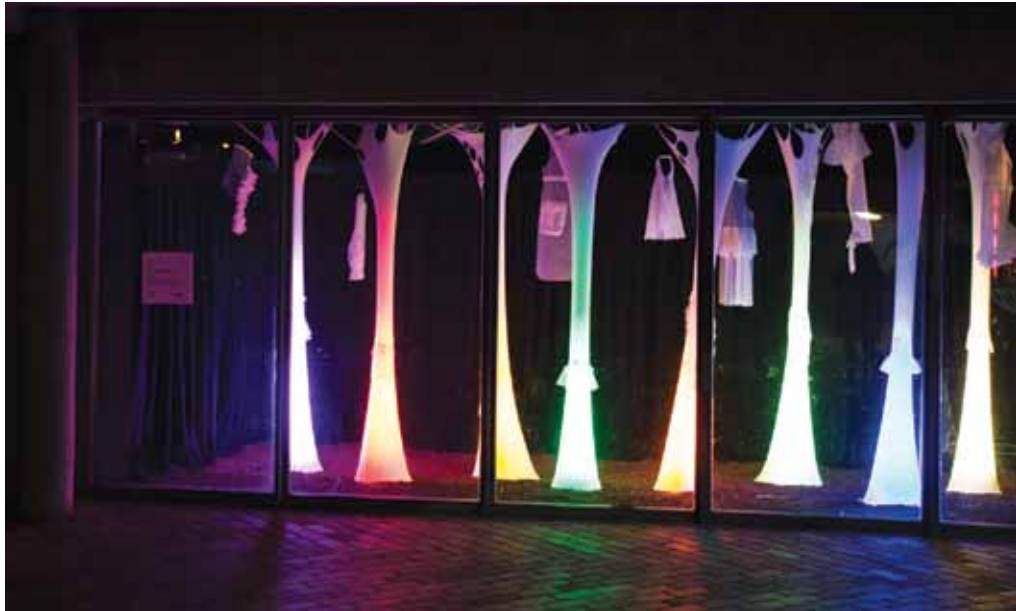


Figure 2. Sue Prescott, *How Many Collars*, 2017, silk organza, Lycra, LED lighting. Exhibition view, "Fashion Perennials," LUX Light Festival 2017, Wellington, New Zealand. Photograph: Sue Prescott.



Figure 3. Sue Prescott, *Bondage Pocket*, 2017, silk organza, Lycra, LED lighting. "Fashion Perennials," LUX Light Festival 2017, Wellington, New Zealand. Photograph: Sue Prescott.



Figure 4. Sue Prescott, *Polite Pocket*, 2017, silk organza, Lycra, LED lighting. "Fashion Perennials," LUX Light Festival 2017, Wellington, New Zealand. Photograph: Sue Prescott.



Figure 5. Sue Prescott, *Exhibition view*, 2017, silk organza, Lycra, LED lighting. "Fashion Perennials," LUX Light Festival 2017, Wellington, New Zealand. Photograph: Sue Prescott.



Figure 6. Sue Prescott, *How Many Collars*, 2017, silk organza, Lycra, LED lighting, shirt pocket. "Fashion Perennials," LUX Light Festival 2017, Wellington, New Zealand. Photograph: Sue Prescott.



Figure 7. Sue Prescott, *Jelly Cuff*, 2017, silk organza, Lycra, LED lighting, shirt pocket. "Fashion Perennials," LUX Light Festival 2017, Wellington, New Zealand. Photograph: Sue Prescott.



Figure 8. Sue Prescott, *Poplar Collar*, 2017, silk organza, Lycra, LED lighting, shirt pocket. "Fashion Perennials," LUX Light Festival 2017, Wellington, New Zealand. Photograph: Sue Prescott.



Figure 9. Sue Prescott, 2017: *Llama Collar*, 2017, silk organza, Lycra, LED lighting, shirt pocket. "Fashion Perennials," LUX Light Festival 2017, Wellington, New Zealand. Photograph: Sue Prescott.



Figure 10. Sue Prescott, *Llama Collar*, [correct?] 2017, silk organza, Lycra, LED lighting, shirt pocket. "Fashion Perennials," LUX Light Festival 2017, Wellington, New Zealand. Photograph: Sue Prescott.

POST-FASHION, HYBRIDITY, THE UNCONVENTIONAL: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE END OF FASHION

Rekha Rana Shailaj



Figure 1. Kurta dress in laminated cotton fabric, 2016, Rekha Rana Shailaj.
Photograph: Simon Swale.

INTRODUCTION

Clothing concerns all of the human person, all of the body, all the relationships of man to body as well as the relationships of the body to society.

Roland Barthes¹

Has fashion reached its end, its borderlines where it finishes? Can the phenomenon of fashion be quietened? In my view, the end of fashion is hard to accept. However, we can comprehend what is *beyond* the notion of fashion, as we know that people will continue to make sense of appearance and identity through clothing. What then describes the fate of fashion? Is it anti-fashion, non-fashion or post-fashion? These terms have been employed by many authors to explain what could be *beyond* fashion. Mary Lynn Damhorst proposes that "communicating through dress is increasingly complex."² I find it even more complex being surrounded by cultural differences which I encounter living beyond the national boundaries of my home country. The notion of *beyond* is critical for me, and I feel a rapport with the way in which Homi Bhabha elaborates this concept. He states that "the 'beyond' is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past. For there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the 'beyond': an exploratory, restless movement ..."³

According to Polhemus and Procter, "Anti-fashion refers to all styles of adornment which fall outside the organized system or systems of fashion change."⁴ They include all forms of traditional and folk dress of peoples who are removed from Western cultures. Fred Davis makes a distinction between *anti-fashion* and *non-fashion*. According to Davis, all dress forms such as folk, peasant and tribal should be categorised as *non-fashion* instead of *anti-fashion*; he asserts that "the oppositional stance of antifashion ... distinguishes it at once from fashion *indifference*. There one is either oblivious to or, for one reason or another, thoroughly unconcerned with what the reigning or ascendant fashion is."⁵

This distinction between *anti-fashion* and *non-fashion* sounds convincing. However, as I study traditional clothing from my culture, I am alerted to the progressiveness embedded in these articles of clothing and how they have been transformed – initially, in a quest for better functionality, and now in response to the existing need for altered iterations of appearance. Hence, these traditional garments are continuously represented according to the dictates of non-Western fashion systems. At the same time, these garments are being referenced in Western fashion clothing, too.

Keywords: hybridity, post-fashion, ethnographic clothing, unconventional designing

METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

This paper is an auto-ethnographic account of my design practice, where my personal story and theory are woven together. As Arthur P Bochner put it, "[t]he visible researcher self in the text"⁶ underpins my research. Bochner has also described the need for "auto-ethnography as a critical response to disquieting concerns about silent authorship, the need for researcher reflexivity, or as a humanizing, moral, aesthetic, emotion-centred, political, and personal form of representation," as he argues against splitting the academic from the personal self.⁷ Design practice is unpacked through the process and methodology of active critical making, and is produced by the cultural differences and hybrid encounters involved in constructing a fashioned self-appearance, which is in the continuous process of making and evolving through the act of negotiation. The methods deployed are qualitative, concentrating on the unpacking of textual analysis and the creation of a personal account of lived experiences. Active making is the key method of research, where reflections on and in the making process are analysed regularly.

The Third Space

Homi Bhabha's work on cultural politics in relation to being a 'migrant' in the contemporary metropolis has supported my understanding of how my design practice is associated with cultural differences. Bhabha asserts that "with the notion of cultural difference, I try to place myself in that position of liminality, in that productive space of the construction of culture as difference, in the spirit of alterity or otherness."¹⁸ Working with the significance of cultural differences has underlined the translation and displacements of norms within my design practice. The garments I design are not completely signified in Western culture, nor in my Indian culture – they are in between, in the liminal space which Bhabha refers to as the "third space." For him, the "importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom."¹⁹ This space is where I wish to operate, even though it is fraught with difficulties. It is in the third space that old ideas are disrupted and new ideas are provoked through the act of critical making.

Critical Making

The act of making might be active or passive. The level and depth of engagement with the making process usually determine the complexity of the act. As a maker, I am engaged in making and with making. The final result is incidental and is affected by the emotive and immersive making process. Both the making activity and the approaches to making can be unconventional – such as using paper modeling (changing the making materials) or sculpting (changing the making process) as tools to create fashion designs. Both are unconventional approaches to designing through making.



Figures 2 and 2b. Kurta in full-size 10, organza fabric, 2016, Rekha Rana Shailaj. Photograph: Simon Swale.

Peter Dallow proposes that “Art is ... about producing something new (unknown) within culture (what is established).” Elaborating on practice-based research, he suggests that “considered introspection offers the opportunity to try to understand the way an artist engages in an original way with their physical, cultural and psychic raw materials.”¹⁰ The purposeful act of making therefore relies on the connections made through these processes of making, which might be lost or not captured if they are not formalised through a system of meanings. Origami as an art of folding, the art of gift-wrapping in Japanese culture, wrapping a blanket to cover oneself – all these processes are connected insofar as they have folding and wrapping as core concepts.

Jessica Garness and Amy Papaalias point out that “to be ‘critical’ is to analyze and evaluate, examine the existence of something, and note points of success, failure or shifts in perspective. ‘Making’ in contrast, indicates materialisation or production, a means to determine the essential things needed to form, build, and create through a process of construction.”¹¹ When these two concepts are used together to inform one’s method of working, *critical making* is conceived. Matt Ratto characterises critical making as “a mode of materially productive engagement that is intended to bridge the gap between creative physical and conceptual exploration.”¹² According to Ratto, critical making is informed by the process of establishing connections between the theoretical and pragmatic modes of engagement with the world that are often held separate – critical thinking and physical ‘making,’ goal-based material work. Making as a method of research is qualified when criticality is attached to it. As part of my design practice, the process of making needs to be contextualised within the theoretical analysis of concepts that inform my work. The act of making could be purely physical, but its encounter with conceptual considerations opens it up for theoretical reflection.



Figure 3. A variation on the kurta design, 2015, Rekha Rana Shailaj. Photograph: Simon Swale.



Figure 4. A variation on the kurta design, 2015, Rekha Rana Shailaj. Photograph: Simon Swale.

AN EMERGING STORY

For me, 2015 was a year of chosen circumstances, with time off work and a decision to live in Bahrain with my family. This allowed me to travel to India seven times. It was a year of immersive fashion designing. The designing started with old newspapers and newsprint paper, which were made into large paper bags to hold paper patterns. Creativity was at a peak as my engagement with the making process was elaborated.

Soon the bags started to fill up with patterns, and the open hanging spaces with pristine white toiles. Making a shift dress is a pure physical activity; repositioning a shift dress as a *kurta* – a traditional piece of Indian clothing – and conceptualising it in the context of constructing an appearance and identity shifts the act of making onto another level of signification. The *kurta* becomes a monumental object as it leads to the conception of other forms of *kurta* and their identification. There are three key threads of investigation that have been undertaken for this paper. They can be characterised as “cultural investment in the *kurta*,” “connections with the unconventional” and “the geometry of a rectangle.”

Cultural Investment in the Kurta

The *kurta* became the key piece of clothing under consideration, essential to this body of research. The example in Figure 2b is a typical *kurta*, albeit made in unconventional fabrics. Here the *kurta* is fragile, uncomplicated and exposed. When I left India in 1996, I did not bring a single piece of *kurta* with me, nor did I make a committed effort to own one. Even though this piece of clothing (among others) epitomises Indian national identity and was an essential item in constructing my personal identity, this piece was left behind. This was done unconsciously. This



Figures 5 and 5b. Bubble dress, 2015, Rekha Rana Shailaj. Photograph: Simon Swale.

unconsciousness changed to consciousness as the kurta was missing from my day-to-day life for an extended period of time. When the kurta reappeared, it was not in its pure form but was transformed by the acculturation process which I underwent.

This is evident in the version of the kurta shown in Figure 3, which has a softer shoulder line and built-in sleeves, as well as a traditional in-seam pocket, half of which sits in the front and the rest on the back of the garment. The bottom of the pocket is trimmed with a fringed fabric edge. This garment is made out of a bedcover bought in Jordan which I fell in love with; its weaved pattern brought back memories of bedcovers in my parental home. Here the kurta is worn as a dress without trousers (an unconventional way of wearing a kurta).

My friends and family would often ask me: "I love what you are wearing – is it a shirt, or is it a jacket?" Most of the designs I create fall outside a singular description of a garment, sitting between two forms, such as shirt-jacket, kurta-dress, top-jacket or kaftan-top. It is hard to classify such pieces as one particular type of garment – just as I would specify that I am Indian besides being Kiwi. All these designs have cultural implications and expressions. The kurta-dress in Figure 4 is a long version of the kurta, with borrowed in-seam pockets and long slits of a traditional look but with a shirt hemline, and loose sleeves with pleated tucks in the under-seam. This iteration is made from various materials, using cotton twill fabric and colour inspired by menswear. In my story, the kurta is the piece of clothing in which I invest my time again and again – with no clear direction, but with a compulsive cultural engagement.

The conception of the bubble dress in Figures 5 and 5b was rather laboured. The desperation I felt in not having a sewing machine in Bahrain at the start of 2015 pushed me to explore other ways of making. This particular dress was draped on the body and then hand-sewn together in the absence of a sewing machine.

Connections with the Unconventional

When I returned to New Zealand in 2016, the academic year began with teaching on a design project for third-year Bachelor of Design students. There was yet another connection to be made with unconventional ways of designing. My colleague introduced the project with a conceptual 'unpacking' of materials, and asked the students to consider cardboard boxes as the material they would use to drape shapes and forms over mannequins. The aim was to build a dialogue between art and fashion, between sculpting and draping. While I had already worked with three-dimensional shapes, this time it was with stiff cardboard material, which was a creative challenge. The design ideation was heavily based on drape techniques and used a slotting method of construction. The space between the body and the sculpted form had to be considered carefully. The designs were left at this stage, with the potential for future development.

As the project continued, we had the privilege of attending a lecture by visiting scholar Holly McQuillan, as well as a day-long workshop with her on zero-waste patternmaking techniques. This shed further light on the creative possibilities inherent in design practice, as Holly introduced a variety of methods, tools and technique to make designs, with zero wastage of materials as the prime goal. She used paper as her material with which to think and create designs at half size, before translating them into full-sized pieces in fabrics. This method of working was conducive to sustainable practice and encouraged designing through paper modeling. Using this method of designing, several side-opened kurta-dresses were created (Figures 6 and 7) by cutting the front neck to become the facing for the back neck. The second iteration of the design in Figure 7 had further shaping incorporated around the sleeves. The only seam in the entire garment was the underarm sleeve seam, which curved into the open side seams.

The weights of the fabrics were considered carefully to support the draping methods of design development. Making a kurta involves a synchronised arrangement of placing and slicing different sizes of rectangles to form into a three-dimensional garment. However, this kurta (Figures 6 and 7) is conceived from a long, single piece of rectangle, and has been strategically sliced to create a three-dimensional sleeve arrangement; it is very different from a traditional kurta.

The Geometry of a Rectangle

As exemplified by McQuillan's zero-waste design practice,¹³ paper modeling opened up new dimensions for exploration for me. A rectangular piece of paper became the material for sculpting shapes and forms of clothing. The use of these basic rectangle shapes, that are so easy to work with, has become imbedded within my design practice. An A4 piece of paper was folded, sliced, displaced, constructed and sliced again in several iterations to become conceivable designs. Figures 8 and 9 show one of these design iterations, exploiting the geometric play of a simple shape, the rectangle. In this design, the rectangular piece of fabric has first been sliced horizontally followed by angular vertical cuts, then swapped along the horizontal lines. This strategic cutting and swapping of pattern pieces has transformed a standard tube into a bubbled tube through which the body passes. Similar technique were used to form the sleeve shape.

A4 sized paper lent itself readily to the process of cutting and moulding into new shapes and forms. This unconventional paper modeling method has been used to create a skirt design (Figure 10). The workbook shows the complexity of a design which was conceived from a piece of rectangle and worked out in a true scale of 1:10. The design conceived through paper modeling has been then transposed into the full-size garment in fabrics shown in Figure 11. The ensemble was completed with a kurta top in tussar silk which belonged to my husband and was altered to size 12.



Figure 6. Kurta dress, 2016, Rekha Rana Shailaj.
Photograph: Simon Swale.



Figure 7. Kurta dress variation, 2016, Rekha Rana Shailaj.
Photograph: Simon Swale.

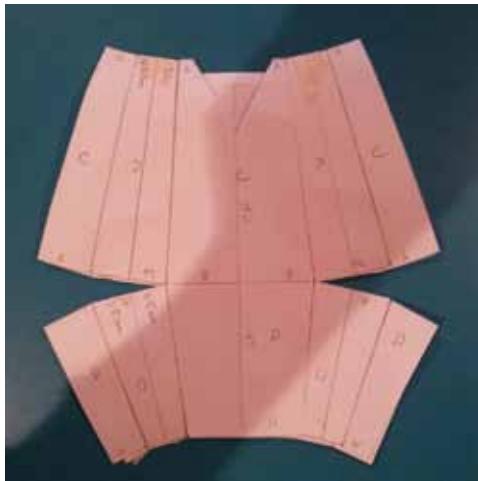


Figure 8. Paper pattern for linen dress, Rekha Rana Shailaj.



Figure 9. Linen dress, 2016, Rekha Rana Shailaj.
Photograph: Simon Swale.

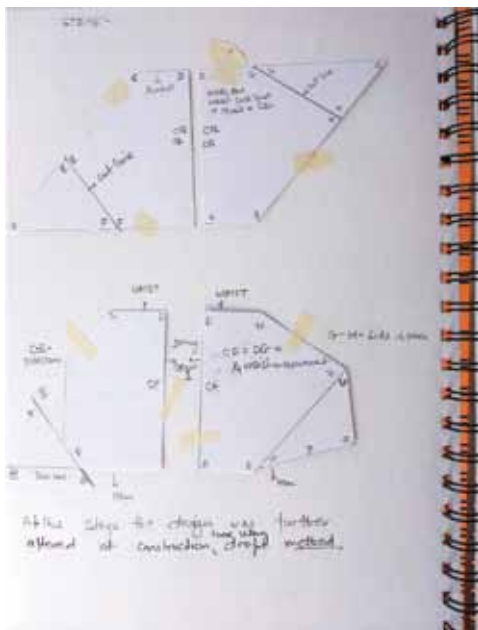


Figure 10. Design development, 2016, Rekha Rana Shailaj.



Figure 11. Skirt design, 2016, Rekha Rana Shailaj.
Photograph: Simon Swale.



Figures 12a and 12b. Dress in wool and silk fabrics, 2014, Rekha Rana Shailaj. Photographs: Simon Swale.



Figures 13a and 13b. Silk velvet dress, 2010, Rekha Rana Shailaj. Photographs: Simon Swale.



Figure 14. Linen dress, 2008, Rekha Rana Shailaj.
Photograph: Simon Swale.



Figure 15. Lycra dress, 2016, Rekha Rana Shailaj.
Photograph: Simon Swale.

Other geometric shapes besides the rectangle can also be used to fit the form of a body. Potential designs are not limited to a few shapes; they can be extended to other geometric shapes. Two shapes, a rectangle and a semi-circle, were draped to create the designs shown in Figures 12a and 12b. Different weights and compositions of fabric were used to create these design iterations.

The design shown in Figures 13a and 13b dates from 2010 and was made from a bias bag, using a rectangular piece of fabric. The bias bag technique is traditionally used to construct Indian-styled leggings called *pajami*. Here the bias bag has been used to design a silk velvet dress. As a designer, I have found it essential to try my designs in more than one type of fabric. Thus this design was constructed once again in the linen fabric shown in Figure 14. The comparison between the two silhouettes highlights the importance of fabrication at the design development and conception stages.

The black lycra dress design in Figure 15 is a blend of two techniques – the construction of a bias bag and folding rectangles into tube shapes – resulting in a large vertical fold along the side seam. The neck opening is then displaced within the geometry of a rectangle. These designs are unconventional as they lack conventional side seams, sleeves or armholes. All these elements are displaced within the design.

Designing is a complex and a dynamic process for me, and many of my designs are draped on the body but not turned into full-size garments. These are the happy iterations that could either sit in the archives for some time, awaiting a future response, or inform further design projects.

CONCLUSION

As a design methodology, I operate in the emerging “third space” where my design practice is constituted through the connections between the notions of difference, displacement, conflict, transformation and the unconventional. Today, the meaning of fashion is fabricated through differences and supplemented by continuous changes forming several constructed layers. This palimpsest of meaning is embedded in differences and diffusions. My personal perspective on dressed bodies is that they are fabricated by individual, social and institutional subjectivities, each threatening to tip the balance of the fashion equation. Each wants the balance to tilt in the direction that benefits it by bestowing visibility. These tensions between various fashion variables are only getting stronger as personal, social, national and global perspectives change. No-one can claim possession of a unitary acculturated fashion. Its fluid form is being continuously disrupted by the circulation of global, local and specific discourses, creating a new dimension of beyond for “the end of fashion.”

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- 2 Mary L. Damhorst, Kimberly A Miller-Spillman and Susan O Michelman, *The Meanings of Dress* (New York: Fairchild Books, 1999), 87.
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- 5 Fred Davis, *Fashion, Culture, and Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 161.
- 6 Arthur Bochner and Carolyn Ellis, *Evocative Autoethnography: Writing Lives and Telling Stories* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 47, 205.
- 7 Ibid.
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- 11 Jessica Barness and Amy Papaalias, “Critical Making at the Edges,” *Visible Language*, 49:3 (2015), 5-11.
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INTEGRATING TRADITIONAL CRAFT TECHNIQUES AND CONTEMPORARY FASHION

Phoebe Ryder



Figure 1. Phoebe Ryder; wax-resist dyed garments, 2017. Models: Mackenzie Hollebon (left) and Henessey Griffiths.
Photograph: Ruby Harris.

The more I am educated, the more conscious I become that the current fashion system is not beneficial or sustainable for our planet and its inhabitants. As a young designer, I feel responsible to be part of the change that needs to occur; and at this point my response is to slow down the excessively fast process that has become the current fashion model. In response to the idea of slowness, I have used my most recent project as a chance to further extend my body of work while developing and exploring traditional textile techniques. Influenced by the natural world around me, I have incorporated wax-resist dyeing techniques to create clothing adorned with landscape forms.

My research began with looking into the practice of traditional wax-resist dyeing techniques, but was soon taken over by researching *through practice*¹ as I started sampling my textiles, leading my project to become very process-driven. The concept of 'flow' – which Hungarian psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes as an energised

focus, where identity disappears from consciousness and individual existence is temporarily suspended² – is a practice I have sought to embody in my process. I discovered Csikszentmihalyi, who developed the concept of flow, early on in my research into practice.³ He describes flow in terms of an intense and focused concentration on the task at hand, allowing identity to disappear from consciousness and a temporary suspension of existence.⁴ I am often challenged by my over-analytical mind and fear of failure, so as I continue to develop my skills and craft I am seeking to embody Csikszentmihalyi's ethos into my practice.



Figure 2. Early exploration of mark-making onto cloth using dye and wax. Photographer: Phoebe Ryder.

As the demand for mass-produced, inexpensive items increases, the creative freedom of designers diminishes as goods are manufactured impersonally and sold anonymously to customers through various distributors.⁵ In my efforts to slow down and rebuild the relationship with the consumer, I am continually drawn to traditional craft techniques and practice. I resonate with the ideas of Gale and Kaur, who believe that fashion can transport traditional crafts into the contemporary world,⁶ and I believe that I am beginning to achieve this within my own work. It is important to me that I am fully involved in my craft, and it was paramount that I was personally in control of as many of the processes as I could be during this project.⁷ I have hand-cut, washed, dyed, painted, and sewn the garments involved myself, which has resulted in a handmade quality that could not be reproduced in mass manufacture.

I often look to artists for inspiration when designing, and for this project I first turned to artists who use cloth as their medium. In the book *Whole Cloth*, Jackson Pollock is quoted talking about the closeness he felt towards his paintings when working with unstretched canvas on the wall or the floor; as it allowed him

to engage with the cloth and interact three-dimensionally with his work.⁸ Pollock worked as though his canvas absorbed the paint as dye, as opposed to it sitting on the surface.⁹ This attitude is similar to my own when it comes to making my mark on cloth; I use dye the same way an artist would use paint on their canvas – only when I work, I am thinking of the final garment and its potential wearer:

It became clear early on in this project that undertaking research *through* practice¹⁰ was key to my achieving the desired results. I have worked with dyeing cloth before, but using wax as a resist was a completely new skill that I had to develop in a short period of time. This meant that continuous sampling was important as I tried various methods and different types of wax to find the best method for the resources I had available.

I discovered the traditional Japanese wax-resist dye method, *Rozome*, which I found to embody another good illustration of cloth being used as a canvas. Contemporary *Rozome* artists continue to produce kimono each year alongside their large paintings and panels; the kimono remains the traditional canvas of the Japanese textile artist.¹¹ I find this an interesting play-off between art and fashion, as the *Rozome* artists use the cloth of the kimono as their canvas, whereby they create a textile that will feature not only on the body, but be displayed on the wall as a piece of art.

My designs were not pre-planned, but were instead influenced by my feelings and memories of landscapes which

I recreated on the cloth. The wax-resist dyeing techniques have brought a new dimension to the otherwise clean silhouettes of the garments. It has been important to me that the clothing is unique and has a quality that can't be replicated through mass manufacturing. These clothes hold a story, and a part of me that can be shared with another person. The craft aspect is important to me – the reality that I have been involved in the whole process, creating garments that are full of my energy.

I began with all-white, natural cloth which I hand-dyed and painted with my wax resist, a therapeutic process which allowed me to create my mark on the cloth. I experimented with different tools such as Indonesian *tjantings* used for batik dyeing, as well as paintbrushes and lino-cutters to create line and build up landscape forms on my textile.

As I grow as a designer, my identity is becoming linked to my practice,¹² and the actual process of making is really important to me. Beginning with a blank canvas, and using dye and wax as my tools, I became fully involved in transforming my cloth into a landscape for the body. The wax allowed me to add shape, depth, line and mood to the cloth, which resulted in suggestive landscapes that envelop the body. This process was organic insofar as I was never really sure what the final outcome would be; every one of my samples turned out slightly different, the only constant being my energy that went into creating the textile. During this process my thoughts and inspirations came from memories I hold, mostly of landscapes that are important to me. The resulting textile is both heavy and delicate in terms of line and shape, alluding to various natural forms such as rock formations, the sky and the ocean.

Learning a new skill in a short period definitely has its challenges, which I found to be very testing and emotionally draining. Characterising a craftsman, Gale and Kaur discuss how it can take many years to develop and perfect a new skill,¹³ so I was definitely faced with some difficulties in this regard. When dyeing fabric, you are continually surprised and never guaranteed the outcome you desire. This forced me to let go of a lot of preconceived ideas, and reflecting on my ideas and outcomes as I went became a crucial part of my making.¹⁴ I was confronted with many challenges when it came to using the wax; it is a messy process and removing the wax from the fabric at times proved rather difficult. I ended up using soy wax, as it seemed to be easiest to work with and remove. Soy wax is a lot more fragile than paraffin, and beeswax reacts to the dye differently. Sometimes the wax was dissolved by the dye bath, which changed the look of my initial designs. Instead of an obvious line, the mark became subtle and broken, resulting in a really beautiful stitch-like line "scaping"¹⁵ the garment.



Figure 3. Sampling different wax resists. Photographer: Phoebe Ryder.



Figure 4. Phoebe Ryder, wax-resist dyed garment, 2017 (detail). Model: Henessey Griffiths. Photograph: Ruby Harris.

From the beginning, I tried very hard not to plan too far ahead, but whether consciously or not I found I had drawn up definite images in my mind of what I thought my final designs would look like. As I have mentioned, it was crucial for me to be reflecting and adapting as I moved forward in my process. It was important that I figured out the best way to apply my textile and, after experimenting, I found it was easiest to create the landscape forms when the cloth was still flat. It would have been interesting to pursue the idea of creating the garment first, then manipulating the textile, which would have created quite a different look. Initially, I thought I would be using more colour in my collection. I had visions of dark greys with pops of green and pink, but instead I followed my gut instinct as I began creating my first piece. Working without a set plan was challenging, and I have been surprised that the outcome was something I couldn't predict, but I am confident that the depth and tone I have created through the dyeing techniques have been successful.

I have set out to create clothing for the body that tells a story, resulting in a quality that is handmade and unable to be replicated en masse. As a maker, I have complete control over the array of different processes that were applied. I wanted the textile to be the main focus of the garments, which meant creating clean silhouettes that allowed the textile landscape to adorn the body. The process of hand-dyeing each garment means that every piece is one-of-a-kind, containing small imperfections and characteristics that enhance the handmade quality of the garment. I want the wearer to notice and appreciate the small differences in each piece; just like a natural landscape, they are enriched with both faults and gems. These garments do not set out to be perfect or flawless – there is beauty in the imperfections and it is important that the wearer can see myself, the maker, within these garments, and know that someone has put their time and energy into creating a piece of work, to be worn upon their body, that is enriched with thought and emotion.

This project has been a huge learning experience and has allowed me to expand my knowledge and skills working with textiles. I am continuing to develop and push my outcomes, while becoming more confident in my design practice and identity. I am looking forward to slowing down the process from maker to wearer even more in the future.



Figure 5. Phoebe Ryder; wax-resist dyed garments, 2017. Models: Mackenzie Hollebon (left) and Henessey Griffiths. Photograph: Ruby Harris.

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- 2 Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow and the Foundations of Positive Psychology* (Rotterdam: Springer Netherlands, 2014).
- 3 Dallow, "Representing Creativeness," 51.
- 4 Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow and Foundations*, 89.
- 5 Colin Gale and Jasbir Kaur, *The Textile Book* (Oxford: Berg, 2002).
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- 7 Ibid., 63.
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- 9 Ibid., 63.
- 10 Dallow, "Representing Creativeness," 51.
- 11 Betsy S Benjamin, *The World of Rozome: Wax-resist Textiles of Japan* (New York: Kodansha Amer Inc., 1996).
- 12 Gale and Kaur, *The Textile Book*, 65.
- 13 Ibid., 65.
- 14 Dallow, "Representing Creativeness," 53.
- 15 This is my own term, as in landscap(ing).

“THE RABBIT HOLE” – NEW FRAMEWORKS OF AWARENESS FOR FASHION PEDAGOGY

Kavita Saluja

I wonder if I've been changed ... Let me think. Was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different.

Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses case studies based on craft cluster modules undertaken by students at the National Institute of Fashion Technology, India (NIFT) – a new pedagogical method developed to raise social awareness within fashion students. I demonstrate how these modules affect students' understanding by engaging them in new ways of working and thinking. Through these modules, students learn to see new relationships between ideas and people, and to ask questions of deeper relevance related to their understanding of craft practice, makers and the craft-making environment. By learning to trace the feelings that allow them to express themselves, students come to understand new sustainable models.

As fashion education shifts focus from traditional 'colour theory' to new 'care theory' models, skills and practices of awareness framed in the curricula by way of direct social engagement energise creative pursuits and consciousness towards collaboration. This change in fashion pedagogy may result in students experiencing a similar transformation to that which Alice experienced in the rabbit hole – a shift in awareness towards a new dimension that is inclusive and dynamic in nature.

Keywords: non-objectivist, dynamic frameworks, expanded vision, navigability between frames, engaging with the experiential, intuitive cognition.

INTRODUCTION

Universal yet personal, grounded yet opening up new vistas for the future, a new awareness of the fashion system has brought in its wake a conscious, renewable and sustainable core that demands courage to reform the processes as much as its outcomes. The frameworks of learning these concepts entail must come from a consciousness of the dynamic environments we live in, and a mind that operates free from objectivist paradigms or prejudices. Earlier processes, devoid of nuances and concerns other than monetary gain and the commercial success of a brand, must now incorporate ideas of collective social growth. It is not just about undertaking practical steps and sustainable measures, curbing consumption, and a commitment to recycle or reuse.

Though effective, these measures do not touch the core of the issue. The problem lies in how we regard and treat the world. With this new awareness, the designer has a key role to play: the role of an intelligent 'game changer.' Fashion schools may be grounded in design, but must also work to develop their levels of awareness and

responses, choices and preferences. Fashion educators must infuse their students with a love for different people and environments, and guide them in exploring opportunities for service and co-existence. In short, it is imperative for the contemporary fashion designer to 'have a heart,' 'emote' and finally 'engage' in the need to achieve human excellence. This involves developing a new fashion pedagogical framework that:

- broadens students' often narrow and limited vision into one encompassing communities and environments
- navigates between frames of reference and develops a collective approach that generates new ideas and problem-solving abilities
- engages with experiential narratives and life stories – exploring the consequences of choices made, through discussion and analysis.

NON-OBJECTIVISM

"... there is seeing, and seeing that the spiritual eyes have to work in constant and vivid alliance with the bodily eyes, otherwise one is faced with the danger of seeing and yet of seeing nothing."¹

The main objective of design education in the current context of sustainability must be to expand the vision of a student, to value more than profit, while being professional and humane at the same time. Two strategies drawn from the Ted (Textile Environment Design) Project's ten sustainable design strategies that reflect these values include:

1. Design for Ethical Production. Design that utilises and invests in traditional craft skills, both locally and globally. It includes designers acting as facilitators for sustainable and social enterprises in traditional craft communities.
2. Design Activism. To encourage designers to leave behind the focus on 'the product' and work creatively with society at large. In doing so, designers become 'social innovators,' using their design skills to meet social needs. Such an objective calls for a shift in our frameworks of teaching and learning mechanisms.

The pedagogy for such a learning process must include non-objectivist goals that emphasise personal work satisfaction and social responsibility. The development of a 'product' must be secondary to the 'processes.' A shift in objectives starts firstly by treating a student as an active and living entity by creating opportunities to demonstrate the 'aliveness' of different environments and people. An integrated learning model promotes studying the impact of design, not only on urban consumer groups but also on rural and semi-urban cultures and environments. A program called the "craft cluster module," that has been successfully integrated into the fashion design curriculum at the National Institute of Fashion Technology, India (NIFT), involves setting up student engagement with rural artisanal communities. These modules draw on the rich and diverse cultural settings of the country and reflect the diverse craft practices, languages, food, dress and beliefs in every province. This direct engagement for 3-4 weeks enables a student to become sensitised to their new environment, playing an insider by stepping in and out of various roles, becoming a part of the problems faced by the host community and seeing it from an outsider's perspective, and intervening and measuring the impact of the designs they create. The environment is structured to encourage conversation, interaction and non-linear discussions, and to help students to experience situations that promote meaningful engagement with the reality of craft practice.

The learning derived from this activity is measured by questionnaires and a review of the project. In this engagement, the primary analytical tool is the quality of feedback and questions from the participants. The data is presented by the students in the form of design propositions, problem identification and insights gathered, which are interspersed in the resulting narrative. Learning outcomes are gauged through presentations, and the whole exercise is designed to show the development of 'insight' in the students at the end of the program. In the words of one student, Ms.

Monami Roy: "I understood that the smallest, simplest act such as selection of material, method or technique can have a large, sweeping impact on the environment and [on] life, and that everything is an opportunity to be inclusive and collaborative."

This craft cluster module enables a student to go through three successive stages of craft design in process:

- observation and perception at the emotional level
- conscious exploration
- conscious manipulation

A sense of conscious awareness is developed at every step in this process as opportunities to engage are provided in a live arena bustling with situations and scenarios. This experience shapes the methods and advantages, challenges and limitations of direct engagement with artisanal communities as a tool for learning design in the current context of global consciousness and sustainability.

EXPANDED VISION

While the challenges and crises we face are often global in scope – human rights, international conflict, environmental issues, and cultural identity, for example – solutions may often emerge from local situations. What is required is the development of concepts and theories derived from experiential narratives that can be projected onto a larger vision. The craft cluster module is designed to develop in a student the ability to:

- Tell a story – creating bridges between social concerns and urban markets through the design process. This is achieved by actively scouting for opportunities for social or socio-cultural engagement by working towards upgrading skills, improving training and design-marketing, and planning technological strategies for the communities involved in the sense of preparing them for a competitive market-readiness.
- Create multidimensional stimulation – shift beyond product into appreciating the people, resources and heritage of a community. To protect, conserve and further the art, culture and craft traditions of a region. Students are encouraged to share experiences that are authentic and uplifting. In the words of one student, Ms Tulasi Elangovan: "I personally do not have a great sense of connecting design to surface intricacies by way of patiently developing ... it has added to my skill and understanding."
- Engage in cross-cultural design – understand the need to integrate the concept of 'we,' not 'I,' to form a collective sense of design. Students are asked to learn from across cultures – for example, the adaptation of *biscornu* (a tiny eight-sided embroidered French pillow that can be used as a pincushion) in Lambani embroidery.² Using design ideas from across the world, we organised workshops involving Lambani artisans and students from the Swiss Textile College, who were on an exchange program with NIFT. We developed "Lambani biscornu," a French pincushion design adapted to create embroidered hangings and throw cushions.
- Build on reason and value as a way of being 'responsible.' The aim is to create fashion products that are not 'in' or 'out' of trend, but have 'continuity,' enabling design to become a vehicle for social, cultural and environmental issues and give customers sufficient reason for buying products – such as poverty alleviation, revival of culture and promotion of the arts.



Figures 1a and 1b. *Biscornu*-inspired cushion and hanging.
Photograph: Prof. Kavita Saluja.

THE CRAFT CLUSTER MODULE METHOD

As we facilitate experiential learning, the pedagogy involves setting up situations and designing the experiential exercises that promote a meaningful continuum of experiences, philosophy, interactions and ethical considerations. The aim is to shape designers who are integrators, capable of expressing their cultural backgrounds to create cross-cultural design ideas.

In this case, the students are immersed in the cluster environment – the habitat, flora and fauna, and lifestyles – where they live in close association with local artisanal communities that express themselves in authentic ways. In short, the stage is set for the learning process to become active. Participant sensitisation workshops precede the craft cluster program itself, with participants interacting with specialists who have previously engaged with rural artisan communities through providing design intervention, technological upgrades or simply social engagement. Students also visit local government agencies to get an updated record of the demography of the area, along with information on the artisanal skills and techniques available in the cluster. This stage is called Diagnostic Study and helps prepare the students to visit craft clusters; it involves acquainting them with the dress, language, food and faith of the artisanal communities in order to create a smooth transition and flow of events.

The student-artisan workshops that follow up this initial study are a two-way learning process – the students learn about indigenous craft resources, and the artisans learn about urban taste and market requirements. They are preparing themselves to develop products through:

- Using both a contemporary Indian and an international design vocabulary
- Diversifying product categories and range to create a wider customer base
- Developing better finishing techniques for a high-value, well-crafted look
- Using raw materials available in nearby clusters and creating design synergy
- Planning technological strategies. (For example, Lambani embroiderers were given training in tailoring to enable them to develop marketable products based on student surveys; as a result, 14 sewing machines were procured under a government scheme (SGSY) and installed. Tailoring programs were conducted to teach these artisans to stitch soft furnishings, accessories and garments.)

During this process, not only do the students acquire techniques and skills from the artisans which improves their work, but the exchange also allows them to accumulate experiences which expand their mental horizons. The ability to correlate materials, environments, people and cultures further refines their outlook and expands their vision as they see a larger realm of possibilities for design at the social level. As lecturers, we have also noticed significant connections being formed between the students and artisans, enduring for days, months and sometimes years after being involved in the program. Sometimes, a student's graduation project may involve the craft community they have been immersed in. In a few cases, enterprises and brands have been established by the students in close collaboration with the host craft community.

In the craft cluster environment, design becomes the result of a dynamic relationship between the designer and the environment they experience – something that not only follows preexisting technical and artistic models, but also includes sociological elements and the local economy. This in turn heightens students' sense of social responsibility and they become mindful of their own cultural mindsets and interpretive errors. In her feedback, fashion design student Ms Pragati Hegde wrote that "it was an eye opener how craft communities work; it brings a sense of respect for them and the products they make. It was interesting to be a part of the challenges they face and realize that the incentives that drive them to do this kind of hard work are more than money – no wonder these products are highly priced in the market." Thus design learning is approached as a practice and not as an outcome.



Figure 2. NIFT students with Lambani women. Photograph: Prof. Kavita Saluja.

NAVIGABILITY BETWEEN FRAMES – CREATIVE FLEXIBILITY

Donald Treffinger has proposed a model of creative learning comprising three levels: complex thinking, feeling processes and involvement in real challenges.³ A creative act involving connecting elements that do not obviously relate to each other takes place during engagement in experiential settings. The shift from urban settings to semi-urban or rural environments, navigating unexpected extremes and oppositions, itself offers a means of solving problems and often brings about an inner transformation in the students. To enable “navigability” in such situations, pedagogical methods that are process-driven and prioritise a sense of responsibility are practiced. In the craft cluster module, students are asked to gather pertinent information about the possibilities or potential of craft development given the resources available, and to define the function of ‘design’ with reference not just to the materials and processes involved, but also to its impact on the environment and the local people. Design is here seen as a dynamic socio-psychological tool. The designer is made to commit to a sociocultural environment through practice. The quality of the learning outcomes hence depends on building social consciousness in students.

ENHANCING INTUITION

Creative flexibility is encouraged in the participants by their exposure to artisanal communities and the local environment; these elements prompt them to approach problem-solving in unusual ways, leading to a creative surge and flexibility of thought. This reflects the notion that intuition encourages full utilisation of the cognitive resources of the human brain.⁴ Students’ intuitive sense is sharpened in the process of experiential engagement with the craft cluster. This enables them to connect the unconnected, find new pathways and patterns to help them solve

problems, and to view design in terms of its impact on people and its links with human emotions. One example was a student's development of a Lambani 'insignia' doll, aimed at creating an identity for Lambani tribal women.

Seymour Epstein suggests that intuition involves the processing of information based on experience – but through the emotions rather than through rational thought processes.⁵ Intuition comprises the elements of immediacy, sensing relationships and reasoning – the kind of reasoning that enables the instant comprehension of a situation.⁶ The development of intuition is almost impossible in a clinical studio environment devoid of real-world challenges and situations. In the words of one student, Mr Omendu Prakash: "I realized that craft-based products are cherished for a longer time because of something intrinsically human and emotional in them."



Figure 3. Lambadi 'insignia' doll.
Photograph: Prof. Kavita Saluja.



Figure 4. Bag with Lambadi embroidery. Photograph: Prof. Kavita Saluja.

CONCLUSION

This paper supports the role of fashion design education beyond the limits of the classroom or studio – moving out into experiential settings where people, environments and cultures are able to supplement students' cognitive abilities. Such experiences, in turn, create an expanded vision and the ability to see in the web of relationships that connects everything. The spirit of experiential learning is well described in words of student participant Ms Suman Marathe:

This program enabled me to see how the work happens, alongside life ... as the Lambani women would share the happenings of the day with others in the group, their needles swiftly flying between warp and weft of the cloth, a joke here and there, and then impromptu, for no reason at all, they would all get up and break into song and dance. In a circle, eight or ten of them with their costumes glittering to their joy, we joined in ... Happiness at work, I thought.

The pedagogy of the craft cluster module outlined in this paper emphasises the shift from adhering to well-defined academic curricula to developing dynamic settings that emphasise interaction and sensitisation. These frameworks can then be adjusted, based on participants' responses and insights. As a result, fashion design pedagogy is being seen in a new light – as actively humanistic and inclusively sustainable.

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Her areas of academic expertise range from Design Process and Fashion Illustration to Trend analysis and portfolio development. She has been instrumental in fostering international linkages with Swiss Textile College Switzerland in 2008.

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AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC REFLECTION ON CONCEPTUAL FASHION TEXTILES

Andrea Short

Every man is the sum total of his reactions to experience. As your experiences differ and multiply, you become a different man, and hence your perspective changes. This goes on and on. Every reaction is a learning process; every significant experience alters your perspective.

Hunter S Thompson¹



Figure 1. Andrea Short, "Klexos" collection, 2016 (detail). Photographer: Ruby Harris.

INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses recent work completed during the Honours year of my Bachelor of Design (Fashion). This work sought to analyse and reflect on the way in which designers and artists use lived experiences to inform and develop their work. I was specifically concerned with conceptual textiles in fashion, aiming to develop a collection that embodies and reflects my own lived experiences and memories. Incorporating autoethnography as an aspect of my process, I have incorporated extracts of my personal journal within this writing (*in italics*).

In addition to taking an autoethnographic approach, I have also used a combination of reflective practice methods and studio-based research methods. I created an intuitive framework to develop a process and making diagram, which I used for the development of a conceptual textile collection (Figure 1).

The outcome of this project was a four-outfit collection that embodies the themes and emotions discussed within this paper: My collection "Klexos" explores the innocence and vulnerability that one feels after the death of a parent. The materials and textiles used to express these themes are a combination of silk organza and liquid silicone. During this project, I learned of the difficulty that comes with situating your own lived experiences in the centre of your making.

Memory is something that no one person recalls the same as another.

My personal memories of my father are mine to treasure and reflect upon. The importance of reflection is stronger now than ever, following his sudden passing after years of illness. I have a strong uncertainty about myself and my surroundings, often finding it hard to stay connected to spaces and the experiences happening around me. Most often, autobiographers write about 'epiphanies' – remembered moments perceived to have significantly impacted the trajectory of a person's life.² I wrote parts of my dissertation as an autoethnographic account of my childhood and lived experiences involving place and time, while outlining how these aspects of our lives can create strong design ideas and outcomes. Carolyn Ellis identifies autoethnography as an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse (*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*) in order to understand cultural experience (*ethno*).³ Not only will this piece of writing be important to my own healing and understanding of grief and reflection, it will also serve as a shared understanding of humanness and the way experiences shape us as individuals.

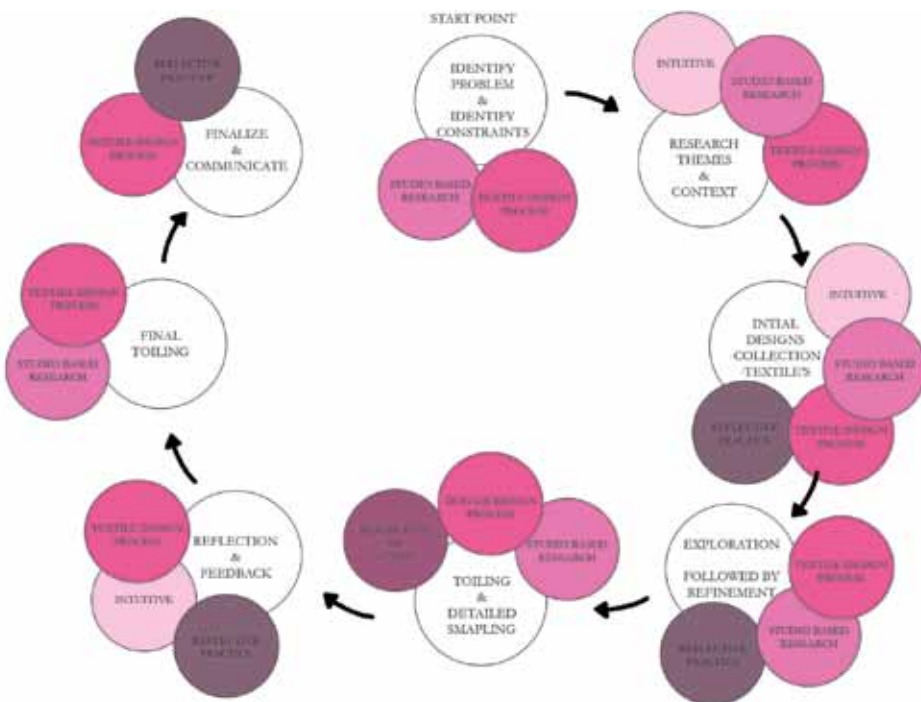


Figure 2. My personal methods and design process diagram, 2016.

Kay Lawrence responds to the question "Is your art therapeutic?" by stating: "I see my art and writing as a way of making sense of my experience, making sense of who I am, constructing my 'self' in fact. It is therapeutic in the sense that making and writing opens up a space for reflection, enabling me to come to terms with loss and cope with the unpredictability of life."⁴ This writing also helps establish a theoretical framework for my making process.

This project became an unpacking of my experiences, and in particular my most recent experience of loss and absence, with an emphasis on memories and nostalgia. My aims and objectives for this project were to establish my design philosophy through a deeper understanding and theorising of my design practice.

NEW REALITIES

On 18 March 2016, my father Richard passed away quietly at home. During this project, I experienced moments that helped me reflect on how I felt; and during a moment of intense emotion, I was able to understand a little bit more about my design outcomes for this project. I began working with materials such as silicone and latex, observing the structures they created on their own and when applied to different surfaces of fabric.

Some things happen for a reason, others not so much. September 21st is my father's birthday. I had not thought too much about it, but as I left my studio in the early hours ready for my bed, my taxi driver took an unusual route home.

We drove past the railway station and the spot where I first found out my father had passed away. I was instantly overwhelmed with the memories from that night, the surreal feeling I experienced as I tried to run away from my new reality.

Through the lived experience of demarcating my inside and outside worlds, I was able to contextualise my design process. My textile work with silicone as a coating or an embellishment had become a protective layer for the real fabric underneath. The transparency shows the surface, but does not allow you to touch and experience the material. The fabrics and silicone blend together to merge these two worlds, creating a sensory experience different from the intended outcome of the original fabric. This could be understood as something that is unnatural, yet the tactile experience of an unpredictable form, an untouchable feeling; I experienced both during my grieving for my dad's passing.

"There is a layer between us now," whether it is physical, spiritual or metaphorical. It is during periods of strong emotion that we learn to create.

The theme of layers was now informing my work as I played with sheer fabric, layered with other types of materials. Inspiration to explore the possibilities of silicone and fabric materials came from researching Andreea Mandrescu and her collection of versatile surfaces or fabrics,⁵ where she explored and pushed the boundaries of craft materials to reinvent and create a new kind of tactile surface. Mandrescu found a unique way of combining silicone and fur to create not only fashion accessories, but also large-scale fabrics and interior pieces.

RESTING PLACE AND MEMORIES

Many people spend a lifetime in the same places, while many others travel to discover something new. It is human nature to seek a home for protection and escape.

I spent most of my teenage years out of home, looking for somewhere I felt I belonged. Nevertheless, I always return to my parents' bed; it has a comfort to it which no other space can provide.

We all have a special place we cherish that holds stories and memories for us as individuals. I found that capturing the spirit and memory of a place was an interesting concept.

I extended the idea of capturing moments in time to incorporate buildings. A building's history is fascinating for me, as I find the most enjoyable and important parts of design involves holding onto the essence of a time. Armed with a bottle of liquid latex and an old paintbrush, I coated the areas of my family home that held a memory of my dad – our home, his glasshouse, his shed. While I was applying the coats, I became aware that everything was exactly how he had left it – every rusted nail, every open draw and every little note. I was struck by the silence of the places where I stood.

There was a loud noise in my head, but it was not something anyone else could hear or understand. On bad days, I can hear it as a low hum and a weight builds on my chest. I feel removed from my surroundings. As though I am outside observing rather than participating.



Figure 3: Liquid latex applied to shed floor:
Photograph: Andrea Short.



Figure 4: Latex casting from shed floor; showing years of accumulated dust and dirt. Photograph: Andrea Short.

Once the latex coats had dried, I peeled them away, removing areas of sawdust and paint at the same time. Kay Lawrence describes how not everything you create needs to be on display: "the value for me was in the process of making them and not in their public exhibition."⁶ I created these latex castings to help me further consider memories of my past and childhood, growing up in these spaces made by my father. These samples are an embodiment of the important places where I created memories with my dad.

I was constantly picking sawdust out of his beard and white paint from his shirts. These samples now carry traces of time and memories.

My father was unwell for most of my life and, being the youngest in my family, I would often find myself alone and having to entertain myself. Being alone in the claim was not always so bad; I had developed a habit from Richard of talking to myself. I would spend hours talking out loud, creating imaginary stories. Even now, I find myself talking aloud when I am designing or when I am feeling alone.

When he first died I found myself talking aloud more often; I thought if I kept mindlessly talking, I could interrupt the thoughts and emotions that were slowly seeping in. After someone dies, it can be hard to clear away the layer of fog that clouds your mind. Even now, months afterwards, I still have moments where nothing seems clear; every day and moment melts into itself.



Figure 5. Andrea Short, "Remnants of Retrospection" collection, 2015 (detail). Photograph: Emily Hlavac Green.

EPIPHANY

The process of designing and making can be an isolating experience. It draws on many different and conflicting emotions and feelings. During periods of this project, I found myself isolated, and questioning my intentions and myself. I felt very trapped and confined by my patternmaking skills, drawings and shapes. The project had become a very meaningful process for self-expression; it had become a memento of my past. My intentions were to create a body of work that encompassed raw emotion and functioned as an outlet for me to share my lived experience and the emotions that come with loss.

Since childhood, daydreaming and creating objects has always been something I have enjoyed; but I never created alone, I always had my father there to bounce ideas off. One of the first things I remember making with him was a rubber-band gun. No sooner was it made, it was hidden away by my mother, but the excitement of turning a block of wood into something different was so intriguing to me. As the years went on, I would bring home new project ideas and we would brainstorm how something might work.

Today was another moment of reflection about how much I truly learnt from him.

I never realised how much my father taught me about design. I believe my interest in using unconventional materials comes from growing up designing and building different projects with him. He always strived for perfection, and I believe that has influenced how I develop and reach my outcomes.

The process of intuitive designing has allowed me fluidity within my work, giving me an organic path; in theory, this creative process allows me freedom to create on a personal level. However, there are also personal restrictions I have placed on myself without realising it. While working on an earlier collection, "Remnants of Retrospection," I became aware that my desire for perfect outcomes was holding me back from fully developing or even resolving my designs. Designing for perfection does not allow a designer to experiment and make mistakes. Again, I became so wrapped up in creating the perfect textile, for the perfect collection, that I upset myself by my shortcomings. I was not allowing myself to work within the intuitive design process for fear of failure and the unknown.



Figure 6. Andrea Short, "Klexos" collection, 2016, cream organza dress. Photograph: Ruby Harris.



Figure 7. Andrea Short, "Klexos" collection, 2016, ruffled top with silicone lace detail.
Photograph: Ruby Harris.

TRANSPARENCY

'Transparent' often refers to a material allowing light to pass through so objects behind can be distinctly seen, while 'translucent' is seen as a significant diffusion or distortion.

High-quality transparent and translucent materials such as silk organza were used to express feelings of vulnerability, and how exposed I felt to those around me after my dad's passing. I want people to be able to look through the outer layer and see what we hide underneath. Transparency and translucency allow the viewer to observe the feeling of vulnerability and the intimacy that both this paper and my collection explore. The colour palette in these pieces is a combination of pastels and muted tones, chosen to evoke the feeling of an innocence that is fading. A strong theme that has carried over from past collections relates to the use of an innocent and youthful aesthetic that heightens the sense of vulnerability. The silhouettes used are simple with minimal shaping, designed to enhance and draw attention to the childlike nature of each garment.

Because of the garments' transparent nature, the seams and internal details can be observed when viewed closely. From a distance, the baby locking and seams give the appearance of different tones and textures. It is common practice when constructing garments to hide and disguise these finishes; my intention is to reveal what holds these delicate garments together:



Figure 8. Andrea Short, "Klexos" collection, 2016, apron dress. Photograph: Ruby Harris.



Figure 9. Andrea Short, "Klexos" collection, 2016, oversized silicone drip jacket. Photograph: Ruby Harris.

SILICONE LACE

I have juxtaposed lightweight, gauzy fabrics with heavy silicone embellishments, affecting the way in which the fabric drapes. Although the ruffled silk crepe top is light and flowing, it is restricted by the heavy burden of the lace textile. It is a mix of beauty and tension. The physical weight of the garment is a manifestation of the emotional stress and weight that bereavement and loss can have on an individual. To develop the lace effect, I prototyped restoring different images into thin plywood using a laser cutter. This created an embellished surface, to which the latex was applied in thin layers. I faced a number of problems when it came to removing the latex once it had dried. Latex is a self-adhesive material, which is hard to pull away from itself. Here I tested applying a variety of fabrics as backings, and noted the contrast between the hard and heavy latex and the sheer silk. I continued my explorations by testing clear silicone, which was aesthetically superior to the latex. I believe the choice to use it as a trim was important, as it is a subtle detail hard to see from afar, but on closer inspection the viewer sees something delicate and intricate.

SILICONE DRIPS

I also tested the effect of dripping the liquid silicone down lengths of fabric. This technique gave me minimal control over the outcome, as the silicone chooses the path of least resistance. This need for organic textiles was part of encouraging myself to embrace imperfection. By using delicate fabric such as the organza and juxtaposing it with the heavy texture of the silicone, a tension was created between the two mediums. The delicate fabric, that lends itself to ripping, becomes integral to the structure of these garments. While areas of the dress are weakened due to stress, this can be seen as a reflection of the burden of grief. The silicone soaks into the fabric and becomes one with the garment. It is impossible to remove the silicone once it has left its mark. Although the fabric has been affected by the silicone, it is not damaged or broken; it now takes on a new life and a new appearance of beauty.

"The reality is that you will grieve forever. You will not 'get over' the loss of a loved one; you will learn to live with it. You will heal and you will rebuild yourself around the loss you have suffered. You will be whole again, but you will never be the same. Nor should you be the same, nor would you want to."

CONCLUSION

This paper allowed me to connect with both my personal world and my act of making through the practice of autoethnography. I found I was often overwhelmed with strong emotions, and could easily lose track of what I wanted to achieve. Keeping a reflective journal allowed me to be mindful and notice patterns within my work and my thought process. I believe that using reflective practice when designing allowed me to become aware of different aspects of creating and to understand myself as a designer. I believe that there is no boundary between myself as a person and myself as a designer – this method offers a great opportunity to bring these two aspects together:

My pieces embody a story of their own, a journey that cannot always be replicated. Each textile is a part of an organic process.

The methods discussed in this autoethnographic paper have helped me to rethink what a creative textile design process can look like when it connects with a personal journey. My collection "Klexos" was created from a need to understand and reflect on my personal experiences and my life with and without my father, Richard.

Although he is physically gone, his essence remains within these creative spaces.

Andrea Short graduated Bachelor of Design (Honours) from Otago Polytechnic School of Design, majoring in Fashion, in 2016. This is her second *Scope* article.

- 1 Hunter S Thompson, "A man has to BE something; he has to matter," in *Letters of Note: An Eclectic Collection of Correspondence Deserving of a Wider Audience*, comp. S Usher (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2014), 64-7.
- 2 See, for example, Arthur P Bochner and Carolyn Ellis, "Personal Narrative as a Social Approach to Interpersonal Communication," *Communication Theory*, 2:2 (1992), 165-72; G Thomas Couser, *Recovering Bodies: Illness, Disability, and Life-writing* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1997).
- 3 C Ellis, TE Adams and AP Bochner, "Autoethnography: An Overview," *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 12:1 (2011), 273-90.
- 4 K Lawrence and L Obermeyer, "Voyage: Home is where we Start from," in J Jefferies, *Reinventing Textiles: Gender and Identity* (Winchester: Telos Art Publishing, 2001), 71.
- 5 S Pakhchyan, "Crafting 'Inlaid Skin': An Interview with Andreea Mandrescu," *Fashioning Tech*, 3 Oct. 2011, <http://fashioningtech.com/?s=andreea+mandrescu>.
- 6 Lawrence and Obermeyer, "Voyage," 71.
- 7 Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss* (London: Simon & Schuster UK, 2005), 230.

SPEED, TECHNOLOGY, ENTROPY: THE FASHION SYSTEM AT BREAKING POINT

Simon Swale



Figure 1. Fast fashion shop window. Photograph: Simon Swale.

INTRODUCTION

"[T]he first product of consciousness would be its own speed in its distance of time, speed would be the causal idea, the idea before the idea."¹

The rapid pace of the contemporary fashion industry and the demands it places on its creative leaders is unsustainable. This has been demonstrated by the infamous meltdown of designer John Galliano in 2011 and by the more recent publicity surrounding Raf Simons' resignation from his post as artistic director at Christian Dior.

The work of French philosopher and cultural theorist Paul Virilio (b.1932) provides perspectives that allow us to contextualise this systematic crisis in new critical ways. His concept of speed in particular is useful in arguing for a causal relationship between the rise of digital technology and the pressures now faced within the fashion industry. Like Jean Baudrillard, Virilio is critical of the manner in which technology has come to dominate contemporary life.

Since digital media has been elevated to the status of a central arbiter of fashion discourse, its proliferation has further shifted attention away from the fashion artefact towards the image. Reflecting what Baudrillard refers to as the "Ecstasy of Communication,"² the fashion image is explicitly connected to both the fashion system's voracious appetite for product and consumers' desire for immediacy.

Utilising the work of Paul Virilio, this paper articulates how developments in digital technology have elevated the fashion *image* to prominence over the fashion *artefact* by a logic of speed. This dematerialisation of fashion has implications for the fashion industry as a whole, and the production of cheap, disposable fashion can be placed within a wider discourse of speed whose effects are far-reaching. This system may be understood as the embodiment of

Francis Fukuyama's liberal democracy which he describes in *The End of History and the Last Man*.³ With reference to this idea, this article considers whether we have in fact reached the "End of Fashion," and concludes with some considerations on what we can do to help overcome it.

Keywords: speed, fashion system, fashion media, fashion design, fast fashion

THINKING ABOUT "THE END"

In 1989 the political scientist Francis Fukuyama published an article, and then a book, that championed Western liberal democracy as the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and its final form of government. This constituted for Fukuyama "The End of History."⁴

However, liberal democracy's ideology of globalisation, capitalism, consumerism, privatisation and a free and open market has only compounded inequalities and exploitation, and the fashion system is not absolved from involvement. Naomi Klein's incisive book *No Logo*⁵ provides a spotlight on such issues: for instance, the fashion industry's practice of shifting production to Asia which, while resulting in a boon for consumers, exploits human rights and natural resources far from the eyes of these consumers, and decimates local fashion industries.

Klein sums up this horrible irony thus: "People are experiencing less stability even in the very best of times – in fact, these good economic times may be flowing, at least in part, from that loss of stability."⁶ First published in 2000, Klein's book prefigured recent events such as the 2008 Global Financial Crisis by near on a decade, and effects of the neo-liberal policies of the last 25 years are too apparent to ignore. Brexit and the election of Donald Trump reflect the frustration and sense of betrayal felt by the many left poor, destitute or unemployed in the wake of the increasingly eviscerating deregulating policies of the last 30 years.

The increasingly globalised supply chain of the fashion system is a pertinent illustration of Arjun Appadurai's model of the Global Cultural Economy.⁷ Reflecting the manner in which political ideology extends to all aspects of the social through a system of flows, Appadurai outlines a system of five "scapes:" finanscapes, technoscapes, ethnoscapes, mediascapes and ideoscapes, in turn providing us with an exciting model by which to consider and contextualise the complexities of the contemporary global fashion system. Indeed, one proposal for a would-be fashionscape has been outlined by Vicki Karaminas.⁸

Karaminas presents the fashionscape as a way to examine "a major transformative moment in fashion imagery via the recent emergence of media technologies (such as fashion film and the Internet) in contemporary fashion practice,"⁹ altering "the way in which fashion is disseminated, experienced, and understood, and its effect on audience sensibility."¹⁰ In part, this paper takes up Karaminas's invitation to engage in a new "critical field of enquiry"¹¹ which she explores in her article. Concurring with her belief that through its multiple reproductions, the seductive force of the image has replaced the object, this paper considers the specific manner in which the contemporary fashion media has impacted on the fashion system at large.

Having begun with the "End of History," I ask whether, through fashion's globalisation and increasing dematerialisation, have we now reached the End of Fashion?

VIRILIO: SPEED, ACCELERATION, POWER

"[O]ur image of time is an image of instantaneity and ubiquity ... we're faced with an epoch in which the real world and our image of the world no longer coincide."¹²

While in what follows I have attempted to demonstrate the manner in which Virilio's ideas converge with the contemporary fashion system, some general background to his work is useful.

In the work of Paul Virilio, speed itself is a powerful engine of contemporary society, politics – indeed of all human history. Characterising himself as a “critic of the art of technology,”¹³ Virilio’s philosophy of “dromology” articulates a relationship between speed and power, and considers the impact of “fast transportation, fast information transmission, and super-fast means of telecommunication on warfare, the city, politics, and everyday life.”¹⁴ At heart, Virilio’s work is concerned with the manner in which a postwar military-industrial complex has shaped contemporary society. Speed is central to this idea, and becomes an underlying principle concerning multiple fields and lines of enquiry, including technology, space and time, communication and representation. Virilio considers the manner in which “real-time electronic media abolish geopolitical limits of our field of vision”¹⁵ by a leap from space-time to speed-time; localised time zones are replaced by global time.

It is of course technological advancements that are responsible for this focus on speed and acceleration. Indeed, it is a concern for speed that drives these developments. The enforcement of military surrender without confrontation, for example, is made possible by the Internet and other informational and communication technological developments that require little human involvement.

IMAGE / SATURATION

In articulating the development of media technologies, Karaminas notes the increased potential for previously excluded parties to participate in the fashion system.¹⁶ There is ambivalence, however, when she writes: “what does it say about the way that the actual material object ... becomes further removed from its original source ... then globally disseminated via digitalized communities?”¹⁷

At the core of the digital experience is speed and immediacy, and the fashion system today seems predicated on the hyper-speed by which the fashion image first reveals, then dissolves. One consequence of this development is a lost appreciation for the materiality of fashion. Virilio warned that “in the future the world will have but one interface,”¹⁸ and in many ways the ubiquity of the smartphone would seem to have produced such a reality.

In an article published in *The New York Times* in 2013 entitled “The New Speed in Fashion,”¹⁹ renowned fashion reporter Suzy Menkes recognised early that speed was a central issue for the fashion system. Menkes noted that online shopping, for instance, had fed the craze for speed, and that because “you can’t touch the fabric or try on the outfit, the only emotion you experience is the excitement of the purchase and the thrill of beating everyone else to it.”²⁰ On social media, Menkes continues: “the voracious demands of Twitter, Instagram, SnapChat and Facebook eat into time and designers fight for attention and links to celebrities.”²¹ Designers such as Olivier Rousteing, creative director of Balmain, embody this shift. Since 2011 he has overseen a so-called “digital revolution” at the historic French house. Coinciding with the birth of Instagram, Rousteing has become France’s most followed French designer, with over four million followers. Balmain has 5.7 million while Rousteing’s “Balmain army,” including Kanye West, Kim Kardashian and Rihanna, have more than 47 million followers.

This is the new frontier of fashion, whereby celebrities and our access to them via social media provide us with a new vicarious mode of digital fashion consumption. Social media seems to have become the heart of the fashion industry, and at the heart of that social media experience is speed. Technology has elevated the importance of the image, and its importance is measured by speed, for today “information is of value only if it is delivered fast.”²² This virtual “theatricalization of the real world”²³ represents an informational economy of increasing velocity. Always on, always available, constantly new, the digital realm provides us with instant fashion, from every corner of the world, at the speed of light. In a society of images moving at increased acceleration, Virilio posits the production of a sightless vision leading to the industrialisation of the “non-gaze.”²⁴ The ubiquity of the screen-based fashion image has fundamentally changed the very concept of fashion. Fashion today is increasingly unconcerned with clothing and the experience of wearing it, let alone making it. Fashion today is an experience consumed with the eyes, and is intimately linked to a celebrity culture without historical precedent.

Through an increasingly disembodied, dematerialised experience of fashion, perhaps Virilio's concept of the non-gaze also defines the way in which the unmitigated, sometimes seemingly unlegislated, production of unethically produced fast-fashion seems for many to go largely unnoticed, creating what Virilio describes as a "false proximity of the world without any density or shadow."²⁵ The Rana Plaza disaster in Bangladesh in 2013 provided the impetus for the establishment of Fashion Revolution, a self-proclaimed "global movement calling for greater transparency, sustainability and ethics in the fashion system."²⁶ The continued growth of brands such as Zara and H&M, however, testify to the scale of the task in making people in the West both aware of and, more importantly, responsive to the conditions under which most of their clothing is produced.

While our subjective experience of fashion is changing, so too are creatives struggling to negotiate a changing fashion system and the rapid pace expected of its representation. In a recent interview, Christopher Simmonds, art director at Gucci, noted: "A few years ago, a campaign was a page in a magazine. Now, it's also an Instagram asset; online advertising; a webpage takeover and a video. ... Clients aren't aware of the time that goes into that ... The breaking point is going to come. Everybody is so overworked ... and everything is just getting compressed. It's going to snap at one point."²⁷

ARTEFACT / IMMEDIACY

A world saturated by images also produces a saturation of real-world product, as for every new image there must be new 'stuff'. The media have always sought to massage the desires of its audience; fashion magazines have done so for more than a century. Digital media's inherent logic of speed, however, has impacted not just on consumers' desire for consumption, but demands for its immediacy. The traditional six-month window between the catwalk and retail experience is no longer acceptable; now the catwalk can be experienced in the palm of one's hand. "All distances in time and space are shrinking," wrote Heidegger.²⁸ Being more able to bear witness to the catwalk experience, the Internet also facilitates consumers' demands for delivery; we want their product now, and never mind being on the other side of the world. Space has been annihilated. The speed of computer-generated cyberspace has eliminated "the relative speed of the circulation of products, goods and people,"²⁹ reducing "the gap between thinking and doing, planning and executing, action and reaction."³⁰

This is precisely the concern of Suzy Menkes when she writes: "The fashion industry is broken in more ways than one: runway shows don't match retail expectations; designers can't keep up with demand; and customers can't buy a coat in winter."³¹ For a consciousness attuned to speed, desire is unabated. As consumers' patience for gratification reaches degree zero, fashion houses now scramble to develop faster models of production and distribution. Representative of so-called "consumer-facing" and "customer focused" fashion experiences,³² Burberry made their most recent collection immediately available in-store. Likewise, Tommy Hilfiger and other labels have "direct-to-consumer" strategies planned for the future.

Speed is power: we must also recognise this move as a strategy to protect businesses' intellectual property. The significant delay in getting product to consumers through the traditional six-month cycle is problematic, given the ability of fast fashion labels to replicate design ideas from the runway and bring them to market in as little as three weeks. Perhaps this is what Virilio meant when describing our sense of speed of history as having moved from "long term" to "short term" to "real-term."³³

Many may deem this progress, yet we should heed Marshall McLuhan's warning that "the new information-as-service environment, when speeded up too much, flips into a disservice ... there is a slowdown of the old system" and inefficiency takes hold as speed "shakes the old system apart."³⁴

This describes exactly the entropic condition of the contemporary fashion system, and Suzy Menkes seems to be of similar mind when reflecting on the resignation of Raf Simons from his role as creative director of womenswear at Christian Dior.³⁵ Menkes asks, "Why is Fashion Crashing?" and considers both Simons' workload and the role of



Figure 2. The cost of fashion? Photograph: Simon Swale.

the digital in contemporary fashion, recognising that "aggravated by on-line sales and the speed of the digital world ... new lines are put up constantly, while the rest is marked down."³⁶ In an interview with Cathy Horyn, Simons himself explained the speed imperative under which he was required to work. "You know, we did this collection in three weeks ... Tokyo was also done in three weeks ... And when I think back to the first couture show I was concerned because we only had eight weeks. ... At Dior, the moment you say, 'This is an interesting thing to try,' things go very, very fast."³⁷

Virilio warns that living at the speed of light produces a progressive disappearance of space whereby "we lose our being in the world in favour of inhabiting the non-space of the space-speed of technology."³⁸ Simons goes on: "There is never enough time," and yet "[e]verything is so easily accessible, and because of that you don't make a lot of effort anymore. When we were young, you had to make up your mind to investigate something."³⁹ Representative of the effects which Virilio terms mediatisation, Simons states: "Now if something interests you, one second later, you can have it. And also one second later you also drop it."⁴⁰

CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE

It is important to recognise that the work of Paul Virilio is explicitly political, and Bob Hanke suggests a concern for speed points us towards further research into "which groups are advantaged [and] which groups are disadvantaged, by speed-effects."⁴¹ Yet these inequalities go largely unacknowledged by consumers at large; the saturation and proliferation of images would seem to produce a systematic blindness to global fashion infrastructure. The technological substitution for the real creates an "aesthetics of disappearance,"⁴² the sightless vision that decouples representation and perception. Sensory overload would therefore seem responsible for the ambivalence shown by consumers, for whom social and ethical issues thrown up by the system seem increasingly problematic, yet also distant, remote and intangible.

The speed at which the system now operates also puts unrelenting stress on its creatives and does not correspond to the foundation of craftsmanship on which the fashion industry was built. How can new and emerging creatives gain a foothold in an industry with such unrelenting demands? What possibility for intervention, innovation, participation and representation for those currently outside this system of speed?

It would seem that what is required is a return to an appreciation of the materiality of fashion; a need to make renewed connections to real garments. Rather than allowing the screen to be our mirror, let us focus on

'the thing' itself. Writing of a jug, Heidegger suggests that "the vessel's thingness does not lie at all in the material of which it consists, but the void that it holds."⁴³ To consider fashion as a 'thing' must then surely foreground its connection to the body. As the jug holds water; so the garment holds the body. We should recognise that fashion may only come alive in its interaction with our bodies. A body-in-real-life. By repositioning the experience of fashion as a real-world phenomenon, we will help resuscitate a value system that recognises the labour and other resources that go into the production of every garment – no matter whether it is high fashion or fast fashion. For it's not about discrimination – it's about the thing.



Figure 3. Do consumers comprehend how their clothes can be produced so cheaply? Photograph: Simon Swale.

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- 2 Jean Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of Communication* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012).
- 3 Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The Free Press, 1992).
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FROM THE PARTS TO THE WHOLE: RECONNECTING FASHION DESIGN EDUCATION TO ITS ECOLOGICAL IMPACT

Jennifer Whitty

INTRODUCTION

Fashion design has historically not been taught in the context of its ecological impact on our planet, and has prioritised analytical thinking over holistic systematic thinking. The field of design, which includes both the practice and design education, has taken its cue from the dominant paradigms established during the Industrial Revolution, where the emphasis was placed on giving form to products for a consumer, based on the logic of growth in a world of finite limits.¹ The dominant linear “take, make and waste” system of the twentieth century has set artificial boundaries and driven a wedge between the players in this system. The scope and role of the designer has been constrained and compartmentalised as decisions are primarily based on principles of aesthetics, technical merit and the marketplace.² This model of design education stifles students’ ability to think and act expansively, to step outside themselves and consider the full gamut of human needs³ and the full context in which fashion operates.

Design education is a powerful place to respond to the contemporary situation, where fashion is now one of the most polluting industries on the planet. As we enter “the century of the system,”⁴ it has become apparent that the challenges facing society necessitate an understanding by designers of interconnected systems and networks. It is imperative that fashion design education shifts its focus to prepare designers to deal with complexity and interrelationships in order to address what Alastair Fuad-Luke describes as a “multitude of truths.”⁵ Through education, fashion designers can be empowered to critique their role as secondary players within a larger system. They can learn to be part of the solution rather than perpetuating problems of the past.⁶

The research questions that drive this paper are the following: If fashion design educators, researchers and practitioners employ systems thinking to search out different “truths” for a more expanded, sustainable view of fashion, will this enable the field of fashion to continue in a world of finite limits? If we widen the scope of fashion design education to factor in its full ideological and authentic context, will future fashion designers enact positive change within the larger networks of society and the environment?

This paper will focus on a recent case study of curricula, “Fashion Activism: Space Between China and NZ,”⁷ which was delivered in New Zealand and China during a six-week period from November to December 2015. This cross-cultural, interdisciplinary course was informed by the philosophy, methodology and manifesto of Space Between,⁸ a strategic enterprise and research initiative at the College of Creative Arts at Massey University which offers a thoughtful new path for designing, making and using locally produced fashion. The course was also informed by other research methodologies and tools such as design activism and slow design as developed by Alastair Fuad-Luke;⁹ the emergent discipline of transition design pioneered by Terry Irwin and his collaborators;¹⁰ the work of Professor Kate Fletcher, a leading scholar in the field of sustainable fashion;¹¹ and the strategies developed by the Textile Environment Design team at Chelsea College of Arts.¹²

The course was devised and delivered by sustainable fashion researcher and lecturer Jennifer Whitty, director of Space Between,¹³⁷ to encourage designers to explore the gamut of issues where fashion may have influence. This paper will critique and question the boundaries of fashion, and aims to embolden students to operate as part of a system which recognises the richness and complexity of the fashion ecosystem from a systemic rather than a solely analytical viewpoint.

PAPER OUTLINE

Our course did not focus on resolved garment outcomes, which is the norm in most fashion design courses. The course was less about what the students created (product/output) and more about how they navigated the challenges presented together (process and people skills). Therefore, this paper will place the emphasis on the course activities and the methodology used, as this is where a shift in thinking occurred in relation to fashion design pedagogy, yielding outcomes which could be shared and adopted by other educators.

INDUSTRY BACKGROUND: A LINEAR APPROACH

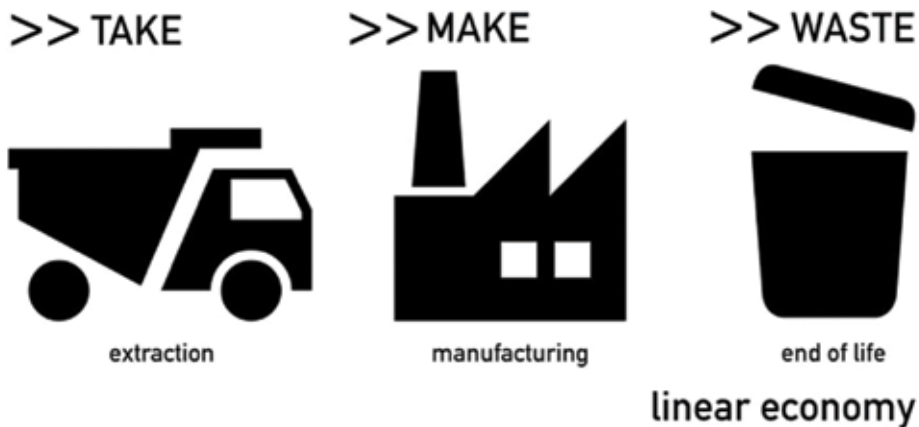


Figure 1. "Take, make and waste:" the linear economy. Image credit: Jennifer Whitty, 2017.

Our current "take, make, waste" linear economic system uses finite resources in the manufacture of goods, which are then consumed and later disposed of (Figure 1). The role of the fashion designer has historically been limited within the system of consumer culture, where the designer exists to provide products or garments to their market or clients, based primarily on principles of aesthetics. This paradigm has led to an unsustainable situation where the global fashion industry is arguably one of the most polluting industries in the world. It could be argued that the same reductivist thinking has been applied within fashion design education, which has focused on the specifics – i.e., the garment, the product, the technology or the specialist knowledge involved – but has often neglected to address the interrelationships between or around garments and their production. It has prioritised an analytical approach, looking at component parts in isolation and has omitted the application of specialist knowledge in its full context, with and for people on our living planet.

Fashion is as much a social and environmental phenomenon or network as it is a technical specialism. The negative impacts of the current system on people and planet can no longer be ignored, and it is time for design education to acknowledge the role it can play (and has played) in this situation.

Aims of the Curricula: Thinking Beyond and Outside the Catwalk

According to Kirsi Niinimäki, the majority of sustainable fashion labels focus on a single narrow approach, which is often the “environmental impacts of manufacturing, substituting materials with eco-materials, or focusing on ethical issues in manufacturing.”¹⁴ While these are undeniably important issues to address, they are limited in scope. They do not encourage complex, holistic thinking aimed at improving the fashion system as a whole. They neglect to consider the entire lifespan of a product, in particular the consumption, disposal and re-production phases and the interconnections between these stages. Nor do they acknowledge fashion’s social and cultural importance as being on a par with decreasing material impacts.

As educators, it is pertinent that we ask how much of the conventional narrow thinking around sustainability is embedded in educational practice. Fletcher argues that fashion by its very definition mirrors and reflects its context; and that context indubitably includes the people, ecosystems and the very soil involved in its production.¹⁵ Fashion students need to fully comprehend and be competent to act with respect and awareness of the entire system in which their potential activities and outputs will operate. It is imperative to consider a post-growth fashion industry that works towards decoupling revenue from declining material resources. Design educators can prompt engagement with new ways of designing, producing, distributing and experiencing fashion. In order for fashion design to be relevant and responsive to the needs and contexts of the twenty-first century, fashion education needs to prepare its designers to think and act with systems in mind.

The Course Structure

“Fashion Activism: Space Between China and NZ” had four major aims:

- To invite engagement with more strategic and systemic designer roles
- To bridge the gap between professional and personal value systems for a more holistic and embodied engagement with the sustainability imperative
- To set up conditions for shared learning experiences on several cognitive levels
- To offer a framework for opportunity-focused and imaginative explorations of sustainability.

The course received the Prime Minister’s Scholarship for Asia (PMSA),¹⁶ a programme funded by the New Zealand government and administered by Education New Zealand. The scholarship’s aims include improving the international skills of the New Zealand workforce; increasing international understanding of the strength and quality of New Zealand’s education system; establishing connections between New Zealand and other countries through building lifelong friendships and networks; and strengthening New Zealanders’ understanding of other cultures. The course was delivered as an elective run by the College of Creative Arts, Massey University, through the college’s School of Design.¹⁷ The studio-based course ran for six weeks, with the first two preparatory weeks delivered in New Zealand. The next four weeks were delivered in China at three universities: Xi’an Polytechnic University Xi’an,¹⁸ Tsinghua University, Beijing,¹⁹ and the Shanghai Institute of Visual Arts (SIVA)²⁰ – all major centres of design, culture, enterprise and industry.

The course brought together a multidisciplinary group of undergraduate students from the fields of textiles, fashion, industrial design, visual communications, Maori visual arts and photography, with a shared focus on addressing issues in the fashion industry and creating positive change. Each university partner brought its own distinctive expertise and complementary approaches to design, technology and business, with an emphasis on internationally oriented design and innovation. Students focussed on the emergent field of design activism, while raising awareness of the contribution that design does and can make to contemporary issues. Students were exposed to the history and contexts of the textile and clothing industry in both New Zealand and China – a “multitude of truths”²¹ about

fashion design which included economic, political, social, ecological, ethical, symbolic, philosophical and cultural as well as technical "truths."

Acknowledging the full context of design enabled the student designers to refocus their creative skills on formulating a more pluralistic mode of fashion design. Students were asked to devise a range of creative responses based on issue-led design approaches and frameworks, such as slow design²² and metadesign.²³ The outcomes were not prescribed or predetermined – rather, students were asked to follow guiding principles and think for themselves about what an appropriate 'fashion' outcome might be in this educational context.

The New Zealand context: Personal and Cultural Truth: Understanding our own Context

It became clear that practitioners must first understand their own relationship with the environment, culture and values before beginning to think about alternative fashion systems, products or services. During the first two weeks of the course, as part of their preparation for travelling to China, the New Zealand students defined their own activist space by analysing their professional and personal motivations in relation to sustainability in a local context. As this was a cross-disciplinary course, the majority of students were not studying fashion as their major. The toolkit known as TED's Ten,²⁴ developed by the Textile Environment Design team at Chelsea College of Arts, was useful in helping students frame their intentions and navigate the complexity of sustainability issues in a fashion and textiles context.

Students were then asked to create a manifesto – a statement of commitment to the issues they wanted to address and how they would go about implementing change – which they presented to the Chinese students in the form of a pecha kucha (a visual presentation session) to demonstrate their individual practice and values. This manifesto was refined to become the basis for the production of "artefacts," as defined by Fuad-Luke,²⁵ while they were working alongside Chinese students in Xian and Shanghai.



Figure 2. Rembrandt clothing factory, Lower Hutt. Image credit: Tom Pringle and Jennifer Whitty.

Examining Economic, Political and Technical Truths in the New Zealand Fashion Industry

As a preliminary study, it was important for the students to understand the facts about New Zealand's relationship to fashion from the economic, political, social, ecological, ethical, philosophical, cultural and technical perspectives.²⁶ New Zealand shows many of the characteristics of other developed Western countries insofar as while consumers are buying more clothes than ever before, most of this clothing is imported, mainly from China. The structures that have led to this situation were examined as students started to explore the wider ramifications of fashion, and the industry it reflects, through field trips to some of the last remaining clothing factories in the Wellington region²⁷ and lectures on consumer psychology²⁸ (Figure 2).



Figure 3. Seaview Recycling Centre, Lower Hutt.²⁹ Image credit: Tom Pringle.

Whitty introduced the students to the philosophy, methodology and manifesto of the Space Between,³⁰ a strategic enterprise and research initiative at the College of Creative Arts at Massey University, which offers a thoughtful new way of designing, making and using locally produced fashion. Situated in a tertiary institution working in conjunction with both the not-for-profit and private sectors, the Space Between incorporates the principles of design-led activism as described by Alastair Fuad-Luke.³¹ Concerned to address sustainability issues such as resource depletion, consumption and production, the organisation asks if practitioners can find a sustainable balance between the design, manufacture and consumption of garments by reducing the speed, volume and impacts of 'waste-ready' global consumerism. This could be achieved by examining the product-service system to find ways of transforming negative consumption and production patterns (Figure 3).

The China Context: Examining Economic, Political and Technical Truths in the Chinese Fashion Industry

The course group spent two weeks studying slow design³² at Xi'an Polytechnic University. The course provided students with the opportunity to tap into alternative systems that provided different tempos from those they were

used to and shift perception about what the label “Made in China” means. During our time in Xi’an, we focused on developing responses to two of the six guiding principles of slow design, “reveal” and “expand.” (The others are reflect, engage, participate and evolve.)

Reveal: slow design reveals spaces and experiences in everyday life that are often missed or forgotten, including the materials and processes that can easily be overlooked in an artefact’s creation or existence.

Expand: slow design considers the real and potential ‘expressions’ of artefacts and environments beyond their perceived functionality, physical attributes and lifespans.



Figure 4. “Fashion Activism: Space Between China and NZ.” The course group visited artisan workshops in Qianyang, Fengxing and Hu counties. Image credit: Jennifer Whitty.

China has a long and glorious history of both the arts and traditional crafts. New Zealand students were exposed to the richness of the country’s traditional artisanal culture in rural Xi’an and the surrounding districts of Qianyang, Fengxiang and Hu counties on organised field trips (Figures 4 and 5). The group also visited the Gaoling Culture Center and Shaanxi History Museum in order to broaden their knowledge of local crafts and history in context. With their XPU Chinese partners, students developed creative responses in the form of artefacts (as defined by Fuad-Luke), created with the first two principles of slow design in mind, which they presented to the class. In addition to building knowledge of the industry, students also examined ‘fashion’ from a consumer perspective. Workshops³³ developed and delivered by Whitty and students from both New Zealand and China considered the question of changing designer and consumer behaviour to develop more sustainable approaches to buying, using and designing clothing.



Figure 5. "Fashion Activism: Space Between China and NZ." The course group visited artisan workshops in Qianyang, Fengxiang and Hu counties. Image credit: Jennifer Whitty.

REFRAMING FASHION OUTCOMES

Part of the objective of this course was allow students to reframe their fashion outputs through a different lens. Fashion outcomes or activist "artefacts," as defined by Fuad-Luke, are characterised by their intention or purpose in relation to the status quo, rather than by their appearance or a predetermined quantity of garments (i.e., a collection). The students were given autonomy to explore or demonstrate sustainability in whatever medium was relevant to their project's intention. This provided students with the opportunity to take risks and explore different solutions.

Widening the outcomes to include communication strategies was seen as a way of increasing consumer and designer knowledge of the environmental and social impacts of fashion and textile products. Publications, blogs, open-source networks, exhibitions, conferences, festivals, social media and manifestos all contribute to engaging society in sustainable and progressively transformative eco-social practices.

Outcome: "propositional artefacts" which explore and demonstrate their sustainability by suggesting a vision for changing the status quo.³⁴

Lachlan Philipson, a visual communication design student, and Matisse Rendle Mitchell, a textile design student, collaborated to create a responsive installation of five patterns, each representing a day spent in Beijing, which were digitally printed onto fabric (Figure 6). The patterns were generated using China's air quality monitoring data



Figure 6. Lachlan Philipson and Matisse Rendle Mitchell's work at the Shanghai Institute of Visual Arts (SIVA).
Image credit: Jennifer Whitty.

as variables in a drawing algorithm. They aimed to create a piece that acts as a provocation to generate discussion of the problems of air pollution caused by mass manufacturing and rampant consumerism. Their installation piece spoke of the issues surrounding mass production, consumerism, waste and pollution. This project's manifesto was informed by the TED's Ten no. 8, "Design to reduce the need to consume,"³⁵ and sought to spark discussion and make people question their immediate surroundings as well as their own impact on the environment.

*Outcome: "demonstration artefacts" which demonstrate positive alternatives that are superior to the status quo.*³⁶

Sarah Gardiner, a visual communication design student, wanted to rethink the role of the consumer and create opportunities for the individual to make interventions in the fashion production process. Her project, The Community Makers, operates as a community of retired craft makers. These makers repurpose unused garments gathered from customers in their local community that have been kept for sentimental reasons (e.g., wedding and birthday dresses), transforming them into functional items that can be integrated into the customer's daily life. "Makers workshop events" are organised by the Community Makers at local venues where they can facilitate collaboration with local community groups. These workshops transfer making knowledge to the new generation in a creative and innovative way (Figure 7).

The new experience of seeing how his clothes were made stayed with Tom Pringle, an industrial design major: In his opinion, having knowledge of where something comes from and the process it takes to get to the customer is key to making informed, sustainable choices. His outcome was: "'entrepreneurial artefacts' designed and produced to challenge the status quo of the marketplace were produced in small batches."³⁷ "Made In China" is a publication and online integrative site that focuses on telling the stories of garment workers and bringing attention and pride

to the craft of making. It aims to reconnect consumers with where and how their clothing is made, while honouring the people who make our clothes (Figure 8). Transparency across the supply chain is a key driver for the Fashion Revolution movement. This project was informed by TED's Ten points: "Using better technology" and "Reducing the need to consume."³⁸



Figure 7. "Fashion Activism: Space Between China and NZ." Sarah Gardiner's working with Chinese partners at the Shanghai Institute of Visual Arts (SIVA). Image credit: Sarah Gardiner.



Figure 8. "Fashion Activism: Space Between China and NZ." Tom Pringle's work with Chinese partners at the Shanghai Institute of Visual Arts (SIVA). Image credit: Tom Pringle.



Figure 9. Chinese clothing factory. Image credit: Tom Pringle.

FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

Creating innovative solutions – not just for today's society, but also for future generations – is a global challenge. The sustainability imperative has put a different emphasis on what we all do and, as educators and designers, we can access potentially significant power to create positive change. As educators, it is vital that we question the nature and scope of design education in order to prepare fashion students for the ethical, political and socio-economic decisions that they will be confronted with, as well as the role of academia in meeting societal expectations and global challenges. In order to encourage appropriate skills in tomorrow's designers, the course designers have come up with the following future recommendations for fashion:

- expanded roles for designers
- designer as facilitator
- designer as social innovator
- designer as catalyst
- empowering communities
- behavioural change

"Fashion Activism: Space Between China and NZ" enabled students to critique their discipline, redesign design and establish a critical position from which to develop an informed, sustainable practice and attitude to fashion design. For perhaps the first time, this issues-led design course encouraged designers to consider the economic,

social, moral and ethical consequences of their work. Students started to question their past practices and began to envision new values, which they have continued to develop into future work. The course looks forward to a different kind of fashion design profession that encourages collaborative rather than individualistic goals. The kind of shared and emergent learning process experienced on the course expands the notion of design and the designer's role. The cross-fertilisation of personal and professional experiences, a "multitude of truths," value systems, factual knowing and imagination, and explicit and tacit skills were all canvassed.

The tools and the approaches considered in this paper seek to foster conditions for learning which is contextual and systemic in approach and which generates a corresponding body of new skill sets. This type of learning requires an in-depth set of personal creative skills and a broad understanding of the creative process and of what it takes to cope with navigating not-knowing. All of these elements can deepen and enhance designing within shorter horizons of time and more mainstream contexts.

We are currently in a transition to a new type of fashion industry, one based on ecological and holistic principles such as "closing the loop" on materials, community values, and respect for everyone involved in the global supply chain. It is also clear that we, as consumers, designers and educators, need to start respecting fashion from the inside out, and educate future designers to do the same.

Future fashion

We are on the cusp of a new educational revolution as a new narrative of education is emerging. This narrative embraces the vision of a large-scale system for learning that is more open-ended, creative, inclusive and sustainable than in the past. It also envisions a different kind of fashion design profession that encourages collaborative rather than individualistic goals, dealing with and for society. A garment cannot possess sustainability in itself; it is the context in which it was created and operates that deems it to be sustainable or otherwise. Sustainability is both a necessity and an opportunity for fashion – it is time to reassess fashion's impact on the planet. Sustainability is not only about minimising negative impacts, but also about maximising positive impacts and forging stronger links and connections.

Education can be a key driver for change if it is linked with systemic thinking and activist intentions to impart the flexibility and capability designers need for working with the unknown situations of the future. As student Lachlan Philipson said after completing the course and being exposed to its thinking, "There is no excuse to not be a design activist."

Jennifer Whitty is a sustainable design educator; researcher; designer; facilitator; writer and activist. Originally from Ireland, she teaches and practices at Massey University's School of Design in New Zealand as Senior Lecturer of Fashion Design. She is focused on developing new green business models and systems for alternative ecologies of fashion practice, which are connected to and have an impact on society. She strongly believes in the positive aspects that fashion can impart to both the individual and to our culture. Jennifer is involved in taking action to harness this power and to catalyse change in the current system by developing alternative roles for the fashion designer through activism and social innovation.

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