

SCOPE

Contemporary Research Topics

art & design 25:
Fashion
October 2023

Fashion Design Process

<https://doi.org/10.34074/scop.1025020>

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Published by Otago Polytechnic Press.
Otago Polytechnic Ltd is a subsidiary of Te Pūkenga,
New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology.

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

The incubation stage where I sit with my ideas and thoughts is really important to me. This can be quite a long process, and as the ideas and designs resonate into something more solid and promising, there is excitement about new research and learning.

Donna Dinsdale

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



All of the above, but my practice revolves around the method of free-form draping. The methodologies of observation and visualisation utilised during this process are so intuitive that they are often taken for granted and undervalued. I am a very visual and self-reflective practitioner, so exploring ideas through process and application works for me. Sometimes the results are unexpected, but that's what I enjoy – the freedom to play! My background in the fashion industry was as a pattern maker, a skill which was very 2D and traditional. As my practice and skills evolved over the years, a 3D approach increasingly suited my working style and has enabled me to become more 'fluid and free' with how and what I create. I feel that free-form draping is like a melting pot of design, pattern and construction, smashing elements together to push the designer's experimentation level, skills and creative outcomes.

FASHION DESIGN PROCESS

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

All of the above.
A catwalk show, a conversation with a colleague, a podcast, an article, mentors and whanau.

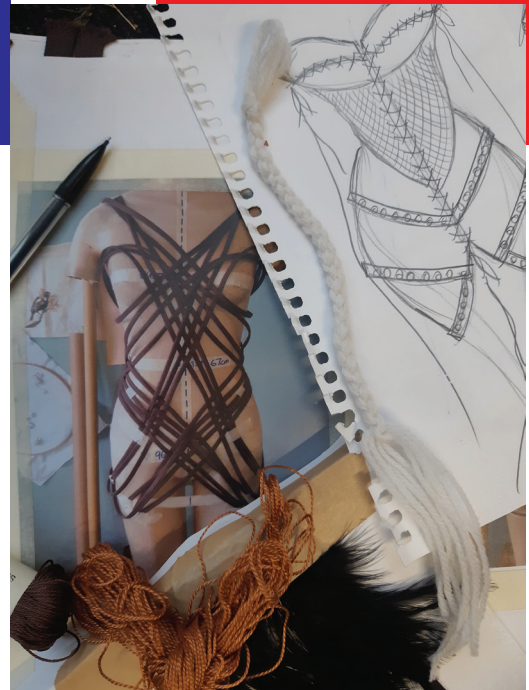
How do you describe the 'research' that you do as part of your design process?

Manic, unprocessed and unorthodox – which transform into refined, focused and on point.

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What fuels your design ideas?

This is a question I often get asked and, to be honest, I don't know the answer. As a creative, on a daily basis there are thoughts and ideas that buzz around in my head which all have potential. If there is an opportunity to concentrate on a particular research outcome, these thoughts and ideas become more focused and refined until the design works its way into a tangible outcome.



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

A good space to work in is key. I have an amazing studio, but I am a bit of a hoarder so my studio is jam-packed with what I enjoy and what inspires me – from vintage textiles and clothing through to an extensive selection of historical cross-stitch pieces displayed on all the walls. Some people would be overwhelmed by the amount of ‘stuff’ around me, but I find it comforting and a pleasure to be surrounded by it. In amongst all of this are the tools to make the designs happen – from a selection of diverse mannequins, pattern-making equipment, a large collection of textiles and trims, to a range of key publications that I can draw research and ideas from.

My routine varies, but if there’s a big project to achieve, I am very disciplined with my time and planning. I do work quite well under stress, which is lucky, as there’s always pressure to get things completed!



What is the most enjoyable part of designing for you?

I love the research process, which comes in many shapes and forms. From the reading and discovery comes new learning; from the sketching and sampling come spontaneous and exciting opportunities for experimental design; and from the free-form draping method come innovation and unexpected outcomes.

I also really enjoy selecting the textiles and trims and coordinating colour palettes that fit with my idea for each project. Watching any work evolve into the vision you have is extremely rewarding – the research and ideas coming together visually is really exciting!



Do you have sources of inspiration that you always revisit?

Isn't anything and everything a source of inspiration? Often inspiration for me is an emotive reaction to something – a wanting to communicate through my research practice a voice about this reaction.

Donna Dinsdale holds a Diploma in Fashion Design and Construction (BOP Polytechnic), Bachelor of Design (Fashion) (Otago Polytechnic) and Masters in Art and Design (first class) (AUT), for which she was awarded the dean's top award for her faculty. Donna has also completed a Certificate and a Diploma in Raranga (Maori weaving) at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa in Rotorua.

I consider myself a maker, someone who enjoys and embraces the act of creating. I always say I was taught by the very best, my mum, who passed her skills and love of fashion and textiles on to me.

As tangata whenua or tangata ti tiriti, how do you practice in our Aotearoa New Zealand framework? How is this reflected in your work? If you live outside New Zealand – how do you work with the different cultures that are part of your communities?

I am extremely lucky that I am part of a wider whanau that is driven by upholding the principles of mātauranga Māori, which is about a Māori way of being and engaging in the world – in its simplest form, it uses kawa (cultural practices) and tikanga (cultural principles) to critique, examine, analyse and understand the world. Collaboration, discussion, consultation and sharing these principles have become an integral aspect of my research and growth as an educator and practitioner.

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

What role does collaboration play in your designing?

While I have enjoyed collaboration on many levels for many different reasons, in my studio I mainly work on my own. I always feel it's important to acknowledge that without the input of the people who surround and support me, I couldn't be an effective practitioner. Colleagues, creatives, friends, community and, once again, my whanau contribute and ground my thoughts.