

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

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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 flippancy 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.