scope

Contemporary Research Topics

art & design 28:
Fashion

July 2025

https://doi.org/10.34074/scop.1028

art & design 28: Fashion

Published by Otago Polytechnic Press.

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Scope: Contemporary Research Topics (Art & Design) - Fashion Special Issue is peer-reviewed and published annually by *Scope: Contemporary Research Topics*, Otago Polytechnic Press. The print edition of this journal is co-published by Otago Polytechnic Press and General Editions.

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. Within Aotearoa/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.

EBSCO Database: *Scope: Contemporary Research Topics (Art & Design)* is catalogued on the EBSCO Database in recognition of academic quality and alignment with international peer review processes.

An online version of the journal is available free at https://thescopes.org/journal/
ISSN (for hardcopy version): 1177-5653;
ISSN (for online version): 1177-5661.

art & design 28

July 2025

Copy Editing: Pam McKinlay

Design & Typesetting: Joanna Wernham

Printing: GE/STUDIO

Cover: Florence Müller (Curator) with exhibition design by Agence Galuchat, Installation scene from the exhibition From the Heart to the Hands: Dolce & Gabbana held at Palazzo Reale Milano, 2024. Photograph: Margo Barton.

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https://doi.org/10.34074/scop.1028020

Tracy Kennedy and Stella Lange

Haere mai, welcome, to this, our fifth Fashion Special Issue of Scope: (Art and Design). The guiding words for this special issue Kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua | I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on my past. This whakataukī refers to a Māori perspective where the past, the present and the future are intertwined.

Aotearoa New Zealand has a rich fashion design history, and none more informative than the Eden Hore Collection. Eden Hore, a farmer from Central Otago, actively collected examples of New Zealand fashion design from 1960 to 1980. The collection includes entire outfits from Aotearoa New Zealand's most interesting 20th century fashion designers. Many garments were designed especially for and worn in the Miss New Zealand pageants. The collection has been acquired by the Central Otago District Council and highlights a long tradition of wool and fashion innovation. Historian and curator Jane Malthus gives a unique insight to the garments placed within the landscape that is now home to this collection.

There are many approaches to fashion design. Indian fashion traditions are little known beyond the sari. Rekha Rana Shailaj introduces us to approaches of cutting and using cloth, drawn from family traditions, reworked in contemporary and historical fashion designs. Moira White gives us an insight into Shailaj's work through a review of her exhibition The Six Yards Sisterhood (Otago Museum), which showcased Shailaj's contemporary hybrid sari practices. Kate Pierre, takes us on a journey of self-discovery, exploring her Caribbean heritage and how learning about the past, of her own people, and of the people of Turtle Island in Canada, where she temporarily worked, all contributed to a more culturally nuanced design approach. Tegan Vickery also provides us with an insight to her personal journey and how that influences her design practice. Tegan focuses on inclusive design through sizing, and how that can be communicated to build an empowered community.

Simon Swales photo essay captures the inaugural 'Fashion Reimagined' sustainable leadership program hosted by Untouched World Foundation and Otago Polytechnic. Sustainable fashion professionals from throughout Aotearoa New Zealand generously workshopped future fashion strategies with students and emerging fashion practitioners over a week-long island retreat.

Rebekah Harman and Emily Russell investigated existing fashion sustainably through asking wearers about the lived experiences of their most worn and cherished garments. Their work questions overconsumption and provides understandings of what people love to wear as they work towards a user centred approach to fashion design. Karlie Morrow explains the development of her DeniFur (TM pending) textile material made from discarded denim, a mindful exploration of circular fashion systems of the future.

This issue brings fashion writing and fashion process together. We are excited to showcase glimpses into the design processes of seven fashion practitioners. This section has a foreword by Professor Margo Barton and captures the creative process, which is often not visible, of designers across Aotearoa New Zealand and the globe.

Lastly, Margo Barton's review of Dolce & Gabbana's From the Heart to the Hands, brings an exhilarating glimpse into contemporary immersive fashion exhibition practice, from the heart of Italy. We couldn't resist using one of her images for the cover, enjoy!

Article

https://doi.org/10.34074/scop.1030011

WINDOWS TO FASHION DESIGN HISTORY AND INSPIRATION: THREE NEW ZEALAND DESIGNERS OF THE 1970S

Jane Malthus

Fashion designers Kevin Berkahn, Colin Cole and Vinka Lucas were as well known to New Zealanders in the early 1970s as Margarita Robertson, Karen Walker and Kate Sylvester are today. Based in Auckland, they had studios, shops and wholesale fabric businesses, and made ready-to-wear and bespoke clothes and wedding dresses. Entrepreneurial and ambitious, they catered to many, providing glamorous outfits for day and evening events.[1] Mostly self- or on-the-job-educated since there were fewer fashion schools back then, their talent drove them to set up their own studios and businesses. We are lucky that some of their designs survive in the Eden Hore Collection, now owned by the Central Otago District Council. As well as providing a window into fashion, textile and social history of a now distant time, they can illustrate stories of the designers' careers, and the history of textile supply in New Zealand's past.

Kevin Berkahn (c.1939 -) grew up on a dairy farm near Dannevirke in the 1940s, where an aunt, who was a dressmaker, inspired him. He made clothes for his sister and her friends, then moved to Auckland to pursue fashion design. With a growing reputation for special occasion and bridal wear, Berkahn went into business for himself at the end of the 1950s and attracted national attention with his entries in the New Zealand Gown of the Year. He knew the value of such publicity in the days before cell phones and social media.

Figure 1: Kevin Berkahn, dress with velvet bodice, Swiss lace trim with rhinestones, 1973, EH35. Photographed at Danseys Pass Hotel, by Derek Henderson, 2024. Model: Alannah Kwant.
Berkahn loved embellishing with beads. In this dress he added the rhinestones around the neckline and sleeve edges.

He also had his eyes firmly on international success. So, in 1971 he organised 'New Zealand's World of Fashion', a travelling fashion show that toured Australia, USA and England with a selection of couture and ready-to-wear clothes by a number of New Zealand designers including himself of course. He even obtained sponsorship from an international airline, Pan Am. The designers included the flamboyant and forthright Vinka Lucas, who was a walking advertisement for her own designs; Barbara Herrick (formerly known as Barbara Penberthy), who sold her fashion under the Babs Radon label; Joan Talbot, whose label was Tarantella; and John West, who made gorgeous suede coats.[2] Then In 1973, Berkahn established a "swishy salon" in Sydney, in anticipation of the impact that the new opera house would have on Sydney's nightlife. As he remarked at the time, few people in New Zealand would "contemplate buying a long dress made of lace from Switzerland that cost $97 a yard, but it would sell in Australia".[3] He understood his market and tailored his design output accordingly.

He hadn't, however, factored in Eden Hore! Hore, a farmer from the Māniatoto in Central Otago, was embarking on a new project to display New Zealand designer fashion at his home near Naseby and Danseys Pass and came to Sydney to see a fashion show at the new Sydney Opera House. Berkahn was part of that show because of his salon in Double Bay. Hore purchased four gowns from him, including the Swiss lace one, and he also obtained several that had been part of the World of Fashion tour.

Having got his name and designs into the public arena Berkahn was commissioned by the New Zealand Wool Board to make a wool evening gown for Miss New Zealand 1973 Pam King, to wear overseas when competing in Miss World and Miss Universe. His take on a Greek chiton, with a gored long skirt, sleeveless, empire-line top and plaited girdle, was also eventually bought by Hore for his growing collection.

Vinka Lucas (1932-2020) grew up in Yugoslavia, (now Croatia) attending the Academy of Dress Design in Zagreb. After immigrating to New Zealand in 1951, she established a business, first in Hamilton, then by the end of the 1960s in Auckland, specializing in evening and bridal dress using elaborate fabrics imported from Europe as well as local fabrics. Vinka's husband David Lucas operated the textile side of their business. Vinka sold her designs, which are characterised by exquisite fabrics and trims, to retailers around New Zealand, under a number of labels including Maree de Maru, After Five and Vinka Lucas.

Vinka Lucas' selection of ornate, colourful fabrics set her apart from many of her competitors and made her a favourite with Eden Hore. She was also commissioned by the organisers of the Miss New Zealand pageant to design garments, including a wardrobe for Miss New Zealand 1970 Glenys Treweek to wear for the Miss International contest at the Osaka Expo in Japan.

The Lucas' entrepreneurship saw them set up United Bridal Salons, where they linked up fabric retailers around New Zealand to stock their imported bridal fabrics and patterns that Vinka had designed. Brides could buy pattern and fabric from the retailer then send them to Auckland to be professionally cut out at Vinka's workroom. The bride could then make the dress herself or get a local dressmaker to make it.[4] This was a time when many people had good sewing skills.

Both Berkahn and Lucas set up companies to import the kinds of fabrics they liked to use, especially for their wedding dress lines, but also for evening wear. New Zealand had restrictive trading rules at the time and tariffs were applied to many imports. In order to protect the country's wool industry, importation and sale of many textiles was controlled by licences. Textile importers and wholesalers represented overseas fabric manufacturers, at that time mostly in Europe, and agents in New Zealand travelled the country with suitcases of samples of French silks, Irish linens, Italian wools, German velvets, and Swiss sequinned or embroidered fabrics. Designers often had first choice of the more expensive or fancy textiles and if they placed an order for a fabric before anyone else, they could get it as an 'exclusive' and be the only designer in the country to use that fabric. With the fabric they would then get the textile manufacturer's labels to sew into the clothes alongside their label.[5]

Figure 2: Vinka Lucas, dress with back panels, in Lurex brocade fabric, beads, early 1970s, EH54.
Photographed at Little Valley Road, Alexandra, by Derek Henderson, 2024. Model: Ngahuia Williams.

Because Berkahn and Lucas had their own importing businesses they could travel to the fabric fairs overseas, select fabrics that inspired them, apply for the licences to import them, and pay the tariff of course, but get the kinds of lavish and ornate fabrics they and their clients wanted. Lucas was even commissioned by European textile manufacturers to design and make wedding dresses in forthcoming fabrics for their marketing publications. Those fabrics sold well, apparently.[6]

Colin Cole (1931-87) began his career in clothing design by undertaking a five-year apprenticeship as a cutter-designer with Classic Manufacturing in Auckland and taking sewing and pattern drafting lessons in his own time. He gained further experience in companies specialising in coats, lingerie and children's wear (Poppetwear) before setting up on his own in 1958 in Karangahape Road, making evening and debutante dresses and high-quality daywear. He subsequently moved to Queen Street, for a short time producing larger ranges of his styles, then on to Parnell as it was revitalised. In 1961 he won a Golden Shears award. He established a reputation as one of New Zealand's leading high fashion designers in the 1960s, always producing one-off designs rather than ready-to-wear, and women travelled from all over the country to his studio for orders and fittings.[7]

In 1975, Colin Cole diversified slightly as the market changed, moving into larger business premises in Parnell and advertising to manufacturers as a design consultant and pattern maker. He had also just designed new uniforms for NZ Railways. Deauville International was one company that contracted Colin Cole to design for their three ranges as part of a four-person team. The team designed for the labels 'Deauville International', 'dile' and 'Lady Lana'.[8] In the 1980s Cole sent a range of fifty outfits to a salon in Muscat, Oman.

Spectacular quality fabrics appealed to Colin Cole. A 1973-4 Colin Cole evening dress in a sheer synthetic fabric printed with large floral motifs in apricot, green, blue, brown and purple, which are outlined with couched apricot and gold thread is a highlight of the Eden Hore Collection. The dress has a long straight skirt attached to a wide waistband, with an apron bib bodice. The yoke and dolman sleeves are cut from a plain apricot satin. All those elements were popular aspects of 1970s fashion incorporated into hippie looks as well as high fashion.

Figure 3: Colin Cole, dress in sheer organza with couched gold braid,and satin, 1973, EH88. Photographed at Strode Road Orchard, Earnscleugh, by Derek Henderson, 2024. Model: Ngahuia Williams.

These three designers followed their dreams of working in the world of fashion design. Yes, it was a very different time: technology, labour markets, fabric supply, and retailing have changed markedly since then; but they can still provide inspiration. Confident of their abilities, they still took risks in setting up independent businesses. They worked hard with their small teams to make those businesses survive, and when or if they didn't, they regrouped and started again. Berkahn went bankrupt more than once in his long career, and Cole moved into contract design when fashion and the times changed so dramatically in the 1970s. Berkahn expanded into Australia for a time and Cole and Lucas looked to the Middle East for customers for their lavish designs in the late 1970s and 1980s. Although Berkahn and Cole's businesses no longer exist, Lucas's wedding dress design business is now successfully run by her daughter, Anita Turner. Fashion design may have very different foci now, especially in sustainability, cultural diversity, and the virtual world, but finding outlets for one's creativity is a constant, no matter how it is achieved. Take heart from some who came before and make it work for you. For further information on these and other important 1970s and 80s New Zealand fashion designers consult Jane Malthus, Claire Regnault and Derek Henderson, *Central Otago Couture: the Eden Hore Collection*, Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2025.

Dr Jane Malthus (ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9075-8197) is an independent dress historian and curator; honorary curator at Otago Museum for their dress collection; on the board of iD Dunedin Fashion, and U3A Dunedin; a member of the Steering Group for Eden Hore Central Otago, the Costume and Textiles Association of New Zealand, The Costume Society UK, and the Costume Society of America.

1 For examples of their public profiles see: Kevin Berkahn with Maggie Blake, *Berkahn Fashion Designer*, (Auckland: Harper Collins,1999); 'Do you get fun from your clothes?' *New Zealand Women's Weekly*, 14 September 1959, p17; 'Grand style fashions for the wee small hours', *Thursday*, July 9 1970: 7-15, includes fashions by Kevin Berkahn and Colin Cole. *New Zealand Women's Weekly*, March 25, 1974: 32, refers to a world tour by Vinka Lucas.

2 'Fashion for export: Kevin Berkahn's New Zealand world of fashion show', *Eve*, November 1971: 8.

3 Kevin Berkahn, interview by Jane Malthus, Auckland, 14 January 2016.

4 Vinka Lucas Designer Collection Haute Couture booklet, Te Papa Archives; *New Zealand Bride and Home Annual*, vol. 3, 1966-7, and No. 4 c.1968, unpaginated.

5 Trevor Hookway and John Kite, interview by Jane Malthus, Auckland, 15 November 2023.

6 'New Zealand fashion first beats Europe by months', *New Zealand Women's Weekly*, 29 November 1971: 24-25.

7 Colin Cole, New Zealand Fashion Museum website, https://www.nzfashionmuseum.org.nz/colin-cole/ accessed January 2024.

8 *Apparel*, vol. 8 no. 9, (September 1976): 16.

Article https://doi.org/10.34074/scop.1030010

UNCOVERED FROM THE PAST: WHAT CAN *CHURIDAR PAIJAMI* TELL US ABOUT ZERO-WASTE, COMPLEX CONSTRUCTION AND FASHION

Rekha Rana Shailaj

INTRODUCTION

Churidar Paijami is a type of trousers characterised by ethnographic clothing from the Indian Subcontinent, which has evolved over historical periods.[1] This garment relies on a specialised fabric orientation and arrangement technique featuring the bias grain. Instead of cutting the pattern pieces from a flat layer of fabric, the pieces are cut from an enclosed bias bag, allowing the bias grain of the woven fabric to drape smoothly around the body, thereby facilitating ease and comfort of movement. The width of the bias bag can be adjusted to accommodate different girth measurements, making it possible to utilise narrower woven fabric widths for garment construction. In contemporary terms, this garment is comparable to modern knit leggings, albeit made from woven fabric.

During the 1980s, *Churidar Paijami* was a prevalent fashion item, significantly influenced by Indian cinema, which played a key role in establishing it as a desirable style. Young women in urban areas often sought the garment to fit their legs like a second skin. Despite its widespread popularity and visual representation, textual references to its form and materiality are limited. The narrative surrounding the bias bag remains largely untold; I was fortunate to learn this technique from my mother. This research aims to explore the origins of the *Churidar Paijami* and its evolution over time, focusing primarily on the intricate arrangement of fabric that forms the bias bag and its implications for fabric usage, waste reduction, and design possibilities.

HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS ON THE BIFURCATED GARMENT, *CHURIDAR PAIJAMI*

This research focuses on a specific category of stitched garments from India, known as *Churidar Paijami*. The objective is to examine the evolution of this garment and to analyse the complexities involved in its construction. It is important to note that the *Churidar Paijami* is categorised as a stitched garment, in contrast to traditional Indian garments which were predominantly unstitched. As Forbes Watson[2] indicates, these unstitched garments "leave the loom, ready for wear." Ritu Kumar highlights that the earliest garments of ancient times, such as the Indian *dhoti* and sari, the African *shama*, the Roman toga, and the Greek *himation*, were formed by draping unstitched fabric around the body (Kumar, R. 1999, p.13). She emphasises that clothing styles varied significantly due to regional and climatic differences. She highlights that the migration patterns of nomadic tribes originating from Central Asia traversing through the Caucasus, Iran, Turkestan, Russia, Tibet, Mongolia, China, Afghanistan, Baluchistan, the North-West frontier region of the Indian subcontinent, and the Punjab have led to a cross-pollination of stitching styles (Kumar, R. 1999).

Stitched garments have typically manifested in simpler forms, including tunics, skirts, and trousers. Kalyan Krishna, referencing literary sources from the Vedic period,[3] discusses ancient manuscripts that detail the materials and costumes of India, noting that fitted trousers were worn by kings and soldiers (Gowsamy, 1992, p.9). Furthermore, stitched garments like tunics and trousers gained popularity among the kings of the Gupta dynasty,[4] having been adopted from the Kushan period, reflecting influences from the Western Roman Empire.

During the initial two centuries of the Christian era, the interaction between external tribes and local populations led to the introduction of new dress styles in India, resulting in a blend of fashion influences. Krishna observes that during the classical period of Indian history, our understanding of textiles and clothing was enriched by the variety of sculptures and paintings from this era, particularly those at Ajanta,[5] which provide valuable visual representations of colours, patterns, and garment styles (Goswamy, 1992, p.10). The diversity of Indian clothing saw significant expansion from the eighth to the twelfth centuries, reflecting the assimilation of these new styles by the Indian populace and the creation of hybrid forms. Numerous researchers and authors have underscored the exchange of sartorial influences across different countries and cultures. Monisha Kumari and Amita Walia note that the arrival of Arabs and the influence of Islam in Persia led to a notable transformation in women's attire, with women adopting long, drawstring trousers with fitted ankles, paired with upper garments in sheer fabrics that varied in their level of exposure of the trousers (Kumar M., et al, 2017). Kumar highlights that as the Turks and Afghans began to conquer and settle in India during the twelfth century, their women introduced clothing styles from Central Asia, including tunics, gowns, and paijamas reminiscent of men's attire. This process of design adaptation and modification persisted with the arrival of the Mughals[6] in the sixteenth century, who brought along their traditional clothing styles from their native regions.

Determining the precise date and time of the introduction of *churidar paijami* is challenging and can only be speculated upon based on the accounts of foreign travellers to India from the late 16th century onwards. One notable traveller, Thevenot, documented that the breeches worn by Indians reached mid-calf to ankle length and were primarily made from cotton. The silk breeches worn by the affluent, on the other hand, featured various coloured stripes and were of such length that they required pleating along the leg, similar to the silk stockings once worn in France (Goswamy, 1992, p.18). This pleated design of the extended breeches parallels the modern *churidar*, a term that literally means fabric 'bangle-gathered' to create pleats. It is also evident that the length of the garment and the quality of the fabric reflect the social status of the wearer.

Churidar Paijami is a variation of the traditional *salwar* and/or *paijama*. The term "Paijama" is derived from two Persian words: "Pae," meaning 'legs' or 'feet,' and "Jama," meaning 'covering.' The popularity of the *Paijama* in India can be attributed to its introduction by Islamic rulers, and it was subsequently embraced by the Rajputs for its practicality. Over time, the Paijama became widely accepted, eventually replacing the *Dhoti* as a commonly worn bifurcated garment in India. This garment is available in various silhouettes, including loose, semi-loose, and fitted styles, and is worn by both men and women, making it a gender-neutral garment.

USE OF MINIATURE PAINTINGS FROM THE MEDIEVAL TIME TO REFERENCE BIFURCATED GARMENTS

Sculptures and paintings serve as valuable visual documentation of popular garments during the medieval period. Analysing the artwork from the Sultanate and Mughal periods allows us to evaluate the various Indo-Persian garment styles that gained prominence during their respective reigns and subsequently influenced fashion trends. Mughal miniatures uniquely synthesised elements from India, Persia, and Europe, resulting in a distinctive artistic style.

Humāyūn established a workshop that employed over 100 painters, and his son Akbar dedicated a significant portion of his time to the arts. During Akbar's reign, costume designs were meticulously documented, both in written form by Abu'l Fazl in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, and through a rich array of paintings produced during this era. The Mughal School of painting achieved notable advancements during Jahangir's reign, which included both portraiture and depictions of subjects drawn from life and nature (Tubach, 2018).

As we examine these artworks, certain pieces merit closer investigation for their representation of clothing styles. In Figure 1, the Emperor Shah Jahan is wearing a floral printed ruched *paijama* under a finely crafted cotton Jama. Notably, in the painting in Figure 2, both women are depicted wearing a ruched *paijami* under the long tunic, reminiscent of the modern-day *churidar*. Supporting the *paijami* is the short blouse in the same colour to compliment the ensemble.

Figure 1. [Left] Hashim (fl. from 1598 until 1654)The Emperor Shah Jahan standing upon a globe, Mughal dynasty, Reign of Shah Jahan, ca. 1618-19 to 1629, 1629/mid-17th century, Opaque Watercolour, ink and gold on paper, Freer Gallery of Art, Arthur Sackler Gallery.
Figure 2. [Centre] Ragini Sarang, from a *Garland of Musical Modes* (Ragamala) manuscript, Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 1770-90, Yale University Art Gallery. https://open.theheritagelab.in/ragini-sarang-from-a-garland-of-musical-modes-ragamala-manuscript/
Figure 3. [Right] *Beauty Holding a Flower*, 1640-1660 (mid-17th Century Mughal period), Opaque watercolour, gold and ink on paper, Source Location: The Art Institute of Chicago London, https://www.rawpixel.com/image/8945643/beauty-holding-flower-mughal

In Figure 3, *Beauty Holding a Flower,* the woman is dressed in a fitted paijama beneath a transparent outer garment known as a Peshwaz. The fitted design will necessitate the inclusion of a button or hook-and-eye closure at the hem to facilitate ease of movement. Additional panels may also be incorporated into the upper section to enhance comfort and wearability,[14] the paijama depicted here is clearly cut on the straight grain. While Kumar notes the presence of bias-cut *churidar* pajamas in royal courts from indicated by the orientation of the print. Most garments that have survived and are now housed in museums, such as the Calico Museum of Ahmedabad, as well as those documented in historical records, demonstrate that pajamas were predominantly cut on the straight grain.

INFLUENCES OF INDIAN CINEMA

As I investigated the historical significance of the *churidar paijami* and its influence on contemporary fashion, it was pertinent to examine the visual culture present in cinema. Indian clothing styles have been profoundly influenced by the films produced by the Bollywood industry. A pivotal figure in shaping the latest fashion trends in India was the renowned costume designer Bhanu Athaiya, who had a prolific career spanning over fifty-four years and designed costumes for more than one hundred films.

In the 1965 film *Waqt*, she introduced the *churidar paijami* paired with a sleeveless, fitted *kurta* made from luxurious silk for the lead actress, Sadhana. This innovative design helped to define her character as a symbol of the emerging upper-class, privileged youth of that era. The body-hugging silhouette created by the fitted *paijami* teamed with the knee length shift dress represented a transformation in the Indian fashion landscape, leading to the film's widespread success.

According to the film's director, the popularity of this look resulted in tailors in Delhi becoming a primary market, as women purchased tickets to the film in order to replicate the designs for themselves (Athaiya, 2010). The *churidar paijami* gained immense popularity among women, who opted for tighter fits akin to a second skin. Consequently, this silhouette became mainstream fashion, characterised by a strong preference for *churidars* cut on the bias grain. However, it is important to note that fashion designers are aware of the fabric wastage associated with garments cut on the bias. By cutting this garment on a bias bag rather than utilising the bias grain of a single layer of fabric, the wastage of material is significantly minimised.

The Indian youth of my generation, who grew up in the early eighties, were heavily influenced by the fashion styles depicted in films from that era. As a passionate fashion enthusiast, I embraced these designs wholeheartedly. My mother, a skilled seamstress, taught me how to create tailored *churidar paijami* designs. Rather than cutting the *churidar paijami* from a single layer of fabric, she adopted a method of constructing a bias bag that was enclosed on all sides. This bag was then transformed into a tube by opening both ends. The *churidar* pattern for each leg was meticulously laid out on this bias tube in opposing directions, eliminating the need for an outer leg seam. This innovative approach resulted in a more efficient use of fabric, minimising waste.

THE PROCESS OF MAKING THE BIAS BAG

The process of creating churidar involves multiple stages. Prior to drafting the patterns, the fabric is constructed into an enclosed bias bag. This method enables the fabric length to align with the bias grain rather than the length grain. We already know that any fashion fabric is woven with the length grain placed along the fabric meterage. This is disrupted by the process of making the bias bag.

To construct the bias bag, the length of fabric is folded at the centre of its width. The two folded ends are secured with a straight stitch, while leaving the edges open. To form the bias bag, the open edge of the fabric is joined together starting from the endpoint of the true bias line, which is created from the inner corner of the stitched

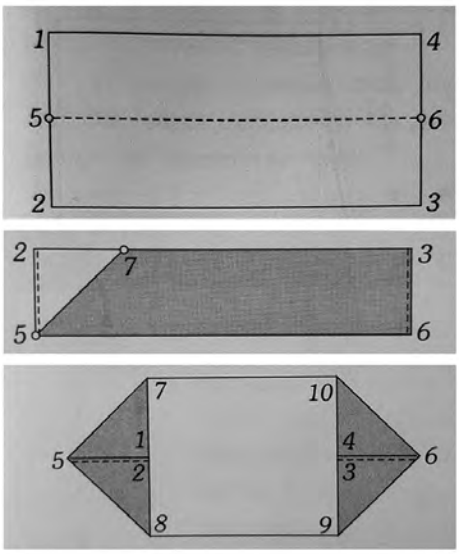

Figure 4. How to Make a Bias Bag.
Source images: collated from a patternmaking book titled "Zarapkar System of Cutting."

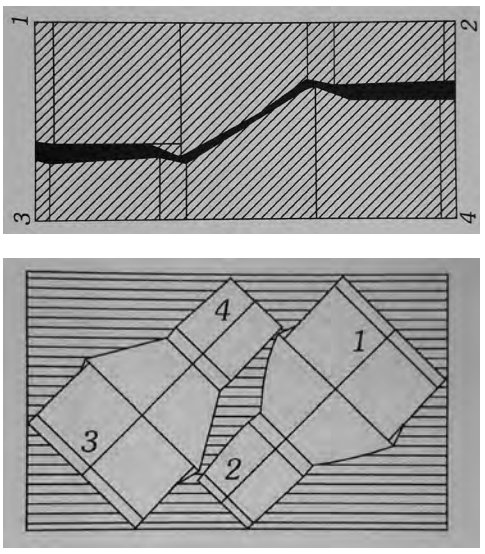

Figure 5. [Top] Lay plan for the *paijami*. Figure 6. [Bottom] Another lay plan for the *paijami*.

fabric end, in a continuous loop, as indicated by point 7 (Figure 4). The open edge 7-10-9 is sewn to the open edge 7-8-9. This sewing process along the fabric edge results in the formation of a bias bag with two ends aligned with the bias grain. Subsequently, the bag is cut along its two ends 5-7 and 9-6 along the bias grain, resulting in the creation of an open tube of fabric. While the construction of a bias bag may appear straightforward, a critical aspect of the process is ensuring that the fabric requirements for the *paijami* are accurately determined to minimise fabric waste. As a general guideline, the fabric required should be twice the full length from the waist to the floor; however, if the hip measurement exceeds the standard size, the length requirement will need to be adjusted accordingly.

Once the bias bag is constructed and transformed into a cylindrical tube, the subsequent phase involves drafting the *churidar* patterns and evaluating the available pattern layout options. The bias tube created from the fabric delineates the cutting length as depicted in Figure 5, in contrast to the singular layer of fabric presented in Figure 6. The two layout plans illustrated in Figures 5 and 6 highlight the extent of fabric wastage, clearly much more in the Figure 6 lay plan. These plans allow the designer to make meticulous and informed cutting decisions aimed at minimising fabric waste.

I have determined that by cutting this garment on a bias bag instead of utilising the bias grain of a single layer of fabric, the material wastage is significantly reduced. However, ascertaining the required dimensions in terms of width and length of the fabric poses a mathematical challenge. To illustrate this challenge, I constructed the bias bag for a quarter-sized *paijami*, utilising a rectangular fabric measuring 22 centimetres in width and 54.5 centimetres in length. I marked the length and width with distinct colours along the edges. Upon constructing the bias bag, I observed the movement of the width and lengthwise edges around the tube. Upon opening both ends of the bag along the bias grain, I was able to measure the length of the tube. The initial length and width (of the single layer fabric) underwent considerable alteration, with the original dimensions of 11 centimetres in width and 54.5 centimetres in length transforming to a width of 15 centimetres and a length of 36 centimetres (for the tube) in this experiment.

At the conclusion of this experiment, several observations were noted:

- The width of the tube increases while the length is compromised. This modification is pivotal as it influences the cutting layout and fabric wastage.
- The original length of the rectangular piece follows a diagonal path around the tube, as indicated by the colour coding.
- The width of the fabric also traverses; however, the traveling length of the fabric results in disruption.
- The cut lines (9-6, 7-5) for the enclosed bias bag correspond to the final width of the bias tube (Figure 7).
- The additional two diagonal lines, 5-8 and 9-10, are positioned in relation to the folded edge of the tube. Their relationship will indicate the degree of bias (Figure 7).
- It is crucial to carefully consider the width of the fabric, particularly if the hip measurement exceeds the standard size, necessitating that the length must also exceed twice the measurement from the waist to the floor.

Consequently, as a general principle, the length of the material required is twice the full-length measurement (from waist to the floor), while the width corresponds to the hip measurement. Furthermore, if the hip measurement increases beyond the standard size, the length should be extended beyond double the full length. There exist numerous permutations and combinations regarding the dimensions of length and width. Ideally, a mathematical solution would be beneficial for calculating and establishing the relationship among the various variables of this complex construct. This approach would be particularly advantageous in minimising fabric waste during the cutting and sewing stages of garment design.

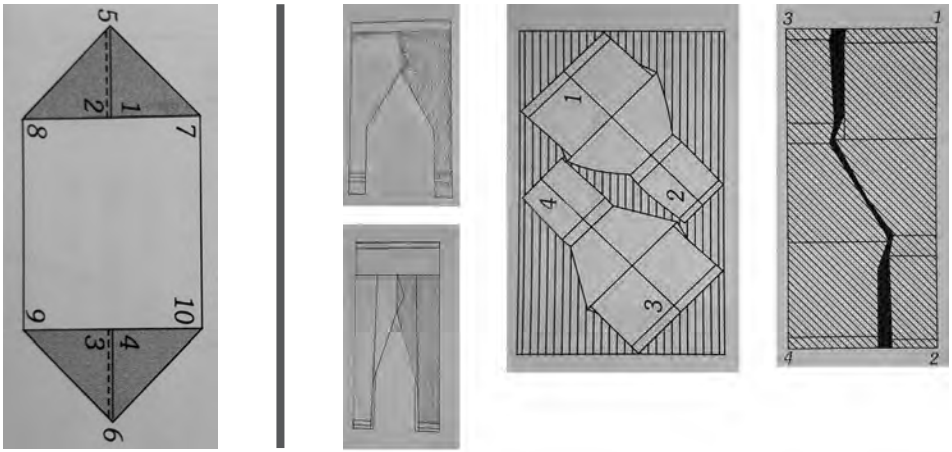

Figure 7. [Left] Bias bag in-process. Figure 8. [Right] A pictorial comparison between a straight grain and a bias grain paijami. Source image: collated from a patternmaking book titled "Zarapkar System of Cutting."

Upon examining the evolution of this garment and comparing the images presented in Figure 8, one can infer that historically, the *paijami* was constructed in its rudimentary form utilising the straight lengthwise grain. Subsequently, a bias placement of the patterns was implemented on a single layer of fabric, which consequently led to fabric wastage. This technique gradually advanced to a more intricate method of cutting *churidar* patterns from a bias tube, thereby reducing fabric waste. While these developments are challenging to delineate with precision on a timeline, they can be approximately estimated.

In the current fashion landscape in India, the allure of this garment as a fashionable item has declined, giving way to a Western-style alternative, namely knit leggings, which are a result of fast fashion production. While the *paijami* is custom fitted to an individual's body dimensions, mass-produced knit leggings are readily accessible in an array of sizes and colours in the marketplace. Nevertheless, these cannot replicate the unique charm of *churidar paijami* crafted from silk and adorned with hand embroidery.

Figure 9 and 10. Paijami designs in woven fabric by Rekha Shailaj, 2011.

CONCLUSION

The allure and design potential of this garment have afforded me the opportunity to utilise it as a design reference in my own work (Figure 9, 10). In my exploration, I have experimented with hybrid variations featuring textured and frayed overlays, as well as incorporating details reminiscent of Western-style trousers, including a fitted waistline and belt loops, styled alongside a jacket and bustier top. As I persist in my endeavours with this garment, I aim to preserve and disseminate its historical origins, intricate construction developments, and its significance within fashion discourse.

Rekha Rana Shailaj (ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5844-6986) completed a Master of Fine Arts (Design) with distinction in 2011 from the Dunedin School of Art at Otago Polytechnic. As a conceptual designer, Rekha practices design in a multicultural environment, working with subjectivities and identities created through different fashion systems. Ethnographic clothing is a special interest, especially from India where she was born and raised.

1 *Churidar Paijami*/Paijama: The two terms are utilised interchangeably to denote the same garment. However, the term "Paijama" is employed by some authors to refer to its generic form, whereas I have specifically used it to denote the female variant of this garment. This terminology is also employed by tailors in India who possess the expertise to construct it.

2 John Forbes Watson (1827-1892), Reporter for the Products of India at the India Office, nominated by the secretary of state, conceived the idea for 'portable industrial museums'. This led to the publication of The Collections of the Textile Manufactures of India in 1866, eighteen volumes of mounted and classified samples of Indian textiles. A companion volume, The Textile Manufactures and the Costumes of the People of India, published in 1866, contained explanatory text and illustrations of how the fabrics were worn as clothing in India. Retrieved from http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/i/indian-textiles-and-empire-john-forbes-watson/

3 After the dusk of Indus valley civilization, The Vedic period (1500 BCE to 500 BCE) began when the Aryans started their civilization in these areas, flourished and later travelled across the world.

4 The Gupta Empire was founded in northern India in the beginning of the 4th century CE, following a long period of turmoil during the Kushan Empire which ceased in the middle of the 3rd century CE.

5 Ajanta caves (dates from first to the seventh centuries AD), located in Aurangabad district of Maharashtra, India, contain carvings depicting the life of Buddha. Their carvings and sculptures are considered the beginning of classical Indian art.

6 Mughal Empire lasted from the 16th – 19th Century.

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https://doi.org/10.34074/scop.1030004

EXHIBITION REVIEW: THE SIX YARDS SISTERHOOD: DECONSTRUCTING THE SARI IN AOTEAROA

Beautiful Science Gallery, Tūhura Otago Museum, Dunedin, Aotearoa New Zealand Open to the public: 1 November 2024 – 23 February 2025

Moira White

INTRODUCTION

The Six Yards Sisterhood: deconstructing the Sari in Aotearoa was an exhibition that showed a reinterpretation of the traditional Indian sari through the lens of its curator, Rekha Shailaj.

Saris are unstitched rectangular lengths of fabric (on average approximately six yards (5.5 metres) long), that are worn wrapped around the body, with the potential to be draped and pleated in a great variety of ways. The sari ensemble of petticoat, blouse (used by Shailaj as a consistent term for the garment worn on the models' upper body) and sari cloth is strongly identified with Indian women – in South Asia and in diaspora communities around the world.

The exhibition showcased "a collection of saris embodying India's vibrant heritage and the influences of New Zealand-Aotearoa". (Shailaj, 2025) The initial and dominant visual impact in the gallery was of the colourful and diverse beauty of the woven and embellished saris. In addition, Shailaj designed the blouse component of each ensemble in line with her interest in positioning saris in a fashion discourse, and in issues of sustainability, thus blending traditional Indian aesthetics with modern design.

Visitors were told in the gallery introduction that Shailaj is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Design at Otago Polytechnic, Dunedin and a PhD candidate at the College of Creative Arts, Massey University, whose doctoral studies on deconstructing the sari informed the exhibition.

Happily, gallery scheduling allowed for the exhibition opening to coincide with 2024's Diwali celebrations.

ENTERING THE GALLERY

The gallery's physical entrance initially conceals its display area behind a partial wall. This visual barrier provided an ideal space to display the exhibition poster and allowed visitors a sensory pause to transition from the first-floor atrium of the Museum.

ENTERING THE GALLERY, ONE WAS IMMERSED IN A BURST OF COLOUR, GLITTER, AND MUSIC.

Near the back of the gallery, a single red and gold, handloom-woven, ikat-patterned sari with parrot and elephant design motifs was suspended from near the ceiling, showing its full length. This allowed identification of the three structural elements common to all saris – the longitudinal (side) borders, the central body or field, and the more intensely decorated pallu - the lower border and loose end. This is the part that is often draped over a shoulder and left to hang. Mounted near groups of mannequins displaying styled saris, this piece also emphasised the role of each human wearer in transforming sari cloth into clothing.

Four large black bases each supported three mannequins that were dressed with styled saris and blouses, accessorised with footwear and jewellery. Each figure had an extended text label mounted beside it. The bases were a practical requirement to facilitate the use of the gallery space for evening events if necessary. They determined the exhibition's display structure, and complicated but did not obscure viewers' access to the ensembles.

The long side walls of the gallery were used to project rotating sets of floor-to-ceiling images showing front, back and detail shots of saris worn (in the main) by Shailaj's friends and family – "the sisterhood". Spot-the-Dunedin-location-in-the-background was a fun exercise.

The far end wall was used to show a variety of static, split screen and film footage imagery that included Shailaj working in her studio, saris worn in motion, and the documented results of Shailaj inviting Otago Polytechnic fashion design alumni, Sidney North, to drape and don the garments in any way she imagined.

The one lidded case held small, wooden manikin figures with experimental blouse toiles, embroidery samples and a working notebook. It was positioned below fourteen large poster-like printed images showing models wearing styled saris, with both model and stylist attributed, and an Instagram link.

A touch screen offered eight 'chapters' of transcribed audio guide content from Shailaj addressing various aspects of her project. These could have been helpfully edited, rather than merely transcribed, when the audio option didn't eventuate. Topics included 'Sari as a lived experience', 'Composing the design of a sari', 'Selecting which saris to display', 'The hybrid

Figure 1. Beautiful Science Gallery entrance. Photograph: Shanaya Cunningham.

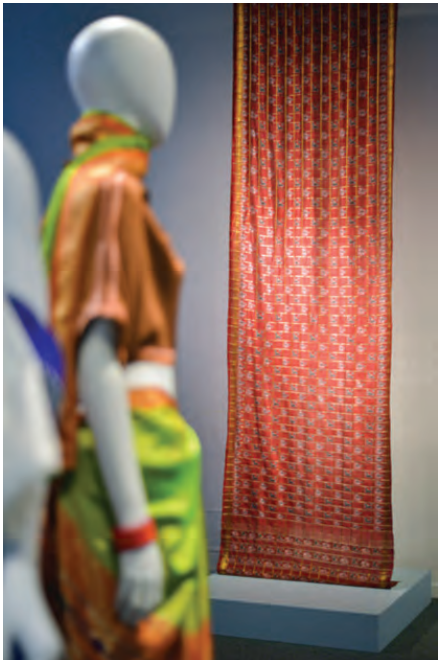

Figure 2. Full length display of hand-woven, ikat patterned sari. Photograph: Shanaya Cunningham.

Figure 3. Gallery view looking back towards the entrance, showing one set of side wall projections. Photograph by Shanaya Cunningham.

Figure 4. Gallery view showing film footage of Rekha Sailaj working in her studio on the far wall. Photograph: Shanaya Cunningham.

Figure 5. The case of toiles, notebook and embroidery samples. Photograph: Shanaya Cunningham.

design of blouses', and 'Zero-waste design'. Zero-waste is "a design technique that aims to eliminate textile waste at the design stage." (Mindful Fashion NZ).

There was a public comments box near the exit, and A5 stapled exhibition guide booklets placed in the gallery were available for visitors to use and keep. These included a section documenting the saris on display with their gallery label text, another with images of the projected saris, and an essay by Shailaj.

STARTING WITH THE PAST

Shailaj has been collecting precious, intricate preloved saris, almost all hand-woven, for years. Elsewhere she has noted that she collects them "in order to study in detail traditional clothing from India… I study motifs, scale, colour, material, style and techniques." (Shailaj, 2021, p.58) Thirteen saris from her collection were physically on display in this exhibition (12 on mannequins); 33 in total, when the projected saris are added to the tally.

Ways of wearing saris have varied in any time period. They have changed in the past, (see Kawlra, 2014 for a discussion of the impact of the call for independence) and are still changing as each population adjusts this iconic garment to their own requirements. In the Indian subcontinent there are regional differences in the form, weave, structure, decoration and usage of saris. Added to this is the potential for each wearer to personalise the presentation of their own sari. "You re-create it for yourself, for this day and age, for this moment in time, and for who you are at this moment in time." (Sharma, 2019)

The use of historic saris introduced gallery visitors to some of the huge variability concealed by our use of a single garment name. Many publications, such as Chishti's (2010) irresistible *Saris – tradition and beyond*, are structured around geographical regions and documenting the special features of the saris in each area. This wasn't an option in *The Six Yards Sisterhood* where so many of the pre-loved textiles lacked full provenance. Instead, Shailaj chose her groupings on essentially aesthetic grounds; while contributing what information she knew or could surmise about the history of their making, decoration or wearing styles.

Shailaj's choice of draping options, however, was not restricted to the historic or traditional. One sari, worn short, played with ideas of the qualities of a kilt. Another, with Badla wire embroidery, covered the mannequin's head in a reference to parts of northern India where women practice facial veiling.

Each ensemble physically in the gallery had an extended label printed on a colour-toned background, which offered historical information about the particular style of the sari, its geographical connections, details of its weave, embroidery technique, or other points of interest.

THE BLOUSES

Each sari was shown with a blouse that Shailaj designed and constructed herself specifically to complement the sari with which it was shown. In some instances, she was able to purchase fabric to make the blouse in India, with the sari in hand to match; others used recycled fabric.

The blouses were where Shailaj incorporated her personal commentaries on light or weighty issues that ranged from fashions-past to textile re-use to colonial history. Some picked up on an element of the decorative technique in the sari; some referenced its colour palette; one played with the idea of the puffer jacket; another, shown with a Paithani sari draped to hint at a bifurcated style, referenced elements of sportswear through the application of striped trims.

Shailaj experimented with rectangular and circular shapes when designing the blouses, making circular and rectangular cuts into those shapes. Circles are not associated with sari cloth so, although not visible as such, they also represented for her the world where sari are largely absent. The gallery labels provided additional descriptive details about that process.

As a group, the blouses constituted a notably contemporary and innovative element, in their composition, shape or stimulus, from the use of untraditional toggle fittings, to loose and unfamiliar silhouettes, or the inclusion of embroidered (broken) roses or lotus flowers, paying tribute to the natural flora of England and of India.

Some of them, I suspect, might pose a challenge to wear modestly when in motion (if that was a concern) and the gallery booklets had at least one example where the sari was photographed out-of-doors with a different blouse. The exhibition was not, however, a forum for reducing imaginable potential to the strictly practical, although the need to make the blouses visible must have had an impact on the sari draping options.

Figure 6. The Zardozi-ite bodice to the left is embellished with silver metallic ribbon, and the Kantha-ite bodice on the right, features deconstructed puffer squares. The Gotta-ite bodice in the centre is made from upcycled silk Tanchoi-weave fabric. Photograph: Shanaya Cunningham.

ISSUES OF SUSTAINABILITY

Shailaj has a long history of interest in zero-waste textile design or near-zero wastage (for example, Shailaj 2017; Shailaj, 2019). While it was an underlying aspect of all the ensembles on display, it was not particularly stressed in the gallery, other than in Chapter Seven of the touchscreen. As Shailaj pointed out there, saris are quintessential zero-waste garments, with the whole of the woven cloth, uncut, being used when it is worn. She also mentioned her mother's lifelong habits of textile conservation, and stated that she had worked with zero waste in her designs.

INTO THE FUTURE

Western fashion narratives have long tended to view traditional dress from other areas of the world as unchanging, but Shailaj's current work is one, among others, that looks at integrating the two; part of undermining this dated perspective. Shailaj described her own experience of wearing saris daily when she lived in India, in a variety of contexts, but then feeling "too different" wearing them in public in New Zealand. That became an essentially private experience for her here and led to an interest in ways of integrating saris into Western fashion traditions, whilst retaining their capacity to act as a symbol of cultural identity. In this, she is part of an international cohort looking at ideas associated with reinventing the sari.

The digital content of the exhibition allowed her to touch lightly on some aspects of contemporary sari changes. An image of a young Dunedin woman wearing a sari on a skateboard acknowledged the development that sees saris in contexts that empower women. A touch screen essay acknowledged that some men, too, are now wearing saris.

It is interesting to compare *The Six Yards Sisterhood* to some other recent exhibitions that also aimed to expand our view of the sari. While, for instance, the Design Museum's 2023 *The offbeat sari* stressed radical contemporary examples, including a sari with ruffles made from heat pleated plastic polymers, a sari made from air pollution, and one made from steel (The Design Museum, 2025), in contrast, Shailaj's exhibition of styled preloved saris teemed with her own blouse designs, offers a more personal exploration. Having stated that the primary objective of the exhibition was "to reinvigorate the contemporary significance of this traditional attire" (Shailaj, 2025), in *The Six Yards Sisterhood* she took creative steps towards that ambitious goal.

Acknowledgments

Rekha Shailaj gave two well-attended public talks and took two embroidery workshops during the time the exhibition was on display. Craig Scott, Head of Creative Services Exhibition, Tūhura Otago Museum worked with Rekha Shailaj on the gallery and graphic design for the exhibition. Otago Polytechnic lent a number of the mannequins used in the exhibition.

Moira White (ORCID iD: 0000-0001-8633-5597) is Curator, Humanities, at Tūhura Otago Museum, Dunedin. She is also Secretary of Costume and Textiles Aotearoa New Zealand

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Article

https://doi.org/10.34074/scop.1030005

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES FROM AN EMERGING DESIGNER'S PERSPECTIVE: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH

Tegan Vickery

INTRODUCTION: FASHION AS WITNESS AND WAYFINDER

Fashion, while often celebrated as a vehicle for self-expression and empowerment, also carries significant risks, particularly concerning body image and mental health. As both a model and a designer, I have experienced fashion as a site of deep personal struggle and of powerful healing.

My 2024 outfit, *Body Dysmorphia*, which won the Supreme Award at the Hokonui Fashion Design Awards, reflects this complex relationship. This article uses an autoethnographic approach to explore how my lived experiences, shaped by disordered eating, modelling, and design education, have informed my work and continue to shape my future creative direction.

Figure 1. Tegan and model at Hokonui Fashion Awards 2024.

REFLECTIONS AND RECOGNITION: THE STARTING POINT

The reflections below, drawn from my diaries, explore my past experiences with body image, identity, and mental health. These reflections were central to the development of *Body Dysmorphia*, which received the top award of excellence at the 2024 Hokonui Fashion Design Awards. The outfit served as both a personal confrontation with my mental health struggles and a public expression of resilience, inclusion, and healing. These lived experiences—past and present—now guide my fashion practice.

WHAKAPAPA: A JOURNEY FROM MODEL TO DESIGNER

As a Model - Past Identity and Shifting Norms

My fashion journey began not in a studio, but on the runway. Between 2018 and 2024, I worked as a model in Dunedin, New Zealand. From the outset, friends and family expressed concern about how this environment might affect my eating disorder. Their fears were valid, but my experience challenged expectations. Instead of harming me, modelling gave me a surprising sense of control and confidence. In Dunedin's fashion scene, inclusivity is increasingly celebrated, with many shows opting for models in sizes 10–12. My body fluctuated over the years—from size 4 to 6, and eventually to 12—but I continued to model at every size, including walking in the iD Dunedin Fashion Show in 2023 as a size 12. This inclusivity helped me reframe my understanding of beauty and body image. I learned that confidence wasn't tied to a specific size but could grow through acceptance and representation.

As a Designer - Present Practice and Purpose

Modelling led me to design. In my Bachelor of Design at Otago Polytechnic, I began to view fashion not just as clothing, but as communication. My lived experiences—especially with eating disorders and mental health—became the foundation for my design language. My outfit, *Body Dysmorphia*, developed for my Honours project and later shown at the Hokonui Fashion Design Awards 2024, was inspired by this journey. It wasn't just a garment—it was a conversation. The award I received was more than recognition; it affirmed that personal storytelling has a place in public fashion spaces. The outfit embodied the emotional labour of healing, aiming to dismantle ideals of perfection and offer space for vulnerability and strength.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS: DESIGNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE

The reflections below, originally written in my personal diary in January 2024, shaped the emotional and conceptual development of my collection. They represent the healing arc that underpins both my fashion philosophy and my lived experience.

Wearing baggy clothes used to be a fashion statement.
Now, it's my safety net from the pointing and piercing gaze of strangers.
I hear whispers—are they worried or disgusted?
"That girl needs to eat."
"How can she do that to herself?"
"You can see her bones."

It's a sunny day. I take off my oversized mandarin coat and immediately feel two women staring at my collarbones. Gobsmacked.

If only they knew the half of it.
I wish I could tell people my story without it being seen as attention-seeking.
This is a mental illness—a disease I've been fighting since I was 17.
At 26, it's still a daily battle.

The mind is powerful, and sometimes cruel.
Explaining an eating disorder to someone who hasn't lived it is almost impossible.
They say, "Just eat."
But it's not that simple.

It's a war inside your head.
One voice knows you need food.
The other tells you to go a few more hours.
Then a day. Then a week.

It becomes euphoric. Addictive.
The longer you starve, the more you feel in control—until the control controls you.

It strains relationships.
It breaks trust.

And those who love you can only sit and watch as you fade.

THEORY AND PRACTICE: FASHION, BODY IMAGE, AND MENTAL HEALTH

Fashion can be empowering, but it is also deeply implicated in mental health challenges. Through this next section, I discuss how body image and self-worth are impacted by cultural messaging, media, and fashion itself.

Figure 2. Model at Hokonui Fashion Awards 2024.

Body Positivity: The Dual Edge

Positive Impacts:
The body positivity movement promotes self-love and inclusivity by challenging narrow beauty ideals (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014). For many, it fosters empowerment, increased self-esteem, and visibility for underrepresented body types.

Negative Impacts:
However, body positivity can impose its own pressures. For those with eating disorders, being told to "love your body" can feel dismissive or overwhelming. Social media often perpetuates "toxic positivity"—forcing people to appear confident when they are struggling (Fardouly et al., 2015).

Social Media and Representation

Negative Impacts:
Social platforms typically elevate thin, white, cis-normative ideals. Plus-size and diverse bodies are underrepresented, leading many users, especially young women, to feel invisible or inadequate (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014).

Positive Impacts:
Body-positive creators and influencers are working to disrupt these norms. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram have created communities for plus-size and marginalised people, offering empowerment through representation (Harrison & O'Brien, 2018).

"Healthy" as a Harmful Ideal

Negative Impacts:
Health is often portrayed as a thin, athletic body. This narrow image promotes unhealthy behaviours, like over-exercising, restrictive diets, and disordered eating. These ideals can cause stress, anxiety, and body dissatisfaction (Levine & Murnen, 2009).

Positive Impacts:
Approaches like *Health at Every Size* (Bacon, 2010) redefine health as holistic, prioritising mental, physical, and emotional well-being over appearance. This shift empowers people to seek balance, not perfection.

Fashion and Socioeconomic Pressure

Negative Impacts:
Fashion trends can be financially and emotionally taxing. The pressure to stay "in style" can create anxiety and exclusion, particularly for those with limited resources.

Positive Impacts:
However, fashion also offers creative freedom. Thrift, upcycling, and sustainable fashion encourage self-expression without the pressure to consume (McNeill, 2018).

CONCLUSION: FASHION AS FUTURE PATHWAY

Fashion is not neutral—it shapes how we see ourselves and how we are seen. For me, it has been both a site of trauma and a tool for healing. Through my outfit *Body Dysmorphia*, and my evolving design philosophy, I seek to make fashion a space for truth-telling, inclusion, and change. Fashion has helped me reclaim my voice. It has given me tools to reflect, process, and project a vision for the future, where fashion is not about perfection, but about power, process, and presence.

Tegan Rose Vickery has a Bachelor of Design (Honours). Tegan Rose Vickery is an emerging designer based in Dunedin, specialising in 'multi-sized' clothing. Drawing from her experiences as a model, entrepreneur, and designer, she creates fashion that embraces inclusivity, blending innovative design with a deep understanding of body inclusivity to challenge traditional industry standards.

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Article https://doi.org/10.34074/scop.1030001

THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF IDENTITY, FASHION, AND EXPLORATION: WHERE FORM MEETS FIT AND FUNCTIONALITY

(a biographical story of identity from a fashion designer)

Kate Pierre

IDENTITY

Identity has always played a big part in my life, starting from a young age. This was due to not understanding my background as I did not have anyone outside of my immediate family who looked like me. I didn't know who I was because I didn't know Trinidadian culture. This makes up half of who I am, and it makes up 100% of what people see when they look at me.

Clothing first intrigued me when I noticed the different clothing my classmates wore at primary school. This information would tell me if the clothes were brand new, home-made or hand-me-downs. Without knowing consciously what I was doing, I was able to identify others by the clothes they wore. I still look at people and clothing this way, not to judge, but to deconstruct pieces to see how they were constructed, or to see if the clothing can provide a glimpse into the mind and personality of the wearer.

During my time in the Otago Polytechnic Diploma of Fashion and Design art class, our instructor, Rick, showed us that fashion was everywhere. One class was a field trip to see the film, *The Fifth Element* (1997), starring Milla Jovovich and Bruce Willis with costumes designed by Jean-Paul Gaultier. This opened my eyes to see that fashion is not only on the streets, or on a catwalk, but also used to tell stories, to form identities and to relay certain characteristics about a person. This had a huge impact on me, later in my career, designing KATE&FRANCES, a sustainable fashion brand, because I am able to design pieces that allow others to be able to tell their own story, to express their own personality and self-expression. I have also used storytelling when designing and building character wardrobes in local theatre productions. The way in which we can portray characteristics about a character, without using words, is a form of communication. Learning that we can 'read' a character by the garments they wear, was crucial in this work.

Traveling through the Caribbean was a way for me to connect with my ancestry, my history, and my family. Throughout these islands I met people that matched my brownness, and my facial features, even if they had trouble understanding my accent (the feeling was mutual!), but there was a sense of belonging, that they could see that I was one of them. The history that I saw in museums, galleries and on the streets helped me to form a connection, and to relax into my identity. The search for another aspect of my identity was taking place, and this journey is visible in the product within KATE&FRANCES. My identity was evolving, due to the knowledge that I was experiencing and gaining. Having built this foundation of identity, made it easier to be myself and to advocate for my point of view in a professional setting. I found that my voice was a lot stronger when voicing my thoughts within my professional career, and in general communication.

Being of mixed race, and light skinned I have experienced what inequity is in this part of the world. Growing up in NZ I experienced it, but I didn't know what it was called, and I thought it was 'normal'. At the time of writing this, I was living, working, and playing on the unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, on Turtle Island. Also known as Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

My proximity to the US, where race relations have a deep and horrid history, and to the lesser-known history of Canadian colonisation and slave trade, there are still systemic racial inequalities that show up in everyday life. These equalities that still run systemically through government, policy, and language, has opened my eyes to the true meaning of what obtaining equity for all truly means and entails. Empathy and compassion for Indigenous persons who have been colonised forms an unseen connection for me, and this has developed my identity, my worldview perspective, and changed what I advocate for, against and with whom.

Growing up as a mixed-race child on Muaūpoko, the Otago Peninsula, my siblings and I were often asked if we were Māori. I remember once when I was asked this, I was around six years old, and I said no. This question was then followed up with, "Then, what are you?" I didn't know the answer to that question, and after school when I got home, I asked Mum, "What are we?" This was my first realisation that I wasn't like everyone else. I didn't see myself as different, but from then on I felt different. This experience made me look closely and examine everyone around me in order to identify differences and similarities. By looking at skin colour, clothes, shoes, the way they treated other people, I was able to form judgements and categorise them, in a way that made sense to my six-year-old brain. This started my fascination with clothing.

My father, who is Trinidadian immigrated to London, England when he was eleven years old, and then to New Zealand in the mid 1970's. My siblings and I were raised in Dunedin, close to my mother's family, whose grandparents immigrated from Northern England. We grew up surrounded by white family members. It wasn't until I was in my late teens, that I started to explore the Trinidadian culture and I visited in my mid 30's in order to immerse myself in the culture and to meet with relatives.

During my early schooling in Dunedin in the 1980's and 90's, I remember Māori culture was incorporated into the curriculum, especially waiata and the creation stories such as the adventures of Maui. Due to our physical proximity to Ōtākau, a Māori village of Ngāi Tahu or Kāi Tahu (an important landmark and within the history of the Te Wāi Pounamu, the South Island), there were marae overnight visits and general awareness of Māori culture. The tikanga, the behavioural guidelines and protocols that were shown to us during these visits, alongside the whakapapa structure and networks and manaakitanga, hospitality that was shown to each individual, and to the individuals as a community, showed inclusion and acceptance. As a young child, I remember feeling the connection, but also a feeling of disconnect because I knew this was not my culture. These visits started the process of whakawhanaungatanga, to establish links and connections between the iwi and the school. This initiated my curiosity with my Self and my culture. It is because of this knowing, early in my education, that I knew it was not appropriate for me to use Māori motifs or design elements in any of my work.

The location I grew up within New Zealand, didn't allow me to see others that looked like me. This has a profound impact on how I view, behave, and move through the world. At a young age I became very observant to those around me, as I felt as though no one could 'see' me because no one mentioned that I was Black. When people say that they don't see colour, there is a huge disservice done, because it is interpreted to mean "I don't see a crucial aspect of your identity."

Watching *Ready to Roll*, a television music show that played music videos from America, and seeing Run DMC, who were wearing Adidas three-stripe black tracksuits gave a sense of belonging to my eight-year-old self as I had a pair of burgundy Adidas three-stripe trackpants too.

In 2013 I visited Trinidad and Tobago for the first time as an adult, as a way to create connection and to explore my identity. I arrived during Carnival and played 'Pretty Mas' as a way to experience a part of my culture

that includes history, food, music, and celebrates all that is Trini. Alongside 'Pretty Mas', there is 'Old Mas' or 'Traditional Mas'. During slavery Carnival was celebrated by the plantation owners (French and English) by way of masquerade balls, outdoor parties, and street festivities. Slaves and mixed-race individuals were not permitted to participate in these celebrations and created their own celebrations where they dressed to mock the upper class through exaggerated imitation (Cometotheislands.com n.d.). Characters such as Moko Jumbies, the Baby Doll, Jab Jabs and the Midnight Robber were created from West African traditions. Disapproval and criticism from the ruling class led to legislation banning many practices associated with Carnival and met with violent resistance. Carnival morphed into 'Pretty Mas.'

The Indigenous People of Trinidad and Tobago include the Arawak (Taino), and Carib (Kalinago), originally from South America, settled there approximately 7,000 years ago. (Minority Rights Group, 2023). Both Indigenous peoples have creation stories, and there is also the folklore from the West African slaves, and the French-speaking planters mixed race peoples from Grenada, St Lucia, Dominica, Martinique, and Guadeloupe. (Besson, 2011). Based on this knowledge, and my limited knowledge of both the folklore and the creation stories, I know I don't have adequate knowledge to be able to incorporate this cultural design and thinking into my design. This does play a part in my practice because I am aware of my lack of knowledge, and I am aware that this complex history has many perspectives and stories attached to it, and this deserves a separate study.

As mentioned earlier, when I wrote this, I was living on Turtle Island and used Canadian agencies for a lot of my research. The Canada Council for the Arts, (n.d.) considers that "cultural appropriation" applies when cultural borrowings or adaptations from a minoritised culture reflect, reinforce, or amplify inequalities, stereotypes and historically exploitative relationships that have direct negative consequences on equity-seeking communities in Canada.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, according to the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (2024), is a "…human rights instrument that sets out the rights of Indigenous peoples around the world. They are intended to define and uphold human rights in international law…they are not legally binding but provide authoritative ideas and approaches that can influence state laws and practises."

The Declaration serves as a reminder that as artists, who find creative influences everywhere we look, and hear, touch, smell and feel, we also need to generate an awareness of appropriation of the influence, and of our own understanding. Respect for other cultures comes into play as, like a lot of creatives, I am curious about other cultures and art forms, and when studying and learning about the Indigenous People of Turtle Island, I search for the truth from the root source instead of relying on government information, which is often written from colonial settlers' viewpoints.

Living on Turtle Island was an opportunity for me to learn about Indigenous ways in the area in which I live, work and play. Nearby at the University of British Columbia (UBC), is the Museum of Anthropology (MOA), where I was a volunteer. This is one way in which I continued to explore and learn about the land and the people. This feeds the curiosity within my practice to know more about others, to understand other cultures, to create connection and deepen my respect. It also piques my curiosity to continue to learn more about my own culture.

Context is important. The look into my past guides me on how I can move into my future, ensuring my perspective and knowledge on my personal and professional cultural design is cared for, nourished, and how it can be of service, in terms whakawhanaungatanga: of establishing relationships and relating to others. By first looking into our own histories, journeys, and relationships, we explore what is important to us as individuals, in an intrapersonal relationship, as small communities, within interpersonal relationships, and then we can branch out and connect with others in global communities, to find mutual commonalities, and to celebrate our differences. This is an opportunity to support others, to learn compassion, atawhaitanga, to encourage those to have maia, courage to move through the world with an open heart, an open mind, and respect for the biculturalism of Aotearoa, the multiculturalism of Aotearoa, and the global community in which we are all a part of. Within this concept, also involves the principle of active protection, where we as creatives have the responsibility to be aware

of the use of cultural icons, motifs, inspiration. To seek collaboration, to gather feedback, to ask ourselves the question of, "Of what purpose does this serve (insert name of group) People if I use this within my work? Do I have the right or permission to use this?" To be able to create safe spaces to have these conversations; where we can expose gaps in our own knowledge, to be able to ask questions and to have honest, authentic conversations without judgement or repercussions, is pivotal for everyone in order to move forward collectively. My hope is that as I find or build these types of spaces that my practice, and that of others, can be inclusive, can speak to multiple communities of people, can open doors to opportunities that may have been blocked before, and can create connection in order to foster a feeling of belonging. When we have a sense of belonging within our Self, our identity can be explored, accepted, and acknowledged.

In 2017 I launched KATE&FRANCES DESIGN. Inspired by the streets of New York City and the functionality of sportswear. I design on my own terms and use Black and Brown models as a way to see myself reflected in the fashion industry. It is the representation I needed to see when I was growing up. You could say that I am my own influence now. This is my identity, and one way I encourage others to create their own identity. Alongside entrepreneurship, I have been teaching at post-secondary institutions which has shown me how influential my early learnings have been in my career, and I am astounded by the amount of learnings I have gained when sharing this knowledge. Students allow me to view concepts from other perspectives and to understand how to teach to multiple learning styles. Students inspire me. They show me that I have relevant information, not only on a professional level, but also as a human, that they can use in their career to move into a space that works for them, and they also show me that there is excitement, awe, and creativity for this industry. Being curious about my immediate surroundings creates a sense of belonging and if I can use this in my work to create more inclusive collections, in a more philosophical manner. It is how I can feel appropriate whilst still acknowledging the diverse cultures around me. I feel it is not appropriate for me to take physical aspects of these cultures and interweave them into the garments that I create, either for my own brand or for clients. However, by acknowledging and recognising the tikanga and whakapapa; the holistic way of life, of being on this planet, the environment, of taking care of others, by respecting the natural forces and traditions of Indigenous cultures, is how I can be culturally aware and embed this cultural aspect of my home into my work.

SUSTAINABLE FASHION

According to Eco.com (2021) "Sustainable fashion is fashion that's mindful of its social, environmental, and economic factors. Its fashion developed by companies that pay their workers a living wage, give them safe, healthy working conditions and monitors its environmental impact, taking care to use more sustainable materials and reduce resource use throughout their products' life cycle."

Brands that do not state their sustainability values and processes, in my experience, don't have them and it is not a priority for them, which translates into the customer who also doesn't prioritise sustainability efforts. My personal beliefs and ideals surrounding sustainability for brands has changed as I have gathered more information as a natural part of being within this industry, working with multiple manufacturers and across many product categories that require careful consideration when selecting fabrics (natural vs synthetic), manufacturers and building processes. Reading brands sustainability statements and realising that they are not actually providing transparency to their processes or manufacturers, has caused me to question and distrust their words, and to deep dive into their practices myself. If information is not easily accessible, this signals that they have not yet done the work or have the understanding of what it means to create a sustainable product. I have also come to the realisation that it is not possible to be a 100% sustainable brand and to not leave an environmental footprint, due to the current processes within the industry. This may change in the future, however there is education to be had, new ways of doing to be explored, and the environment and the workers welfare to be top priority instead of only financial rewards. Within my current brand KATE&FRANCES DESIGN, I have incorporated multiple sustainable processes because they align with my personal values and the values of my customers. These include using zero-waste

pattern techniques to reduce the amount of waste, or to create waste that can be used in other styles; reducing the colour range each season by having core colours and seasonal colours; by designing styles that do not follow trends, but flatter different body shapes and sizes, and by offering a small selection of sizes as well as customised sizing based on customers individual body measurements. Elastic and labels are the only trims used, and the fabric quality is 95% organic cotton and 5% elastane which are sourced from two Canadian suppliers who buy fabric from mills in China and Turkey. The fabric mills are the only part of the process where I don't have full visibility, however both factories are Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) certified, and manufacturing happens locally in Vancouver. With all of these processes and systems combined, I feel confident in calling this a sustainable brand. When talking to customers, honest conversations are had, although I find that not everyone is aware of the ways in which brands can bring sustainability to the forefront, so there is the education side of the conversation as well. My hope is that customers will then go and talk to their friends and family about sustainability, not just regarding apparel, but within their lifestyle.

Now that I am based in Dunedin, Aotearoa, I am sourcing organic fabrics that are GOTS certified and will manufacture in small batches, using minimal trims. After packing up all of my business tools and components, this process made me look again and evaluate just how many components are needed in order to create one garment. This time around, I want to be able to reduce even further the impact I have on this planet.

I often use and hear the phrase, "use what you have," as the best way to reduce the amount of waste that is created, whether that be in the apparel, food, or technology industries. I am a firm believer that you can use what you have on hand to solve a problem with a little creative thinking, and if you have to buy, buy second hand. If you need the item for a one-time situation, then renting or borrowing is an option. Designing with an end-use and purpose in mind that solves a problem for the consumer and is crucial in order to sell product, and to do so in a sustainable way. Taking a user-centric approach, and incorporating feedback gathered throughout the development process in the form of wear/product testing, consumer reviews and competitor research, are ways in which I have created products for large and small organisations, both as an employee and as a consultant. This can look very different between companies, however gathering data from a variety of sources ensures that the product meets the needs, provides the functionality that the consumer requires and contributes to the longevity of the product lifecycle.

THE PROCESS

As individuals, our identity is made up of layers; the experiences that build who we are, our history, our ethnicity, our nationality. For me this includes knowing my own cultural identity of being Trinidadian, being born and educated in Aotearoa New Zealand, and living in the different countries of England and Turtle Island. We have the ability to continue to build on these layers with what we choose to do with our experiences, our history, our ethnicity. This includes my careers, my hobbies, and my travels. Combined, these guide how I show up in the world, and how I show up in my life and in the lives of those around me. Gaining a solid foundation of who I am; what my values, morals, ethics, and passions are, I then have the ability to do anything that I choose. This is what fashion means to me. This is what design means for me. It's an expression of my perspective based on all that I have experienced, and I have a responsibility to be able to share what I have learned with those around me, whether that be in an informal or formal setting. This has become my identity along with the knowledge that I can change or pivot when I want to.

For me there is a lot more to fashion than just a garment. There is thought and meaning and an interconnectedness that not everyone needs to understand, to see, or to experience. Fashion is an art form and one in which the viewer will always create their own opinion, based on their personal experiences. Where form meets fit and functionality, where experience and personal aesthetic intersect, is where you will find me. The stitches and the patterns of the quilting I incorporate into my work form intersections, multiple intersections, this is where you find me. Literally.

As a designer, an educator and a life-long learner, **Kate Pierre** has travelled extensively around the globe working within the apparel industry and exploring many cultures and countries and has now landed back in Dunedin, Aotearoa, to continue her studies and launch her brand KATE&FRANCES DESIGN to the New Zealand market.

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https://doi.org/10.34074/scop.1030007

FASHION REIMAGINED 2025

Simon Swale

From 9-13 February 2025, 15 participants undertook the inaugural 'Fashion Reimagined' programme on Kamau Taurua / Quarantine Island in the Otago Harbour. Fashion Reimagined was developed as a collaboration between the Fashion staff at the School of Design, Otago Polytechnic and the Untouched World Foundation (UTWF), with additional input and support from Ross McDonald, Director of Sustainability at Otago Polytechnic. Fashion Reimagined was created as a programme to foster leadership and empowerment in rangatahi (young people) towards more sustainable fashion futures, with a specific focus on urgency, agency and action. Across five days participants enjoyed the sharing of knowledge from a range of industry experts, and engaged in workshops to develop leadership skills, and critical thinking related to the fashion industry and issues of sustainability, as well as spending time working to regenerate the natural environment of the island.

Many sincere thanks to Jon Clark, Island Manager, Kamau Taurua / Quarantine Island.

The 2025 Participants were:

Daniel Bradley, Polly Figgins, India Woodward-Leth, Oliver Murphy, Catalina Mendoza Gonzalez, Justina King, Dhiya Guler, Hope Duncan, Emma Rowley, Michael Atherton, Oisin Benn, Mikayla Cannan, Ciaran Naylor, and Karlie Morrow.

Facilitators, workshop leaders and guest speakers were:

Claudia Hillyer, Untouched World Foundation

Peri Drysdale, Untouched World and Untouched World Foundation founder

Fiona Bretherton, Untouched World

Bobby Luke, Auckland University of Technology

Natasha Zimmerman, Leadership Consultant

Simon Swale, Otago Polytechnic

Ross McDonald, Otago Polytechnic

Claire Booker, Silverfern Farms

Fiona Jenkin, Stitch Kitchen

All photographs supplied by Simon Swale.

Simon Marcus Swale (ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5830-3034) is an artist, designer and educator based in Ōtepoti Dunedin, Aotearoa New Zealand, whose explorations in body adornment extend across fashion, jewellery and the wider fields of art practice. Simon completed an MFA in contemporary jewellery at the Dunedin School of Art in 2020 and was a participant in the Handshake mentorship programme from 2020 to 2022. Simon is currently senior lecturer in the School of Design, Otago Polytechnic.

Article https://doi.org/10.34074/scop.1030003

GATHERING USER STORIES FOR CLOTHING LONGEVITY IN THE WAIKATO: INITIAL ANALYSIS

Rebekah Harman and Emily Russell

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary fashion is informed by past, current and future contexts. Sustainability is the biggest challenge in the fashion industry currently (Amed et al., 2020, 2024). As a result, there is a global drive towards strategies to create a more sustainable fashion industry. Amongst a range of sustainability issues, a critical one is the high production and consumption of fashion garments per year. Alarmingly clothing items are estimated to be used just seven times before discarding (Thomas, 2019). A recent report found that the average Australian purchases 56 items of new clothing every year, this surpasses data from the USA (53 new items per year) and the UK (33 new items per year) (Gbor & Chollet, 2024). In Aotearoa New Zealand 220,000 tonnes of textile waste is sent to landfill per annum (Casey et al., 2023). Based on raw data collected from Statistics New Zealand, in 2018 New Zealanders imported the equivalent of seven new t-shirt type garments per person. With consumption on the rise, what users do with garments once they own them is critical. The use phase of clothing is known to account for a significant portion of the environmental footprint of a garment (Langley et al., 2013; Muthu, 2015), however tracking what people choose to use is not yet well documented. One aspect of usage is holding onto clothes for a long time and wearing them frequently. Therefore, this research sought to find out more about clothing items that were kept, loved and worn, as opposed to why people choose to discard them. Knowing this information might give further insights about more sustainable modes of consumption and strategies for designing clothing that will be held onto for a long time.

This article reports on a collaborative research project situated in the Waikato, Aotearoa New Zealand, examining the lived history of garments via an online-survey and one-to-one interviews with garment wearers. The aim for the research was to gain insights into the characteristics of garments that people were holding onto and wearing for a long time and then identify pathways the information could hold for the future. The two research questions were:

> What are the characteristics of garments that users are holding onto, loving and wearing in the Waikato, Aotearoa New Zealand?
>
> What pathways might this information hold for further exploration in the future?

Together, a small team of creatives (see Figure 1), have surveyed, documented and interviewed local Waikato residents to find out what garments people have kept, worn and loved the most. Having established a creative team, we allocated roles: graphic and brand design (Emily Russell), sustainable fashion researcher, survey designer and interviewer (Rebekah Harman), and photographer/videographer (Holly Russell and One Man Crew). Together we were collectively motivated by a shared interest to better understanding characteristics of loved and worn garments as a strategy to potentially discover information about clothing longevity.

The study builds on previous research published in 2021, however that was on a small scale, interviewing five people (Harman, 2021). The previous research indicated that there might be a difference between what clothing people loved the most, and what they wore the most, therefore this research was structured to separate out most loved and most worn garments to further identify any difference.

This article gives an overview of our project to date, including the background to the project, explaining how we have used creative media to drive understanding along with initial insights.

BACKGROUND

Over 150 billion garments are produced every year (Koperniak, 2015), and less than 1% of fashion textiles are recycled (The Waste Resources Action Programme, n.d.). Global consumption of clothing increased by 60% between 2000 and 2014 (Vasquez Jr, 2023), leading to the term fast fashion. Fast fashion relies on quickly changing fashion trends to drive further production of garments, including companies such as Pantone (with their colour of the year) driving fast changing colour trends (Segran, 2020). What is additionally concerning is that globally, as consumption increases, the period of time people hold onto garments has halved, which is a dramatic decrease (McKinsey & Company, 2016). Fashion executives are continuing to seek ways to grow the fashion market speeding up trend cycles and using strategies such as nearshoring, a concept that keeps production in nearby countries rather than distant countries, "leading to 3-5x faster lead times" on manufacturing (Amed et al., 2025, p. 22).

Longevity in the use phase of clothing is a goal for sustainable fashion advocates globally, as it is estimated that doubling the lifetime of one garment, could nearly half its environmental impact (Fashion for Good & Intellecap, 2020; Redress Limited, 2022; Sandin et al., 2019). Additionally, slowing down the use phase of garments is the premise of slow fashion. Slow fashion is a term initially introduced by Kate Fletcher (Fletcher, 2007) with the aim of increasing a garments 'life' by a user choosing to hang onto a garment, wearing it for longer and therefore lessening the speed at which a garment goes to landfill. Here the consumer or user selects purchases carefully and thoughtfully and then wears each item for a long time (ten to twenty-five years). Colour palettes for slow fashion garments typically draw on neutral colours. Slow fashion additionally notes that to design what is used, garment design must respond to users in their specific context (Gill, 2012). Understanding people's local clothing practices is therefore necessary. Much has been written about the increasingly fast pace of production in the fashion industry, however there is still much work to be done to better understand what garments endure for users.

Longevity in clothing relies on physical longevity and psychological longevity of the garment (Redress Limited, 2022). Physical longevity requires garments to be made robustly. Psychological longevity requires an emotional connection between the wearer and the garment. Product attachment theories suggest that there are seven key factors that encourage people to increase their attachment to an item of clothing. These are; memories, events and places, identity, utility, life vision, enjoyment, market value and reliability (Humphries-Smith, 2008).

To better understand longevity, we look at what consumers consider to be their most loved clothing items, and most worn clothing items. Ethnographic methods, studying people in their own environments to gain understanding, are increasingly used by social researchers in the field of design to better understand the "users". Fashion has typically taken a top-down approach, whereby the designers typically design for a target market, but are disconnected from the use stage (Gill, 2012). With user centred and human centred design processes in the fashion industry often being limited to a few designers worldwide, such as Lucy Jones, designing garments for those seated, rather than standing, such as wheelchair users (Jones, 2015) or Burberry designing custom-made apparel for activist Sinead Burke, who has achondroplasia (resulting in a short stature). It is valuable to gather information on the 'use' stage to better understand characteristics of what is being used, loved and worn as this information can then inform future exploration.

There are three lenses through which consumer behaviour is commonly explained – economic, psychological, and anthropological. Kate Fletcher, a leading academic in the field of sustainable fashion and textiles, notes that understanding consumer behaviour needs to consider real experiences and the way people use clothing (Fletcher, 2011). As previously mentioned, the use phase is known as a hotspot to further examine, due to clothing being expected to have a longer life after purchasing (Muthu, 2015). Within Aotearoa New Zealand there is limited information on what the use phase looks like for users (Nautiyal et al., 2023). Using methods such as life cycle analysis, tracking of the environmental footprint of clothing production is gaining momentum, although data sets are still uncertain. Whereas the environmental footprint of the use stage of garments remains mostly unknown (Sohn et al., 2021). Initial findings from one user study in Aotearoa New Zealand indicate that different countries have different behaviours around using and caring for clothing. For instance, a study of the use phase of woollen and synthetic jumpers (Nautiyal et al., 2023) uncovered that New Zealanders appear to be wearing woollen jumpers nearly double the number of wear events to similar studies in Germany and the United Kingdom (Nautiyal et al., 2023; Wiedemann et al., 2020). This may indicate that regions or nations have differing behaviours regarding holding onto and wearing clothing, therefore it is critical that data is gathered nationally and not generalised globally.

WHAT WE DID:

We conducted an online survey, followed by in-person one-to-one interviews. There were two main survey questions: what is your most loved clothing item? And what is your most worn clothing item? (See Figure 2 and 3). We had 103 respondents to our online survey. Respondents had to meet the criteria of being located within the Waikato, as well as be 18 years or older. The criteria were put in place for logistical reasons, with the idea that other regions could be surveyed in the future, creating a national 'picture'. Respondents were encouraged to tell us as many details as they would like about the garments. In the survey people could choose to have a face-to-face interview, where we sought to better understand the characteristics of the clothing items and reasons for wearing and loving them.

We documented the most loved clothing items and most worn clothing items, using photography and videography. Where possible creative media was used to drive understanding and engagement with the survey. Additionally, an Instagram account, sustainable_clothing_research, was created to highlight the project. Therefore, in addition to creating a survey, a brand was developed for the research, to communicate the survey and its findings.

As a team we developed a brand alongside the early research. The name given to the project was Worn Well, to describe the idea of much used garments. Emily Russell, designer for the project brand, created a list of key words that were fundamental to the brand identity of the project. These were sentimental, identity, reliable, nostalgic, textile, pattern, construction, handmade and intertwined. The key words, along with the concept of craftsmanship resulted in Russell deciding to create hand drawn type as part of the brand for the project. In crafting the "worn well" wordmark, the aim was to emulate the feel of the cotton thread within the letterforms. Experiments were conducted laying down cotton thread to form the words, to capture the sense of flow and organic essence of the thread. The intention was, for the logo creation process to mirror the act of making and sewing, paying homage to the intricate craftsmanship involved in crafting long-lasting clothing. For Russell, it was critical to include a human aspect (herself) in the process to have a real-life experience. Hand-lettering requires focus and patience, a process that is slow but forces the designer to fully immerse themselves in the moment.

Russell generated concepts (see Figure 4), then scanned the type into the computer, recreating them while keeping imperfections to preserve the essence of being made by hand (see Figure 5). Symbol inspiration for the brand came from two sources, the blocks that patterns for garments are created from, and the cut-out shapes used by Henri Matisse. Russell was inspired by how Matisse emphasises the interplay between form and colour. He experimented with various shapes and colours, arranging them in compositions that exude rhythm and energy. There is something very individual about those shapes he created, reminding her of individuality and expression of identity when wearing clothing.

Colours used in the branding were inspired by the colour of paper domestic clothing patterns and landscape. Russell had memories of her mum making kid's clothes when she was young, and recalled those bits of brown tissue that would flutter around. Brown hues are often perceived of as being a more eco-conscious choice, because bleach is avoided during the paper processing, thereby reducing amount of chemical processing (Grascogne Group, n.d.). Consumers have typically associated brown paper with ideas of environmentally friendly (Van Schoubroeck et al., 2023). Russell sought to find imagery of beaches around Wellington's coastline, where Harman studied, to pull further colours from. Russell wanted to draw inspiration from a raw beach setting, because she felt that would signify a flourishing ecosystem.

The typeface crafted by Russell was used to create a logo, and then paired with a purchased typeface called Pluto, designed by Hitesh Malaviya. Pluto was selected as it is renowned for its modern sans-serif style characterised by clean lines and geometric forms. This related well to the garment block shapes and critically was easy to read. A key consideration throughout the project has been on clarity of visual communication to a public audience.

As previously noted, participants for the in-person interviews were self-selected as part of the online survey. Methodologies for qualitative research were used, following Kvale's seven stages for conducting in-depth interviews (Kvale, 1996). Qualtrics was used to gather the online survey information, with a communication plan created for recruitment. Following ethics approval, both active and passive methods of recruitment were used (Negrin et al., 2022). Passive recruitment methods used were a press release, resulting a newspaper article in the *New Zealand Herald* (see Figure 6), an appearance on a local radio show, and social media posts into community pages. Active strategies involved creating sharable posts on social media, which encouraged person-to-person involvement. The inclusion criteria required participants to be 18 years or older, and to be currently living in the Waikato. In person one-to-one interviews were documented using video and photography so people's stories could be used in the future to inspire others to hang onto clothing.

Of the 103 Waikato based people who responded to our online survey, these accounted for 25 different ethnicities and 9 genders. Eleven of those surveyed had an in-person interview, which was videoed, and the garments were photographed.

INITIAL INSIGHTS FROM OUR SURVEY

While we had primarily sought to document garment characteristics in the online survey, many participants were very descriptive in their responses. Examples of responses were, "fabric is silky to touch, feels luxurious, jacket is comfy and roomy" about a most loved reversible bomber jacket (see Figure 7), and "t-shirt that says Polaroid and has these gorgeous colours…it reminds me of all the trips that I've worn it on" about a most worn garment (see Figure 8). Other examples were very specific about how they obtained the garment, and where they were. For example, "I found it while on a gap year course in Havelock North, 8 years ago" about a most loved navy-blue cardigan. Another descriptive example, "A bright blue fleece. It has a pocket in the front for you to put your hands in to keep warm, and a zip from halfway. It was originally for hiking, and I got it in an outdoors store in Oxford, UK. I now use it for gardening but would drag it out for hiking too (we don't do as much anymore)" about a most worn item.

Garment types were described by all participants in the survey. Colour was described by a high proportion of participants, but not all. Sixty-eight participants mentioned colour for their most loved garment, while forty-seven mentioned colours for their most worn garment. While colour is an incomplete data set, there is still enough data to draw broad conclusions.

Emotions and feelings came across strongly when people wrote about their most loved clothing items. Examples of the type of language used were: "fits perfectly", "beautiful", "unique", "comfortable", "perfect", "cute", "makes me feel professional, after parental leave", "it's a beautiful, feminine, joyous thing". When writing or speaking about most worn clothing items utilitarian reasons came across strongly, with people commenting aspects such as the

pocket placement. Comfort was also important with language used being "soft", "comfy", "roomy", "stretchy", "fluffy" or something that they could "slip into".

Forty participants made a point of explaining how they obtained ownership of the garment, even though this was not a question we asked. While 16 bought the garment new, 10 bought the garment second hand. Five people obtained the garment via another family member, five people mentioned specifically being overseas when they got the garment, while the others in this grouping either hand-made the garment or had it custom-made. Additionally, a few participants mentioned items that lived between households, swapping and sharing clothing.

Some survey participants found it difficult to decide whether a garment was most loved or most worn and this theme remained true for our interviewees, who all asked specifically to be reminded which garments they had selected as most loved or most worn. The interviewees recalled the garments, but not whether they had named it as most loved or most worn.

When considering the genders identified in the survey (this section was not compulsory but was completed by all but three of the participants), 75% identified as female. With other genders identified as follows; male, non-binary, cis-gender female, nonbinary takatāpui, fluid, they/them, hetro and I just am.

DISCUSSION

Dresses were the most described item for most loved clothing (see Figure 9), with some participants mentioning key memories, such as it being a wedding dress, or a dress they had worn to an occasion that made up a key part of their identity (such as a first date with their now husband). Places were often mentioned as part of the memory. Enjoyment and expressions of emotion were also associated with dresses discussed. These are all psychological reasons for loving a garment. Memory, events and places are known factors identified earlier as being required for people to attach to a product (Humphries-Smith, 2008).

Colour appeared to be an important characteristic, with black, green and blue accounting for a significant portion of the garments described. Black was the most mentioned colour overall. Much has been written about New Zealanders love for wearing the colour black, with the exhibition and book, *Black in Fashion: Wearing the Colour Black in New Zealand*, outlining a chronology for a country that seems obsessed with the colour. For most loved clothing black and shades of green were mentioned an equal number of times. For most worn, black was the standout winner, with blue identified as second most popular (Figure 10). Colour appeared to be a principle of aesthetics' that was important for people to describe. The high proportion of the colour black aligns with an already known colour trend in clothing for New Zealanders.

The use of language differed between garments identified as most loved and those identified as most worn, even though people mentioned struggling to decide if it was most loved or most worn. The use of emotive language and feelings was primarily used for garments identified as most loved, while utilitarian language was predominately used for garments identified as most worn (see Figure 11). Attachment theory suggests that product attachment occurs when the user or consumer feels a sense of commitment and emotion towards a product. The use of emotive language may link to feelings of commitment or attachment. Attachment can also be for utilitarian reasons (Humphries-Smith, 2008), and this is shown in the most worn garments.

Garments were obtained via a variety of sources. While much data can be found about consumption rates, these only track items that are purchased new. Many mentions were made of obtaining items second hand. Additionally, of significance seemed to be garments passed down amongst whanau or family (see Figure 12), or keeping items between friends or family members, a type of fluid ownership between multiple people. This is an area which seems to be under researched and as such, not well understood. However, hanging onto garments and passing them, or sharing them would suggest there is the potential for a strong emotional bond between the garment

and more than one person and the added potential for longevity. In the Australian study, where it was found the average Australian purchases 56 garments per year, it was noted that some of those surveyed purchased high quantities of second-hand, compared with data from other countries (Gbor & Chollet, 2024). This is a pathway for future exploration.

Females were over-represented in this study, at 75%, and not representative of the region's population, where 50.4% identified as male, and 49.4% as female in the 2023 census (Infometrics, 2023). Another study based in New Zealand on sustainability in fashion had an even higher representation of females participating and considered that this might play into societal ideas of gender norms (Wiedemann et al., 2020). Various studies show that women consume more clothing than men (Vino Supraja, 2023), therefore better understanding solely female demographics could be useful.

We are aware that the nature of the survey meant that people were self-selecting for the survey. This means that the interpretation of data is less accurate when applied across a population. However, it is standard practice to use these types of methodologies as described earlier. The final sample size compares well with a UK sustainable fashion study involving 128 participants (Zhang et al., 2021). We are aware that we have described part of a big picture, rather than information that is a universal truth.

CONCLUSION

Creative media, photography, videography and branding, was used to drive awareness and give us an avenue to begin publicly sharing survey responses via an Instagram account. A brand was created, along with a word mark. The process included researching sustainable design practices, as well as using key words, and art and design references as inspiration. This has given us a cohesive and clear way to visually communicate messaging and survey findings.

In summary, most loved clothing was described by participants using emotions and feelings, and colour was often described. Most worn clothing was described in much more utilitarian terms, with comfort being important, and colour described but less so than for most loved clothing. What we discovered through our survey was that characteristics of loved and worn clothing that was being held onto in the Waikato aligned to many of the typical ways that people attach to products, including memories, places, events, identity, utility, life vision, enjoyment and reliability.

Additionally, we discovered that users attach to garments via multiple ownership avenues. Items that were gifted or shared were of equal value to the current user compared to items purchased new. One pathway for future exploration would be to survey users specifically regarding ownership, to explore longevity that may happen through gifting garments or sharing garments. Studies are already emerging on second-hand garment acquisition.

Future exploration into ways to encourage product attachment within fashion design is critical, because studies show that over time the relationship with the product can increase resulting in users taking better care of an item, addressing wear issues (resulting in mending) and treasuring these items resulting in product longevity (Ball & Tasaki, 1992).

While the study focused on a region for logistical reasons, further work could be done to survey other regions around Aotearoa New Zealand, resulting in national level information. This type of information would lead to better understanding user preferences, including colour and style preferences and could be incorporated into the fashion design process.

While we are still part-way through unpacking all the data we received, we believe this type of research is important. Past methods of designing and making need to be challenged because of the high levels of waste and overconsumption within contemporary fashion. Our future lies in better understanding what people are holding on, loving and wearing, and creating for that, rather than taking a top-down approach that seems to most common in the fashion industry. Fashion design needs to centre around a user-centred and human-centred design approach, designing items based on what users love, hold onto and wear if we are to seriously tackle the issue of waste.

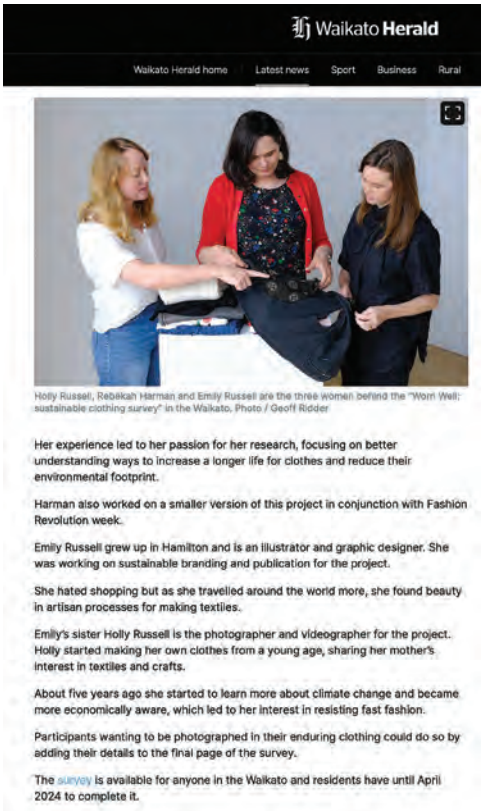
Figure 1. Left to Right, Holly Russell, Rebekah Harman, Emily Russell.
Photograph: Geoff Ridder, 2024.

Figure 2. Instagram story post for survey, designer.
Photograph: Emily Russell.

Figure 3. Instagram story post for survey, designer.
Photograph: Emily Russell.

Figure 4. Emily Russell's design process for creating the wordmark.

Figure 5. The final wordmark for the project.



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Holly Russell, Rebekah Harman and Emily Russell are the three women behind the "Worn Well: sustainable clothing survey" in the Waikato. Photo / Geoff Ridder

Her experience led to her passion for her research, focusing on better understanding ways to increase a longer life for clothes and reduce their environmental footprint.

Harman also worked on a smaller version of this project in conjunction with Fashion Revolution week.

Emily Russell grew up in Hamilton and is an illustrator and graphic designer. She was working on sustainable branding and publication for the project.

She hated shopping but as she travelled around the world more, she found beauty in artisan processes for making textiles.

Emily's sister Holly Russell is the photographer and videographer for the project. Holly started making her own clothes from a young age, sharing her mother's interest in textiles and crafts.

About five years ago she started to learn more about climate change and became more economically aware, which led to her interest in resisting fast fashion.

Participants wanting to be photographed in their enduring clothing could do so by adding their details to the final page of the survey.

The survey is available for anyone in the Waikato and residents have until April 2024 to complete it.

Figure 6. New Zealand Hearld article about the project.

Figure 7. Quote from the survey about a most loved item, this was shared to Instagram to increase engagement with stories as they were told.

Figure 8. Quote from the survey about a most worn item, this was shared to Instagram to increase engagement with stories as they were told.

Figure 9. Charlee Albany-Pearson wearing her most loved black maxi dress, which she wore on her first date with her now husband. Photograph: Holly Russell, 2024.

Figure 10. Brandon De La Cruz wearing his most loved hooded sweatshirt, which was his father's, and he wears to feel close to him. Photograph: Holly Russell, 2024.

Figure 11. Chris Stewart wearing a most worn bush shirt, that she finds soft and easy to wear for painting and other art activities. Photograph: Holly Russell, 2024.

Figure 12. Megan Lyon wearing a shared family jumper, originally knitted by her mother, for her father to wear. Photograph: Holly Russell, 2024.

Rebekah Harman (ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3938-4625) is a Principal Academic Staff Member in the School of Media Arts Te Kura Pāpāho, Wintec Te Pūkenga, Hamilton, New Zealand. Her background is in fashion and textile design, working on research and development projects within the wool industry before working full-time as an academic. Her continued passion is examining ways to reduce the environmental footprint of the fashion industry. Social media: @sustainable_clothing_research

Emily Russell is an Academic Staff Member in the School of Media Arts Te Kura Pāpāho, Wintec Te Pūkenga, Hamilton, New Zealand. Her background is in graphic design and illustration. She is passionate about sustainable consumption. Social media: @sustainable_clothing_research

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https://doi.org/10.34074/scop.1030009

CREATING FAUX FUR FROM WASTE TEXTILE

Karlie Morrow

In 2023 Mindful Fashion NZ put out a competition call (Mindful Fashion Circular Design Award) to New Zealand designers and creators to re-think textile waste by searching for and creating a new and innovative approach to dealing with textile waste streams. Mindful Fashion New Zealand (MFNZ) is a not-for-profit organisation established in 2019 to strengthen the NZ fashion and textile industry.

Whilst traditional design process is linear i.e. brief, design, revise, produce; and then the product is no longer in the designer purview, many in the design and sustainability realm agree we now need to think of design as circular; in that from concept to final product and beyond, the designer needs to think of every aspect of their product's lifespan, and where it goes when it is no-longer of its original intended use. (Battesini Teixeira et al, 2023, Cleveland, 2019).

Defining circular design isn't succinct; The Sustainable Fashion Forum definition states "A Circular Economy (CE) is an economic model, rooted in Indigenous principles, designed to minimize waste and make the most of resources." (Sustainable Fashion Forum, nd). However, when expounding upon this phrase and applying it to the fashion system you can be left confounded by possibilities and pathways, 'the fashion system lacks a holistic vision that can support and guide this sustainable transformation toward CE.' (D'Itria, Aus, 2023). For the purposes of this article as it relates to the Mindful Fashion NZ competition I shall define it as "creating a garment(s) using waste textiles in an innovative manner, with a pathway to either continued re-use via reselling, sharing or upcycling, and including the possibility of returning to the earth once it is no-longer fit for its original purpose, or able to be cycled back into the fashion system."

The competition was searching for circular solutions that were fully resolved (as much as possible in terms of a one-off garment/ensemble) and these garments were to be showcased in the inaugural Mindful Fashion Circular Design Awards.

Figures 1 and 2. The source fabrics were jeans destined for landfill.

Jacinta Fitzgerald CE of Mindful Fashion NZ approached me and suggested I enter as she knew I had been doing work in this space in the form of my children's wear label Cirkel Life; creating garments entirely from textile waste streams, op-shop cast-offs, sampling fabrics from local fashion companies, and off-cuts from the manufacturing processes. This was timely as I was sitting in a headspace where I was not sure of my direction; whilst I was creating from waste and had considered my full circular business model, I was still struggling with the issue of left over scraps, particularly denim. I had been part of working groups looking into textile waste streams and was aware we had no ability to recirculate fashion textile waste back into the fashion system in New Zealand. As my main source of textile were denim jeans the op-shop didn't deem saleable and therefore were headed for landfill; many of the jeans I had been given did not have a lot of usable fabric left to them, the denim had become threadbare or was already full of 'designer' holes. However, in my mind this brought value to the denim as I loved it for my children's wear due to its softness from many washes and wears and as anyone can contest old jeans are the comfiest!

From my research into post-consumer waste textile streams I knew existing processes in New Zealand created either an inferior product, one of a similar value but not within the Fashion Textile framework, or were still within a pilot or trial phase (See Usedfully and Scions collab on roading made from recycled textiles, cotton, polyester and a blend of the two). I wanted to introduce to the conversation the question of how can we create a new valued fabric from this 'waste'? Instead of 'downcycling,' whereby the value of the textile is degraded (i.e. rags) or 'cross cycling', in which there is value added but the resulting textile doesn't stay within its own industry (i.e. fluff for insulation or the pilot roading previously mentioned).

I was looking for the value in those 'designer' holey parts and realised, though the weft would often have given out, the warp still had potential as those fibres were intact. I had been considering felting after seeing a process Eileen Fisher (an American sustainably focused fashion designer) had done some years prior with her denim scraps and seconds (Velasquez, 2020). But it was while listening to a podcast episode of *The Wardrobe Crisis* by Clare Press in which she was discussing reinventing faux fur from a bio rather than oil source, that I started to consider the further potential in denim scraps. I had been fraying the denim on the bucket hats I was producing and noted the 'fluff' potential of frayed denim especially once re-washed and dried. From there I considered developing an entire jacket from the 'frayed fluff.' And so, I veered away from just cutting up old jeans and tried to look at what we could do with the worn-out knees and ripped/stained denim, de-constructing this to create a faux fur/feather with texture and warmth.

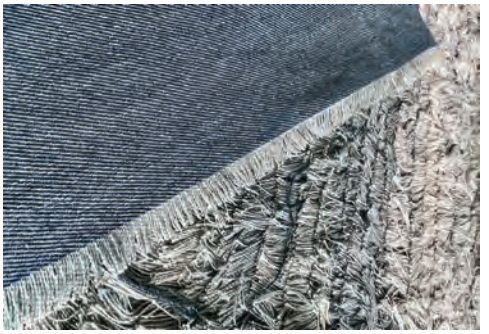

Figure 3 and 4. Stripped and frayed denim to create the Denifur and crochet fibre.

As part of my entry criteria, I also considered fashion's role in kaitiakitanga. The Te Ara online encyclopedia states 'Kaitiakitanga allows Māori today to feel they are meeting the responsibilities and hopes of their ancestors. It also allows non-Māori to reflect on the notion of kinship with nature, and how this idea might be useful in an environmentally threatened world.' (Te Ara).

As a non-Māori I reflected on how we as an industry could protect our whenua (land/environment) and prevent future pollution by utilising our existing resources and valuing what we already have in circulation. I had informal conversations with Māori environmentalists Tāme Malcom, (Ngāti Tarāwhai, Ngāti Pikiao, Ngāti Ngāraranui Tapuika, Ngāti Ruanui Iwi) and Riki Nelson. Tāme Malcom is Deputy Director-General Treaty Partnerships for the Department of Conservation and Riki Nelson is Director of Kaimai Kauri, kaitiaki of our local kauri; a Tangata Whenua led, kauri advocacy group, that is composed from hapu of Ngai Tamawhariua, Tauwhao ki Otawhiwhi and Te Whanau o Tuapiro. They both gave me gave me further insight and they each expanded on the traditional meaning of kaitiakitanga and how they believe it works in a modern framework. Malcom told tales of his kuia (grandmother) and whaea (mother) and how they would, with other wāhine (women) use their traditional waiata (songs/singing) to entice rats to traps by sounding like bird song. Malcom extended that into modern practise by using recordings of native birds particular to the areas where he was setting traps, to entice the rats and thereby protect our native manu (birds). Nelson discussed the common values between a sustainable, holistic world view in the Euro-centric sense and the te ao Māori world view.

Nelson says, "Everything is connected, affected/effected and impacted in the material world and must be afforded recognition which is why we mihi to everything…and when we do that, we consider the consequences of our actions in the world…using Mātauranga Māori practices and methodologies we can apply practical solutions to everyday issues; in relation to fashion/textiles, I suppose renewable textiles are important, making sure the Whakapapa of the plant is local…keeping within the principles (cradle to grave), local grown, local employed (all along the chain."

As stated above, current methods of up-cycling and recycling often end with waste product. Cotton that is recycled is mixed with virgin resources for strength and fibre durability, polyesters are recycled but at what cost, plastic on our skin or micro plastics in our food chain? I proposed we need to find a way forward without virgin fibres either natural or synthetic; considering also current recycling of polycottons restores the polyester to a re-spinnable form but leaves the cotton as a slush type waste product. As I learnt from the Blocktexx Australia website, Polyester stream, "The polyester is largely untouched by the process, but the sunlight and many machine washes do degrade the quality of the material, so this is enriched to bring the intrinsic viscosity back up and then pelletized. At this point it is effectively a fresh raw material source for RPET that can be spun into new garments. The Cellulose stream ends up as a viscous paste, a little like playdough. This is a rich source of organic material and used for land reclamation and soil enrichment processes. Unlike PET, the economics of spinning this material back into yarn are just not viable for the foreseeable future, so it can't be put back into the textile supply chain" (Sustainable Ecommerce).

My competition design was inspired by the upcoming Summer festival season and included a crochet top, breezy summer pants and hat for the heat of the day, whilst my hero 'fur' vest was included for the cooler evening and post-gig walk home; a bag for sunblock, a water bottle and snacks completed the look. Wanting to ensure as little wastage as possible, I saved all the intact weft fibres from the deconstruction process for future use in crocheting or knitting a garment to work together with my denim fur or Denifur/Indifur (TM pending), as I had taken to calling it. Those weft fibres were collected, sorted by colour and twisted together in varying plys for different weights within the crochet garment. I enlisted a local craftsperson to help me with the design and execution and together we created a 'festival top' that was sturdy and dense around the bust but became light and airy at the hem; we used the existing colour of the weft thread that had been sorted to create an ombre effect in the skirt of the top, effectively creating colour variation without the need for dyes. Without the weft the frayed denim was laid up and stitched to create the basis for the 'fur' which was then transformed into a vest fully lined with the same fabric scraps used to create the pants. The hat was made from the same linen off-cuts with a denim lining created from jeans that contained more usable denim. The final garments/accessories were made from approximately 98% waste product (I had to buy new thread), any trims were from recycled sources, the pants were created mindfully to incorporate the design brief point of longevity and were fully adjustable with a tie waist that fits sizes NZ Women 6-12. Fabric pieces of cotton or linen from discarded shirts and manufacturing offcuts were laid upon

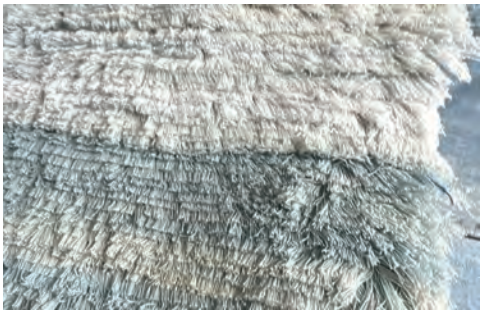


Figure 5 and 6. Close up Denifur before washing and crocheting into garment.

the pattern I created, then cut and sewn to make full pieces. Accessories were designed and made to use up waste from cutting – note the shape of the 'fur' on the bag is the same as the vest armhole, utilising zero waste techniques in the cutting of the 'fur'. All thread used was 100% cotton to ensure biodegradability.

Below is the blurb that accompanied my Mindful Fashion Circular Design competition entry, describing the thought process behind the designs.

> "Fast fashion is a misnomer; fashion comes from innovation and creation, and fast fashion is a copycat, a cheap imitation, a churn and burn philosophy of same-ness. Sustainable fashion is also a misnomer; creating new from virgin resources on a finite planet is inherently unsustainable.
>
> My garment inspiration has evolved from a single question regarding fake fur's place in our world to something inspired by re-visiting the optimism of youth. It celebrates the creativity of a teenager finishing that top right before the party, or the teen that doodles their optimism on their school bag, the twenty something that adores festivals, sunshine and the whimsy of Goldie Hawn in her early movies. It references the subversiveness of punk, think 70s/80s Vivienne Westwood and 90s Alexander McQueen; the free spirt of the flower power movement, with a nod to both the Māori korowai (feather cloak) and the symbols for growth and togetherness (applied by the ancient art of graffiti to the bag).
>
> 'No Virgins Allowed' is the PUNK, that controversial slogan that garners attention; in this case we mean virgin resources, and using fabrics made from plastics, derivatives of oil that become our second skin yet cause harm both to us and our planet. Or the beautiful virgin natural fibres that use so much water to produce and are dyed using products that unintentionally cause harm. We have decorated our bag with the slogans of "now," "no dinosaurs" (oil), "no virgin" (materials), "break the rules and go off grain" (references to breaking the traditional rules of pattern making to make different fabrics and grains work together).
>
> This ensemble represents a coming together of cultures, ideals and philosophies past and present to symbolise how we need to think about fashion's future. In my conversation with Nelson, he used his current application and understanding of Mātauranga Māori practices, defined here by Sir Hirini Moko Mead,
>
> "Mātauranga Māori refers to Māori knowledge in its widest and broadest terms, and Mātauranga Māori is inclusive and allows for innovative ideas and practices" (Mead 2012)...to add a fashion view point by concluding, also another view with textiles, we have a 110 year old kiwi cloak we use for tangihana (funerals and the rituals of mourning)...may be to steer away from consumerism and disposability and invest in quality, making each item a Taonga to be past (sic) down to each generation. (Nelson)
>
> 'Denifur's' application is that of a boutique fabric, a special textile that gives us feelings of warmth and comfort and reflects the inherent value we once revered for the animals whose pelts we wore, a textile to create future taonga.
>
> 'He tino āhuru tēnei pūeru' (This textile is very cosy/comfortable/warm/safe)"

Karlie Morrow has worked in the fashion industry as a designer, patternmaker, workroom manager and photographer, in New Zealand and overseas. She won the Creative Excellence award at the Mindful Fashion Circular Design Awards for her denim fur project. She is currently studying for a Master of Design, focused on recycling textile waste.

Figure 7. Denifur vest, crochet top and pants as styled for Viva Magazine (accessories, bag and hat not pictured).

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https://doi.org/10.34074/scop.1028012

FASHION DESIGN PROCESS

FASHION DESIGN PROCESS: IDENTITY, INDIVIDUALITY AND MATERIALITY

Margo Barton

Fashion, more than any other design field, is something that most people have experience of, that is, we all wear clothes, and these clothes could be experienced as fashion. I hazard a guess that everyone reading this article has worn and is probably wearing clothes right now.

The design process is a very individual thing, and fashion can be idiosyncratic. At times complex, disciplined and with a purpose in mind. Equally at times simple, meandering, trusting the gut, and experimenting with an open mind as to where wearable explorations may lead.

Fashion studies can be housed in schools of art, architecture or engineering, and of course also within a design school. It is worth noting that several designers in this section refer to art informing their practice. The fashion design process can be creative, but it doesn't have to be. The process can be functional, but it doesn't have to be; it can use a pragmatic engineering trajectory, or an emotional artistic process. The process can be situated on, and movable along the elastic continuum of pure creativity through to highly engineered products, as defined by the designer and / or wearer.

The designers sharing their processes here show distinct ways of working, and their diverse worlds of fashion and fashion making. Themes of culture, identity, philosophy, body, empathy, respect, people, experimentation, authenticity, materiality, textiles, the wearer, the craft, and more all come through. These seven designers from across the world; from Singapore, now living in the UK, from Austria, and across Aotearoa New Zealand, demonstrate the expansive processes that abound. Each designer is heading towards a different end, some designers create for personal satisfaction and fun, some for learning, and others with a focus solely on the end result – fashion.

There is no right or wrong way to design fashion, there is no right or wrong way to wear the results of the designing process either. Fashion processes are as diverse for the designer, as fashions are to the wearer.

https://doi.org/10.34074/scop.1028013

FASHION DESIGN PROCESS

[RE]CONSIDER

Annette Cadogan

What fuels your design ideas?

Tailoring and structure, vintage details and traditions of making, including consideration of fabrics are always the starting point for me. Other inspirations and ideas feed into this process, but these I guess are always constants in that process.

More recently I've started researching how zero or minimum waste design/making process might be more integrated into production, therefore potentially more accessible to a wider audience. I love to problem-solve through process, which can become a continuum through which to explore further ideas. Inspiration also comes from memories of my nana's wardrobe, where every piece was valued, with quality items treasured and looked after.

Who are the practitioners who you feel have influenced your design processes?

Vintage Balenciaga, Claire McCardell, Kenzo and Isobel Toledo as master cutters and makers; alongside the craftsmanship associated with the master tailors of Saville Row have been long-time inspirations. Another inspiration is the zero-waste patternmaking and designing of Timo Rasmussen. Working alongside inspiring colleagues, with many opportunities for conversations around the designing/making process constantly generates more thinking and development in my process too.

I have played for some time with the concept of 'jigsaw' non-traditional shapes which also draw on drape using varying weights and layers of cloth – exploring drape, pleats and ruching. Although this process aligns with my attraction to the works of designers such as Rasmussen, Kenzo and Toledo I found I was still curious as to how more conventional silhouettes might utilise this process.

A couple of years ago I found an article discussing the work/practice of Danielle Elsener's Masters project at RCA (London), designing and patternmaking zero-waste scrubs for the NHS as a project during lockdown in 2020. These were shared as open-source patterns, creating huge interest and positive feedback, including from manufacturers who were interested in generating full production runs utilising Elsner's methods. This inspired me to [re]consider how garments with a more traditional fit and function might also integrate minimum-waste processes that could easily translate to production situations.

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

Making! I will often start with a rough sketch, accompanied by scrawled notes that form a concept; this will then be transformed into a roughly mapped 'jigsaw' which then becomes a fabric prototype. Sometimes the initial prototype might only be a section or detail of a garment, but the active making brings more ideas and variations as I work through this process. Combinations of methods to define silhouette, fit, proportion and weight [layering] into the structure and visual aesthetic of the garments, always refining details [to a simple form again] where possible, for unfussy making. Considering the wearer's body is also a key part of the process – how the garment feels on and how it moves with the wearer. Working through this making/development/problem-solving process is the most enjoyable aspect of designing for me, whereby the complicated can become refined and resolved.

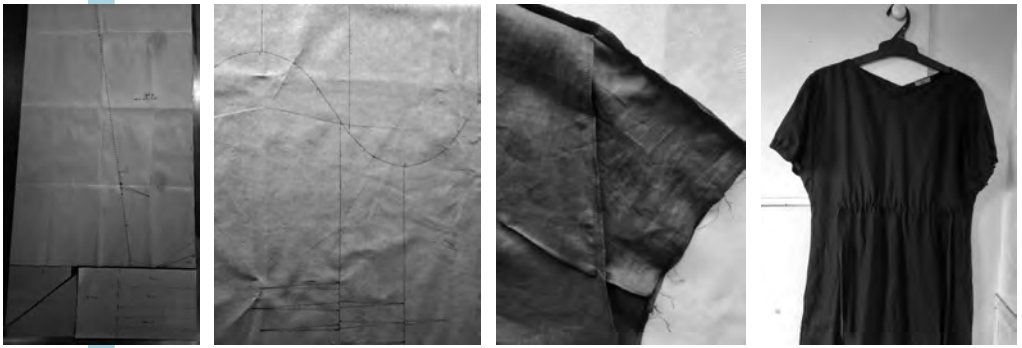


Figure 1. Mapping patterns to fabric constraints. Piecing together the jigsaw. Prototyping in fabric.

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

When I can see an idea beginning to take shape as I make, which also begins to reveal further possibilities. This often generates many more scribbled drawings and notes that I'll file away, to refer back to when I have time! Embracing the uncertainty is essential at this point, exploring possibilities & pushing your knowledge beyond the familiar.

What 2D / 3D methods or techniques do you use to explore ideas?

Sketching, note-taking and mapping of patterns and lines as a start point, followed by making up toiles (prototypes). The process becomes quite circular, with re-drawing lines directly onto toiles (or printed images of these) and creating the next iteration.

How do you select or adapt your environment to best suit your modes of designing?

I'll note-take or sketch at any time to capture ideas as they happen, wherever I might be. I have a small studio/workroom at home where I can develop ideas and prototypes. I find it easier to work if I can have a quieter, uninterrupted time/space to keep working as the process evolves and unfolds. Once I am ready to move onto full-scale prototypes though I'll often utilise space at work – this is often where I share progress and discuss process with colleagues or students, which then generates more thinking and development.

What role does working with others and collaboration have in your designing?

In 2008 I established the fashion label 'Iris' which retailed for about seven years, this was a great way to share my design/making outcomes with a wider audience. Although not focussed on minimum waste patternmaking at that point, I did focus on a more sustainable approach – each collection was intended to combine with and complement work from previous collections, so customers could select pieces from different collections to complement their individual style. I also felt that understanding how to refine designs from a production and cost perspective without compromising aesthetics was an important step in my process. Sharing my changing, developing process is also important to me – the area I am researching is not 'new' but integrating this practice into my teaching/learning is where I like to be.

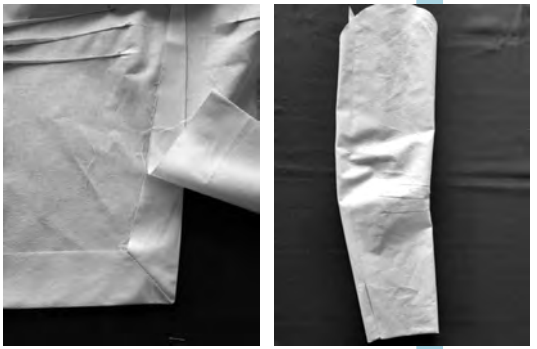


Figure 2. Tailored sleeve - creating shape with functional details and completed prototype.

As tangata whenua or tangata Tiriti, how do you practice in our Aotearoa New Zealand framework; how is this reflected in your work?

I intend to continue exploration into responsible design. I think this is where my practice sits, considering how best to combine my love of traditional work such as tailoring and how that sits in a modern aesthetic and aligns with a changing understanding of best practice. For the future, I would like to utilise technology to assist with this, e.g. developing the 'mapping' process to fit fabric constraints with the use of digital patternmaking tools as a more seamless process. Having said that, for me I think there will always be a hands-on connection with making and mapping as a necessary part of the process.

Annette Cadogan is a Senior Lecturer at the School of Design at Otago Polytechnic where she teaches on the Fashion programmes (BDes and NZCertFashion, including co-ordination of NZCertFashion programme). Her academic and workplace experiences combine in her teaching practice, which focusses on understanding of the making process, both as a practitioner and learner. With a lifetime love of making, re-using and creating responsible fashion, she utilises her skills as a pattern cutter, currently exploring possibilities with (re) considering the designing/making processes for tailored or structured garments.

https://doi.org/10.34074/scop.1028014

FASHION DESIGN PROCESS

St Claire Marshall

What fuels your design ideas?

My ideas reflect significant events or emotions in my life. I use dreaming subconsciously (and then subsequently and consciously design) as a way of compartmentalising scary or upsetting things; simultaneously removing and connecting with them by visualising these thoughts as a separate thing. Although they are me, they become separate from me entirely and this gives me a chance to process things without becoming overwhelmed – I am disconnecting my mind from my body. This can then lead to a metaphorical and symbolical narrative, which then plays into my design narrative and final designs. This often lends itself to eerie, fantastical or macabre elements as part of my designs.

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

I work through an auto-ethnographic process/lens, with the conceptualisation of fashion design functioning as a response to the self, using analytic autoethnography in a way which then subsequently enables a design narrative. I will have several months of disturbing dreams and images with no obvious logic and reason, and then throughout the expression of these ideas in my designs, I will come to understand these dreams and how and why my brain has produced them. My examination and connection of the motifs in my dreams (self-analysis) leads to an understanding of which pivotal experiences are currently impacting me in my life, and then subsequently allows me to examine my personal life and feelings*, which in turn informs my art and/or design, and

creates an emotional connection between me and my work. In the context of my own work, I call this research process Dream Reflection Design Research.

(* This is never my only or main form of processing or examining these thoughts and feelings, and I encourage others to also use multiple methods such as therapy.)

What is the most enjoyable part of designing for you?

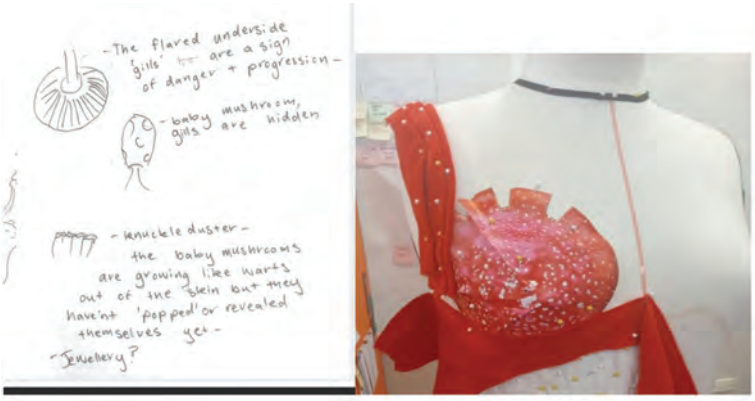
The most meaningful part of designing for me is the collating of my ideas – bringing together these little notes and images and drawings to puzzle them into a clear thematic narrative or design point of view. Also (of course) eventually seeing an idea from my head become a real tangible 'thing' – whether that's a piece of clothing, a print, a textile, or some other form of art.

Do you have sources of inspiration that you always revisit?

A source of inspiration I always tend to revisit (aside from dreams/nightmares and fantasy) is the body, and my relationship to it – whether that be positive or negative, or through the body as a manifestation of more metaphorical thoughts and ideas. I also am constantly drawn to plants and animals, which often inspires shapes, prints and colours.

What 2D / 3D methods or techniques do you use to explore ideas?

Reflective observation is pretty much always my first step in the design process, typically through a notebook/visual diary and/or a reflective journal/research diary (either physical or digital, often both). This serves to document my stream of consciousness and/or a personal narrative. My ideas tend to come in fragments or as quick images or concepts so operating like this allows these ideas to be quickly expressed and noted, then in future they can be refined. I will move into other design research methods such as sketching, curation and visual glossaries.



Typically, I gravitate towards writing as a tool to analyse and steer the direction of my designs – to figure out the 'why' of my design. I also use notetaking/writing because it is easier to sort through and use to make my ideas logical, eventually enabling a coherent theme(s). During my design process, I continue to use these notes as my primary method of reflection – in action, noting new ideas, adjustments, problems and improvements as I experiment with ideas, textiles and toiles. I use sketching continuously throughout my design process to develop concepts and ideas from their original start and plan how they might look. I've found that I don't always start my designs from a strictly fashion perspective, so if I need to translate it into a fashion perspective, sketching with the human body in mind helps focus and contextualise my ideas. I don't tend to use one design research method at a time, and often several methods are used in tandem.

St Claire Marshall is an Otago Polytechnic Fashion Design Honours student and practitioner who loves exploring inside her brain, and all the new odd and interesting ideas or research that she happens across. In the future, she hopes to continue figuring out how to design and create as much as possible – and to continue having dreams.

https://doi.org/10.34074/scop.1028015

FASHION DESIGN PROCESS

Tania Allan Ross

What fuels your design ideas?

Designing and making garments and accessories for clients, who have difficulty finding and purchasing clothing which makes them feel comfortable and is enjoyable to wear, fuels my practice. Most of the made-to-measure products I produce are informed by the wearer's individual needs and wishes, clients are usually able to inform me of what does not work well for them relating to clothing, and often they have suggestions of possible solutions.

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

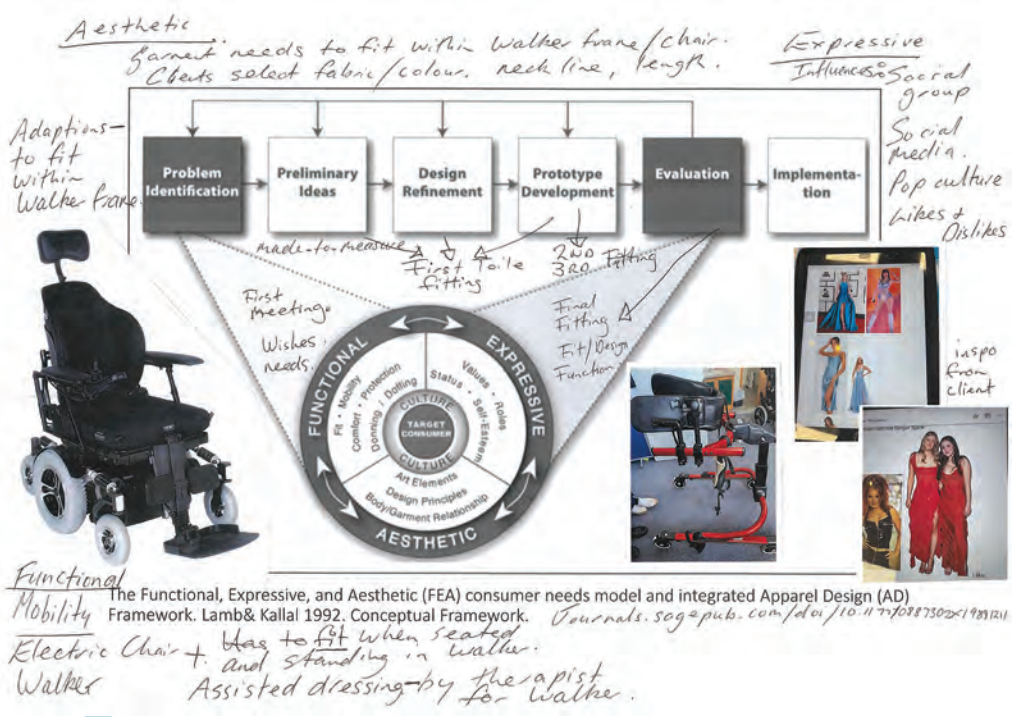
In the field of adaptive clothing there are two academics who have inspired and informed my design practice, Susan Watkins and Grace Jun. Watkins' first textbook, *Clothing: The Portable Environment*, published in 1984 is considered to have had a major influence in establishing functional apparel design as an area of academic study. Jun practices and teaches design processes inclusive of disability. Jun recently published a book *Fashion, Disability, and Co-design: A Human-Centred Design Approach* (2024), which outlines design and practical making techniques, with the aim of teaching and informing the production of garments and accessories that help increase social inclusion for people with disabilities. Both Watkins and Jun place emphasis on the users' needs and the importance and value of their input into the design of functional aspects of clothing.

Lecturing in fashion within the School of Design at Otago Polytechnic continuously feeds how I think about and approach designing, I have and continue to be influenced and learn from colleagues and students. I also appreciate the value of a multi-disciplinary design environment, study in occupational therapy has also helped build my approach of working toward gaining best understanding and empathy of my client's needs and wishes.

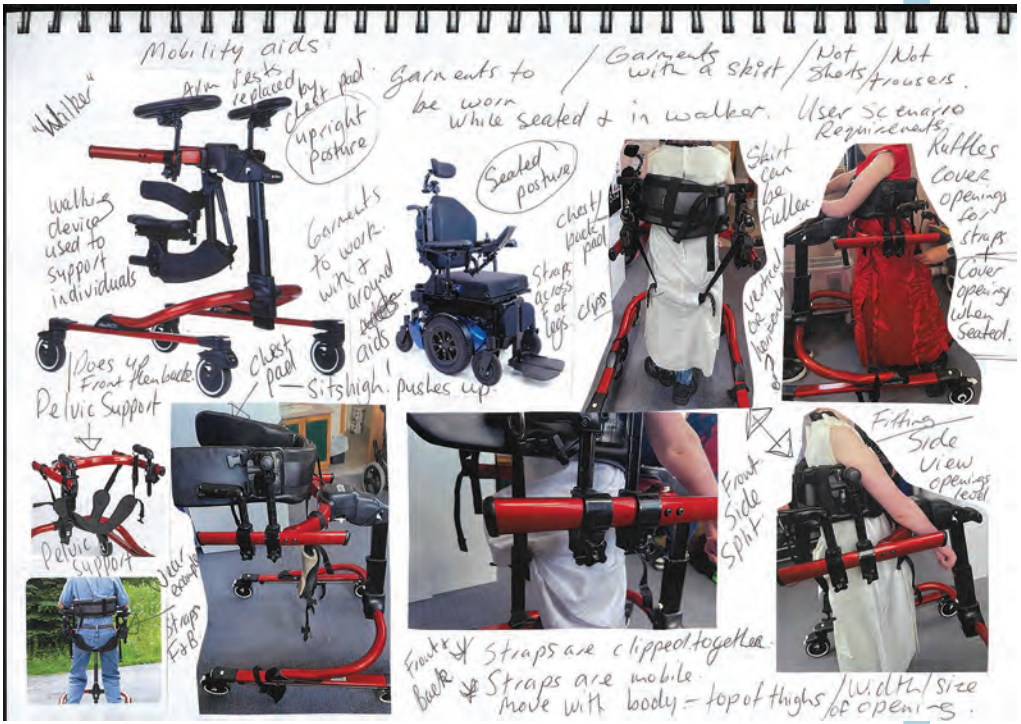
How do you describe the rangahau|research that you do as part of your design process?

When working with a client my design process is user centred, informed by a framework published by apparel design educators Lamb and Kallal in 1992. The FEA Consumer Needs Model assesses the users' needs and wants which informs the identification of the creative problem and design criteria. Functional, Expressive and Aesthetic (FEA) user needs are integrated with an apparel design framework; the key to this model is that it assists in resolving design problems in an inclusive manner, whether functional or fashion orientated, so that the design best meets the needs of the intended user.

Most often the research I undertake when working with a client is in the form of creative problem solving. Mainly the issues I need to consider when designing are adaptive, working out solutions that often don't exist in mainstream apparel, such as the placement and size of garment openings, the most appropriate types of fastening to close and secure an opening, placement and reduction in seams, working inclusion of medical and assistive tools around and into garments.



The Functional, Expressive, and Aesthetic (FEA) consumer needs model and integrated Apparel Design (AD) Framework. Lamb& Kallal 1992. Conceptual Framework. Journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/088703029219911



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

The most meaningful and enjoyable stage of working with a client is when the garment 'works' when the problem is solved or at least is less of an issue – when the client is happy and more comfortable in their clothes.

What 2D / 3D methods or techniques do you use to explore ideas?

I work with both 2 and 3 dimensional methods, where acceptable snapshot photography is employed to record details discussed during initial consultations with clients, to record what is and isn't working with their clothing. Desk-top research is then often a starting point to better understand assistive tools and/or medical devices which are needing to inform or be included in the design. Sketching and toiling of prototypes is then employed to communicate and fit possible solutions to the client. During fittings of toiles, I mark the fabric with the required alterations to best meet the clients' requirements, these markings are then taken back to patterns – additional research may be required before the adaptions are included in the following toile. This process continues up until the stage of constructing the final garment or accessory. I will leave toiles with clients to enable a longer period of wear testing to take place, if necessary, before final adaptive design solutions are confirmed.

How do you select or adapt your environment to best suit your modes of designing?

Initially, I normally meet a client in their home or work environment to discuss their needs and wishes, often they are accompanied by their communities and networks; family, friends, occupational, health and/or educational supports. At these meetings I gain an understanding of identified problems and possible solutions. I work on preliminary design sketches and gain feedback from the client; this is either through face-to-face meetings or exchange of digital files. The prototyping/ toiling process is either undertaken in my home workroom or in the production studio at work, Otago Polytechnic. When I make at work, colleagues and students at times offer feedback and guidance. Toile and final garment fitting usually happen in my client's environment.

What role does working with others and collaboration have in your designing?

Working with others in a collaborative way is an integral part of a user centred design process, this is an aspect of work that I particularly value and enjoy. I am always learning and gaining understanding of how powerful lived experiences are in informing better design.

As tangata whenua or tangata Tiriti, how do you practice in our Aotearoa New Zealand framework; how is this reflected in your work?

Working with clients during a made-to-measure process enables the building of relationships through collaboration, the sharing of knowledge, experiences and ideas, I relate this type of codesign engagement to Te Aranga Māori Design Principle, Whanaungatanga: which provides people with a sense of belonging.

Do you have sources of inspiration that you always revisit?

Disability and fashion networks, publications focusing on design with and for disabled, user-centred design practices across varied disciplines. I enjoy following a number of fashion influencers with disabilities.

Tania Allan Ross is a Principal Lecturer in Fashion within the School of Design at Otago Polytechnic. Tania holds a Master of Design Enterprise and a Post Graduate Certificate in Adaptive Design (Occupational Therapy), her research includes adaptive fashion, co-design and inclusive apparel specifically addressing sensory integration.

https://doi.org/10.34074/scop.1028016

FASHION DESIGN PROCESS

Barbara Wendt

What fuels your design ideas?

My surroundings and everything that crosses my mind. It varies from books to late-night talks with friends, TV series, philosophy, or just nature.

Do you have sources of inspiration that you always revisit?

I've always been inspired by colors and how they can transform the mood of an entire room and the emotions of people surrounded by them. As I continually return to this theme, I've come to recognise that I've been drawn to different colors at various stages of life and what they've meant to me. This has led to the practice of reflecting on my life through colors and also understanding the kind of feelings I experience through my surroundings.

What 2D–3D methods or techniques do you use to explore ideas?

My techniques often go hand in hand. The main techniques are drawing, exploring, and working with textiles. They frequently influence each other physically. Across these components, I am always striving to reflect on how they interact after every step.

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

It's the stage where everything comes together. Not because I want to end a project, but more like the feeling that everything is done perfectly and there is no better time than now. It's the feeling that I've allowed my project to unfold its full potential. On the other hand, it can also be frustrating when you have to stick to a time schedule and I know it's not the right time for the project to end.

What is the most enjoyable part of designing for you?

It's the playful experimenting with different materials. Nothing has to be perfect, nothing has to work out, but when it does, I am amazed by what comes out. And if it doesn't, I hope it connects with my inner child through crafting. But I also have to admit that it's only enjoyable when I am satisfied with the outcome, so I like to take my time for this.

Who are the practitioners who you feel have influenced your design?

People around me and also the author Liv Strömquist, who help me understand the world I am living in but also help me understand who I am and why. Bilderbuch (the band) who sing a lot about love between two or all human beings on earth. Their yearly concerts, often held in May, also initiate Spring and Summer for me. Comme des Garçons stands for being brave and trying out new shapes in fashion. Iris van Herpen and my Professor Paul Reza Klein for beautifully connecting electronics with fabric. Jacquemus for pleasing my eyes every time.

What role does collaboration play in your designing?

Collaborative work can be so much fun, but I don't actively seek it out. For me, it's more about exchanging ideas and learning from others and their techniques, and seeing where it leads me or us. I love keeping it open, whether we are going the path fully together or only for some parts of the process.

As tangata whenua or tangata Tiriti, how do you practice in our Aotearoa New Zealand framework?

I am new to New Zealand, so I am slowly diving into a new culture. Maybe it will affect me at some point, but for now, it is more about learning and understanding a new culture.

Considering your reflection and answers to the above questions – how would you describe the "research" that you do as part of your design process?

Diverse, playful, interested in new things, and reflective.

https://doi.org/10.34074/scop.1028017

FASHION DESIGN PROCESS

Lilia Yip

What fuels your design ideas?

A new fragment of knowledge, a glimpse of an image, a particular textile, garment histories.

Who are the practitioners who you feel have influenced your design processes?

Yohji Yamamoto, Issey Miyake and Martin Margiela. Yohji Yamamoto (along with Rei Kawakubo) created a space in fashion, for people such as myself to feel seen. A space that as a student I could dream of one day feeling a sense of belonging within. I appreciate Issey Miyake's love for people, materials, traditional craft and his belief that good design brings joy and connection, as I hold similar values within my practice. With Martin Margiela, I learnt to appreciate the use of found materials and everyday objects as sources of inspiration and forms of resistance – with grace and a wry sense of humour.

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

I would describe myself as a cultural anthropologist. Fashion is about engaging with the world and the people in it. It is a unique language of communication that weaves histories, cultures and identities into the fabric of clothing. In my process, I look for fragments of knowledge that speak to what I feel needs to be revisited, reframed or reflected upon.

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

Choosing the right fabric to work with. When I have chosen a material that speaks to me and reflects my sustainable ethos, everything else starts to fall into place.

What 2D / 3D methods or techniques do you use to explore ideas?

What is the most enjoyable part of designing for you?

The best part of being a designer/artist is meeting other kindred spirits. They are all over the world and quite often not working in fashion. I often present my work in places that are connected to the local communities of the area. These places function not just as artistic gallery spaces but as places where locals meet to socialise. I spend a lot of time in the space during that time, meeting new people, exchanging stories, learning about the community and its cultures. It is the most intense, memorable and meaningful part of the design process.

Figure 1. My studio wall is divided into the following porous sections: Feeling - Silhouette – Materials – Colour – Relevance – Writings – Techniques – Details.

Figure 2. Creative pattern cutting and draping is a key process. I call it drawing with scissors.

What role does working with others and collaboration have in your designing?

Collaboration is a significant part of my work at the stage of communication and presentation. The work I make is multi-faceted as it is often about the larger human condition and our collective experiences. As such, with each collaboration, be they a curator, artist, musician or filmmaker, we start with a conversation about what we both value and appreciate. This stage is deliberately kept experimental and open, and my collaborators are given the

freedom to interpret and use my clothing and collection concept, taking from and interpreting it within their own artistic medium. The final outcomes could be a fashion show, a music video, a film, a dance performance, an exhibition and zine, a photo editorial, a workshop. There are many ways in which stories about clothing can be told and this collaborative approach brings a richness to the storytelling.

Do you have sources of inspiration that you always revisit?

I have a love for ancient Asian clothing and traditional textile crafts. I am especially drawn to clothing made and worn by rural communities, minority groups and clothing that is worn in daily life or for specific rituals. In the book *Yohji Yamamoto Talking to Myself*, fashion scholar Kiyokazu Washida writes:

"In producing his clothes, Yohji Yamamoto has always borne in mind the point at which clothing ceases to be clothing – the most basic level where clothing functions simply as covering." (Yamamoto, Washida. 2002)

It is in the places where clothing hover on the edge of Fashion, that I find most captivating.

Figure 3. I play with material finishings, experimenting with unusual ways to finish a garment edge.

Lilia Yip is a Singaporean fashion academic, designer, artist and musician threading the different strands into a creative practice that explores the boundaries between our cultures, identities, philosophies and bodies. Designing with empathy and respect for material and people are key concepts. Lilia works collaboratively across various art, science and analog/digital technology disciplines, exploring new ways of making, representing and experiencing fashion. Lilia graduated from the Royal College of Art in MA Fashion Womenswear and has collaborated with the British Council as their guest designer, showcasing work in the Philippines and running workshops in Saudi Arabia and Morocco. They have exhibited internationally in solo exhibitions and major group shows at Museum Boijmans van Beuningen and the Victoria & Albert Museum.They are a Senior Lecturer and Research Mentor at London College of Fashion, University of the Arts, London and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

REFERENCE

Yohji Yamamoto, Sozzani, C. and Kiyokazu Washida (2002). *Talking to Myself*. Göttingen: Steidl.

https://doi.org/10.34074/scop.1028018

FASHION DESIGN PROCESS

Britt Nelson-Misa

What fuels your design ideas?

My design ideas often begin as small fragments – lines from a poem, a brushstroke in a painting, or the way light filters through trees on an overcast day. I collect these moments through photographs, sketches, and script, allowing them to shape my creative process. Art, poetry, emotions, and nature are constant sources of inspiration, and are always woven throughout my process and final outcomes.

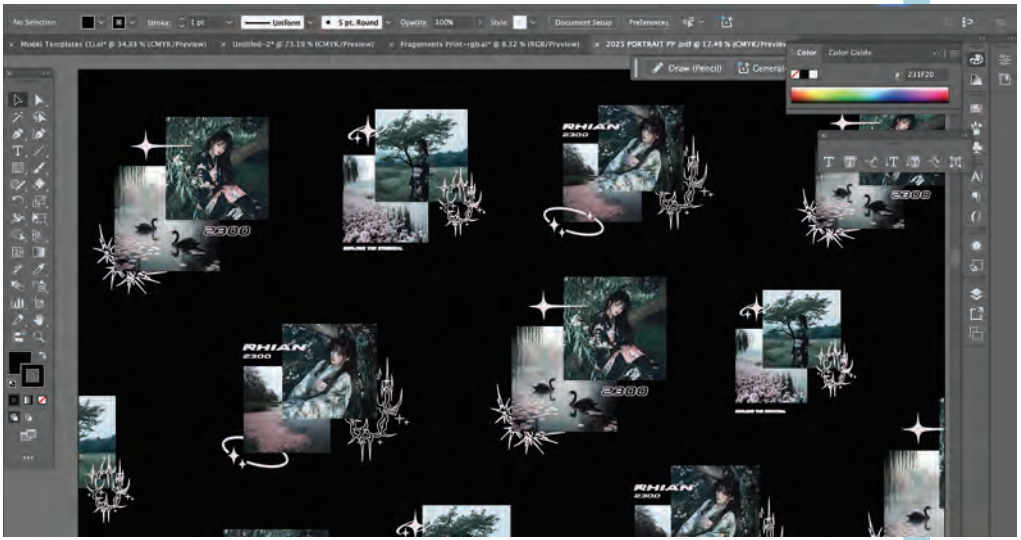
As I develop a collection, these inspirations guide my exploration of fabric, texture, and form. Sometimes, a particular image or feeling leads me to experiment with drape and movement, while other times, I start with a silhouette and refine its details to reflect the mood I want to convey. I often translate my ideas into fabric manipulation, layering techniques, or custom prints that embody the essence of my inspiration. Every step – from initial sketches to pattern drafting and fabric selection – is an intuitive process, and often non-linear, allowing my designs to evolve organically while staying true to the emotions and themes that sparked them.

Who are the practitioners who you feel have influenced your design processes?

During my time at Otago Polytechnic, I was fortunate to learn from some incredible fashion lecturers who became a source of inspiration for my design process. They emphasised the importance of experimentation and taught me to see beauty in what might initially seem like mistakes. This mindset had a profound impact on me, giving me the confidence to explore new concepts without fear of failure. I learned that what we often perceive as errors are actually valuable learning opportunities that can lead to unexpected and innovative outcomes.

As a result, my design process is now entirely rooted in experimentation. I rarely begin with a fixed idea of what I want to create. Instead, my designs evolve organically through hands-on exploration – testing fabrics, playing with shape and form, and experimenting with prints and embellishments until something resonates.

Beyond the technical aspects, I have always been inspired by individuals who express themselves authentically through fashion. Even when someone's aesthetic was completely different from my own, I found their confidence in self-expression deeply motivating. Being surrounded by such creative people during fashion school reinforced my own sense of authenticity. Now, I celebrate human difference in my work, valuing individuality as a core element of my design philosophy.



Exploring the ethereal collection.

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

Much of my current research revolves around digital printing – exploring the preparation, dyeing, and fabric treatments that ensure a successful application. This involves understanding how different textiles interact with pigments, how to achieve lasting vibrancy, and what processes enhance both the durability and aesthetics of the final print. Additionally, I focus on the technical aspects of digital design, particularly file types and colour management, ensuring a smooth transition from screen to fabric. Learning the nuances between RGB and CMYK colour spaces is crucial to maintaining colour accuracy in my prints.

Beyond the technical side, my research also begins with visual exploration. I gather inspiration through imagery, colour palettes, textures, art, and graphics that resonate with the concept I'm developing. These elements are then curated into a mood board, which serves as a foundation for the collection, capturing the overall atmosphere and direction. This research phase helps me refine my vision, ensuring that every design choice – from silhouette to print – aligns with the story I want to tell.

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

The most meaningful stage of my design process is creating the first prototype.

I'm especially drawn to the hands-on, three-dimensional aspect of design – watching a flat concept evolve into a full-body form is always the most rewarding part of the process for me. It is here where I see the research, inspiration testing and toiling come together. At that moment I think I feel a sense of contentment and accomplishment.

What 2D / 3D methods or techniques do you use to explore ideas?

I often begin my design process with research and sketching, using collage as a way to bring my ideas to life. I layer photos, fabric swatches, embellishments, and textures to create a visual and tactile representation of the project's mood and direction. This helps me refine the overall aesthetic and feel of the design.

Functional modelling is also a crucial part of my process. I embrace toiling, key feature tests, and fabric experimentation to explore how a garment will take shape. Toiling plays a significant role – it provides a three-dimensional representation of my ideas, allowing me to see how the garment sits on the body, how it moves, and whether it functions as intended.

For me, research, sketching, and toiling work together as the foundation of my design process. Each stage informs the next, offering a holistic view of my concept's potential and revealing areas for refinement. This ensures that my final designs are not only visually compelling but also thoughtfully constructed and functional.

How do you select or adapt your environment to best suit your modes of designing?

I've always been particular about the aesthetic of the space I work in. For me, being surrounded by inspiration in my studio helps spark my creativity. My walls are filled with imagery, artwork, sculptures, figurines, fabric swatches, and plants. My studio isn't minimalistic or perfectly organised, but I thrive in the chaos; and amongst it all, I somehow always know where everything is. I also think natural light plays a huge role in my space. Poor lighting and a lack of sunlight often makes me tired, uninspired, and unproductive. A maximalist environment deeply impacts my creativity and well-being, which is why it's such an essential part of my design process.

What is the most enjoyable part of designing for you?

I think I am lucky as I genuinely enjoy every stage of the design process. I love watching each phase unfold, from the initial concept to the final piece. However, if I had to pick a favourite moment, it would be unboxing my fabric rolls. There's something incredibly rewarding about unrolling the fabric and seeing the print I've meticulously perfected on screen come to life. It's exciting to see the scale, colours, and details in their true form. The only part I'm not so fond of is waiting for the fabric to come out of the washing machine – I'm always too eager to start cutting into my freshly washed prints!

What role does working with others and collaboration have in your designing?

Collaboration plays a crucial role in my design process. I work closely with digital printers, models, photographers, artists, and many other suppliers to bring my ideas to life. I truly believe that one of the most important aspects of design is recognising and appreciating the people who help make your vision a reality. Each person I collaborate with brings their own expertise and creativity to the table, which enriches the final outcome and allows me to push the boundaries of what I can achieve. Working with others not only enhances my work but also fosters a sense of community and shared purpose within the design process.

When you need to work with others how do you go about the approach and working?

I think it's important to approach collaboration with an open mind and a sense of respect for the people you're working with. Building trust and appreciating the contributions of everyone involved helps create a positive working dynamic. It not only makes the current project smoother but also sets the foundation for future collaborations.

As tangata whenua or tangata Tiriti, how do you practice in our Aotearoa New Zealand framework; how is this reflected in your work?

As a designer in Aotearoa New Zealand, I am conscious of the cultural context in which I work. I strive to approach my practice with respect for the land and its people. Whether this is through incorporating sustainable practices, acknowledging the importance of natural resources, or considering how my designs impact the wider community. Manaakitanga, Whakaiti, and Whanaungatanga are deeply embedded in our cultural framework, and values that I strive to uphold in my brands philosophy and processes.

https://doi.org/10.34074/scop.1028019

FASHION DESIGN PROCESS

Deb Cumming
and Christine Brimer

Introduction to the Designers and project of 'Wayfaring – Cloth and Coat'

Christine Brimer (CB) interrogates natural fibres, tools, and process, articulating her research findings and experiences in woven cloth by manipulating surface, scale and form. Her work is concerned with journeying, place, and our connection to the natural world. Deb Cumming's (DC) research is aligned with fashion technical design applications that address broader inclusive, social and environmental aspects. Her design practice focuses on alternative pattern design and drape methods. As their first formal design collaboration, Christine and Deb bring together their shared values and approach to sustainable design, integrity of cloth in the craft of weaving and apparel zero waste pattern processes, with reflection of interdisciplinary design and identity explorations. This design project resulted in the creation of a zero-waste one-piece coat hand woven from strong wool and contained in its own bag, a wayfaring carrier of shared and diverse exploration. This project has been about co-design and experimentation though sharing and overlaying respective crafts of making. This has led to innovative methods which enhanced the process, outcome and contributes to future integrated design practice for textile and fashion designers.

Figure 1. ‘Cloth and Coat’ zero waste one piece design. Photographer: Olivia Melhop.

What fuelled your design ideas for this co-design project?

DC. This co-design project 'Wayfaring: Cloth & Coat', arose with a mutual respect for our personal connections and design practices, concepts of place and identity, and a focused integration of each other's disciplines in fashion and textiles.

CB. The brief was to conceptually articulate a story of connection through journey – for DC. This meant learning more of her family migration from Shetland to Aotearoa. I don't have a family affiliation to Shetland. However, as with earlier textile research projects, coastline and wild landscapes inspire and fulfil a desire in myself for belonging and connection.

DC. I've been fascinated by the beauty of apparel one-piece pattern shapes but also the technical thinking and application for sustainable possibilities, with potential reduction of fabric waste and manufacture bringing together innovative apparel and textile processes. Traditionally within the fashion design processes there are often too many segregated, sequential processes of production – drawings, patterns, fabric selection and construction. To solve some of the fashion and textile waste issues and to innovate, there is a need for greater understanding of how these disciplines can connect and overlay knowledge and technologies.

CB. Having studied and worked in both science and design I see a huge overlap in methodologies and ideation with the key skills of curiosity and observation, and a drive and tenacity to identify and resolve problems and communicate complexity. Through an iterative design methodology, researching and executing weave experiments to resolve new cloth is like finding a new vocabulary and metaphor that helps me clarify my thoughts and literally make sense of the world around me.

Who are the practitioners who you feel have influenced your design processes?

CB. I am inspired by designers who identify new material potentials or innovate with process or tools. I subscribe to *Material Matters*, a podcast hosted by Grant Gibson who interviews design thinkers and practitioners who integrate materials, processes and systems across a range of mediums. I read a lot about walking and journeying, the natural world and the human experience of landscape (Tim Creswell, Robert MacFarlane, Gaston Bachelard, Yi Fu Tuan). Patricia Grace poignantly conveys a sense of belonging and place in her writing. My thinking is informed by visual artists concerned with themes of belonging and dislocation, and sculptural and architectural works that explore our relationship with space and place. Weavers I admire innovate by pushing processes and tools and the conventions of woven cloth beyond the status quo. They are the Wayfinders, working at the fringes. Weavers such as Kay Sekimachi manipulate fibre and innovate with the tools of knowledge, experience and their hands, developing an intimate relationship with materials to solve problems and create beautiful forms. In Aotearoa, weavers developed innovations such as kākahu with shoulder shaping woven into the cloth, and the functional elements incorporated into Te Ra, the 200-year-old woven harakeke voyaging waka sail. Loom weavers Peter Collingwood, Annie Albers, Ann Sutton, Laura Thomas and Molly Haynes inspire me with their tenacity, skill and originality.

DC. There are many who have inspired me from the design field! I do have admiration of practitioners who place 'process' at the forefront of their work for example Genevieve Sevin-Doering, Madeleine Vionnet, Holly McQuillan and Rickard Lindquist, amongst others who consider patterns and the body as their focus of attention.

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

CB and DC. We both find secondary, and practice based technical design research (ongoing building of material and process knowledge) essential to support our design aims and thinking to address issues and practical application. Research in the form of iterative design (sampling, critique and editing) underpins our practice, a way of reflective and generative design thinking and working. In this project, there was initial collating of research sources including historical, place and identity, craft and hand-mediated text references, family objects and visual photographic analysis along with informal interviews and storytelling. In collaborative projects like this, there are continual reflective exchanges to lead and alter the iterative research practice. For both of us, the technical design research in this project was focused on the integrity of woven cloth and apparel zero-waste pattern processes.

CB. Tackling technical frontiers or applying conventional techniques in new contexts to resolve new ways of working with yarns on a loom, enables me to articulate my experiences and research.

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

DC. The most meaningful stage is the process; problem-solving when draping the fabric on the body, especially when the technical design aims have sustainable incentives or to improve the wearer experience. Recent design projects with inclusive user-centred design aims have been incredibly meaningful and gratifying in working alongside others to support their needs. I smile a lot.

What is the most enjoyable part of designing for you?

CB. (it's hard to separate enjoyable from meaningful). What excites me most is pushing process and tools to resolve new techniques to add to the vocabulary of woven cloth. Ideas can be expressed in new ways or with more nuance or clarity, especially if form and texture are important design elements. I call it The Crunchy Thinking!!!

What 2D / 3D methods or techniques do you use to explore ideas?

DC. I have described some of the initial sources above for the contextual research. But designing for me is with the hands, when draping the fabric on the body. Usually, the process informs the design. It is the drape that I love the most, purely because it allows a 3D design development as an act of creation/sculpture in a relationship to the fabric and the body.

In this project, visual references and metaphorical references were reflected upon and translated through draping, while at the same time exploring technical solutions to improve the one-piece zero waste processes with fabric development. For example, in this design project the one-piece silhouette conveyed the concept of the 'journeyer' and elements of historical imagery of Shetland women and dress, garment layering, scarves enveloping the head, *kishie* carriers/baskets worn on their backs, *maakin* knitting belts wrapping the waist while walking. In the 3D drape toile process, a rectangular piece of fabric was wrapped from the back lengthwise grain round the shoulder to the front which shifted to the bias. Here is always the unpredictability that is the most enjoyable, how the shape will evolve responding to the grainline, in this case a

softer malleable drape. The front neckline was partially cut leaving the back neck to eventually form folds for a hood or carrier bag. Two lines are cut from the perimeter to back and lower front arm points, to release fabric to be brought around to the lower front from the back. This remained on the straight grain and the line moving around the dropped waist simultaneously creates internal triangular folds to allow a pocket in one piece. The fabric partially released from the arm axis points is rotated to join a spiral sleeve to the armhole, maintaining the lower armhole in one with the body. On reflection of this process, it became a metaphor for the journey or wayfaring, the strong warp at back was indicative of the beginnings, the known certainties of land and life, as the fabric shifted to the bias front, the responses are unpredictable, risks are taken. The shape continues to overlap and settle, doubled in strength (or resilience) forming a new front which is displaced yet stronger at the resulting place of journey. The act of using one piece of fabric with minimal cutlines creates a new shape with no waste and opportunities for reuse, redesign, remake. I love the process – not just for the design outcome but the drape pattern shape and problem solving with a textile designer. We needed to communicate with miniature paper models of pattern and drape, using scaled dimensions with cuts, pivots and folds moving between 2D to 3D to understand the shapes and demands for the fabric weave; textural and weight changes, functional finish lines and turning points, and eyelets integral within the weave. In this project, sequential processes of production – drawings, patterns, fabric selection and construction were disregarded to integrate a stronger relationship between woven fabric and garment. Production communications of garment and fabric notations were overlaid for the weave production and garment construction eliminating many of the usual conventions. The final pattern comprised a fabric dimension 240cm x 140 cm rectangle with minimal openings from the perimeter to woven internal points, measures being derived from body and arm curvature and loom parameters.

CB. Primary research is mostly experiential; observing the natural world with all senses engaged, and the physical act of model making, all to experience form, proximity and space through my body and hands. And then the words come... which are then translated into design elements of scale, form, proximity, negative space and composition. I need to think about form and space in another context or process before I try and emulate in cloth. Then at the loom interacting with a material and experiencing the physics of a tool or process become more vital than visual imagery as the sampling and editing process develops. I have had strict criteria for the yarns I use (undyed, natural fibre, if wool – strong undyed, grown and processed entirely in Aotearoa) so I have developed an intimacy with a small materials palette and become well acquainted with their character and constraints. This fluency enables me to push process and hack tools to explore new potentials and enables innovation. In this design project, recordings of place led us to consider the harbour entrance lighthouse – imagining a lighthouse beam as the migrants' last connection with Shetland, and perhaps the first encounter with their new home. A poignant moment was reading that both the Bressay light in the port of Lerwick, and the original Pencarrow light (now replaced by the Baring Head light) were built in 1858. The lighthouse flash sequences generated ideas for the plaid in the cloth; Baring Head light with a sequence of nine seconds on, six seconds off, and The Bressay light, two quick flashes every twenty seconds. As a natural colourant for the light flashes, gorse flowers were collected from two headlands in Te Whanganui a Tara. Anna Gratton's 110 TEX natural cream Corriedale yarn was used as the warp, with a proportion dyed with gorse collected from Baring Head. For the weft Bressay sequence, Gratton's 240 TEX Corriedale was dyed using gorse collected from the

Southern Walkway above Lerwick Terrace, close to my home. Early weave sampling included twills and structures with floats to reference textural elements, but plain balanced weave best satisfied performance requirements for cut and drape, and interplay of colour patterning. This structure also maximised off-loom cloth width to explore volume and drape. The one-piece method was reflected upon as we interchanged our respective processes. Miniature paper shapes helped the pattern and garment translations between us. With a full-scale pattern and toile there were many reflections on how the weave and garment construction could become integral to strengthen each other. The challenges were highlighted such as the fabric weakness for the 180-270 degree turns of endpoints/ cuts demanded by the draping. I considered functional moments in the cloth that could assist in enabling the coat to be cut and formed with integrity and minimise or eliminate sewing and extra interventions in the cloth. These design interventions evolved from exploring long established hand mediated weave technologies. Long vertical openings are used in many handwoven garments to give integrity by building internal selvedge. Such openings were incorporated in the body of the cloth. I became cognizant that a small amount of slit tapestry technique could offer a self-healed stable moment in the cloth to act as an axis point. It acts as a waypoint; a point of certainty like a lighthouse, a star, or navigational chart position. This was further explored as a potential to build a row of 52 stable eyelets. Two rows of eyelets gave a soft fold for the edge of the hood, a strong double row of gathering eyelets, and the edge hidden inside, also eliminating fusing. Loom waste felted wool was used for the cords that ran through the eyelets. I developed a novel leno variation that more closely references the knitted lace so important for women in Shetland. These functional and aesthetic features for the garment design were mapped out to guide placement while weaving and served as a means of communicating design iterations.

How do you select or adapt your environment to best suit your modes of designing?

CB. South Coast Wellington Aotearoa continues to be a shared place of lived experience for design research for both of us. When working on this project, walking on the coastal hills and being at sea looking at the land (and sky) from another lens, feeling distance, apprehension and anticipation, is like the co-design process; seeing an idea or problem from another point of view and an opportunity to get out of one silo. I get outside, I walk and observe and feel movement in space, both as research as described above, and as a means of clarifying and honing thought, both conceptual and technical. Being AWAY from my loom has become as important as being AT my loom. I often work at night; I'm a terrible sleeper. I need concentrated time to process ideas and process but also time away to rest and reflect and recharge. My physical workspace is quite chaotic as I need to see what is in front of me; lots of samples and my entire studio becomes my "mood board". I work on many different looms from small back strap heddle looms to lever controlled shaft looms (4 to 16 shafts) and a 24 shaft Compu dobby loom; different ideas and experiences come with these different technologies... weaving is haptic, proprioception.... my hands, my body, my eyes, my head, proximity and movement in relation to the yarns and to the cloth as it builds. For this project, the woven bands were made while sailing towards Baring Head light – a strange experience, making during continuous movement through space and time. An object begins in one time and space, is completed in another time and space. Warp dominated bands are strong, functional, elegant. An ancient and ingenious technology still widely practiced because it is portable, cheap to make, and in partnership with

an attentive weaver can be tuned to make beautiful cloth. The belts were a reference to the *maakin* belt waist straps and serve to hold the tension and load of the back carrier bag while walking.

DC. There is much design thinking and reflection while walking the coast and bush where I live on the other side of the harbour. I usually do design research / practice work at home at nights and weekends (I take over spare room or more often living space with dress form, table and machine). This gives the chance to totally focus and for time to escape me. In this collaborative project, there were many shared discussions and sharing of samples and developments in the studio. Our timing revolved around what was happening in our lives – a contrast to the other design research contract work with set deadlines.

What role does working with others and collaboration have in your designing?

DC. Simply put, collaboration is the enjoyment and the greatest source of learning when designing for and with others. I always find it useful to make sure we have shared values or aims from the beginning, and ensure there is respect of each other's design thinking, perspectives and practice, with continual reflective moments to inform iterative developments.

CB. As a sole practitioner generally my design briefs are self-generated. Collaboration and co-design enables me to APPLY my design methodology to new realms, either a practical or more esoteric problem to solve or communicate. When the brief presents me with problems that I can solve through integrating materiality, process and tools, and the research outcomes make sense to another person, I feel useful and connected. This co-design project aligned with my research interests and effectively presented a brief to ideate and develop techniques and to work poetically to tell a story through cloth and garment. This project was an opportunity to think about employing "standardised" weave techniques and adapt them to suit a new context and application to address a situation that I wouldn't have encountered without collaboration. Co-design offers a wider reach, stepping out of a silo and gaining insights into the realms and audience of the other designer. Before this project almost all my work had been focused on interior applications. Working in collaboration, I extended my knowledge of research methods and gained some insights into Deb's specialty of one piece and zero waste pattern and drape, and the relationship of woven fabric and the body.

As tangata whenua or tangata Tiriti, how do you practice in our Aotearoa New Zealand framework; how is this reflected in your work?

DC. To begin research into my family's Shetland connections of which I knew very little, secondary research and delving into family history triggered thoughts around identity, connections and my sense of place here in Aotearoa. Through design practice, there has been much reflection through sharing and making.

CB. During this past year, I have begun to actively research and be open to encounters that are filling an emotional and knowledge void created by a sudden dislocation five generations ago in my connection with my whakapapa.... so, exploring the relationships between land and water, tangata whenua and tangata Tiriti, place and journey, has been both poignant and timely.

DC and CB. The photo imagery in this design project helps to portray the sense of place, and use of local resources to create adaptation for the new, yet there is a resonance with where we

have come from. We are both pleased that this project outcome exudes integrity and quality in the woven wool cloth and the functional design with connection and experimentation through sharing our respective crafts. There are now many more questions for us from the connections through making. The cloth and coat is contained in its own bag, a wayfaring carrier now with design and personal meaning of shared and diverse exploration.

Do you have sources of inspiration that you always revisit?

CB and DC. Our relationship with land and the natural world. Themes of belonging and the experience of a shared humanity.

Associate Professor Deb Cumming (BSc Psychology, University of Canterbury, MDes (Fashion), College of Creative Arts, Massey University). Deb Cumming is a fashion design researcher and academic at Massey University with teaching in undergraduate and postgraduate design supervision. Her research is aligned with fashion practise with a focus on technical design applications that address broader inclusive, social and environmental aspects.

Christine Brimer (BSc (Hons) Plant Physiology, University of Canterbury BDes (Hons) (Textile Design), College of Creative Arts, Massey University) Christine interrogates natural fibres, tools, and process, articulating her research findings and experiences in woven cloth by manipulating surface, scale and form. Her work is concerned with journeying, place, and our connection to the natural world, and is informed by earlier studies in plant science, working with people from refugee backgrounds, and ocean voyages.

https://doi.org/10.34074/scop.1030006

EXHIBITION REVIEW: FROM THE HEART TO THE HANDS

Dolce & Gabbana held at Palazzo Reale Milano Italy
Sunday 7 April – Sunday 4 August 2024
Curator: Florence Müller

Margo Barton

As they say, when in Rome, or in this case Milano, I took it upon myself to visit an exhibition highlighting the designs of Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana, known as Dolce & Gabbana (D&G). I am someone more drawn to so-called intellectual, almost sensible fashion, and because of that thought that the D&G, *Heart to Hand* exhibition could be unpleasant, filled with garish, unwearable confections, but as I was in Milano, I planned a visit.

I had knowledge of the strong links between Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana's heritage, their love of their Italian, and Sicilian culture in particular, their geographic location in the Mediterranean and their fashion designs. Founded in 1985 by the two designers, Dolce born and raised in the province of Palermo Italy, and Gabbana born in Milan and raised in Veneto region of Italy, and their aesthetic of Italian-ness, of abundant luxury has not waivered, they have a brand handwriting that is noticeable in their fashions, their merchandising, and which also extends to the usual fashion and fashion related products of shoes, handbags, scarves, sunglasses, spectacles, perfumes, as well as the not so usual homewares, food, beverages, pasta, cake, wine, SMEG refrigerators and Bialetti stove top espresso machines, all anchoring the brand as a beacon of Sicilian culture, and Italian-ness in general.

In *Image-Music-Text*, Barthes (1977) analyzed an advertisement for Panzani[1], a purveyor of Italian food products, and proposed that because of the connotations of the image of pasta and their Italian name, the brand was also a signifier of Italianicity. Barthes went on to discuss that, "Italianicity is not Italy, it is the condensed essence of everything that could be Italian, from spaghetti to painting." (Barthes, 1977, p.48) Much like D&Gs foray into products that are not fashion or fashion related, but which further endorse the Italian-ness and Italianicity of D&G, obvious in some collections, for example in Sicilian Traditions section, and strengthening the brand identity as a whole.

The curator, Florence Müller, has contributed to more than 200 exhibitions worldwide over their career to date. Müller is known as a fashion historian, an author of numerous publications about fashion, and is a professor in fashion history at Institute Français de la Mode, Paris, France. Muller is a graduate of the Ecole du Louvre and the Institut d'Art et d'Archéologie and was previously Director and curator of the Union Française des Arts du Costume, and the Avenir Foundation Curator of Textile Art and Curator of Fashion at the Denver Art Museum.

While the exhibition isn't a full retrospective, it featured key creations from Dolce and Gabbana's three haute couture lines established in 2012 - Alta Moda (luxury fashion), Alta Sartoria (luxury tailored menswear) and Alta Gioielleria (luxury jewellery) collections. The D&G exhibition was held over 10 rooms in the luxurious Palazzo Reale adjacent to Milan's Duomo. Each room was themed, and each contained reference to the designer's heritage and brand story, everything Italian.

Right from the beginning, as I entered through the thick velvet curtains, my breath was taken away by the sumptuousness and extravagance shown.

Figure 1. [Left] View of room 1, Fatto a Mano, the Hand Made with Duong's paintings lining the walls.
Figure 2. [Right] Dolce&Gabbana Alta Sartoria, Venezia Collection, F/W 2021-22.
Blue top made of feathers and chains in chevron pattern, embellished by golden chains on the neck and armholes; trousers in silk Mikado; T-shirt in silk satin.

ROOM 1: FATTO A MANO, THE HAND MADE

(F/W 12-13; S/S 14; F/W 16-17; S/S 20; F/W 20-21; F/W 21-22; F/W 22-23; F/W 23-24)*

Situated in the middle of the gallery space, numerous mannequins stood on tiered platforms all showing delicious handmade fashions. The fashions in "Fatto a Mano, the Hand Made," offered real life examples of the most thrilling handmade textiles imaginable. There were so many mannequins, and they were placed so close together it was hard to see everything. I used my camera to zoom into the garments and accessories, trying to see more, and more, I strived to understand how the craftspeople created these, and importantly, decipher how I could make these. To me, the real beauty of Room 1, the "Hand Made" is that as a fashion maker, I can dream that I can also create, and wear such beauty, given the materials, and of course the time.

Lining the room were self-portraits by Anh Duong[2], artist, model and actress. Dolce commissioned Duong to create a series of paintings in 2012, with the artist donning what appeared to be many D&G fashions in the paintings. These were not fashion illustrations, but instead self-portraits of the artist wearing fashion, Neutres (2024, p58) stated "It is interesting to see in this commissioned series of Duong paintings how the artist is once more wisely controlling the integrity of her own artistic identity while serving the legacy of a mass luxury global brand". Even though the paintings were spectacular, the materiality of the physical fashions that were the stars in this room, and that somewhat overshadowed Duong's work.

Each time I circled the display, I noticed more intriguing fabrications, techniques and fashions, the wearability, and noted the Italian-ness of the techniques and of the messages, and yes there was some garishness, wearable garishness.

Figure 3. [Left] Left. Dolce&Gabbana Alta Satoria, Venezia Collection, F/W 2021-22.
Kimono entirely embroidered with glass bugle beads, floral elements and crystals; Trousers in satin; Satin shirt with scarf neck.
Figure 4. [Right] Dolce&Gabbana Alta Moda, Venezia San Marco Collection, F/W 2021-22.
Dress with crystals, resin, scale sequins, and hand engraved and stretched plexiglass elements.

ROOM 2: THE ART AND CRAFT OF GLASSWORKING

(S/S 16; S/S 20; F/W 21-22; F/W 22-23)

Wearability did not immediately come to mind in Room 2, which was dedicated to highlighting the works by glass artisans. The designs were adorned with glass and crystal embroidery and were created to open D&Gs Alta Moda and Satoria collections held August 2021, in Venice. Murano, an island near Venice has been the center of Italian glass mastery since 13th Century. The fashions were outstanding, majestic and in many cases wearable, and were highlighted by the Murano glass chandeliers, mirrored walls, and underpinned by the startling soundtrack of breaking glass.

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Figure 5. [Left] Dolce&Gabbana Alta Moda, Palermo Collection, F/W 2017/18.
Hand-painted triple organza corset gown with train in a silk tulle underskirt, embellished with crystals.
Figure 6. [Right] Dolce&Gabbana Alta Moda, Siracusa Collection, F/W 2022/23.
Illusion tulle corset dress embroidered with cross-stitch, tulle veil with lace inserts.

ROOM 3: IL GATTOPARDO, THE LEOPARD

(S/S 17; F/W 17-18; F/W 22-23)

If you are a fan of Italian cinema, chances are you have viewed the Luchino Visconti's 1962 film *The Leopard*, a masterful adaptation of an equally important historical novel of the same name by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa. The film is set in Sicily in the mid 19th century after the arrival of Garibaldi, and during the sociopolitical turmoil of the Italian unification. The movie is said to be D&G's cult film, and represents the designers love of tradition, which was shown in the crinolines in this room, as well as their love changing times and of modernity. Room 3 was dressed to appear like The Gallery of Mirrors in the Palazzo Gangi, Palermo, where *The Leopard* was filmed, however in this exhibition, the mirrors became screens showing footage from the 1962 movie.

At first glance the fashion in this room appeared 'costumey', but on reflection I believe it was the room itself that stamped a historical mood onto the fashion. I carefully examined the fashions and while the techniques harked back to traditional craftsperson-ship, the fashions themselves were very contemporary, and again were steeped with Italian-ness. When discussing their Siracusa Collection, F/W 2022/23 on their website, Dolce&Gabbana also noted that link to tradition and heritage when they stated "Returning to where everything began".

Figure 7. [Left] Foreground - Dolce&Gabbana Alta Moda, Special Piece.
Lace mantle embroidered with sequins, gold-wound thread, soutache, jet beading, and crystals.
Figure 8. [Right] Dolce&Gabbana Alta Moda, Siracusa Collection, F/W 2022/23.
Lurex duchesse hooded coat embroidered with handmade elements in Lurex and lamé, embellished with a Sacred Heart on the back embroidered with crystals.

ROOM 4: DEVOTION

(S/S 20; F/W 22-23)

The Sacred Heart, a symbol of catholic devotion, is also a popular form of Sicilian art and culture, and it was the centrepiece of Room 4. Black and gold being the colour palette, this room was a drawcard for selfies, with a queue of people lined up to take photos. The display was enclosed in a space that resembled a small chapel, lace printed plexiglass framed the space on two sides, and sumptuous gates framed the front of the small chapel like structure.

The installation very much reflected small chapels housed within Sicilian churches, such as within the Cattedrale di Palermo, which was founded in 1185 and which also had multiple additions to the architectural structure and the contents over the centuries[3]. Reverend David Tracy sums up the influence that ecclesiastical icons and art can have on creatives in his essay included in the *Heavenly Bodies, From Michelangelo To Dolce & Gabbana* (2018, p44), states "the highly visual culture of Catholicism is a natural influence for all manner of artists, fashion designers not exempted."

While the relationship to the church is palpable, curator Müller reminds the viewer on the Room 4 exhibition wall label, as well as in the exhibition catalogue (Müller p110) "in this exhibition the [Sacred] heart reminds us that creativity cannot happen without a sense of giving oneself, fully, to artistic enterprise."

Figure 9. View of Room 5, Ateliers, ornaments and volumes.

ROOM 5: ATELIERS, ORNAMENTS AND VOLUMES

(F/W 12-13; F/W 22-23; F/W 23-24)

Through another velvet curtain, to what is arguably the most inspiring room for a person who makes fashion or textiles or jewellery or anything really.

Room 5 is the heart of the exhibition, the homage to the craftspeople who D&G work with. Decked out as an atelier, a fashion designing and making studio, there was a multitude of fashion studio bits and pieces. From the half-sized mannequins in dresses, to the rolls of fabric, to the in-progress pad stitched tailored collars, the embroidery, the piles of exquisite haberdashery, boning, ribbons, soutache, tassels, feathers and more. Screens on the wall opposite the atelier showed craftspeople, jewellers, tailors, and more, all generously sharing the process of creating works for Alta Moda, Alta Sartoria and Alta Gioielleria.

I was captivated, and I wasn't the only one, an elderly lady with what looked like her daughter was oohing and aahing as she watched the different craftspeople describe how to make flowers, how to undertake tambour embroidery, how to measure and cut a menswear shirt. She told me she was a sewer and was so happy to see this work.

I did not want to ever leave this room; it felt like home.

Figure 10. [Left] View of Room 6, Architectural and pictorial.
Figure 11. [Right] Dolce&Gabbana Alta Moda, Napoli Collection, F/W 2016/17.
Coat in Lurex brocade entirely embroidered with crystals, sequins, bugle beads and stones.
Handbag (in case) - Dolce & Gabbana Gold Acrylic and Leather Baroque Dolce Box Top Handle Bag.

ROOM 6: ARCHITECTURAL AND PICTORIAL

(F/W 16-17; S/S 19; S/S 20)

When I finally left the Atelier, I entered another realm, an enormous immersive space of video mapped meaningful (to the design duo) renaissance architecture and art works, as they adorned the fashions standing in the centre of the room. Along with the transfixing projections of architecture and art deconstructing in front of my eyes were a collection of designs that drew on a multitude of architectural artistic inspirations from Italy over the ages, from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. The designs were intricately and lavishly created, with craftspeople being in synch with the designers, and using every exquisite technique imaginable to create a cacophony of textures and colours, on what were mostly quite classic (and wearable) fashions. The little bags here and there reminded me of the receptacles holding the corporeal parts of significant people, as found in Italian churches. The fabrications were numerous, bugle beads, cotton, cross stitch, crystals, frogging, fur, gemstones, gold wound thread, intarsia knit, pearls, piping, plissé Lurex, sequins, silk, soutache, tassels, Velvet, wool and gold plating. Yes, all those things, sometimes all at once - so luxurious, so garish, so elegant, so wearable, so Italian and so subversive.

ROOM 7: SICILIAN TRADITIONS

(F/W 17-18)

The bright wonderful spirit that is Sicily, was presented through vibrant fashions, that reflect the painted work that artisans in traditional hand painted Sicilian ceramics known as majolica, first produced in 1350, and the Sicilian horse drawn cart (*carretto siciliano*), had surpassed their original function of a means of transport, became an elaborately decorated mobile teller of stories and tales, and in the context of this exhibition, had progressed to become a cultural icon, reflecting Italianicity of D&G, their clothes, and indeed the assorted non fashion products. As the exhibition visitor entered the room, traditional Sicilian music played loudly, I felt as if I had been transported to a Sicilian festival, as this more than any other room in the exhibition radiated Sicily. It was hard to stand still with the soundtrack blaring. Another attendee danced around the Sicilian cart, laughing joyously.

What a bodily experience, what a pleasure that D&G and the curator offered to attendees. The vivacious fashions were exotic, and perhaps these were the most extreme of the entire collection, by room 7, I was a D&G devotee. Of note was the huge feather headdresses, reflecting the headdresses horses wear when drawing the painted carts, and the colossal hand painted dresses, with tambourines attached to the sleeves! These fashions were paint-the-town-red central. Also in the gallery space were Sicilian products D&G designed in collaboration with the manufacturers, the Bialetti coffeemaker, the SMEG refrigerator. In this gallery, like the atelier, D&G paid homage to artisans, the tile painters and the cart painters. These artisans were filmed working, and the films again generously shared with gallery attendees. This was a tactile space, attendees could walk on and touch the tiles and the cart, in a gallery setting touching is unusual and it was exhilarating.

And I was taken to Sicily, I love everything Sicily, and I loved this room.

Figure 12. [Above] Sicilian Traditions, Alta Moda, Palermo Collection, F/W 2017-18.
Dresses composed of a Mikado bodice enriched with decorative elements of the Sicilian cart and of a hand painted double gazar skirt;
Headpieces made with feathers of different qualities, inspired by the harnesses of Sicilian cart horses.
Note the painted tiles and horse cart in the image.

Figure 13. [Right] Sicilian Traditions, Dolce&Gabbana SMEG refrigerators.
Note the painted tiles in the image.

Figure 14. White Baroque. Dolce&Gabbana Alta Moda, Siracusa Collection, F/W 2022-23.
Left, Cotton duchesse jacket with sculpted sleeves embellished with two cherubs in Mikado, horsehair and wadding.
Centre, Alta Moda Siracusa Collection, F/W 2022-23.
Mikado jacket with cutwork embroidery and silk thread. Chantilly lace and chiffon corset dress.
Right, Alta Satoria Ostuni Collection, F/W 2023-24. Armour created by 3D printing thermoplastic polyurethane with metallic side closures, hand painted with Grottaglie ceramic effect. Silk trousers.
(Note that Grottaglie is an area of Apulia where ceramics used in stucco originate).

ROOM 8: WHITE BAROQUE

(F/W 22-23; F/W 23/24)

More Sicilian crafts-person-ship was the inspiration for Room 8. This time in a tribute to Giacomo Serpotta[4], master of the Baroque period. The wearable baroque stucco work appeared to be ripped from baroque architecture and then transformed into thoroughly modern sculpted fashions that reminded me of 3D printed clothing or accessories. Most of the fashions weren't 3D printed, they were sculpted using very traditional tailoring methods, with horsehair fabric and wadding to add shape and volume to the angels, their wings, the sumptuous flowers, volutes, and swirls of cloth. There was an unusual smell in this room, which perhaps was from the stunning 3D printed thermoplastic polyurethane menswear. This room was another tribute to craftspeople, and how the past present and future are intertwined.

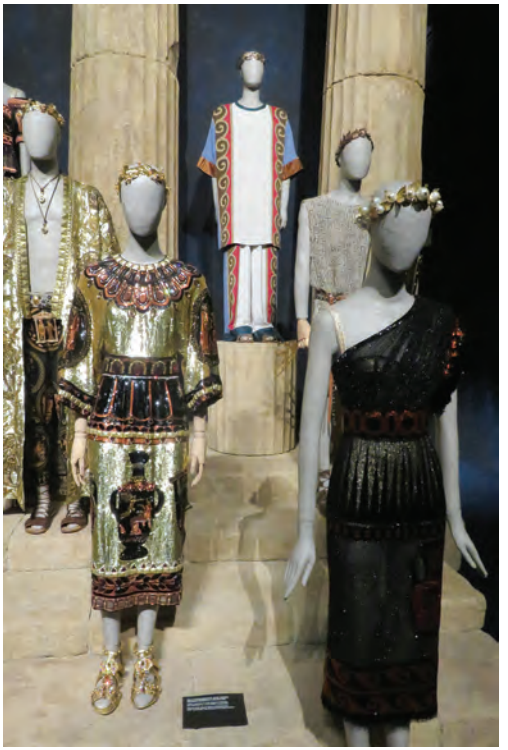

Figure 15. [Left] Dream of Divinity first half of the room. Dolce&Gabbana Alta Moda Agrigento Collection, F/W 2019-20 and Alta Satoria Sciacca Collection, FW 2019-20. Assorted materials.
Figure 16. [Right] Dream of Divinity, first half of the room.
Dolce&Gabbana Alta Satoria Marzamemi Collection, F/W 2022-23.
Jewelled armour entirely embroidered with crystals,gold wound thread and seed beads. Dyed denim jeans with rips.

ROOM 9: DREAM OF DIVINITY

(F/W 17-18; F/W 19-20; F/W 21-22)

Displayed much like a Cinecittà film set, there were two halves to this exhibition room.

In the first half of the space a standout with assorted fashion designs, posed as if sculptures of Roman emperors such as Augustus or Hadrian held high on their plinths, as seen in and around Rome to this day. In this context, these mannequins were then dressed in contemporary fashions. Diagonally across the room were women looking like goddesses. When discussing womenswear that looked very much like attire for goddesses, Müller (2024, p183) stated, "Descending from their lofty thrones, the queens of antiquity…"

The simple masculine and feminine shapes comprised of complex patchworked textiles suggested Byzantine mosaics and art. Reminiscent of statues seen in and around Rome's Colosseum, the menswear stood out as very edgy contemporary street fashion with wide appeal, slashed denim trousers worn with outrageous sumptuous jewellery as headdresses and upper body wear, and with simple roman sandals, elegant and irreverent.

Figure 17. Dream of Divinity, second half of the room. Alta Moda and Alta Sartoria room showing designs inspired by Italian byzantine basilicas and art created in assorted fabrications, textiles and textile techniques.

"Dream of Divinity" was divided in two, and around the corner were yet more pieces inspired by the rich subject matter, Byzantine mosaics and art. There was one out of place piece at the back, a men's suit in a geometric fabric, which to me harked of a Split Enz costume. A highlight was the intarsia fur sweatshirt and matching pants. The assorted fabrications, textiles and textile techniques – appliqué, beads, brocade, bugle beads, cabochons, chiffon, coins, cotton, crepe, cross stich, crystals, embroidery, fur, georgette, gold wrapped thread, intarsia fur, jet, lace, lamé, Lurex, moiré, patchwork, sequins, silk, stones, tulle, velvet, wool – and the very simple shapes that carried these over the top textile treatments together highlighted the importance of the history, and also the crafts persons skills and abilities to bring these inspirations to life, through fashion, in such a contemporary way.

Figure 18. [Left] The Opera. Dolce&Gabbana Alta Moda Milano Opera Collection, S/S 2020. Assorted materials.
Figure 19. [Right] The Opera. Dolce&Gabbana Alta Moda Milano Opera Collection, S/S 2020.
Assorted materials including the intarsia fur coat in mink on organza inspired by Attila
and embellished with sable and marmot details.

ROOM 10: OPERA

(S/S 16; S/S 17; S/S 20)

This gallery, decked out like an Italian theatre, I was struck by the discordance, in the looks, colours, textiles, everything, as stated in the exhibition catalogue, (2024, p211) "a phantasmagorical journey through legendary operas". Again, like room one, things were placed so close to each other I couldn't get a clear view, and again, the second time around I saw new delights, including the wonderful table laden with sweet treats to the entice these opera characters. D&G took inspiration from several of their favourite operas and created costumes, which were also wearable for special occasions. Of note was the fur coat, patched together in random shapes, and in the most delicious colours. A patchwork made to look that wonderful must have been made by a person with exceptional design and furrier skills. Also noteworthy were the Mikado triplets with the plumed headdresses and coloured tights… I could list everything in this room, but I won't.

As a counterpoint, opposite the display of lavish womenswear was a row of men in strict formal opera wear, many of the menswear pieces were designed and made for the exhibition. Behind them, was a ticket office with ticket vendor, and snappily dressed people further behind, all set for the opera. These attentions to details were impressive.

Figure 20. Dolce&Gabbana Alta Moda Milano Collection, S/S 2013.
Macramé lace dress on a pannier structure with gold filagree corset and crown,
and tulle veil embellished with lace inserts.

I did not want the experience of D&G to end, I wanted to view the entire splendid and inspiring exhibition again and again and again. To extend the experience, I attempted to avoid the exit and slip back through another velvet curtain which led directly into the first room, "Fatto a Mano, the Hand Made." A security person halted me, and I was directed back to the start of the exhibition, and assured that I could do another loop, which of course I did, twice.

Just past Room 10, the "Opera," was a solitary wedding dress, the traditional fashion look to conclude a fashion show. As beautiful as it was, and with such attention to detail, I was somewhat overwhelmed by what I had experienced in the "Opera," and by the security persons intervention, I missed the detail of the bold (to look at) and yet delicate (in its making and parts) of the wedding dress. In my third time around, I can confirm that it was indeed a great beauty, and a tribute to the hearts and hands behind D&G and behind this exhibition.

CONCLUSION

What stands out with Dolce & Gabbana's exhibition, is that the designers or perhaps more accurately, the brands, total commitment to their craftspeople and makers, and their culture, and Italian-ness.

It sounds like there was no downside to this exhibition, well yes there was, my phone ran out of storage space and then battery and then so did my camera. Remember to take a battery pack.

After Milan, Dolce and Gabbana exhibition reformed at the Grand Palais, Paris, France, January to April 2025, and then to Palazzo Esposizioni Roma, Italy, May 14th to August 13th.

The exhibition was developed by the curator Florence Müller to be a touring exhibition, and therefore I am sure that we will see *From the Heart to the Hands* on show across the globe.

Travelling exhibitions can evolve, either because of a different space to work in, or perhaps after reflecting on previous exhibitions. Be assured that due to the limitation of words in this review, as I have not divulged all the delights, that is, it is not a spoiler. I strongly recommend anyone interested in fashion, in textiles, in craft, in culture, in telling one's story through fashion and design, please do take the time to experience this sumptuous Italian-ness and Italianicity of 'From the Heart to the Hands: Dolce & Gabbana' if the opportunity presents itself. And furthermore, I encourage you to use this opportunity to reflect on how each of our cultures and traditional crafts and arts do and could inspire our creative practices and our fashion- wearing. If you are creative of any kind, this exhibition reminds us to remember to look to our traditions, and as the theme of this issue of Scope states, past, present and future are intertwined.

While I've seen and worn many fantastical and inspiring fashions, from fashion students and emerging designers, and in clothes destined for fashion shows or exhibitions only, at this exhibition there were two things that stood out.

Firstly, D&G consistently credited and honoured the crafts people who through their high level of expertise and skill were the gifted conduits from D&Gs hearts to the realised fashions, and who patently understood the heart of the brand, and the hearts of Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana themselves. Secondly, all the fashions, no matter how fanciful, were wearable, by humans, in their not so everyday lives, and isn't wearing the number one reason for fashion?

From the *Heart to the Hands* stole my heart and roused my hands.

Dr Margo Barton (ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8055-3630) is a Professor and Head of Fashion Programmes, School of Design, Otago Polytechnic, Dunedin, New Zealand. She is an educator, milliner, fashion designer and fashion show creative director and often brings these elements together in the form of participatory projects where she examines how we use fashion to form our identities, from a design practitioner and from a viewer and wearer's perspective. Through an ongoing participatory wearing project, Citizen Stylist, Barton explores the discourse between the designer and the wearer, and wearer and fashion and the opportunities and challenges that this dialogue promotes. Margo is actively involved in the wider fashion communities in New Zealand and internationally. She is the Creative Director and Co-Chair of iD Dunedin Fashion, including the iD International Emerging Designer Awards and is a board member of the International Foundation of Fashion Technology Institutes (IFFTI) and chair of the IFFTI membership committee.

* *Exhibition Catalogue Collections Designations*

F/W: Fall/Winter, year,

S/S: Spring/Summer, year

1 Panzani is an Italian food producer. https://www.panzani.com/

2 Anh Duong is a French American artist, actress, and model. Duong is known for her portraits, including self-portraits, many of these are of model and fashion friends met while modelling. Duong met Dolce and Gabbana at the start of their careers, and when she made the move to artist, Dolce and Gabbana started to collect Duong's works. Duong stated in a YouTube interview that she "wanted to introduce fashion into my paintings" and noted that the clothes were always a part of portraiture in the past. https://youtu.be/d7UsI3aeqy8?si=xY3M1SVfi4qq-20b

3 Cattedrale di Palermo a cathedral in Palermo, Italy was founded in 1185. It contains a mix of architectural styles and ornamentations, reflecting the eras the additions occurred in, for example mosaics of the Madonna from the 13th Century, a portal added in the 16th Century, monuments on walls from the early 18th century, a meridian / observatory added in 1801 and more. Throughout its history the Cattedrale di Palermo has also become a receptacle of devotional treasures, many of them encrusted in gold, and often highlighting the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a symbol of Christian devotion.

4 Giacomo Serpotta , was a master Scillian sculptor of the Baroque period. Born in Palermo in 1656 , Serpotta was famous for using stucco, a technique that harnesses fine plaster and other compounds. Serpotta died in Palermo in 1732.

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