

DISRUPTION, AIMS TO CAPTURE CURRENT PRACTICES AND RESEARCH ON FASHION

Stella Lange and Margo Barton

Kia ora koutou and welcome to this, the third special fashion issue of *Scope (Art & Design)*. This follows the initial two issues published in 2017 and 2019, and like those, builds upon a successful fashion symposium organised by fashion staff at Otago Polytechnic's School of Design to coincide with Dunedin's iD Fashion Week.

As with the symposium, the theme of this special issue is 'Fashion Forward >> Disruption', and like the previous themes is dedicated to analysing, reflecting, and critiquing ever-changing local and international fashion systems. Once again sustainability is a central concern of the fashion practitioners, designers and custodians who are featured in this issue. This focus reflects not just our fashion communities continued and increasing need for systematic changes, but also importance of sustainability to Otago Polytechnic's strategic framework.

Our first issue in 2017 mentioned rapid technological development, incessant war, political turbulence, geological disasters and global warming, situating Fashion as a constant human endeavour that reacts and proposes a new future in the face of constant change. Throughout all of these recent events fashion continues to function as a mirror and mediator of human activity. Fashion signals that humans have the capacity to connect, trade, explore, question and most of all to create a response to the world in which we live. Since our last issue, the world has experienced the global interruption of Covid-19. The disruption to fashion systems of production, design, distribution, education, and research has mirrored that witnessed across all human activity in 2020 and 2021. Yet with all of that at play in our world the content in this issue is positive and tells a story of how fashion has potential to improve our worlds.

As editors, we are delighted to present this special issue, which presents a range of fashion and design activity that showcases a bright future for fashion. Fashion is, to those outside the practice, often seen as mere aesthetics. This issue provides yet more evidence that fashion practices have the potential to both critique and improve the world. Increasingly fashion designers are rethinking how fashion can contribute in sustainable ways. Fashion designing is and always has been a deeply considered activity, requiring research, experimentation, innovation, reflection, and sharing of the results with others. This issue has a special focus on a deeper understanding of the many processes of fashion design, presenting the work of numerous emerging fashion designers, alongside retrospective analysis of contemporary and historical fashion designers practices and contexts.

With local, national, and global travel restrictions in place for much of 2020, fashion events reinvented their format and continued to delight and surprise audiences. Those audiences became global, many were trapped at home in 'lock-down' and using their screens to experience the wider world. The annual iD International Emerging Designer Awards was early to transform their event, and instead of cancelling, partnered with a film production company, Natural History New Zealand to work with the selected finalist designers to create a movie highlighting the designers processes and final designs. Sixteen fashion professionals, members of the international jury, used the movie as a means of judging, no matter where they were located in the world. Once judging was completed, anyone who wished to view the movie that highlighted emerging fashion designers as they worked remotely, with often

limited resources and equipment. Both designers and viewers were connected globally through the video sharing their superlative fashion designs, and through this they gained insights into the designers work, and fashion practice, insights that would be unlikely at a customary fashion parade. The movie fashion show was deemed successful, and adopted for both the 2020 and the 2021 iD International Awards events.

Reimagining the iD Awards as a movie prompted the annual iD Dunedin Fashion Symposium, the annual scholarly fashion event established in 2010 as a public fashion design lecture series held alongside iD Dunedin Fashion Week, and since 2017 as a symposium, to transform in response. The result was *Critical Making: Contemporary Fashion Practices Online Symposium Exhibition (2020)*, an online platform that highlighted the physical material practices of a global set of innovative and inspirational emerging and established fashion and fashion-related designers, a compendium of the symposium is featured within this publication. We encourage you to visit the Contemporary Fashion Practices website to hear and see the designers presenting their critical fashion practices.

Following a covid induced postponement of the exhibition, *Fashion Forward >> Disruption through Design in 2020*, an exhibition featuring a selection of iD International Emerging Fashion finalists from 2005 > 2019 were displayed alongside pieces from the Otago Museum's collection and a recent example from the five local fashion designers called 'the godmothers'. This featured exhibition identifies fashion as a disruptor; an agent of change; with the potential to challenge beliefs, identity, and to communicate fashion designers hopes for the shape of the world using fashion – and another example of fashion overcoming the global disruptions as it often does, by innovating, reinterpreting, and adapting with the resources to hand. Please visit the exhibition via this virtual walk-through link.

As Editors of this issue we introduced a new sub-section, *Designer Process*, to capture and make visible the processes used by fashion practitioners. The importance of making process visible is key to considering Fashion as more than mere artefacts or interpreting fashion as a purely visual mode of communication. Far too often the designers voice has been considered a sound-bite to accompany the visual of a show or collection. The process of designing has received less attention than the finished works. We hope this section will become a regular feature here in *Scope (Art & Design)* and also in other publications. This sub-section was Inspired by Hywel Davis's *Fashion Designers Sketchbooks 1 & 2* where the process of dozens of fashion designers is made visible.

Designer process pages highlight both the similarities and differences in how designer's work. Some combine more traditional forms of research such as deeper reading of literature alongside 'making'. Others like Simon Swale share insights on how they recognise the importance of reflection and thinking, identifying 'Critical Walking' as part of their practice. Mentioned also is the importance of sharing with a community of practice to understand how others see ones work. As fashion designers explore a wide range of creative tools and new sustainably processes and materials – these Designer Process pages have a role in making visible what it means to be a practicing Fashion Designer.

Embracing diversity is increasingly important, in fashion, in education, in life. Indigenous and non-binary identities are not only recognised but now actively celebrated. Such a shift is overdue, and widespread. Individuals are often the site of these shifts, and many use their time in fashion education to explore what it means to be bi-cultural, through their undergraduate Fashion Design Projects. More and more in Aotearoa an adult exploring a dual Māori /Pākehā heritage is an important aspect of the fashion design practice of many individuals. Fashion is a unique research space to conceptualise and explore hybridity, diaspora, and lived-experience through practice.

Fashion research, has at times, seemingly forgotten that there is a wearer; and instead focussed on the designer or the way in which fashion 'works' as an object for a viewer. We are delighted to include two works that highlight the experiences of fashion wearers. Rebekah Harman's work seeks to tell the stories of those who wear fashion. Her interviews echo Kate Fletchers *Craft of Use* project and reflect wearers here in New Zealand. Knowledge of the value many wearers place on their clothes provides important considerations for those researching fashion. Likewise wearers of fashion have always used new and old pieces to construct unique identities for themselves proving that fashion practice extends from supply and production to owning and wearing. Jenny Aimers presents

a first-person account of fashion that she identifies as heterotopia, alternative fashion she wore as a young adult in late punk era Dunedin. Her stories remind us that fashion practice exists and is important beyond and outside of the commodified offerings of retail stores and runways. This is highly relevant in a contemporary fashion world where slow and local are increasingly considered important tools in a sustainable fashion toolkit for both designers, and wearers.

Fashion Design is about imagining the next innovation and celebrating identity. Fashion is not new, and its practice has played an important role in New Zealand's smaller provinces as it has across the world and throughout history. Designers and entrepreneurs used Fashion Design to create identities, and economic stability for themselves within their communities. Fashion Design Graduates join the Fashion community as Designers, and practitioners, armed with ideas both for design and practice, graduates offer fresh perspectives on what fashion is and how it can be done. As more and more practitioners identify how to work sustainability over the next few decades descriptive updates like this will become part of a history of sustainable fashion design evolution.

This special edition covers fashion from a broad range of lenses, emerging designer; historical, practitioner; wearer, curatorial, and personal. What is key here is the acknowledgement of the very different ways in which all our authors have engaged with fashion in this academic space – fashion practices are plural, overlap, are informed by our pasts and always seek to make our futures together better in some way. We are excited to share the content with you and invite you to explore the content in this issue.

Our thanks go to all involved in making this special issue of *Scope (Art & Design)* possible. Firstly to all the authors whose work here contributes to new knowledge and understandings for what fashion is, can, and will become in the future. A deep and heartfelt thanks also to all the reviewers, including those members of the editorial board, who so generously give their time and expertise to ensure *Scope (Art & Design)* offers the highest quality of academic credibility. To Paul Sorrel and Joanna Wernham, whose work as copy editor and designer respectively adds greatly to your reading pleasure and helps make this journal such a visually rewarding experience. Thank you both – it was a pleasure to work with you once again.

This publication would not be possible without the funding from the Otago Polytechnic Research Office so thanks go also to their staff and for Otago Polytechnic's dedication to promoting research excellence. Final thanks go to Pam McKinlay and Jenny Aimers for their support and organisation and for keeping us all on track!

Link to: iD International Awards

[https://www.viva.co.nz/
article/fashion/watch-the-winners-of-the-id-international-emerging-designer-awards-2021/](https://www.viva.co.nz/article/fashion/watch-the-winners-of-the-id-international-emerging-designer-awards-2021/)

Link to: Contemporary Fashion Practices

<https://www.contemporaryfashionpractices.com/>
