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The Utilisation of Non-Clothing Materials Within The Fashion System

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Submitted to Glasgow School of Art for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.
December 2003 © Jeanne Tan, 2003

Declaration. I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of the university or other institute of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

Date: December 2003

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The Utilisation of Non-Clothing Materials Within the Fashion System

Abstract. This practice-based thesis approaches the practitioner's process of utilising non-clothing materials within the fashion system from two angles, one as the theoretical researcher and the other that of the research practitioner. The former perspective provides an a study of the contexts in which non-clothing materials have been utilised within the fashion system thus far, while the latter perspective seeks to investigate the practitioner's design rationale and process.

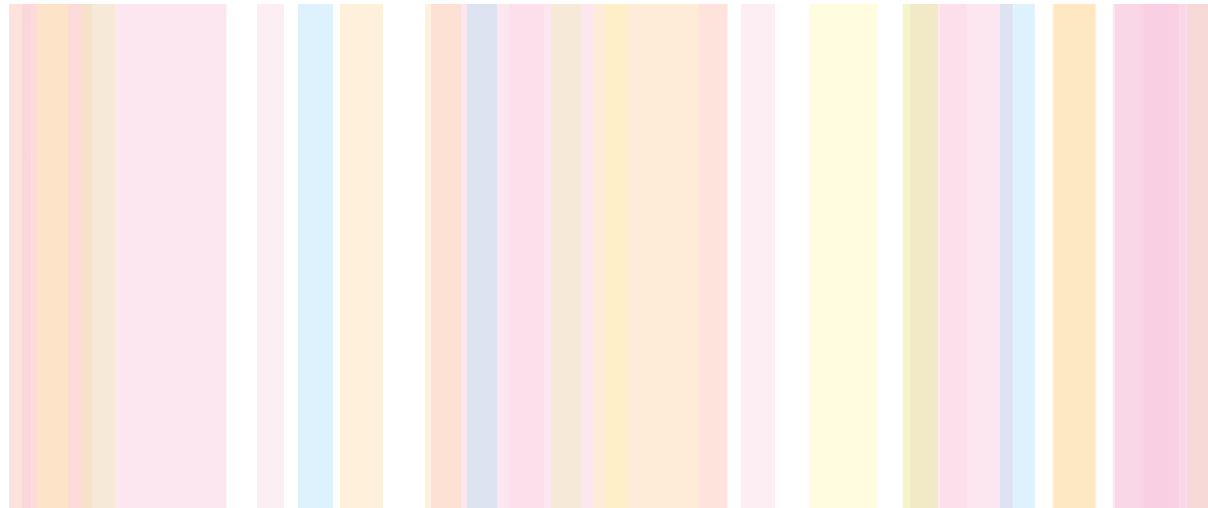
The theoretical aspect of the research shows a spectrum of practitioners and explores the different ways in which they have utilised non-clothing materials within the fashion system. Non-clothing materials have been utilised within many different categories of fashion. This theoretical aspect while providing a brief historical overview focuses mainly on the contemporary context for the utilisation of non-clothing materials within the fashion system, and also examines the works and design processes of current practitioners in this area of design.

The findings of this research indicate that there is a lack of fashion design literature rooted in the practitioner's perspective. As most of the authors of existing literature have no experience as practitioners, they tend to focus on the end products rather than the development of the creative process. Using self as the main case study, the practice aspect of this research investigates the design rationale and process involved in the creation of an inspirational catwalk collection by integrating non-clothing materials into fashion. It begins with the research, sourcing, experimenting, juxtaposing and combining of a variety of non-clothing materials, and continues with the development of various design and construction methods to create garment silhouettes and new materials simultaneously. This practical aspect provides first hand data of the design rationale and process as well as the market considerations of the fashion system.

Finally, the research demonstrates increasing demand for individualistic and unique products. It also confirms that a target audience does exist within the fashion system for fashion items created from non-clothing materials.

This thesis seeks to make a contribution towards existing knowledge about the creative design process of practitioners utilising non-clothing materials within the fashion system. It illustrates that the design process is a systematic evolution of ideas and experiments, which includes a critical relationship between material and design. The research findings also suggest a need for better representation of the fashion practitioner's perspective and process within fashion literature to create a more informed understanding of the fashion system.

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Please note all original audio, video tapes, questionnaires, interview transcripts, samples and sketchbooks are available upon request.

This thesis consists of a printed dissertation, a CD-ROM consisting of the written dissertation, digital photos of the sketchbooks ,samples, mini-documentary of the design process, a website and an exhibition (held in conjunction with the VIVA at The Newberry Gallery in September 2003)

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Thesis Outline. This written dissertation consists of seven chapters. The first chapter, introduces the research and states the research objectives, rationale, originality and research questions.

Chapter two looks at the methodology undertaken to help answer the research questions and achieve the objectives. It was a combination of both textual and non-textual research. The main approach was via action research, which was applied by using self as case study. Other than the theoretical research, which provided data for the literature review and part of the contextual review, the other methods which were applied to explore the non-textual elements of the research were case studies, experiments, interviews and questionnaires.

The third chapter consists of the literature review. It reviews an extensive range of books and articles relevant to this area of research. In order to provide a range of 'views', there was a conscious effort to review articles by authors from a variety of backgrounds for example practitioners, historians, curators and theorists. Certain focal themes emerged from the existing literature. Therefore for the sake of clarity, the review was structured around these themes.

Chapter four is the contextual review. The contextual review, while focusing on a contemporary review of current research and practice from the practitioner's perspective consists of an overview of the different positions of the practitioners who utilise non-clothing materials within the fashion system and a brief a historical review. This section looks at the different ways in which many practitioners of different backgrounds (for example artists, designers, high street designers and craftsmen) have utilised non-clothing materials and citing the practice of several practitioners within this area of research. As part of the contemporary review, interviews were conducted with seven practitioners of different backgrounds and three high street designers. Other than looking at the different non-clothing materials and methods that they have used, the interviews also provide insights

into the practitioner's rationale and process.

Chapter five is the work process report. Using self as the case study for practice, this chapter details the design process for creating f.apothecary. It both describes and reflects on every stage of the practitioner's development and design process,

The sixth chapter is essentially a continuation of the work process report with a focus on the resolution of the practical work. It describes and reflects on the final viable materials and methods. This chapter also analyses questionnaire results. Questionnaires were conducted on models and the fashion show audience to enable the research questions, (which required objective sources) to be answered. Both chapters help to trace the practical process from the initial inspiration to the fashion show and co-ordination of the exhibitions. Due to the visual nature of the designer's process, a mini video documentary was made in conjunction with chapters five and six, to provide a visual demonstration of the process.

Finally, chapter seven concludes and reflects upon key research findings, the contribution to new knowledge and the strengths and weaknesses of the research.

In its final format, the Ph.d submission consists of several components, the written dissertation, practical work (consisting of development work, sketchbooks and the collection entitled f.apothecary), an exhibition, a website and a CD-ROM. The CD-Rom consists of a PDF version of the textual dissertation, comprehensive illustrations which shows the development sketchbooks and samples, short video clips of the process, a fashion show video clip, a mini-documentary "The making of f.apothecary", and a link to the researcher's website. The website provides a summarised version of the research and acts as a visual and interactive format of the research.



Chapter 1

Introduction

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Chapter 1: Introduction

“Using unusual materials in textiles gives it an edge when used properly. Innovation is also a very important factor when using such materials.”

(Roet 2000: Interviews)

This practice-based research explores the utilisation of non-clothing materials within the fashion system, with a focus on the practitioner’s design rationale and process when using such materials.

Fashion and textile designers have often utilised non-clothing materials to create new, innovative textiles and fashion designs. Within the context of this thesis, ‘non-clothing’ materials are defined as unconventional non-textile materials that have little association with general perceptions of fashion. Relevant areas of the ‘fashion system’ within this research span art, haute couture, mass-market fashion and all divisions in between. (Please refer to Fig.4b)

The utilisation of non-clothing materials in the fashion system is approached from two research perspectives, theoretical and practical. Although each role’s objectives may appear ‘at odds’, the two however are intrinsically linked and mutually supportive.

1.1: Objectives

As the research is approached from two perspectives, for the sake of clarity, the objectives of the research are divided into its respective categories. The same person undertakes the roles of the theoretical researcher and the research practitioner within the context of this research. And both roles and areas of research are equally significant.

The Theoretical Researcher's Role And Objectives

The theoretical researcher's perspective informs the contextual review of non-clothing materials in the fashion system. The researcher's objectives are:

- To explore how practitioners have integrated non-clothing materials into the fashion system and the rationale for using such materials.
- To investigate unconventional fabrics and non-clothing materials appropriate to the research.
- To review current examples of non-clothing materials within fashion.

The Research Practitioner's Role And Objectives

The practitioner's role will provide insights into the practitioner's rationale and design process when considering and using non-clothing materials. The practitioner's objectives are:

- To create an inspirational catwalk fashion collection using non-clothing materials.
- To experiment with a range of unorthodox media and materials to obtain 'new' fabrics for the collection.
- To integrate the new materials and consider the silhouette simultaneously when developing the garment.
- To make both the theoretical and practical research accessible to a wide range of audience ranging from researchers to the general public.

(For the sake of clarity within the text, the theoretical researcher and the research practitioner roles are referred to as the researcher and practitioner.)

As this is essentially an inspirational catwalk collection, wearability within the context of this collection is defined as being able to be worn by a model on a catwalk and for publicity, photo shoot purposes including being displayed on garment stands for exhibition purposes.

1.2: Rationale For The Research

“The ‘90’s were about uniform dressing...When we turned the millennium, the whole fashion vocabulary changed so radically. Consumers wanted to look different; it became all about individuality.”

Jaqui Lividini, Senior Vice President of Saks Fifth Ave. (Betts 2003: 116)

There is a potential market/ audience who want alternatives to mass produced ‘mechanised’ products. The hand finished touches and treatments currently seen in high street fashion such as Urban Outfitters, Diesel and the above quotation evidence this. This demand has resulted in more individual and unique products developed from experimental approaches and created with unusual material. Pertinent exhibitions in recent years, such as, “100 Years of Fashion” at the Hayward Gallery in 1998, “Fabric of Fashion” at the Crafts Council 2001 and “Radical Fashion” at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2001 have also contributed to the interest in ‘materials’ fashion.

The work of prominent designers utilising non-clothing materials is discussed in journals such as Fashion Theory and in publications¹ about the fashion system. However, the existing literature does reveal a gap within this particular area of research. Most of the research available is provided from a ‘third persons’ perspective and there is virtually no literature available written by practitioners. Often the literature focuses on the final creations rather than the designer’s rationale or process. Indeed when the work is explored in depth, writers, such as Carvellaro and Warwick (Please refer to Chapter 3 p32), due to their lack of experience as practitioners often over analyse and fail to deal with the true nature of the design process.

This research is important because:

- It provides a balanced view to ‘fashion outsiders’ (Please refer to Griffiths on p34-35) by studying the design process from both the researcher’s

and practitioner's perspective.

- It explores how and why practitioners (including self) use and integrate non-clothing materials into fashion.
- It investigates the potential of unconventional fabrics and non-fashion materials through experimentation, development and resolution of garments made using non-clothing materials.
- It reviews and analyses a range of practitioners using such materials.
- It creates a higher level of awareness amongst the general public about the practitioner's process and rationale by creative methods of presentation.

The intended audience for this research is practitioners, theorists, students, fashion and textiles researchers and the general public who are interested in fashion. This research could be used in a number of ways:

- To demonstrate the creative potential of utilising innovative and unusual materials for fashion.
- To create a greater level of understanding and appreciation of the experimental and development process in design.
- To demonstrate the symbiotic relationship between 'material' and 'garment'.
- As a reference, showing viable research methods for Design practice-based research.
- As a professional practice reference guide for creating a catwalk collection and fashion exhibitions.
- As a review of a range of practitioners within this particular field.

1.3 Research Questions

To achieve the aims of this research, questions that need to be explored are:

Theory

- 1) How and why do practitioners utilise non-clothing materials within the fashion system?
- 2) What kinds of theories have been developed in relation to the utilisation of non-clothing materials within the fashion system?
- 3) How has the fashion practitioner's perspective been explored in the literature?

Research Questions With Theory And Practice Overlaps.

- 4) What are the 'wearability' implications of such fabrics?
- 5) What is the distinction between the conceptual fashion practitioner and the conceptual artist/ designer?
- 6) How does the development of the material or the garment design influence the other?

Practice

- 7) What types of media, materials and garments are feasible for experimentation?
- 8) How might practical experiments best be conducted and recorded?
- 9) Which processes are the most appropriate for experimentation? (Including 'conventional' versus 'unconventional'.)
- 10) How do the media and process affect the aesthetic of the final garments?
- 11) How might the practical research best reach the public domain?

Endnotes

- 1 For example "The Golden Dustman: A Critical Evaluation of the work of Martin Margiela" by Caroline Evans (1998) pg 21-22 and Radical Fashion edited by Claire Wilcox (2001) pg 20-21 respectively.



Chapter 2

Methodology

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2.4	Practice-Based Research (Action Research, Case Study And Questionnaires)	14
2.5	Reflection And Critique On Methodology	

Chapter 2: Methodology

The research for “The utilisation of non-clothing materials within the fashion system” was approached from the dual perspectives of the theoretical researcher and the research practitioner. There is a tension here in that one perspective must not be allowed to overtly influence the other; and the stance taken seeks to maintain a balance of methods and processes with the aim of coherently reflecting the researcher /practitioner dynamic so that one effectively enhances the other.

2.1: Outline And Justification Of Main Methods And Specific Research Techniques

The research strategies employed cover a range from the qualitative to the quantitative and have been selected to comprise part of a wider view of the field from the process of making and recording through to the structured analysis of data.

The main research activity has involved investigating the context in which non-clothing materials have been utilised within the fashion system. A review of the literature, interviews, and case studies provided a range of interlocking qualitative data and the central importance of this way of acquiring knowledge can be summarised as follows:

- Many of the phenomena studied can only (or mainly) be described and analysed in terms of meaning and experience and so cannot be translated into numerical data and would lose their essential quality if they were.
- As major components of the data are collated through the actual experience of the researcher they provide the ‘insider’ phenomenological perspective: indispensable data, which can be obtained in no other way.
- This range of experiences will result in data that is valid and rich.

- It is process orientated: key to understanding the nature and rationale of the outcome. Because the data are rich and detailed they are also narrowly focused.

However, when the research is looking for a range of responses from a bigger audience within a short space of time (Gilham 2000:6) a quantitative 'survey' approach is adopted. A semi-structured questionnaire¹ was used to gather responses for the research collection at the fashion show. The advantages of the quantitative approach in this case are:

- It is more likely to be representative of the views of others.
- Whilst it is, in a sense 'superficial' it is capable of replication and verification.

As with any practice integrated Ph.D. research, it is impossible to make a simple distinction between fieldwork and deskwork. Fieldwork involves the process of collating data from outside sources, for example, market research, trade fairs and seminars. Deskwork as the term implies, provides research data that are derived from the analysis of and reflection on textual or visual sources, for example literature reviews or images of varied fashion outputs. As a practice-based inquiry, both strategies have to be employed in order to keep abreast of the latest developments within the fast-moving design industry, and to position the researcher's original work within it.

In order to implement the investigative process the researcher has found it valid to think in terms of action research; a combination of case study, experiment and questionnaires employed to answer the research questions. This combination encompasses all the different aspects that were required for the research.

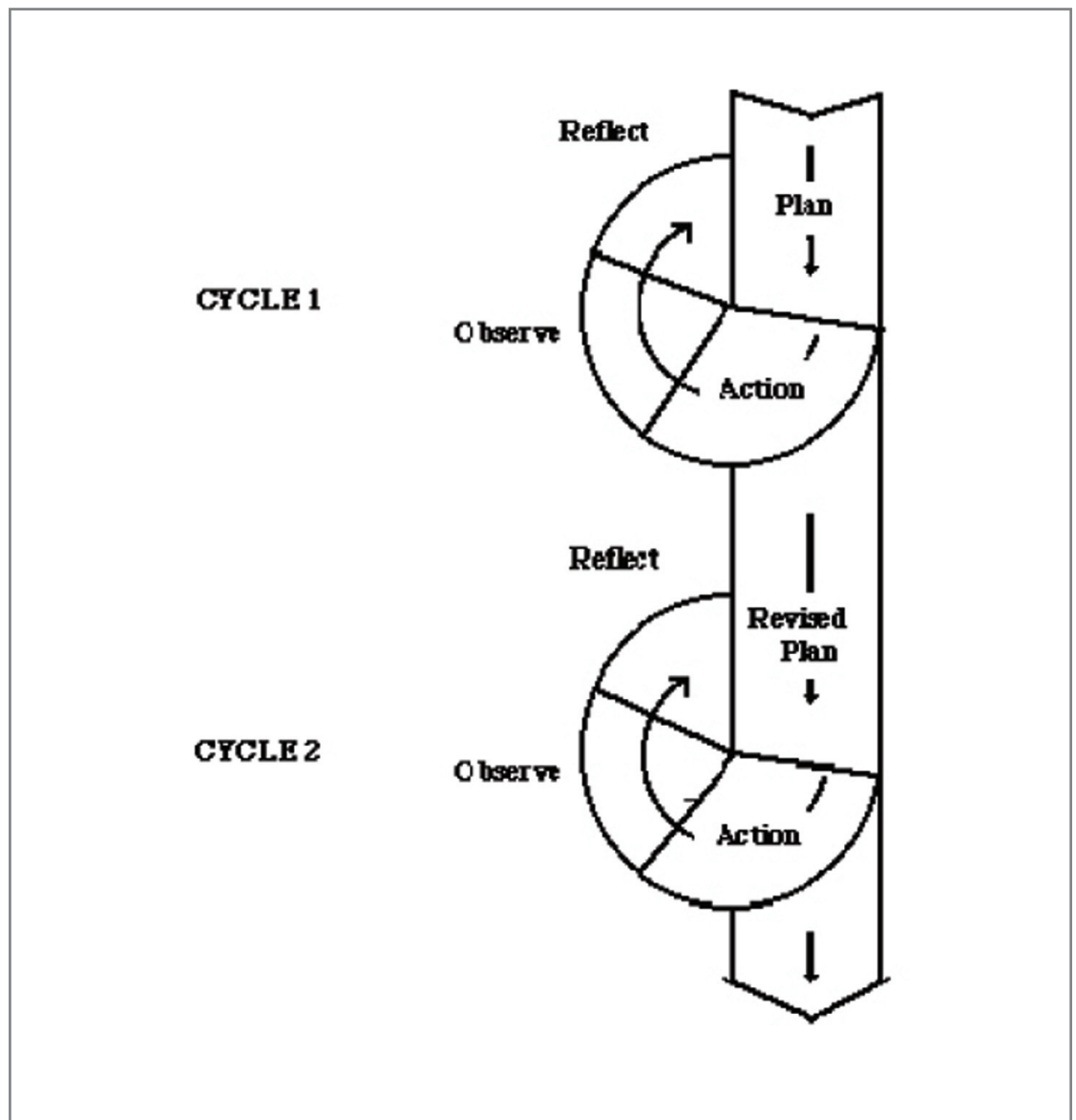


Fig.2.1a:
McLassac's chart
showing the cyclic
nature of action
research.

Action research is a qualitative research method originally developed in the 1970's as a way of focusing research on social problems: it is one in which researchers 'learn by doing' (O'Brien 1998:2). It offers a systematic approach to the definition, solution and evaluation of the research questions. There are four basic stages to the action research process:

- 1) Plan- Identifying questions
- 2) Act- Collecting information, analysing, sharing results
- 3) Observe
- 4) Reflect

Advantages of adopting an action research approach for the present topics are:

- It is context specific and future orientated.
- It is applied as an 'experimental' approach in harmony with the 'inquisitive' nature of the research.
- It aims at the enhancement and gaining of new knowledge of relevance to practice.

Action research provides a framework for the practitioner to record 'first hand' experiences and make improvements: relevant here because part of the researcher/ practitioner's objective was to produce new creations, in the form of an inspirational fashion collection. In order to create new products, various experiments were conducted by juxtaposing, manipulating, embellishing, combining, deconstructing and reconstructing different media and materials for comparative evaluation using different criteria, including for example, production methods versus design intentions.

In order to record and reflect on the detailed role of the researcher/practitioner, case study research methods were employed. In this case, the researcher's personal practical research will be taken as the main case study. Case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed. (Yin1994: 1) The case study method enables the researcher to observe, study and analyse her own process as a practitioner.

Advantages of using case study methods are:

- Case studies are founded on a range of experience and evidence, which is very relevant to the ethos of action research and can be more persuasive in an argument.
- They provide a range of data, which can be subjected to further analysis as lines of enquiry develop.

In order to complement the case study, and place it in a wider context, questionnaires were also used. Questionnaires usually involve asking generally large and representative groups of people relatively straightforward questions. This approach was applied where responses were being sought for the practical component of the research. The main advantage is that this provides a sample of respondents and produces an outsider perspective.

2.2: Application Of Research Methods And Techniques.

Specific methods apart the research itself can be described as falling into two main sections within the contextual research, which involves a review of the research literature and of existing professional practice including market trends.

Contextual Research

The contextual research aims to consider theoretical issues, in particular the relationship between theory and practice. The contextual review aims to answer the following research questions:

- How and why do practitioners utilise non-clothing materials within the fashion system?
- What kinds of theories have been developed in relation to the utilisation of non-clothing materials within the fashion system?
- How has the fashion practitioner's perspective been explored in the literature?
- What are the 'wearability' implications of such fabrics?
- What is the distinction between the conceptual fashion practitioner and the conceptual artist?
- How does the development of the material or the garment design influence each other?

Literature Review (Deskwork and Qualitative Research)

This phase of research was conducted using library facilities available at Glasgow School of Art and various other libraries in Newcastle and Glasgow. Exhibitions, conferences, internet and archive resources were also explored and accessed.

The aim of the literature review was to conduct a background search of the relevant literature available within this area of research. This incorporated searching for text on practitioner's utilising non-clothing materials, their creative process and also publications, which had broached the subject. The results were then cross-referenced or applied to other aspects of the research. For example to help contextualise the area of research and by applying relevant information to the researcher's own practice.

The literature review aims to answer the following questions:

- How and why do practitioners utilise non-clothing materials within the fashion system?
- What kinds of theories have been developed in relation to such utilisation of non-clothing materials in the fashion system?
- How has the fashion practitioner's perspective been explored in the literature?

Research Into The Context Of Professional Practice

Material for the research into current professional practice was obtained from visits to trade fairs, from the internet and publications like 'Textile View', 'Draper's Record' and 'Craft' magazines. Interviews were conducted with fellow practitioners within the field because they were in a position to provide 'first hand' experience and evidence in relation to their own experiments in practice.

The contemporary practice and market research, which is an on-going process, makes it possible for the researcher:

- To keep abreast of the latest developments in the field.
- To widen the researcher's knowledge of the research topic.
- To understand existing and past practitioners' work.
- To avoid repeating the same investigation undertaken by other practitioners in the field.
- To establish clearer definitions of the different roles practitioners play within the system.

The information collected in this phase was recorded via notes, reviews, magazine extracts and photography.

2.3: Analysis And Application Of Contextual Research

From the information gained from the contextual research, a diagrammatic overview of practitioners' (who utilise non-clothing materials) positions within the fashion system. (Fig.4.2a) The overview focuses on the positions occupied by practitioners utilising non-clothing materials for fashion and helps clarify the position occupied by the researcher's own practice. Candidates of the research interviews were selected based on their represented positions. This ensured that the wide spectrum of the fashion system was represented.

2.4: Practice-Based Research

(Action Research, Case Study And Questionnaires)

As previously explained, the practical research takes an action research perspective using the case study method. This provides perspectives from both inside and outside the design process. The design process is recorded and experiments are reviewed and reflected on in order to explore the role of intuition, accident, novelty and unusual juxtapositions. The researcher's personal practice provides

the detailed data, which forms the core of the research investigation.

This practical research aimed to explore the following key questions:

- What types of media, materials and garments are feasible for experimentation in this area?
- How might practical experiments best be conducted and recorded?
- Which processes are the most appropriate for experimentation? (Including 'conventional' versus 'unconventional'.)
- How do the media and process affect the aesthetic of the final garments?
- How might the practical research best reach the public domain?

Practical experiments were conducted with a range of orthodox and unorthodox media and materials using a variety of orthodox and unorthodox approaches:

- Data from the experiments were collected in the form of a systematic work process journal in the form of sketchbooks (with samples and photography) and a textual report in Chapter 5 and 6.
- Results of the experiments were analysed and selected. Samples were selected for further development based on their aesthetic appeal and fashion potential.
- Results were shared with colleagues and supervisors for discussion, feedback and critique.
- From the discussions and feedback the successful experiments were developed further on the dress stand before evolving into the final fashion pieces.

Questionnaires were employed as a means of answering research questions, which required 'objective' sources. (i.e. views, judgments and understanding other than that of the researcher.) The broad questions were:

- What are the 'wearability' implications of such fabrics?

- How do the media and process affect the aesthetic of the final garments?

Research Analysis

The analysis of contextual and practical research findings was taken further in that the information collated and results of the experiments were shared with focus groups and practitioners within the field to obtain further feedback as well as to generate further interest and awareness of the research.

2.5: Reflection And Critique Of Methodology

The action research approach worked very well within the context of this practice-based research, in particular because the research was investigating the practitioner's role, which was found to be under represented in existing literature. This personal-problem solving approach enabled the researcher to gain 'first hand' data, which could not have been obtained in any other way without extraordinary efforts.

Document analysis, where existing publications relevant to the subject were reviewed proved to be very useful. Even though the literature available did not cover some vital areas of the research, it did inform the practitioner's perspective and process. It helped to emphasise and highlight the importance of the topic.

Research interviews were conducted via mail, e-mail, fax, and telephone or on a face-to-face basis. Telephone and personal interviews yielded the best results as they enabled the researcher to adapt to the interviewees' responses and ask questions which delved deeper in to the subject. Other questionnaires were conducted via mail, e-mail and fax because practical circumstances ruled out more direct approaches. All the interviewees are busy practitioners and some were

hindered by their schedules, the technology available to them, geographic location or a language barrier. These interviews were conducted more like an unstructured questionnaire where there were open-ended questions. Although they yielded the necessary information they did not give as much depth as the other interviews. In other words 'richer' data would have been obtained if the researcher had been able to conduct personal interviews with each of the participants.

The practical research was recorded via a work process journal in the form of sketchbooks, photos, audio and videotapes. This journal worked very well especially as the creative process was highly visual and was better demonstrated through images as opposed to text.

Questionnaires were conducted at the Glasgow School of Art Fashion Show in order to collate information from relatively objective sources. This proved to be a highly appropriate event at which to conduct the questionnaire, as all participants would have seen the collection presented in its intended form. Fresh from seeing the collection, the participants were very receptive and willing to do the questionnaires even when some of them were recorded on video. The researcher was aware that the positive results might have been a result of conducting the questionnaire on a favourably disposed audience. Naturally, due to their interest in fashion the audience would have been more receptive to new fashion concepts. But the research is aimed at the target market of practitioners, theorists, students, fashion and textiles researchers and the general public who are interested in fashion thus conducting the questionnaires on the audience was justifiable.

Endnotes

1 Questionnaires with multiple choice and open-ended questions. (Gilham 2000: 3)



Chapter 3

Literature Review

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Chapter 3: Literature Review

One of the key objectives of this research is to explore how various practitioners have integrated the use of unorthodox materials into their designs and investigate how these then challenge the pre-conceptions of contemporary fashion. This chapter reviews existing publications (relevant to this research) by a variety of authors from different backgrounds, for example theorists, historians, curators and practitioners.

The themes which emerge from the literature on this subject are:

- The use of non-fashion materials in fashion
- The relationship between art/ craft and fashion
- Can fashion be considered art?
- The design process, the development of materials based on experiment and the construction of the final garment.
- Fabrics and materials as visual signs.
- Practitioners' perspectives.

Thus for the sake of clarity the literature review will be structured around the six emergent themes.

3.1: The Use Of Non-Clothing Materials In Fashion

The use of non-clothing materials in fashion has a long history. In many cases, the materials were chosen for their practical qualities, for example, metal chain mail or the use of gold and jewel embroidery on Byzantine garments. Historically, the most prominent period in which fashion designers utilised unorthodox materials was in the 1960's. Many designers started experimenting with unusual materials in their reaction to the dramatic changes that were happening in science and on the emergent media culture stage.

Paco Rabanne, presented controversial collections made from Rhodoid (Plastic) and metal. (Lobenthall 1990: 63) He went against traditions by making dresses with pliers instead of sewing with needle and thread. His work epitomises the radical experimentation that was happening during that period. (The history of the utilisation of non-clothing materials is further discussed in section 4.1 p39)

While researching the literature on this topic, it was difficult to find a definitive text that looks solely at the history of the use of materials in fashion. Most texts discuss fashion either by time period or by designer. Chronological fashion literature tends to focus on the silhouettes and the construction of the garments while designer books tend to be written in collaboration with the designer. These books provided illustrations of past collections, glamorising the work and often resulting in a one-dimensional study, which seldom explored the reasoning or process behind the choice of materials.

*Radical Fashion*¹, edited by fashion curator, Claire Wilcox (2001), includes many key examples of contemporary fashion designers utilising non-clothing materials in fashion for example designers such as Rei Kawakubo, Martin Margiela, Hussein Chalayan and Junya Watanabe. Within Clark's article, Looking Forward Historical Futurism, she compares the work of these avant-garde fashion designers to early 20th Century Futurist experimentation and studies their use of non-clothing materials within the context of fine art history.

The key points that Clark noted were similarities in their ethos, concepts, use of materials and use of clothing as an 'active canvas'. The two Futurist theories highlighted are their belief in radical change, their abhorrence of nostalgia and their belief in the utilisation of non-clothing materials.

"The age of silk must end in dress as that of marble is in architectural constructions... we will throw the doors open in the ateliers to cardboard, aluminium....gas...fresh plants...living animals..."

(Volt 1920 as quoted in Clark 2001: 14)

I agree with Clark's observation, Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons (with her protégé, Junya Watanabe) also observes this exclusion of history within her design concepts.

"because she has never explained her fashion philosophy like western designers do, she is free to roam across the frontiers of design without the fear of ideological contradictions... Miss Kawakubo starts her collection each season from nothing, from zero. She has sought to break away from conventional form."

(Coleridge 1988:89)

Like the Futurists, many contemporary designers have embraced the unorthodox utilisation of materials. For example, Margiela experimented with mould and bacteria (Fig.4.2h) for his exhibition 'La Maison Martin Margiela 9/4/1615' in 1998 (Evans 1998: 77), and Chalayan presented dresses made from sugar glass (Fig.4.2g) for his Spring/ Summer 2001 collection. (Wilcox 2001:68)

Clark also highlighted significant historical collaborations between artists and designers, for example Futurist , Thayaht and Madame Vionnet in the 1920's and Dali with Schiaparelli in the 1930's. In current times we have seen collaborations between Rei Kawakubo and artist Cindy Sherman (Loreck 2002: 265) and Sherman had collaborated on many occasions with fashion magazines like Harpers Bazaar to showcase the designs of various designers like Dior and Calvin Klein. (Loreck 2002: 262)

Clark noted key similarities between fashion and Futurism but the intentions and motivations of the designers were not explored. Had the designers made these garments in an attempt to associate their work with art? Or have they created them just for the sake of creating something novel?

In *The Golden Dustman: A Critical Evaluation Of The Work Of Martin Margiela*, Evans² (1998), the fashion theorist, discusses her views on the work of the Belgian deconstructivist designer, Margiela, using the work he presented at the

exhibition 'La Maison Martin Margiela 9/4/1615' at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen (a museum for art and design), Rotterdam, as a focal point. She considers Margiela's use of mould, bacteria and second hand clothing to be "changing the rules of time" (Evans 1998:77) Using mould and bacteria, he grew something old overnight and challenged the stereotype of 'old'. Margiela also elevates the status of second hand clothes, which were traditionally clothing for the poor, and converts them into desirable commodities for the consumers of designer fashion. Margiela's fashion shows with their lack of glamour, had more in common with art installations and performances. By juxtaposing Margiela's work with Baudelaire's poem in which the designer is compared to the 'poet/ ragpicker'. (Evans 1998: 91 as quoted from Benjamin 1997) Evans further confirms her view of Margiela's work as having parallel status to art. Similar to Clark, Evans was quick to link Margiela's work to art without seeking out the designer's own true intentions and motivations. This again, resulted in a one-dimensional discussion of the materials themselves.

The paper, *Intertwining Hair And Clothing, Art And Fashion* was presented at the 'Textiles An Afterthought' Symposium³ by Emily Bates (2000). Bates came from a textile background and was trained at Glasgow School of Art. In this paper, she discusses her role as a practitioner, the motivation and practical processes behind her use of human hair in the construction of dresses. She revealed personal experiences with her own hair throughout her life together with a painting of Mary Magdalene as the starting points for her work. She wanted to explore the relationship between women's external self-presentation and their 'crowning glory'.

Most of Bates work had been exhibited within a fine art context and had always been accepted as art. This ready acceptance of these garments as art could be related to the scale on which these dresses⁴ are presented. The dress's distorted proportion gives it the appearance of a piece of sculpture rather than

the appearance of a garment. Even though Bates had exhibited her work within both fashion and textile art contexts, she is adamant that she is not a fashion designer. She had decided to stop exhibiting her work within the fashion context as she felt that such exhibitions confused the intentions and main concerns of her work. But also argued that,

“Classifications should be secondary to the reality of the object”

(Beattie 1999:103)

The other literature that had been reviewed had been written from the third person's perspective, thus Bate's paper had revealed an insightful view from the 'practitioner's world'. We can thus see that the initial motivation could be very personal and does not have to relate to any specific theoretical framework for it to be considered as art although intellectual context cannot be ignored.

Techno Textiles by Braddock and O'Mahony (1998) is one of the key publications within this area of research. The authors come from lecturing and consultancy textile technology backgrounds respectively. They explore various innovations within the technology of textiles, especially the advances in synthetic fibres and the text traces the utilisation of hi-tech fabrics within different contexts like art, fashion and architecture. As the title indicated there is a heavy emphasis on technology, detailing the exciting integration of materials for example titanium coating on polyamide and stainless steel coating on polyester. The book also discusses the work of some textile designers and artists, who were working on a low-tech level. The authors put an emphasis on textile advances, which would be impossible without collaboration between individual experimental designers and big industrial textile companies.

By looking at the implications of using techno textiles within different arenas, the authors highlight the importance of research and experimentation with unorthodox materials. Many of these experiments result in useful products, which can improve

the quality of life. For example Stone Island's Bronze Tela (Fig.F4j) jacket which provides slash proof protection.

3.2: The Relationship Between Art And Fashion

There has been a long relationship between art and fashion, through the intermingling resulting from collaborations between designers and artists or the provision of a source of inspiration for each other. There were many cases where we can see pastiches of art on the catwalk; a well-known example would be Yves Saint Laurent's 1965 Mondrian dresses. This relationship between the two is not just a 'one way street', as highlighted in Marie Simon's, *Fashion in Art*, (1995) fashion also influences art. She looked at the new links between fashion, art and literature in the 19th Century. The most prominent link was with portrait painting. This art form became very popular in the 19th Century with more portraits being painted than any other genre during this period. Portraits were also seen as status symbols, not only was the technique employed by the painter important what the sitter was wearing was deemed to be equally important. Simon explores the role of Carolou-Duran who would play the role of the modern stylist by attending the couturier's fitting with the sitter to ensure the right outfit was chosen. (Simon 1995: 142) Every detail was scrutinised to ensure the right image was portrayed to the viewer. Simon's highlighting of this two-way relationship is vital as it provides a different perspective on the relationship. Since art has often been portrayed in the popular media as the 'dominant', influencing factor for fashion, this perspective has managed to balance the scales and enable the viewer to consider them as of equal status.

In *British Fashion Design: Rag Trade or Image Industry?* , McRobbie (1998), through a series of interviews and documentation, observed the roles that fashion designers played within the fashion, art and craft contexts⁵. Both art and craft

work simultaneously within fashion,

“The craft element is relegated to the more private vocabularies of the practitioners, while art provides an identity in the public domain.”

(1998:102)

She claimed, recent graduates were more likely to retain the ‘artistic integrity’ within the work and more likely to position their designer role within the world of art. Art is viewed as a source of legitimisation because it is widely accepted as high culture. McRobbie explains this common use of art vocabulary within fashion. Firstly she claims that it justifies poor turnovers, as traditionally artists had always had a disinterest in the commercial value. Secondly, the art vocabulary is utilised to explain the work to customers.

In my view much of the evidence supports McRobbie’s analysis. The first point was consistent with the case of Chalayan, who despite critical acclaims for his designs (which were presented within fashion and artistic contexts) filed for liquidation in 2001⁶. In relation to the second point we saw the ironic use of ‘design integrity’ and ‘art vocabulary’ which, created the ‘win-win’ scenario for budding designers. If they fail they can use art as a means of retaining their integrity and if the consumers accept them, they use it as a powerful marketing tool! The most prominent designer who has successfully utilised this marketing tool is Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons. Her design ethos infuses the collections and presentations of her shops are consistent with her principles. Her shop in the Axis building in Tokyo was described thus:

“The place was bare.... She bowed and slid back a frosted-glass panel in the back to reveal thin stacks of shirts...”

(Coleridge 1988:81)

The shop resembled an art gallery more than a typical fashion retail shop, and yet, Kawakubo possesses a huge fashion empire with millions of dollars turnover every year.

Despite the similarities shared between both designers especially, in their high regard for design form and concept. I would like to point out their distinct differences, which can be illustrated in the quotes below.

Chalayan, “I just happen to symbolise my ideas with clothes. I am a fashion designer technically because my clothes are sold in shops... some of the clothes should be hung on a wall and... perhaps that would remind you of things like an ornament does.”

(Tuck 1995:28 as quoted in McRobbie 1998:109)

Kawakubo, “ I realise clothes have to be worn and sold to a certain number of people. That’s the difference between a painter or sculptor and a clothing designer.”

(Coleridge 1988:83)

Both quotes act as revealing insights into both designers, whilst Kawakubo clearly understands the need for a financially viable aspect to her work in order to continue her fashion experiments. Chalayan had clearly retained an ‘artist’s vision’ which might have been the reason behind his financial downfall.

3.3: Can Fashion Be Considered Art?

As we can see from the previous reviews, the relationship between art, textiles and fashion is tangible. Various aspects of fashion and art do share common characteristics for example both are highly visual, but ultimately the question must be answered, can fashion be considered as art?

In *The Greatest Show On Earth: A Look At Contemporary Fashion Shows And Their Relationship To Performance Art*. Duggan (2001) reflects on how performance art and fashion shows communicate on the same visual level. The article analyses the design ethos and the presentation techniques in terms of catwalk shows of

the designers included in this study. Many similarities were observed between the performance artist and the fashion designer. First, their high regard for concepts and forms above all other factors, second, their willingness to continuously explore and experiment with the same topic, third, the disregard for the work's commercial value, fourth, the catwalk shows that have been included in this article have been highly acclaimed by art critics. Duggan looks at these catwalk shows as "a new hybrid of performance art". She proposes that the recent blurring of the boundaries between fashion and art represents a move towards the integration of fashion and performance.

"The definition of art is ever changing and re-configured"

(Wollen 1999:7)

I would like to argue, that there is no need to invent the idea of integration of fashion and performance. Fashion is performance.

"Clothes make not the man but the image of man"

(Hollander 1993: xv)

Since the existence of clothing, it has always been seen as a medium to express the status and personality of the wearer.

Sung Bok Kim in *Is Fashion Art?* (1998) addresses the ultimate question. By analysing the literature written about fashion from authors of different backgrounds, she collated data on their collective arguments and views. Like Duggan, she acknowledges the ever-changing roles of art and fashion and the blurring of boundaries. She also notes how different backgrounds influence writers' preferences for different presentation techniques. Fashion leaders expressed contradictory views of the status of fashion on both ends of the spectrum. Diana Vreeland the ex-editor of American Vogue regards fashion as a craft while Richard Martin the fashion curator at the Costume Institute sees "No definition between fashion and art." Kim deduces that due to the broadened conceptions of art,

fashion has been established as a subject within the post-modern art world. With the blurring of boundaries, can fashion be labelled as an ‘undecidable’⁷?

It was interesting to see the contradictory views expressed by the fashion and art professionals. Even Margiela, (whose work had been included in most of the above literature on art and fashion) had displayed his work within the art context and was highly acclaimed by the art world, which regards his work as a craft. But as a designer he also likes to “leave the interpretation of our work to others.” (Derycke and Van De Veire 1999:13) Does this imply that since different people have different opinions, the viewer or consumer determines the status of fashion and that the designer is a mere cipher?

3.4: The Design Process, The Development Of Materials Based On Experiment And The Construction Of The Final Garment.

Fashion creations have often been subjected to theorising from a variety of academic perspectives. Fashion journalists have always critiqued the silhouette, colours and construction of garments. However, the design process, its development and construction are consistently excluded from thorough studies of the fashion system. The lack of literature in this area might be because designers have rarely talked about, or even recorded this so-called intuitive process.

“Intuition is the power of knowing or understanding something immediately without reasoning or being taught.”

(Oxford Dictionary 2000:420)

The term intuition is often used by practitioners in a rather sub conscious way. According to the research interviews conducted with practitioners and the article on Shelly Fox (Please refer to p73 and 30 respectively), they often refer to their creative process as intuitive and natural which does not need any reasoning yet they frequently describe their design process as a systematic evolution of ideas.

This rather subconscious way of describing the vital creative process might be because the practitioners did not know how to articulate the highly personal and detailed process or they had not reflected on the fundamental roots of their work. Practitioners were asked to explain more about their creative process in the research interviews. (Please refer to section 4.3)

Nonetheless, there is some published literature on the designer's design process. One example is *Issey Miyake*, by Mark Holborn (1995). In this book, through references to Miyake's lectures and interviews, Holborn studies the designer's design and material development. Miyake is renowned for his innovative use of textiles and technology; often his works are filled with contrasts.

“ On one hand he is highly radical in his invention, following a credo that clothes can be made from anything...On the other hand he is discovering functional, comfortable clothing for the working day.”

(Holborn 1995: 16)

Holborn traces the rationale behind Miyake's choice of materials to his design concepts and his cultural background. His design vocabulary consists of simplicity of form, simplification and functionality. Miyake's design ethos; simplicity of form was also traced back to his eastern roots. Holborn asserts that this minimalist approach to garments was clearly derived from the kimono.

In conjunction with Holborn's book, the research also consulted recent articles about Miyake at the Designboom website. This is an attempt to link Holborn's theories to Miyake's current work. It is also worthwhile to note that Miyake returned to his first design concept, 'A Piece Of Cloth – APOC' in the late 90's with textile designer Dai Fujiwara. Miyake and Fujiwara researched ways in which a garment can be produced from a continuous piece of cloth without the use of seams. The final products of the research were exhibited at the Vitra Design Museum in Berlin in June 2001. A computerised knitting machine produced the garments/ fabrics. Due to the sophisticated knitting technology, the seams of the garment would already be joined together and all that is left to do is for the consumer to cut it

out and customise it. In this project, we can see that Miyake's choice of materials and techniques was clearly dictated by his design ethos, which in turn might have been influenced by his cultural background.

*Fabric of Fashion*⁸, edited by Brett Rogers (2000), is published in conjunction with an exhibition. The exhibition was curated by Sarah Braddock and Marie O'Mahony, the authors of *Techno Textiles*, two key voices within this area of research. The book explored the design processes of 15 fashion practitioners from different backgrounds. (For example, textile designers, fashion designers and milliners.) The common vocabulary that runs through the work of these practitioners is their willingness to experiment and develop. Of the fifteen practitioners, the description of Shelly Fox's design process was the most vivid within the book.

Rogers observed that Fox's studio had the atmosphere of a laboratory where fabrics are manipulated and subjected to experiment, indeed the best results came in the form of 'happy' accidents. Often, Fox's collections are made up of unusual materials for example Elastoplasts, which originate in the medical industry. The fabric has been transformed beyond recognition by manipulation, stretching and burning. Felted wool is one of the staple fabrics within Fox's collections. The felt is subjected to different manipulations for a fresh interpretation every season. Fox explains the appeal of felt.

"It's a fabric I don't feel precious about when I'm using it. It can withstand a lot, Its so rough and ready and feels like a piece of paper with rough raw edges."

(Rogers 2000: Shelly Fox)

Fox's comments show that the choice of technique and materials is actually not 'intuitive'. The designer can usually provide a detailed explanation, which is often the product of a well thought out design process. It also shows that practitioners are more concerned about the physical properties of the materials rather than the potential 'art' theories that they might relate to. This publication does successfully provide an insight into the practitioner's creative process. It has demonstrated that

the design process is not just 'intuitive' and designers can also be articulate and reflective about their creative process. Some of the probable reasons why there is a lack of such literature are firstly: the writers of fashion literature had never probed designers with such questions. (Most writers in this field do not come from design practice backgrounds, which may explain their greater interest in final products as opposed to the design process.) Secondly, some designers might not be as eloquent in expressing their design process; it may depend on the type of fashion education that they have been subjected to. The 'intuition' of the designer's creative process is definitely more than a natural process and this subject was explored in more depth through the observation of the researcher's design practice.

Other than technical texts on pattern cutting and sewing techniques; the rationale behind the creative and construction process is not discussed in detail in the available literature. The emphasis on the final product threatens to overshadow the design, development and construction processes. Ironically without these vital processes, there will be no end products.

3.5: Fabrics And Materials As Visual Signs

Clearly there is a very intimate relationship between fabric and body. Clothing is an integral part of everyday life for most people in the world. Each individual will have their own interpretation and perception of their relationship with clothing. Fabrics and clothing are often used as a form of 'shield' or mask for the naked body and these 'shields' are used as a way of both expressing and perceiving the personalities of the wearer.

Seeing Through Clothes, by Anne Hollander (1993) looks at the historical background and the sociological implications of garments. She traces the use of drapery from the Archaic Greeks to the Renaissance by referencing various artworks.

“Since the look of western clothes is so closely allied to its changing image in art...”

(Hollander 1993: xv)

The term ‘Drapery’ is used to describe clothing in this book. It is noted that in ancient civilisations such as Ancient Greek, the use of fabric to drape around oneself is used both as a symbol of status and a means of conveying the persona of the wearer to the viewer. As underwear was not used, there was an intimate awareness of clothes. Hollander observes that the use of drapery and clothing must have been a vital factor that influences Greek behaviour and mannerisms thus resulting in their sense of the aesthetic within their artwork. In Greek statues, there is a heavy emphasis on nudes and drapery. It is also noted that the use of drapery in Greek statues is not only a covering, by contrast in many male nudes, drapery is used to emphasise nakedness. Drapery is also used as a means to accentuate the naked body beneath the fabric.

“The beauty of cloth must have had no less appeal to the imagination than the beauty of the nude...”

(Hollander 1998:5)

Hollander’s observations help reinforce the intimate relationship between the fabric and the body. When the fabric is used to cover a body, both are seen as one entity. The garment and the body will be viewed as a whole thus; the messages that the outer layer conveys will also represent the body within.

In the article, *Shielding and Sprawling Garments*, Carvellaro and Warwick (1998) explore the fabrication of garments in relation to the theories of many different philosophers. Both writers come from English studies background, which might explain their highly theoretical approach to the creative process. Warwick and Carvellaro explored the relationship between the fabric and the body together with the viewer’s perspective on fabrication. In this article, garments are seen as both an extension to and a frame for the human body. The frame in this case, is

considered as a frame similar to a context such as a building being an architectural frame where negative and positive spaces are being explored.

How does the wearer choose his or her attire? Barthes summarises this process with, “all species of materials end by being catalogued under an opposition of the type... light/ heavy. (Barthes 1990: 172) According to Barthes, certain materials will convey different qualities about the wearer to the viewer. Materials with a light image will convey refinement or being ethereal and materials with a heavy image will convey qualities like coarseness, being uncouth or solemn and authoritative. The material of the garment is perceived as the ‘second skin’ of the wearer, which has the ability to convey different aspects of the wearer’s personality.

“Fashion can convert any sentence into the sign it has chosen, its power of significance is unlimited.”

(Barthes 1990: 259-260)

The writers note the difficulty for a particular material to be associated with a specific connotation due to the ever-changing fashion climate. Carvellaro and Warwick deduce that depending on the individual viewer, different materials will have different meanings and functions depending on which aspect the viewer would like to concentrate on. This was evident in the practice element of this research when fashion show audiences were asked about the researcher’s collection f.apothecary. As the audience responded positively to various aspects of the collection for example design and colour. (Please refer to Chapter 6 p145)

Whilst most writers have concentrated on the impact of the garment’s silhouette and overall construction, these writers when linked to Barthes’ semiotic theories have managed to successfully convey the importance of fabrication. Thus highlighting the significance of both the viewer’s perception and the intuitive act of choosing the fabrication of the garment for both wearer and designer.

3.6: Practitioner's Perspectives

While collating information for this review, it became clear that there is very little published material available on the contemporary use of non-clothing materials in fashion. Most of the publications were fashion review articles by fashion writers. Most of the articles concentrate on the new silhouettes and colours of the season and in most cases, the non-clothing materials were mentioned only because of their novelty value. The designer's decisions and the creative motivations and processes behind their choice of unusual materials were seldom explored. The other kinds of literature dealing with this area are books published in conjunction with exhibitions and exhibition catalogues. These publications tend to immediately juxtapose the fashion on display with art. They are quick to relate the work to various art movements as if by doing so it legitimises the presence of fashion within the 'world of art'. Again, the true motivations behind the designers' work were not explored.

In the article, *The Invisible Man*, Ian Griffiths (2000) explores this 'gap' within the literature available on fashion. It should be noted that Griffiths⁹ is one of the few people within the fashion industry who is both an academic and a practising designer. He notes the lack of literature written by practitioners citing the journal, *Fashion Theory* as an example, he observes that in the years since first publication, none of the articles had been written by a practitioner. In a comparison of the reading lists of first year fashion students and architects, he reveals that out of thirty-nine fashion titles only one was written by an author who had practised as a designer. By contrast, half of the architecture list was written by practising architects. Griffiths notes a link between this 'gap' in literature and the low status 'suffered' by fashion practitioners.

"Just as sometimes fashion is sometimes regarded as occupying the lowest intellectual rung of the design ladder..."

(Griffiths 2000:70)

In attempts to write academically about fashion, the subject matter is often taken into a different context in order to position fashion in relation to fine art. This often results in literature that does not look at fashion designers from a fashion perspective and does not provide the information that the reader needs. Griffiths notes,

“the paucity of texts...I mean texts which objectively consider research, design process, realisation and distribution of clothes in relation to their meaning.”

(Griffiths 2000: 83)

This lack of literature written from the practitioner's perspective has rendered practitioners invisible and in this article Griffiths emphasises the need for such literature. Fashion is at risk of being overshadowed by theories; practitioners must express and articulate their creative process in order to provide ‘fashion outsiders’ with a balanced view of the fashion system. This article has highlighted and reinforced the need for detailed studies of the fashion system from the practitioner's perspective as undertaken in this research.

3.7: Results And Discussion Of Literature Review

In terms of the literature reviewed, it is clear that the most insightful literature contained interviews with designers and various other professionals practising within the fashion context. Interviews proved to be successful in penetrating the glamorised facade of the designers to find their true thoughts and motivations. Unfortunately, few such interviews have been published, because some designers are not articulate about their design process or some designers have just chosen to be more elusive. For example fashion designer, Margiela (Derycke and Van De Veire 1999: 12)

Due to my own role as a practitioner, I found the most perceptive voices within this field to be those of fellow practitioners. This review has analysed various

writings from authors of different backgrounds. (Theorists, curators, historians and practitioners.) The different perspectives on the same topic were found to be valuable but in some cases the authors were perceived to be 'over-analysing'. (For example Carvellaro and White 1998) Frequently they seem to have forgotten the true nature of the creative process, which can be exploratory, accidental and evolutionary. Often, new findings are discovered by remarkably simple means and do not need a complex theory to legitimise them.

Endnotes

- 1 Radical Fashion is a book published in conjunction with the exhibition an exhibition held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2001. The book is made up of contributions from various writers from the fashion theory and fashion history backgrounds.
- 2 Evans, has written extensively on deconstructivist fashion from a theorist perspective. Some of the other articles might also be relevant to this research.
- 3 Held at the RSA in 1999.
- 4 The top of the dresses are made to the scale of baby christening gowns and the dresses when hung extends onto the floor.
- 5 Please refer to Fig.4.1a. and Fig. 4.3a in Chapter 4.
- 6 Porter, Charlie. January 4, 2001. "Fashion Star Chalayan 'files for liquidation'" Guardian Unlimited.
- 7 "An 'undecidable' as Derrida puts it, something that seems to belong to one genre but overshoots its border and seems no less as home in another" (Derrida as quoted from Maharaj 2001:7)
- 8 Fabric of Fashion was an exhibition organised by the British Council and the Crafts Council. The exhibition was on at the Crafts Council gallery from the 8th of November 2000 to 14th of January 2001.
- 9 Griffiths was both a designer at Max Mara and the Head of Fashion at Kingston University in 1992. (Griffiths 2000: 69)



Chapter4

Contextual Review

4.1	Historical Utilisation Of Non-Clothing Materials By Fashion Designers	39
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Chapter 4: Contextual Review

While providing a range of background information through the exploration of historical and contemporary examples, the focus of this chapter is to look at the utilisation of non-clothing materials from the practitioner's perspective. The practitioner's perspective is also explored through research interviews. The analysed results of these interviews are detailed in section 4.3.



Fig.4.1a:
Elsa Schiaparelli.
'Glass' cape made
from synthetic material.
1937.

4.1: Historical Utilisation Of Non-Clothing Materials By Fashion Designers

Non-fashion materials have often been explored in the past, many designers have sought to innovate through the use of new materials. Indeed most materials would have been deemed unusual or 'non-clothing' when they were initially used for fashion. For example common synthetic materials were only utilised by a few designers when first introduced in the 1930's. Elsa Schiaparelli embraced the new technology and experimented heavily with new synthetic materials in collaboration with the French textile company, Colcombet. She incorporated materials like



Fig.4.1b:
Paco Rabanne.
Models in 'unwearable'
dresses 1965 with Dali.



Fig.4.1c:
Paco Rabanne. Dress
self-assembly kit
consisting of 750 discs
and 1300 rings.

perspex, lucite and cellophane into her designs. In 1934, she created the 'glass cape' using Rhodophane a glass-like synthetic, brittle material. (Dee Co 1998: 19) However given the sheer amount of historical examples, this section will provide an overview only of the most radical and prominent examples. The starting point will be in the period from the sixties to the eighties.

In the 1960's, designers inspired by space exploration and 'futuristic' looks explored many different non-fashion mediums. The most prominent of these designers was Paco Rabanne. He presented his first official collection on the 1st of February 1966 at the Hotel George V in Paris. (Lobenthall 1990:63) The designer described the collection as "Twelve unwearable dresses in contemporary materials". (Fig.4.1b) His first collection consisted of dresses made from plastics that were cut into shapes and strung together with rings to form garments. Rabanne's true obsession was with materials. The 1960's was a time



Fig.4.1d:
Giorgio Dant'Angelo.
Corrugated cardboard
outfit from the 60's.

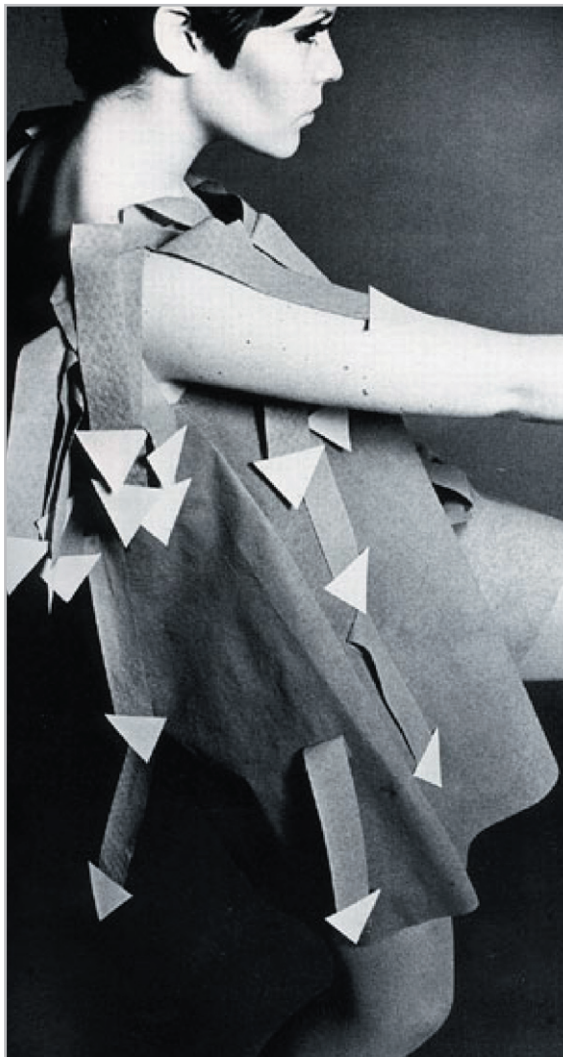


Fig.4.1e:
Elisa stone. Paper
dress 1965.

when traditional materials were abandoned by many designers in order to experiment with more contemporary materials. Rabanne, for one, thought it absurd to hang on to the concept of only using conventional fabrics to make clothes and indeed he continued to experiment with many other non-fashion materials throughout his career. He started to experiment with paper in 1967, and continued to do so, notably utilising paper that was mixed with nylon and papers coated with iridescent films. He also experimented with moulded plastics and metals.

As well as metals and plastic, paper was another unconventional material, which was popular during the sixties. Designers like Giorgio Sant' Angelo and Elisa Stone used paper in various forms like corrugated card (Fig.4.1d) and medium weave paper which resembles paper towels (Fig.4.1e). Other than being experimental, the designers were having lots of fun with their materials. As Stone pointed out,
 "I love the idea that my clothes do not last. I thought of them as toys."
 (Lobenthall 1990:92)



Fig.4.1f:
Diana Dew. Light up
dress from the 60's

Although paper as a fashion material came into prominence during the sixties, the use of paper for garments in Japan could be traced as far back as the Kamakura period (1192-1333) and the Edo period (1603-1867) when expensive paper garments were considered to be stylish. (Fukai 2002:664)

The most prominent boutique during the sixties, which showcased many of the most innovative designers of the decade, was "Paraphernalia" in New York. The boutique sold designs by Stone, Betsey Johnson and Diana Dew. Dew's designs were the quintessential interactive disco fashion. Dew was an electrical engineer who made dresses, which lit up. The lights were powered by a cigarette pack size battery, which was fitted into the belt of the dresses.



Fig.4.1g:
Proto-Punks Philip
Sallon and Yelena with
bin liner outfits.

Throughout the following decades many fashion designers continued to experiment with non-clothing materials. In the seventies, consumers were taking control they adopted totemic clothing by making and customizing their own outfits as

a way to express their political views and ideals. The most prominent 'look' of the decade was Punk. The original Punk Look appeared in London in the seventies. Punk was a movement started by Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren. Their boutique "SEX" on London's King's Road was a vital outlet supplying clothing and accessories to punks. (Krell1997:11) It was not just a fashion look but was more akin to a lifestyle, with its own ideology and philosophy of anarchy. The Punk style demanded attention and rebelled against the conventions of society at that time. For example, Punks like Philip Salon made outfits from bin liners. (Fig.4.1g) (Polhemus 1994:89) Other than using bin liners Punks were also known to embellish their outfits with chains and razor blades almost as an alternative embellishment to applied decorations like sequins and they stained their outfits with artificial blood as opposed to using dye. (Lurie 1992: 163)

High profile designers of the eighties, like Miyake and Versace, continuously sought innovation by



Fig.4.1h:
Issey Miyake. Rattan Body, Spring/ Summer 1982.



Fig.4.1i:
Issey Miyake. Embossed plastic bodice. Autumn/ Winter 1980.



Fig. 4.1j:
Versace. Silver tone
Oroton gown printed
with blue flowers.
Spring/Summer 1983.

utilising non-clothing materials with new technology and skills. Miyake experimented with an extensive range of materials such as rattan (Fig.4.1d) and plastics. Both examples were made to simulate the human body form. For the plastic bodice, Miyake moulded and embossed plastic into a realistic second skin. (Fukai 2002: 609)

Another prominent eighties example was Versace's use of metal. Even though metal had always held a certain fascination for designers through the decades, it was only the development of Oroton in 1982 that pushed the use of metal to another level of sophistication. (Wilcox, Mendes and Buss 2002:146) Versace developed this material with a German craftsman, unlike previous metal materials. Oroton could be draped, dyed and patterned. With its invention, it constituted one of the most important advances in terms of the innovative use of non-clothing materials for haute couture.

As illustrated in this section of historical examples, practitioners from various backgrounds (for example fashion designer and electrical engineer) utilise non-clothing materials in many different ways. Some seek innovation, some wanted to

make conceptual statements while others simply used fashion as a medium. The next section focuses on contemporary examples and explores the different ways in which contemporary designers have utilized non-clothing materials .

4.2: Contemporary Utilisation of Non-Clothing Materials

Many practitioners experiment with new and unusual materials in order to seek innovation as noted by textiles designer Sophie Roet (please refer to research interviews 4.3),

“Innovation is a very important factor when using [unusual] materials.”

This section of the thesis contextualises the different kinds of non-clothing materials used by practitioners of different backgrounds. Due to the number of possible examples that could be cited, the examples were selected based on a specific criteria.

The selection criteria reflect two main factors. Firstly they are selected on the basis of the unusual characteristics of the materials that had been utilised. And secondly, they were selected based on their significance and the influence they have on the researcher. The works of high profile practitioners like Margiela, reach a relatively wider audience because of press and critical interest. The researcher herself a part of the wider audience had found such works highly influential. The works of practitioners like Toemsombat and Beard, tend to have a lower profile, not because of the inferior quality of their work but because of the inaccessibility of their work to the audience. These works utilise non-clothing materials in many interesting and innovative ways, their works were also selected because they provide an alternative perspective from those of the high profile examples.

In order to illustrate the wide variety of possible materials that could be utilised, the research cited examples of practitioners using different materials. Other than

just observing the works of other practitioners, the researcher also endeavoured to experiment with a range of materials in her practical work in order to further enrich the research. (Please refer to Chapter 5 & 6) Through the course of the research, the researcher came across many interesting examples of the utilisation of non-clothing materials. Due to the practical constraints of the thesis it would have been impossible to cite all of them, thus a separate list of other influential examples has also been included.¹

As illustrated in Fig. 4.2a, this section looks at the contemporary utilisation of non-clothing materials in two ways. These are:

- The different positions which the practitioners represent within the fashion system.
- The different ways in which non-clothing materials have been utilised.

The aim of this section is to help contextualise and locate the researcher's position (Based on her practical work which is detailed in Chapters 5 and 6) within the fashion system.

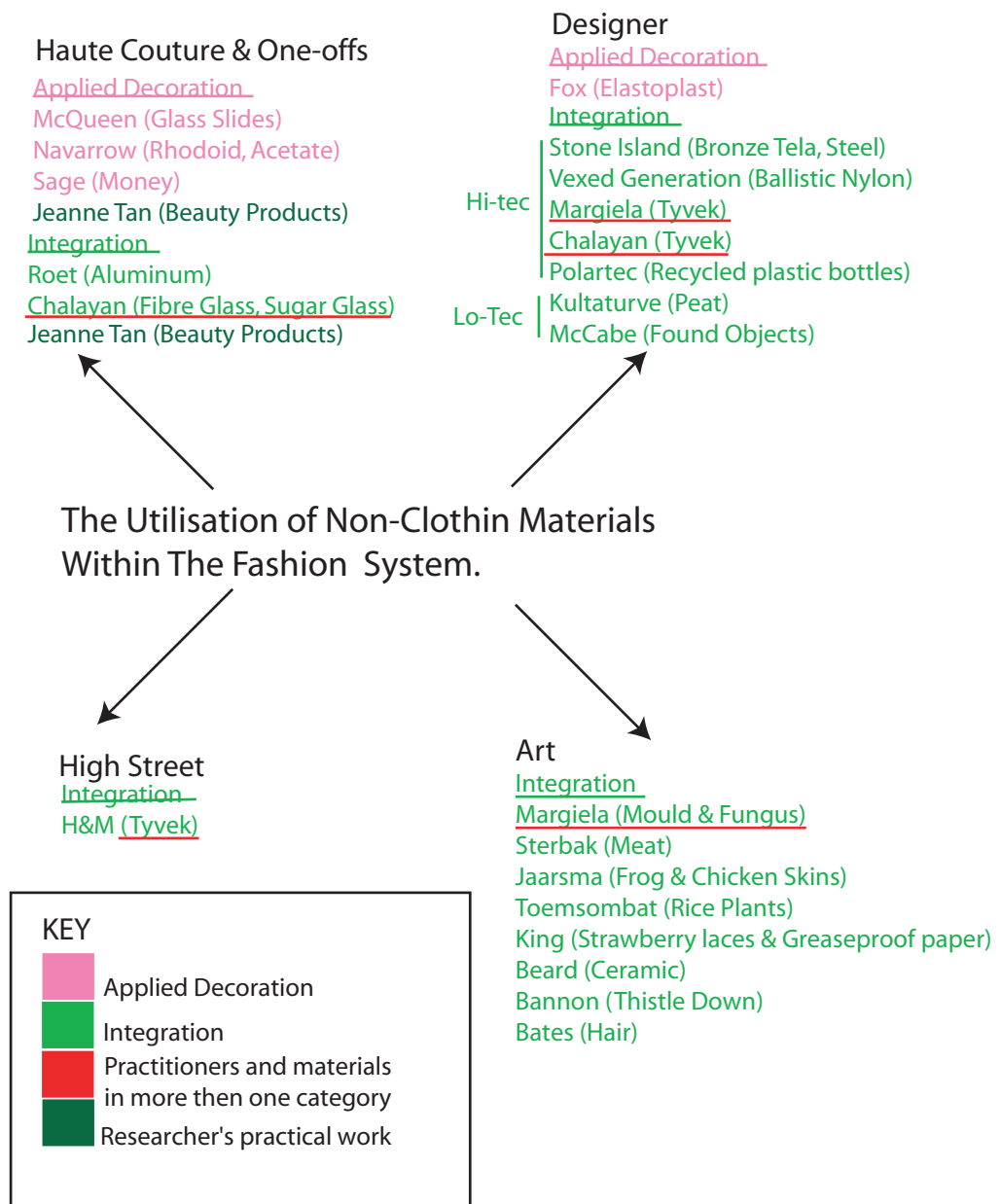


Fig.4.2a:
 Chart showing
 the contemporary
 utilisation of non-
 clothing materials
 within the fashion
 system

Within the context of this research, the fashion system can be described as a range of activities ranging from art where artists use clothing as a medium to express their ideas to high street fashion. From the chart illustrated in Fig 4.2a, it can be seen that the practitioners represent many different sectors within the fashion system; although they are mainly fashion designers from various sectors or artists. The different sectors of the fashion system are also briefly discussed to provide the reader with an overview of the subject.



Fig.4.2b:
Dior advertising
campaign for Autumn/
Winter 2003.

Fashion

Haute Couture and Designer One-Offs.

Haute Couture is the highest and most exclusive form of fashion. A true couturier is bound by the rules laid down and monitored by the Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne in Paris. (Bohdanowicz & Clamp 1994: 59) The garments are one-offs, which are specially made for the client. The construction of the garments involves the most skilful designers, craftsmen and seamstresses. Couture is only available to the very rich as the price ranges generally start at five figure numbers. In order to support this expensive form of fashion, the couture house usually will also produce commercially lucrative products like perfumes and handbags reflecting the distinctive image of the couture house. The couture line will also provide an



Fig.4.2c:
Russell Sage.
Money Skirt.
Autumn/Winter
2001



Fig.4.2d:
Alexander
McQueen. Glass
slides dress
Spring/Summer
2001.

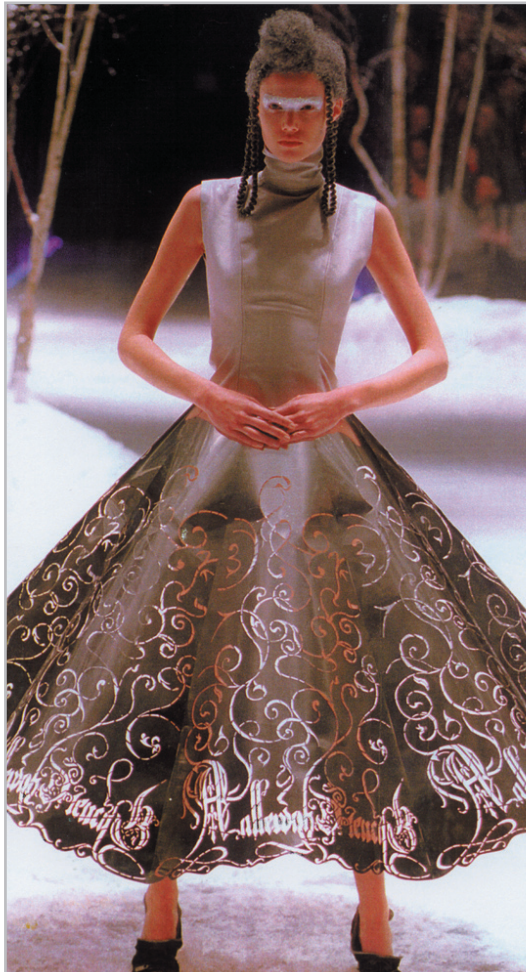


Fig.4.2e:
Alexander McQueen.
Metal Gown. Autumn/
Winter 1999.



Fig.4.2f:
Hussein Chalayan.
Aeroplane Dress.
Spring/ Summer 2000.



Fig.4.2g:
Hussein Chalayan sugar glass dresses. Finale to
Ventriloquy, Spring/ Summer 2001.

exclusive image, which the public would like to 'buy into' thus both the couture and accessories line mutually support each other. One example of a couture house is Dior (Fig. 4.2b). Within this category, the researcher also included designer one-offs, which are designs made as statement pieces for either the catwalk show or an exhibition. Often these pieces are also used as a means to attract media attention to the label like Sage's money dress. (Fig.4.2c) (Hoggard 2001:45) The examples of practitioners who utilise non-clothing materials within this category are McQueen (Fig.4.2d &e), Chalayan (Fig.4.2 f&g)), Margiela (Fig.4.2h) Navarow (Fig. 4.3h&l), Fox (Fig4.2 l), and the researcher (Fig.6.2a-d).

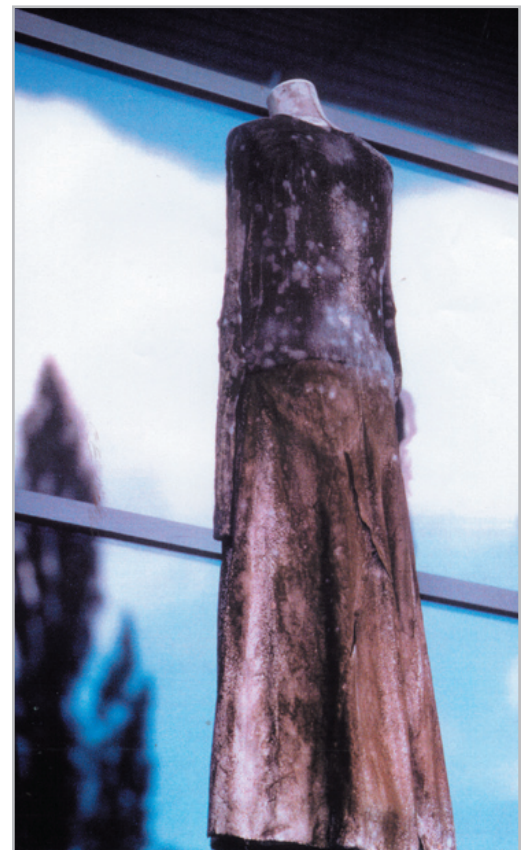


Fig.4.2h:
Martin Margiela mould and fungus dress from 'La
Maison Martin Margiela (9/4/1612)'



Fig.4.2i:
Shelly Fox.
Elastoplast dress.

Designer

Both couture houses and individual designers produce lines within this category. This category could be split into many different levels depending on the price ranges of each label. Generally this category offers good quality, designer high-end merchandise. These lines generally still retain a level of exclusivity as though they produce in multiples the volume of each design produced is significantly less than that of the high street. Examples of practitioners who utilise non-clothing

materials within this category are Stone Island (Fig. 4.2j), Vexed Generation (Fig. 4.2k), Margiela, Chalayan (Fig. 4.2l), Fox and Kultature (Fig. 5.1b).



Fig.4.2j:
Vexed Generation. Ballistic
nylon jacket 1997.



Fig.4.2k:
Stone Island. Bronze Tela
jacket 2000.

High Street

The high street provides up-to-date fashion at various prices to cater to the mass market. The price ranges within this category are generally accessible for most consumers. High Street labels like Topshop usually require a high turnover of goods and profits as the products are made up to various specifications in order to appeal to the wide range



Fig.4.2l:
Hussein Chalayan.
Tyek dress Autumn/
Winter 1995/96.

of customers. (Bohdanowicz & Clamp 1994: 60) The only example the researcher could locate within this category was Tyvek skirts by Hennes and Moritz.

The researcher noted that there are few examples of the utilisation of non-clothing within the high street sector of the fashion system. In order to investigate the reason why high street designers seem to utilise fewer non-clothing materials, the researcher conducted interviews with three high street designers from Xxploit Ltd. The company designs and supplies a range of British high street labels such as Oasis, Topshop, New Look and Alders. The designers interviewed were Lesley Rankin, Grace Lee and Emma Howard. Due to their busy schedule, the researcher conducted short face-to face interviews based on a standard set of questions. (Full transcripts are available within the Appendix.)

Each designer was asked about their design process and their rationale for using particular materials. The interview revealed that often the choices made in regard to the designs and materials within this sector of the industry are very price and customer driven as indicated in their responses:.

“...sometimes a customer will request a particular fabric. Sometimes we find a fabric which inspires us...at our level in the market the right fabric at a workable price is important.”

Lesley Rankin

“In our business, things must sell.”

Grace Lee

The designers explained that they do not use non-clothing materials because designs sold within the high street level had to abide by the standard testing and quality parameters. Lesley Rankin also explained, “factories must perform exhaustive lab tests to demonstrate that the garment is suitable for the purpose intended.”

The aim of the high street is often to produce fashionable garments at the lowest possible prices to appeal to the widest possible audience. Thus designers for this market are unlikely to use non-clothing materials. Lesley Rankin notes, “as high

street customers would be uncomfortable with the concept...high street labels might also be nervous about selling the idea to high street shoppers.” Due to the constraints of the testing laws and the nature of the consumers within this particular sector of the fashion consumer market, high street designers are generally unlikely to use non-clothing materials thus explaining why there are so few examples within this level of the fashion system.



Fig.4.2m:
Jana Stebak. Vanitas.
Dress made from meat
1987.

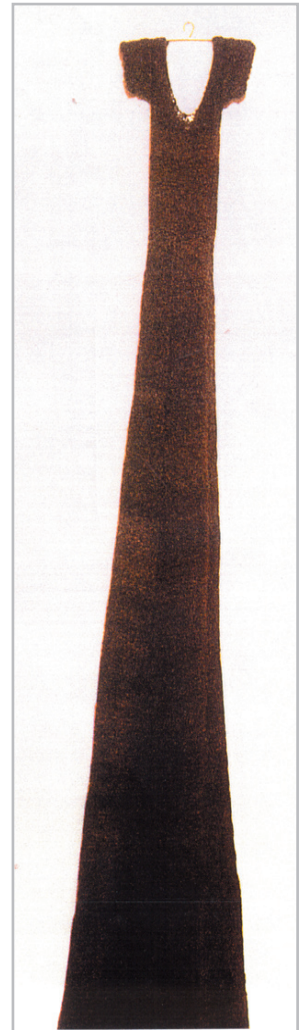


Fig.4.2n:
Emily Bates,
Depilator 1994.

Artists

Fashion and art have been intrinsically linked through history but the 20th Century witnessed a growth of prominent relationships between art and fashion (Sung 1998:52) some were collaborations between designers and artists (For

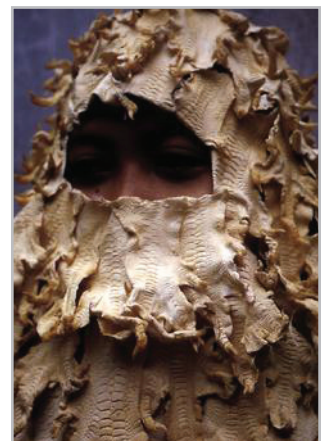


Fig.4.2o:
Mella Jaarsma.
Chicken Skin Veil.

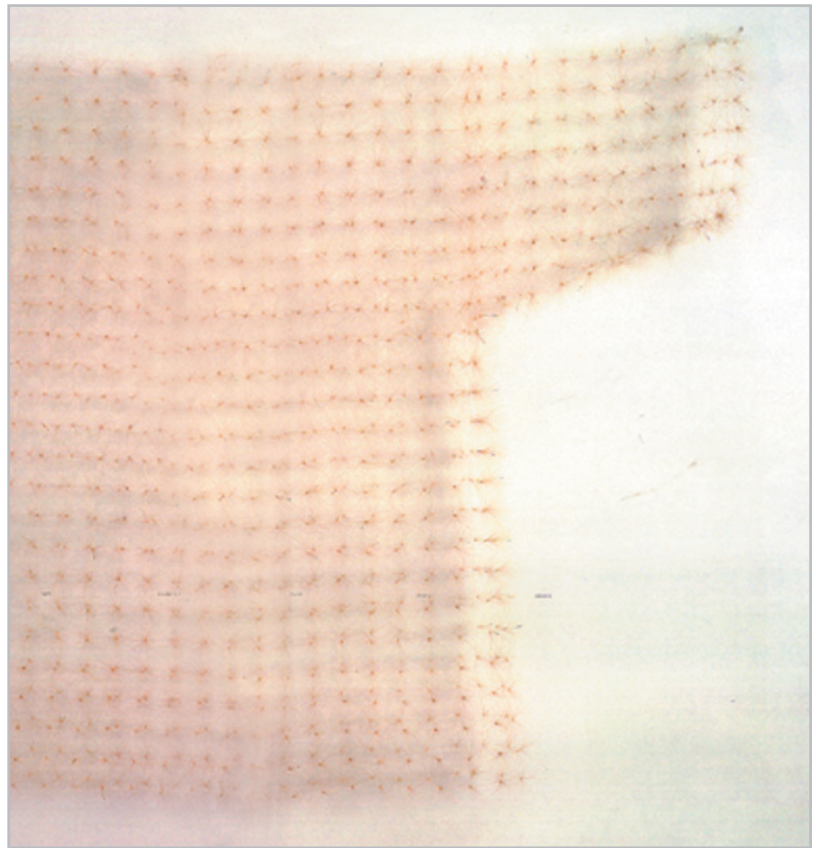


Fig.4.2p:
Adrian Bannon
Thistledown Coat
1998.

example Dali and Schiaparelli in the 1930's and Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons and Cindy Sherman in the 1990's). Others were artists who had decided to take on the fashion establishment using clothing as a three-dimensional medium for their art.

A prominent artist within this area of research is controversial Canadian artist, Jana Sterbak. In 1987 she created a life size dress mad from fresh flank steaks. The dress was entitled, *Vanitas² : Flesh Dress For An Albino Anorectic*. (Fig.4.2m)) The dress was sewn together from fifty pounds of beef, which cured over a period of weeks from fresh meat to dry skin. The dress was created to demonstrate the transitory nature of the human physical existence.

Mella Jaarsma, a Dutch artist based in Indonesia is another artist who utilised non-clothing materials to make a garment within her artwork. In her work entitled "Hi Inlander" she created veils made from dried chicken and frog skins. (Fig.4.2n) By using materials, which as Jaarsma notes were considered, "Not halal (Clean)" by

Muslims, to make sacred Islamic Clothing like the veil, she confronts her audience with the consequences of racism.

(www.stormloader.com/wearable/theart/mell.html)

Emily Bates, a textile artist by training has continuously created art works in the form of garments. She repeatedly uses human hair to construct basic dresses of distorted scales. (Fig.4.2o) (Please refer to Chapter 3 pg 23 where her work and rationale was discussed.)

Adrian Bannon is an artist based in London. In his exhibit at the “Addressing The Century” at the Hayward Gallery, Bannon created a coat out of thistle down. (Fig.4.2p) The lightness of the material conveys the transient and ephemeral offering a commentary on the mutability and temporary qualities of the human body. (Woollen 1998:71)

The different ways of utilising non-clothing materials.

Non-clothing materials could be utilised to make clothing in a variety of ways, but they usually fall into two main categories, applied decoration and integration.

Applied Decoration

The approach refers to materials being applied onto the surface of an existing material. The materials could be applied using various techniques like sewing and appliqué. The non-clothing materials could thus be removed from the garment.

This method is the most straightforward way of utilising non-clothing materials. Within this method, materials are often applied as embellishments in the same way as sequins and beads. Due to the novelty of such materials, this method of utilisation often results in a dynamic outer aesthetic for the design where the focus will be on material rather than the actual structure of the garment.

One prominent example of utilising non-clothing materials through applied decoration is Russell Sage's Autumn Winter 2001 collection (Fig.4.2c). In this collection, Sage presented dresses which were embellished with folded twenty and fifty pound notes. He had utilised used bank notes to explore the transitory history of money. This was the most feasible way for him to utilise pound notes as the designer was constrained by the rules set by the Bank of England. Sage recalls, "We ended up fashioning the stiff toile by folding notes because we had to promise the Bank of England that we wouldn't cut up any." (Sage as quoted in Hoggard 2001:45) Other examples are Alexander McQueen and Xavier Navarow. Alexander McQueen, has often applied unusual materials to create dynamic designs for his couture shows. Some of the materials he had utilised before are shells, metal and glass slides (Fig.4.2 d&e). Xavier Navarow, on the other hand is a lower profile young Spanish designer based in Paris. His work often utilised synthetic materials like Rhodoid and acetate and is discussed in greater detail in section 4.3.

Integration

Integration is to combine or form (a part or parts) into a whole.

(Oxford Dictionary 2000:416)

In this approach non-clothing material is used to construct the garment or the materials are permanently combined or fused with the material of the garment. The non-clothing material is integral to the construction of the garment and cannot be removed from the garment.

As can be seen in Fig 4.2a, most of the practitioners fall into this category. While the artists tend to be more literal by using non-clothing materials to form basic garment shapes, designers tend to use the materials in a more complex manner, often combining different materials and silhouettes to construct garments of unique shapes and styles. The practitioners that are considered within this section

are Margiela, Chalayan and Fox, and as the works of the other practitioners fall within the sub-categories, their works will be discussed in the following sections.

Margiela³ has gained considerable acclaim for his innovative use of unusual materials. He not only used them in his one-off catwalk and exhibition pieces he also used a paper material like Tyvek for his main commercial lines. For his 1997 exhibition 'La Maison Martin Margiela (9/4/1612)' (Derycke and van de Viere 1999:62) in Rotterdam, Margiela presented garments which had multi-coloured fungus and bacteria growing on them. In order to produce this collection of garments, he collaborated with a prominent Dutch microbiologist Dr. A.W.S.M van Egeraat.(Fig.4.2h)

Hussein Chalayan has a more conceptual approach to design. (Rogers 2000) He has collaborated with other experts such as artists, architects, textile and product designers to create innovative new designs. Chalayan created a series of airplane dresses (2001) with the help of a product designer and an architect.(Fig.4.2f) The dresses were made from fibreglass using composite technology that is usually associated with the aircraft industry hence the name of the series. The dresses could change shape to reveal the frilly pink tutu skirt under the dress with a flick of the remote control. This series like his sugar glass creations entitled "Finale to Ventroliquy" for his Spring/ Summer 2001 collection were designed for exhibitions only. In fact, the sugar glass creations were smashed to pieces by models on the catwalk. (Fig.4.2g)

Shelly Fox is another designer who successfully integrated non-clothing materials into clothing. Her experimental approach towards materials resulted in the development of her 'Elastoplast' fabric (Fig.4.2i) which she continuously experimented with and presented in various collections. (Rogers 2000) Fox prefers to use fabrics from unconventional sources (for example elastoplasts originated from the medical industry) and often customises materials through a series of manipulative techniques such as stretching and burning. Details of Fox's design

process were explored in Chap 3.

Within the category of integration, we can also see two other sub groups, which are hi-tec and lo-tec materials. All the practitioners within the two sub-groups are commercial designers, most of whom utilised high-tec textiles which were not originally intended for the fashion industry. The only example, which to utilise a lo-tech material, is Kultaturve.

Hi-Tec

The examples cited within this section are Stone Island (Fig.4.2k), Vexed Generation (Fig.4.2j), Margiela, Chalayan (Fig.4.2l) and Polartec (Fig.4.2p). All of these have commercialised the idea of the utilisation of non-clothing materials. These materials are feasible for commercialising because the materials that they use are in the form of textiles like Tela, Ballistic Nylon and Tyvek were invented for industrial or protective purposes. These textiles were often high performance and reliable, thus these materials were often selected for their functionality and their potential for appeal to a wider audience.

A key material invented for the clothing industry that had innovatively utilised a non-clothing material is Polartec. (Fig.4.2q) It is a fleece material made from recycled plastic bottles. The bottles were chipped, melted down and re-spun into fibre that was then use to make the fabric. The material is generally used to make thermal protection outer wear. The objective of its invention was to provide a lightweight, fast wicking and insulating material for diverse conditions from the extreme cold of

Everest to the humidity of the Amazonian jungle. Due to its functionality, the use of polartec is not only used within the outer wear industry but also in designer diffusion labels like DKNY. In fact the material was so successful, it was named by Time



Fig.4.2q:
Polartec Fleece Jacket.
(www.polartec.com)

magazine as one of the great inventions of the 20th Century. (www.polartec.com)

Vexed Generation comprise of the design duo Adam Thorpe and Joe Hunter. They often integrate high-performance textiles like ballistic nylon (originally meant for military and protective purposes) into their urban streetstyle designs. They tend to work with their textile suppliers to come up with innovative hi-tec textiles like Teflon coated denim. They incorporate innovative garment and assembly techniques with innovative textiles to create garments suited for the urban city environment.

As mentioned above, Tyvek is a paper material which had been utilised by both Margiela (Spring/ Summer 1998 collection) and Chalayan in their commercial labels. Originally the material was developed by Dupont for the packaging industry and for making disposable protective clothing for the spray-painting industry. Due to its functionality and ease of manufacturing via conventional sewing techniques many designers commercialised the use of it for fashion garments through their commercial labels.

Lo-Tech

Finnish fabric, Kultaturve⁴ similar to Polartec was a material invented for the clothing industry, which utilised a non-clothing material. But in contrast to the previous examples, it integrated the material through the Low-tec method of felting. Essentially Kultaturve is a material made from wool and a by-product of peat (Eriotex). (Fig.4.2r) Peat is usually used in households as



Fig.4.2r:
Researcher's degree
collection made from
Kultaturve.

a fire starter. Eriotex is a natural micro fibre, which originates from a Scandinavian plant called Eriophorum Vaginatum. The plant only grows in moist environments and only develops into the fibre after being buried underground for thousands of years. (www.kultaturve.fi/)

Due to the length of time that the fibre had been buried underground; it had disintegrated to a state, which could be easily processed via mechanical processes without the use of chemicals. The unique properties of Kultaturve which are not present in other natural fibres are,

- Anti-Static
- Hypoallergenic
- Light-weight
- Provides more warmth than wool
- Good absorbing properties

Kultaturve demonstrates that with the right materials, innovative functional textiles could be made from materials not conventionally associated with fashion.

Comparative study between the practitioners.

After exploring the many different works of the above cited practitioners, the researcher noted that they share many key similarities and differences.

Couture and one-off examples as compared to commercial examples

First we will look at the differences between the Couture and one-off fashion examples and those commercial examples positioned within the Designer and High street sections.

The key similarities are,

- They present their work within the context of fashion.

The differences are,

- The couture group utilise non-clothing materials to create dynamic attention grabbing designs as statement pieces for their collections or as a means of attracting publicity. For example Sage's money outfits (Fig.4.2c) (Hoggard 2001:45) While the more commercial group utilise non-clothing materials in a functional manner which will appeal to a consumer market.
- The former's designs are meant for a target audience while the latter are meant for a commercial market.
- The former's designs are often labour intensive and difficult to reproduce in multiples while the latter's are typically easy to mass produce.

Couture & one-off practitioners and Artists

On the exterior, the two categories seemed very similar because,

- The works produced are in very limited numbers often there is only one.
- Made for exhibition and catwalk purposes only.

The differences are,

- The artist's work is targeted at an art viewing audience while the designer's work is targeted at a wider audience that might ultimately result in gaining more publicity for their commercial labels.
- The artists have a subject or a concept that they want to convey within the creations and often articulate them to the audience, while a designer like Margiela may or may not have a concept but are less likely to discuss them with the audience leaving the interpretation to the audience.
(Derycke and Van De Veire 1999:13)
- The designer's works have been exhibited within both art and fashion contexts while artists have only exhibited in an art context.

From the comparative study, it was noted that even though all the examples had shared the common ground of having utilised non-clothing materials to create garments, they were still very different. In the next section, the thesis will consider the works of lower profile practitioners from various backgrounds. It will be interesting to observe whether they retain the same similarities and differences as the examples cited within this section.

4. 3: Research Interviews

Due to the lack of literature that considers the fashion system from the practitioner's perspective, the aim of the research interviews was to reveal insights from the practitioners' design process and the rationale behind their work.

Rationale For Choice Of Interviewees

In the process of researching and collecting data for both the contextual and literature review, (via conferences, books, magazines, crafts council database and recommendations) the researcher identified a cross section of practitioners who utilise non-clothing materials for garments. To ensure the results of the interviews represent the wide spectrum of the fashion system, the interviewees were chosen based on the different positions that they represent within the fashion system according to Fig. 4.2b. They represent a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, but their shared common ground is their use of non-clothing materials to make garments. The practitioners interviewed were:

- Helen Beard (Ceramist)
- Tine De Ryusser
(Jewellery Designer)
- Emma King (Visual Artist)
- Michael McCabe (Jewellery Designer)
- Xavier Navarrows (Fashion Designer)
- Sophie Roet (Textile Designer)
- Montri Toemsombat
(Performance Artist)

Backgrounds

Helen Beard (Fig.4.3a&b) is a ceramist based in London. Beard graduated from Edinburgh College Of Art in 2001 with a ceramics degree. She was originally trained in Jewellery Design but decided in the final year of her degree that her interests lay in ceramics and thus graduated with a ceramic degree. She makes life size ceramic dresses that can be worn on the human body and views her work as a form of performance art. Beard's work is relevant to this research as she was able to provide insights into the use of non-clothing garments within



Fig.4.3a:
Ceramic Mini Dress 2001.



Fig.4.3b:
Helen at work in her studio.

Fig.4.3c:
Pleated fabric bag with
printed copper 2001.

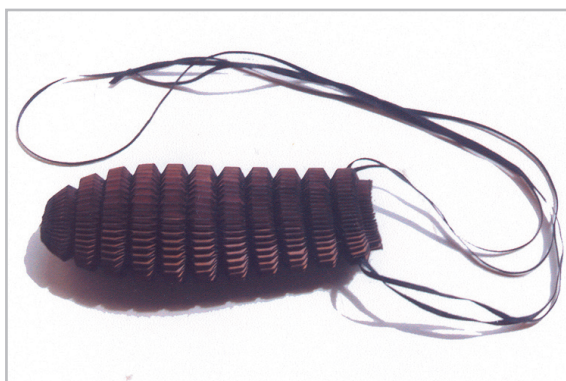
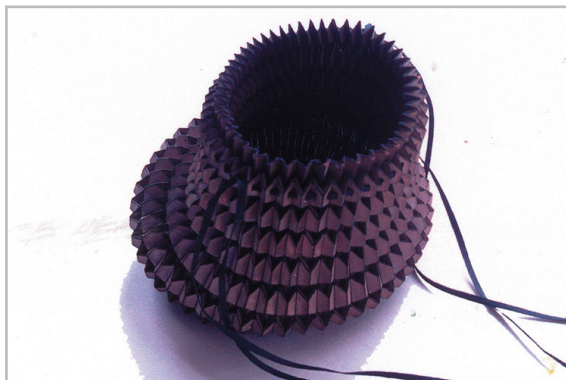
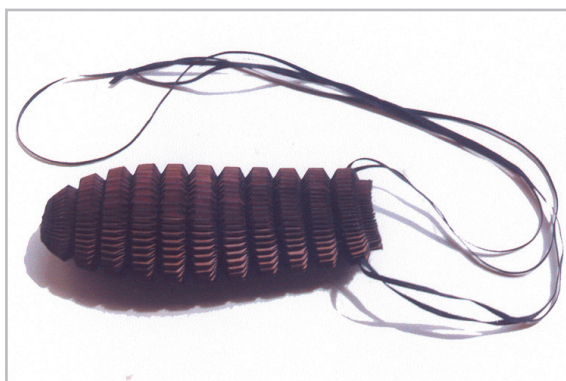
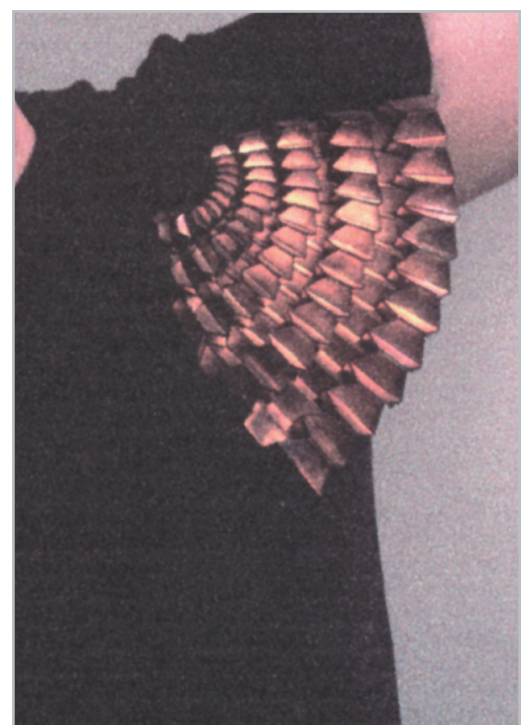


Fig.4.3d:
T-shirt with pleated
detail 2001.



the context of performance art.

Tine De Ryusser (Fig.4.3c&d) is a Jewellery designer based in Antwerp, Belgium. She graduated from the Royal College of Art in 2001 with a Master of Art Degree in Goldsmithing, Silversmithing, Metalwork and Jewellery. De Ryusser applies metal to fabrics to create geometric rigid facets and had successfully utilised this fabric to make bags and garments. She currently has a patent pending for her fabric. De Ryusser's work provided an alternative perspective in this research because she had successfully applied non-clothing material onto everyday products, and had successfully cross the boundaries of jewellery and



fashion.

Emma King (Fig.4.3e&f) graduated from the Norwich School of Art and Design with a degree in Visual Studies. She makes garments in different materials depending on their 'function'. In her 2001 collection she explored the theme of the five human senses. Within these, the garments exploring the sense of smell and sound are most relevant to this research. Both garments were totally made of non-clothing materials. The outfit exploring the sense of sound was made from greaseproof paper and the dress exploring the sense of smell was knitted from edible strawberry laces. She finds it difficult to be categorised in relation to a specific design background but would say that she leans more towards Fine Art if she had to. King's work provided insights from the perspective of a visual artist.

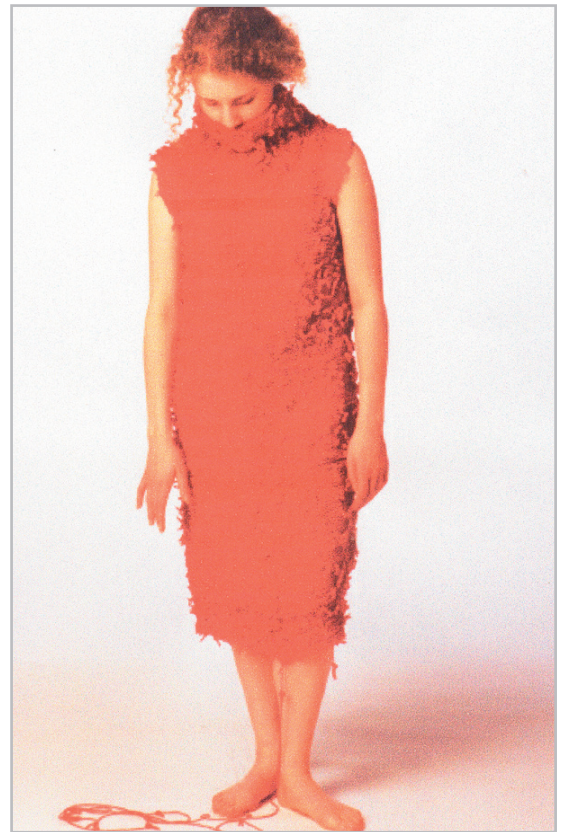
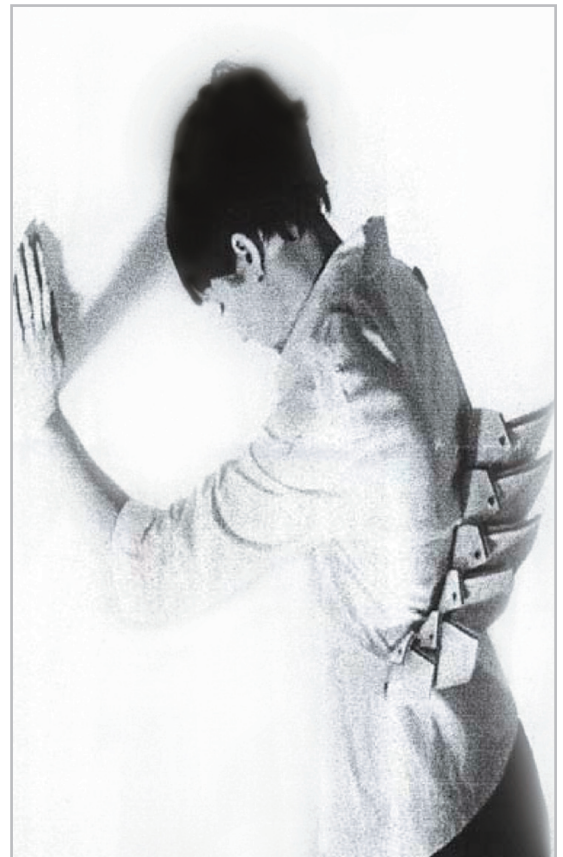


Fig.4.3e:
Taste. Edible dress made from strawberry laces
2001.



Fig.4.3f:
Sound. Outfit made from greaseproof paper 2001.



Michael McCabe (Fig.4.3g) graduated from the University of Wales as a 3-Dimensional designer with a focus on jewellery. He attended the course at University of Wales for a specific reason. McCabe was not interested in working in metal and the course at Wales gave him free rein with whichever materials he had wanted to explore. Currently, he makes jewellery and garments from found objects on a commission basis. His creations are very popular within the niche market of clubbers and fetish dressers. McCabe's work was relevant to this research because he had successfully integrated various non-clothing materials into fashion and had successfully created a commercial niche market for his products without compromising his design ideals.

Fig.4.3g:
Michael McCabe. Sculptural garment made from found objects.



Fig.4.3h:
Xavier Navarrow.
Acetate dress. 2000



Fig.4.3i:
Xavier Navarrow. Dress
with rhodoid 2000

Xavier Navarrow (Fig.4.3h&i) is a Spanish fashion designer based in Paris. He worked as a costume designer for the theatre before heading for Paris for a fashion course at the Paris Syndicale De La Couture. He is currently working at the Louis Feraud couture house. Navarrow had mostly explored the use of synthetic materials like plastic and hair. Amongst his creations, his work with Rhodoid received the most acclaim. Navarrow was able to give the perspective of a traditionally trained fashion designer utilising non-

clothing materials.

Sophie Roet (Fig.4.3j) is an Australian textile designer based in London. She works very closely with fashion designers creating bespoke fabrics for each designer. She had worked with many acclaimed fashion designers (e.g. Chalayan) and had experimented with many different materials like horsehair, metal, bubble wrap. Amongst them, the most prominent ones were the fabrics that are bonded with metal. Roet was able to provide the perspective of a practitioner who had successfully utilised non-clothing materials to create innovative textile designs, which are commercially successful.

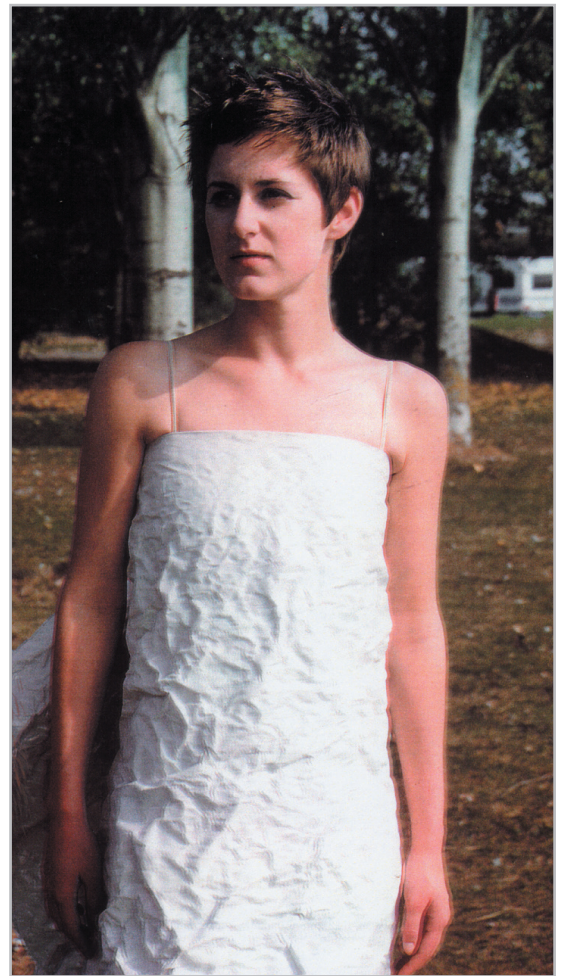


Fig.4.3j:
Cotton and aluminium fabric 1999.

Montri Toemsombat (Fig.4.3k&l) is a performance artist based in Bangkok, Thailand. He graduated from Chulalongkorn University with a degree in Visual Arts. Even though he is a performance artist, he also had a background in fashion as a fashion stylist. Toemsombat had exhibited his work in both fashion and art contexts. He had explored the utilisation of rice plants and live silk cocoons on



Fig.4.3k:
Rice/Life. Rice outfit 1999.

Fig.4.3l:
Cocoon:
The Renaissance.
Human 'sculptures'
formed by silk worms.



garments. His work was relevant to this research because he was able to provide perspectives both as a performance artist and a fashion designer.

Interview Techniques

The interviews were conducted using various methods, depending on the preference of the practitioners. The interviews were conducted by:

- Correspondence (Emma King)
- E-mail (Montri Toemsombat)
- Fax (Sophie Roet, Xavier Navarrow)
- Telephone (Tine De Ryusser and Michael McCabe)
- Face to face interview. (Helen Beard)

Other factors that affected the interview methods were their location and whether there was a language barrier.

The interviewees affected by their locations were Tine de Ryusser, Xavier Navarow and Montri Toemsombat as they were based in Antwerp, Paris and Bangkok respectively.

There were language barriers with Xavier Navarow and Montri Toemsombat, both needed interpreters thus fax and e-mail were most flexible as this enabled both the researcher and the practitioners to engage interpreters at both ends.

The interviews conducted via correspondence, fax and e-mail are recorded in the original letters, fax and computer printouts. Telephone interviews were recorded using audiocassettes with transcripts of the interview. Personal interviews are recorded on videotapes with transcripts. (Please refer to appendix for transcripts. All original tapes and correspondence are available on request.)

Interview Questions

All the practitioners were sent a standard set of questions because this kept the interviews focused and relevant to the subject and the data was easier to compile for the content analysis. The questions were designed in a way, which enabled the rationale, process and concepts behind their work to be thoroughly explored. The questions were:

- 1) Which design background do you come from?
- 2) How do you decide what materials to use in your work?
- 3) When did you start using 'non' clothing materials?
- 4) Why did you decide to use 'non-clothing' materials?
- 5) How do you decide which materials to use?
- 6) Does the garment design lead the choice of the material or vice versa?
- 7) In what contexts have you exhibited your work?
- 8) Which is more important? Function or aesthetics?
- 9) What is the aesthetic appeal of your work?

Due to the different nature of the interview techniques, the researcher was also able to explore more areas about the practitioners' work when there was direct contact with them. Some of the other questions that were asked in the course of the interviews were:

- What is your design process?
- Is the design process intuitive or a form of systematic evolution?
- Which industries have responded well to your designs?

Interview responses

Due to the large number of interviewees, it was not feasible to present all their responses within this chapter. Instead key quotations arranged according to themes and questions that most accurately represent the practitioners were selected.

The objective of their creations

Interestingly, most of the practitioners stated that their creations were never intended for mainstream commercial markets. Most of them create such works as a means of expressing their personal ideals or as a personal creative challenge. Often the designs were intended to make the viewer think.

"The garments are not there for commercial or fashionable purposes. These are my medium of expression. I don't compare myself to an artist but to a couturier who creates dresses which sometimes are displayed in museums...This is a personal conception of beauty..."

Xavier Navarrow

"To entertain people, they are a performance piece, they amuse people and people will come and see them...I hope they will see ceramics in a new light...they are wearable dresses in a performance...they are strange but you can wear them and not to be taken seriously."

Helen Beard

Why did the practitioners decide to use 'non-clothing' materials?

All the practitioners involved in the interview gave various reasons for the decision to use non-clothing materials. The common element behind their reasons was that none of them had any ambitious artistic concepts behind their work, none of them associated their work with any artists or art movements. Some found the utilisation of non-clothing materials to be challenging and some found that their designs had just evolved to that stage. Toemsombat and McCabe gave social concepts as the rationale behind their work. Toemsombat wanted to explore themes like materialism and consumerism.

"Since all my projects were linked with materialism, consumerism ... I wanted to find materials to express the idea of life with materialism. Nature works with consumerism... Rice naturally appeared being the most representative element of my culture (I belong to a family of farmers from Issarn-Northeastern province of Thailand)."

Montri Toemsombat

McCabe wanted, "... to work with things that used to be something else... So they were totally recycled...I like to re-evaluate the item."

While Roet noted, "Using unusual materials in textiles gives it an edge when used properly. Innovation is also a very important factor when using such materials."

Does the material lead the design or vice versa?

Out of the interviewees, a majority of 71.4% said that the materials always lead the design of the garment and that the designs of the garment tend to evolve as they work with their garments. The other interviewees said that their designs tend to be led by both factors or by the commissions set by their clients.

"I search for materials because these are the field that I feel most comfortable... The colour and the cut are always subordinate to the material."

Xavier Navarrow

"The material leads the design. My work is art first, fashion is a support, a medium that actually fits with my concepts on consumerism and materialism."

Montri Toemsombat

‘A bit of both really, as obviously if you use strawberry laces there is only so many ways you can make a garment...but designs do come into it also, as the purpose of the piece is the function at the end...’

Emma King

Design process

For the interview with Helen Beard the researcher was allowed access to the practitioner’s studio and was able to witness and explore her design process in more detail. In her studio, there were works in progress, storyboards and fashion pictures up on the wall. Every little detail revealed insights into how the practitioner worked. Beard commented:

“I initially have a shape. I often imagine them from above. As I always have the dresses in performance, I always look at them from above. What I will do is work out a way to produce the bell shape and make variations from them. I make different necklines and armholes...I spend a lot of time life drawing. Research a lot of different fashion. Look at what is happening in fashion for example white and green embroidery, which was something that was happening earlier this year. And the rest is in the making, because it takes a long time, the idea develops.”

Intuition or systematic evolution

The researcher talked about the nature of their design process with both Michael McCabe and Tine De Ryusser. The answers to the question of whether their design process was intuitive or systematic were very interesting.

“It is mostly intuition. I could not have done it without doing some sort of research on certain processes...It evolved from being paper to metal jewellery that is flexible and evolved into fabric mostly by coincidence. Then I decided that it would most probably look beautiful as clothing. There is no conceptual meaning behind it... I never planned to make the material, I never said that it was my aim. It just happened.”

Tine De Ryusser

“I believe in working in a very natural way. I don’t try to contrive it too much...[the design process] is still evolving.”

“If I got a project in mind, I usually go looking for things that are in the same vein, for example for the electronic design, I went to a broker’s yard...”

Michael McCabe

Both practitioners were quick to refer to their design process as a very intuitive and natural process but on further probing, they reveal a systematic method for the evolution of their designs. There was always a logical reason behind every step of the process. A process that required them to re-evaluate the progress within their work. It might be because most practitioners go through this self-evaluation process very quickly almost subconsciously that they are always quick to consider this process as intuition, which is natural and does not need to be taught.

Which is more important? Function or aesthetics?

Most of the practitioners found aesthetics to be more important than function. But some of them are keen to point out that they are equally important.

De Ryusser observed:

“Really, the folding of the design is purely aesthetic...What I really like about it is the way it folds and is flexible so there is no real function to it... I could not predict the way it looks, it is more a coincidence...”

Whereas Beard commented:

“Both is as important as each other... It is very important that the surface, the floral patterning, the colour blends with the form... the form of it is very important... I was struggling with a new type of clay...I was trying to bring the form in... It got bigger and had huge out of proportioned breasts. And I did not like it...”

Aesthetic appeal of their work

All the practitioners gave similar responses to this. All of them thought the use of non-clothing materials were integral to the aesthetic appeal of their work. The incongruous way in which the materials and design were juxtaposed together brought innovation, surprise and alternative perspectives into their work.

“...people tend to like the unusual materials and the colour schemes...Things that

stand out.”

Michael McCabe

“The strangeness of watching someone walk about in something so solid, restricting and yet looking so graceful. I also think the shape and the surface pattern are crucial to making the piece beautiful.”

Helen Beard

“I would say the aesthetic appeal of my work is the surprise of the use of unusual materials.”

Emma King

Which industries had responded most favourably?

Even though the work of the practitioners interviewed was not meant for the mainstream commercial market all of them had received positive responses from various industries.

Sophie Roet had, “Very positive response from a large variety of fashion designers with regards to both visual and tactile qualities of my designs, however few designers have the budget to pay for my textiles as they are created exclusively.”

“Interestingly, it is the ceramics [industry]. Initially I really struggled with ceramics... it was deemed as a very bad thing to cut up ceramics to make something...The exhibition at Cornwall was purely for ceramic lovers and makers. It was amazing they were so intrigued with something so unusual and at this scale...”

Helen Beard

“...for example, the spiky ones went down well with clubbers and some S&M people. I’ve got lots of feedback from people like that...Also fetish clubs tend to go for what I do. Alternative clothes shops and things like that.”

Michael McCabe

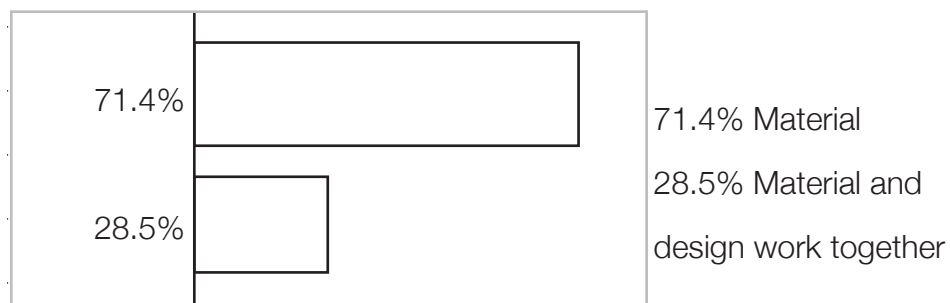
4.4: Research Interview Findings

Through the interviews, some revealing insights into the practitioners’ perspectives were gained. This angle had consistently been neglected in the existing literature.

The literature review had demonstrated that writers seldom explore the design process. There are a few possible reasons to explain this. One might be due to the fast turnabout of the fashion industry where there is an emphasis on final products rather than the process. Another possible reason is the practitioner's process had always been deemed to be intuitive, thus there is a lack of writers who were in a position to explore this area of research. In addition the process is very complex and difficult to articulate verbally or in text, this might explain practitioners' reluctance to discuss it coupled with the fact that most writers on fashion are theorists or historians rather than practitioners, which further exacerbates the problem.

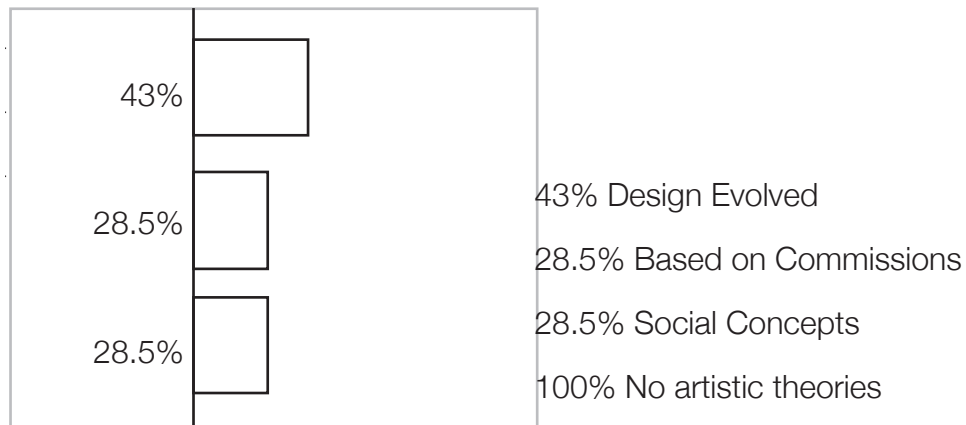
As discussed in the literature review, it is important to articulate the design process from the practitioner's perspective in order to provide a balanced view of both the practitioner and the fashion system. This section looks at the results collated from the interviews, which are categorised according to the interview questions.

Material Vs. Design



71.4% of the practitioners found the material to be the most dominant factor within the designs. Often working around the designs to accommodate the 'nature' of the material.

Rationale behind practitioners' work



All of the practitioners interviewed do not align themselves with specific art movements or artists when they set out to create a new design. 43% of them found their work to have evolved through experiment to its final stages, often they had not planned the final look of the design. 28.5% wanted to express social concepts that they believe in, and these concepts inspire them to utilise materials that share the same ideology. The rest of the practitioners are more commercial and base their designs and ideas on the demands of their client's commissions. Some of these responses are very similar to the practice element within this research. f.apothecary, the researcher's final practical collection was created through a cyclic evolutionary process from the inspiration of a concept that led to specific materials that in turn influenced the collection. The collection was created through a systematic development of the materials rather than being inspired and dictated by a specific artistic concept.

The utilisation of non-clothing materials in the fashion system could be viewed as 'trans-boundary'. The practitioners had experimented with ideas and materials that do not traditionally exist in their own disciplines. In fact many of them had changed disciplines in order to pursue the direction in which their design development had led them. Most of the practitioners interviewed found it hard to define themselves within a specific discipline. In fact, both Helen Beard and Michael McCabe found it initially difficult to have their work accepted by the various disciplines.

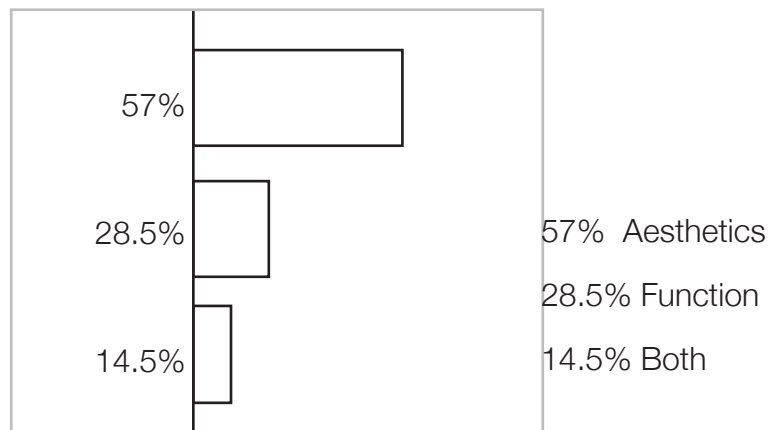
"...I had always got into trouble at college for not clarifying my status..."

Michael McCabe

“Initially I struggled with ceramics, as it was all very distant pottery stuff. It was deemed as a very bad thing to cut up ceramics to make something. If you were a really good ceramist you will be able to make a whole vessel and not alter it in... the traditional way.”

Helen Beard

Function Vs. Aesthetics



57% of the practitioners found the aesthetics of the designs to be more important than the function. Some viewers might argue that most of the works by the interviewed practitioners are not meant to be commercial. Thus they can afford to concentrate on the aesthetic aspects rather than ultimately seeking a function for the commercial market in terms of wearability.

“... I wanted to be creating pieces that people could interact with. Pieces that would make you sit back and think twice about.”

Emma King

Contrary to this belief, the practitioners who had expressed the importance of function within their work are artists. They wanted to make sure that the work would serve the function of making the viewers think.

The practitioners, who sell their designs to the commercial market, were more concerned about the outer aesthetics of their designs. This could be due to the target market for their designs. The practitioners sell their work either to a specific niche market (For example, McCabe's designs are sold in the fetish market) or

to high-end markets, where the customers could afford to spend money on items that do not serve a practical function but instead the creations fit into their personal ideals or lifestyles.

4.5: Comparative Study Between Research Interviewees And Practitioners.

At the outset, some of the interviewees appear to share some key similarities with the high profile practitioners cited in section 4.2.

For example Navarrow, McCabe and Margiela.

Their shared similarities are,

- They have presented their work within a fashion context.
- They generally produce their works in small quantities (With the exception of the Tyvek garments by Margiela.)

But this is as far as the similarities go; there are still key differences between these practitioners.

Margiela's and Navarrow's differences are,

- Margiela has presented his work in various contexts like art and fashion and within various sectors of the fashion industry. Navarrow on the other hand had only presented his work within the couture and one off sector within the fashion industry.
- Navarrow had only utilised non-clothing materials via applied decoration while Margiela had used them via applied decoration and integration.
- In his works, Margiela had collaborated with other experts while Navarrow had only worked solo.

Margiela's and McCabe's differences are,

- McCabe's work is targeted at a specific niche market while Margiela's work is targeted at both art audiences and designer wear consumers.
- McCabe only works on a commission basis and is reluctant to over commercialise his designs while Margiela made his work for both exhibitions and commercial purposes.
- Margiela had collaborated with other experts and had sometimes incorporated technology into his works while McCabe had worked on a solo basis and made his work via lo-tech techniques.

So far in the thesis we have mainly considered the works of practitioners who had approached the utilisation of non-clothing materials from a non-commercial point of view. Their designs were mainly intended for a target audience rather than a target consumer market. There are reasons why the thesis had cited more artistic and non-commercial examples because very few commercial labels actually utilise non-clothing materials. As explained by the high street designers in section 4.2, commercial garments sold to a wide market had to be made to appeal to the widest possible market, easy to mass manufacture and be able to pass all the regulated testing laws which govern this fashion sector. Thus we see more examples of designer labels utilising unusual textiles meant for other industries as these materials already exist and are not likely to need much further development and could be easily mass produced as they could be made up using conventional sewing techniques, thus cutting down both on development and manufacturing time.

In order to provide a more balanced view of those practitioners utilising non-clothing materials, the researcher included a detailed study of Stone Island's work through a review of Morozzi's book. The research chose to show Stone Island's work in detail because in contrast to most of the practitioners cited they are predominantly a commercial designer label and like the research interviewees had articulately expressed their design philosophy and ethos.

In Morozzi's book, "Carlo Rivetti: C.P. Company-Stone Island" she explores the history, the design philosophy and work of the company through a series of insightful interviews with the current major shareholder, Carlo Rivetti and the designer, Paul Harvey.

Stone Island is a label, which was formed under the parent label of C.P. Company. The label's initial function was to create garments from textiles with specialised surface treatment and dyes. The company began its life in the 1970's, when it was known as Chester Perry and was set up by the designer, Massimo Osti. His aim was to be a "creator of clothing that functions as tools." (Morozzi 2001:15) to "produce clothing that was like a second protective skin." (Morozzi 2001: 13) He had wanted to create innovative menswear through the use of new materials like rubber-faced fabrics and heat sensitive materials.

Due to the expansion of the company and the inclusion of new partners, Osti left the company in order to retain his sense of freedom as a designer in the 1980's. Nevertheless, the company retained Osti's initial vision and continued its research for new and innovative materials. The company is very dedicated to this area of research as recounted by Rivetti, the company is "engaged in a continual process of research, no defined 'end-products' to be stolen or copied." (Morozzi 2001:19) When Rivetti was describing his experiments with new forms of manufacturing and management, Morozzi noted that Rivetti's description was like "an experimental laboratory rather than a manufacturing facility." (Morozzi 2001:19) Such description bears similarities to how Rogers had described Fox, another designer who utilises non-clothing materials. (Please refer to p30)

Of the company's design process Rivetti noted that the materials were the dominant factor. "Before it creates the clothing the company creates the textiles." (Rivetti as quoted in Morozzi 2001:21) This supports the interview findings in which 71.4% of the practitioners had also revealed the material to be the dominant factor within their designs.

Endnotes

1

Endnotes

This chart illustrates a list of examples of the utilisation of non-clothing materials. Due to the practical constraints of the research, the researcher was unable to cover each example. Thus this chart also list comprehensive referencing to the original source.

Haute Couture & One-offs

Applied Decoration

Amadi, Onyema (Designer)
- Car Tyre Inner Tubing 1996.
(Braddock & O'Mahoney 1998:62)
Blaisse, Maria (Costume Designer)
- Synthetic Foam. 1996. (Braddock & O'Mahoney 1998:22)
Red or Dead (Fashion Designer) - Aperitif Labels. 1997.
(Kingswell 1998)

Integration

Lee, Chungie (Fashion and Textile Designer)
- Copper wire. (Knitted to make a hat) 1992.
(Braddock & O'Mahoney 1998:17)
Koshino, Michiko (Fashion Designer)
- Plastic Cellophane. 1996.
(Braddock & O'Mahoney 1998:121)
Milner, Deborah
- Stainless Steel. 1998 (Wollen 1998:18)
Red or Dead (Fashion Designer)
- Straw. 1990.
- Product Wrappers. 1991.
(Kingswell 1998)

Designer

Applied Decoration

Ellise Co. (Mit Media Laboratory)
- Water Sensors. 2003. (Piquepaille 2003:2)
Prototype stage but has potential for mass production.

Integration

Cevese, Luisa (Fashion Textile Designer)
- Textile Industrial Waste. Accessories) 1995.
(Braddock & O'Mahoney 1998:27)
Lewis, Sophia (Fashion Designer)
- Silicone. Applied onto garment for decorative beaded effect. 1996
(Braddock & O'Mahoney 1998:15)
Hamai, Koji (Materials Designer)
- Stainless steel coating. 1995. (Braddock & O'Mahoney 1998:126)
Jakob Schlaepfer (Textile Design Company)
- Metal. (Stacatto, Fabric woven with metal and silk) 1996.
(Braddock & O'Mahoney 1998:19)
Maubrey, Benoit (Die Audio Gruppe)
- Audio Equipment. 1983-1996 (Braddock & O'Mahoney 1998:42-43)
Porteous, Sharon (Textile Artist)
- Recycled plastic bags. 2000 (Heely 2000:9)

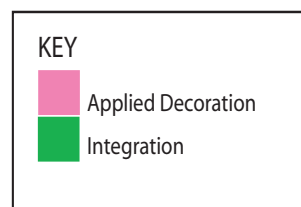
The utilisation of Non-Clothing Materials
Within The Fashion System

Art

Integration

Gillott, Sara (Textile Designer)
- Inflatable Plastic. 1996 (Braddock & O'Mahoney 1998:45)
Ito, Kei (Textile Artist)
- Metal coated paper. 1995. (Thomas & Jackson 2001:104)
Lafaso, Christine
- Newspapers. 1992 (Wollen 1998:110)
Smith, Mimi (Artist)
- Recycled Rubbish. 1965 & 1993 (Wollen 1998:56)
Thomas, Charlie (Graphic Designer)
- Paper and cardboard. 1999 & 2000 (Thomas & Jackson 2001:70-74)

Fig.E4a:
Additional chart
illustrating practitioners
utilising non-clothing
materials.



- 2 Vanitas is derived from 16th and 17th century Dutch paintings, where still life objects are arranged in a way to make the viewer contemplate the 'vanities' of life and death. (Lane 2003)
- 3 Margiela set up 'La Maison Martin Margiela' with Jenny Meiren in 1988. (Derycke and Van De Veire 1999 :288)
- 4 Kultaturve is a small Finnish textile company in Finland. Founded by Kaisa Ovaska-Ahonen in 1993. (www.kultaturve.fi/)



Chapter 5

Work Process Report and Reflection

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5.4	Materials Development (Accessories)	108

Chapter 5: Work Process Report And Reflection

Using self as the main case study, chapters 5 and 6 consists excerpts from the researcher's reflective work process journal which should be viewed together with the sketchbooks, samples, video clips and mini-documentary. Both chapters examine the research practitioner's design process and methods in detail. Chapter 5 looks at the initial inspiration, processes and the development of a theme for the final collection. While Chapter 6 focuses on the actual construction and realization of the final collection f.apothecary.

The objective of this practical work was to investigate the integration of non-clothing materials within the fashion system and the research questions that this chapter answers are:

- What are the 'wearability' implications of such fabrics?
- How does the development of the material or the garment design influence each other?
- What types of media, materials and garments are feasible for experimentation?
- How might practical experiments best be conducted and recorded?
- Which processes are the most appropriate for experimentation?
(Including 'conventional' versus 'unconventional'.)
- How do the media and process affect the aesthetic of the final garments?
- How might the practical research best reach the public domain?

As the research went through a complex evolution with both successes and failures, this chapter examines and reflects on the researcher's design process, mainly focusing on the experiments and points that helped mold the research.

The research process will be looked at in five main parts:

- Origin of interest and initial research.
- Materials Development. (Ceramics & Fibre Glass)
- Materials Development. (Clothing)
- Materials Development. (Accessories)
- Collaborations and Exhibitions.

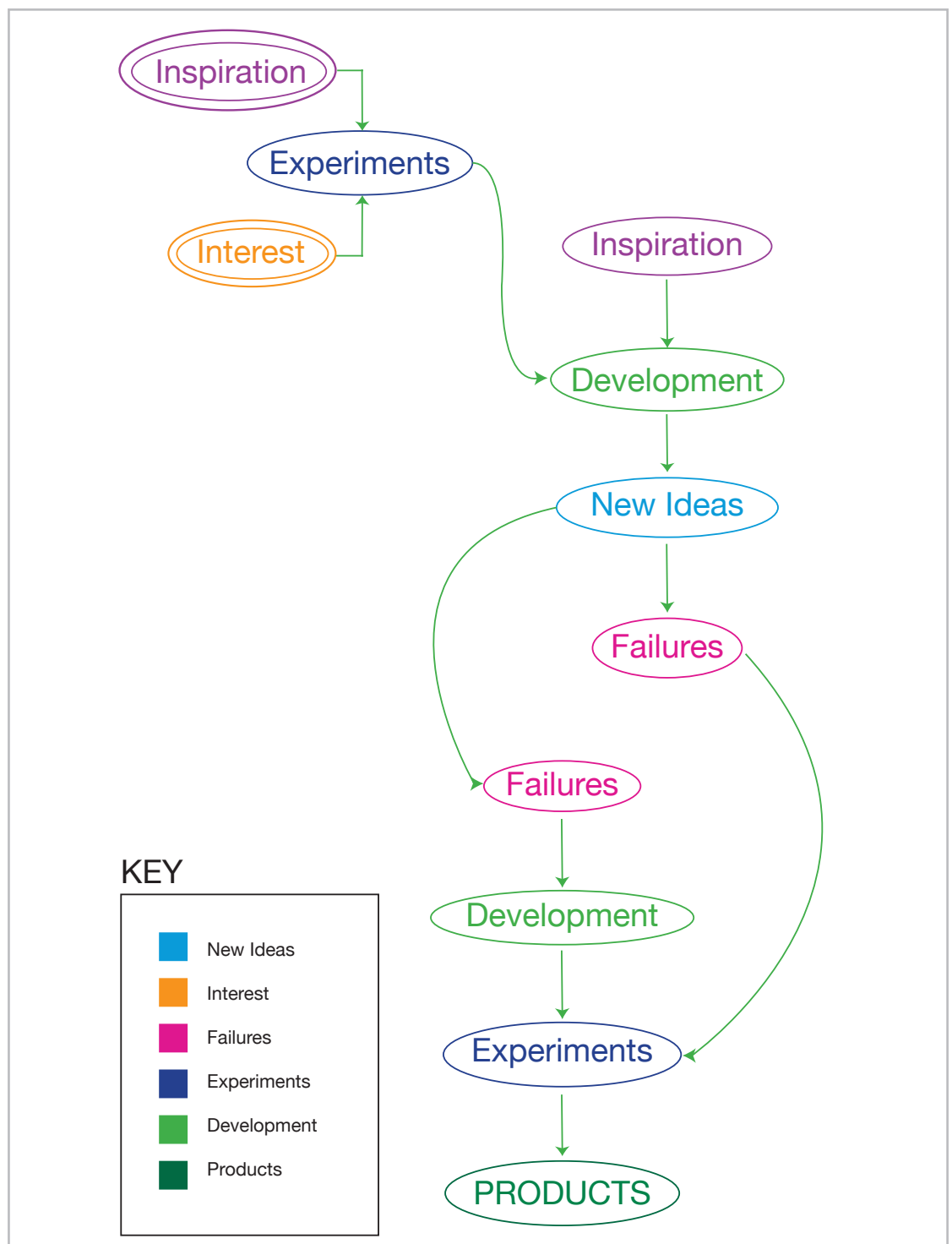


Fig. 5a:
Basic flow chart of the
entire design process.

Fig.5a: illustrates a summary of the design process. At the beginning of each section there will be a flow chart, which will illustrate the basic structure of the design process. Each chart is colour-coded, each colour will represent a particular stage within the research. (The starting point of each chart is the double-circled bubble on the left)

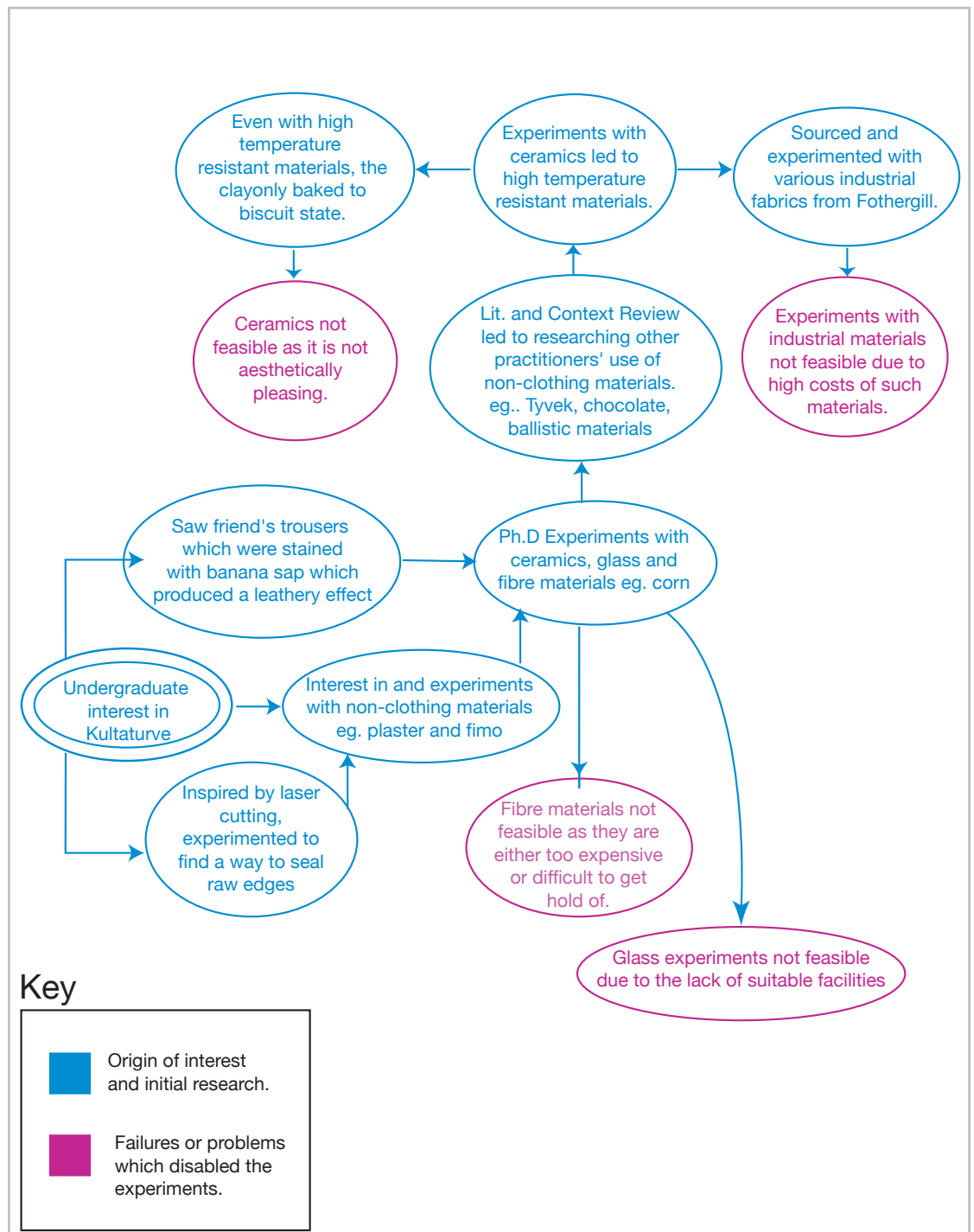


Fig. 5.1a:
Work process chart.
Origin of Interest and
initial work process.

5.1: Origin of interest

Interest in the integration of non-fashion materials into the language of fashion stems from the researcher's work as a fashion design undergraduate. For her final collection, the researcher, was drawn to both the aesthetic and discordant characteristics of kultaturve¹. The materials were felted together to form a new material which was visually appealing, comfortable, sturdy and practical.

For her undergraduate degree, the researcher was trained as a commercial fashion designer where fundamentals of garment construction and interpretation of fashion trends were taught. Within fashion design, there is often a set of rules for pattern cutting and garment construction. The garments were designed, illustrated on paper, and technical drawings were produced with all the specifications of the garment calculated before putting the garment together. During her undergraduate experience, the researcher undertook an elective in Textile Design for Fashion. Due to the time constraints a 'no rules'



Fig.5.1b:
Jeanne Tan. Outfit
made from Kultaturve
1999



Fig.5.1c:
Jeanne Tan. Close-up
view of Kultaturve outfit.

experimental straight-to-fabric approach was taught. The elective was only taught for two hours per week and within that short space of time it would have been impossible to learn the basic rules of textile design to the same standards as full time Textile Design students.

Despite the dual approach to garment and textile design causing conflict and occasional dead ends, the researcher did eventually successfully combine the differing approaches by both simultaneously breaking and adhering to the rules. For example, letting the material dictate the design and construction methods rather than the other way round and using orthodox garment finishing/ construction techniques on non-clothing materials. (All of which contributed favorably to the aesthetic of the final collection.)

Equal emphasis was to be placed on the process and the final products. The approach towards the collection was totally 'hands on' where the researcher worked with the materials throughout the experimentation and development stage to the final assembly of the garments. Therefore, the researcher's role within the practice is not only that of a practitioner designer but that of a practitioner maker. The evolutionary process of the development and the final realisation act are important design processes and aid the researcher in fully understanding the rationale and the exploratory, accidental and evolutionary elements of the design process. This approach also allows the researcher to have full control of the process without having to compromise due to external factors.

The researcher's knowledge of orthodox garment construction and unorthodox knowledge of textile design were used to create an inspirational fashion collection by integrating and applying non-clothing materials. Initially, the researcher was inspired and influenced by what she came across in daily life. Through chance encounters, the researcher came across two factors, which moved the interest in a specific direction during this initial phase. These were a friend's old, tattered trousers, which were stained with dried banana sap. The trousers were stained

previously when he had spent sometime working on a banana plantation during the summer. The banana sap had dried out to form a glossy, leathery patch on the fabric. After several tests with different detergents, the patch could still not be removed; thus the researcher was intrigued by this permanent effect which could be achieved by an unusual material. At the same time, the researcher also saw some fabrics, which had been cut by lasers. The intense heat of the lasers sealed the raw edges of the synthetic materials. These observations sparked an interest, in finding an alternative way of sealing the raw edges of materials.

These interests in banana sap and laser cutting initially seemed at odds and thus the research was conducted as two separate areas but gradually they began to merge.

The banana sap led to research with vegetable and fruit fibre fabrics. The initial search was conducted via internet and Whaley's Fabric Catalogue. (Whaley's is a textile supplier company in the U.K. It specialises in plain fabrics which are ready for textile treatments.) This search led to Pina which is a fabric made from Pineapple fibre. This material is commonly used in The Phillippines for making special occasion garments. But the material was found to impractical because it was expensive and had already been utilised within a fashion context thus

using this material will not aid in any contribution to new knowledge for the researcher.

Further research led to corn fibre which at that time was being developed and manufactured by Kanebo. (Kanebo is Japanese company which is involved in developing and manufacturing a wide range of products, from cosmetics to textiles.) Corn fibre is



Fig.5.1.d:
Biscuit state clay on
heat resistant fabric
samples.

made by extracting sugars from the plant, the sugars are then fermented and converted into a polymer called polyatide. Fibres are then extruded from this polymer and subsequently woven or knitted into fabric. As corn fibre was still in the initial marketing stage during the time of research, information and actual samples were not accessible. Thus it was not possible to further research this material due to the unavailability of the product.

Plaster, glass and Fimo² were experimented with to find a sealant to prevent the fraying of fabrics similar to the sealed edges of a laser cut fabric. The two areas of research were combined, the materials were experimented with in an exhaustive manner, using as many different combinations and methods as possible. As a result, the researcher found some of the materials were not feasible for experimentation. The vegetable and fruit fibre materials were feasible due to the cost. Glass was proved not to be feasible due to the lack of expertise and suitable facilities necessary in order to work with this material.

Subsequent research about other practitioners' use of non-clothing materials led to experiments with materials such as ballistic materials. The primary sourcing of such materials led to two companies, Fothergill Engineered Fabrics Limited and Dupont. Fothergill is a British company which specialises in knitted and woven high performance textiles. The researcher found both their ballistic and thermal protection materials to be relevant for the experiments with ceramic clay. As clay needs to be baked in a kiln at a very high temperature, the fabric must be heat resistant. The materials which the researcher was particularly interested in were Kevlar (ballistic material), Tyglas and knitted Tygasil (Both are Thermal Protection materials) Tyglas is made from glass and Knitted Tygasil is made from silica fibres. After coming in contact with the actual samples, the researcher decided to concentrate on the use of Tygasil. the two main reasons for this decision were,

- Stone Island had already produced a successful series of outerwear with Kevlar and it was important to use a material, which had not been

used within a fashion context in order to ensure an original contribution to new knowledge for the Ph.D.

- Tyglas has a very rigid and coarse handle, which was not feasible for making garments.

Knitted Tygasil seemed feasible at that point because,

- The material had a nice handle. it was soft and comfortable to the touch.
- It was a knitted material thus was pliable and could be sewn into a garment.

Even with heat resistant materials, the clay can only be baked to 'biscuit' state before the extreme temperature will disintegrate the fabric. This series of experiments had again proved the researcher's initial ideas and experiments to be unworkable. The factors that demonstrate why these experiments were not feasible are as follows:

- The ceramic clay can only be set to a 'biscuit' state, which produced samples that were visually unsatisfactory and unrefined.
- The researcher did not have the relevant ceramics expertise to further refine the experiments.
- Ballistic and heat resistant fabrics (Industrial materials) are very expensive, after repeated rejected requests for sponsorship from industrial fabric suppliers; such materials proved not to be viable due to their high cost.

While researching industrial materials , the researcher also came across a company called Dupont. (Dupont is a science -base company which researches and develops chemicals, materials and energy.) Tyvek is a paper material, which is commonly used for making packaging materials like envelopes and CD covers. It is also used to make protective overalls for people working in specialist areas where

they handle toxic materials.

The researcher decided against using this material because, it had been used previously by Margiela, Chalayan and H&M in their Womenswear collections.

Even though the initial series of experiments had not been feasible, they had revealed important facets of the researcher's design process. As the process was conducted in the form of action research, results of initial experiment were reflected upon, analysed and feasible results were then further developed. The process was very systematic and practical, unsuccessful experiments were aborted and feasible avenues were further pursued. And the process was not only influenced by hands on experiments but was also influenced by the researcher's personal experience and theoretical research.

5.2: Materials Development

(Please click here to refer to sketchbook 1, 2 & 3)

Taking the failures that were encountered in the initial stage of experiments into account, the researcher went in a different direction to source materials. The decision was to source more accessible and controllable materials. At the same time, the researcher saw an inspirational collection of clothing by Hussein Chalayan. The collection was made of sugar glass (Fig. 4.1g) and was only presented on the catwalk. Nevertheless it was one of the most talked about collections of that season.

This prompted a closer reflection on the aims of the practical work. At that time, the aim was to produce a collection of garments that had been achieved using non-clothing materials, which would have a particular and recognisable aesthetic. The collection is targeted at a target audience rather than a commercial market. After looking at other practitioners' work, both through literature reviews and

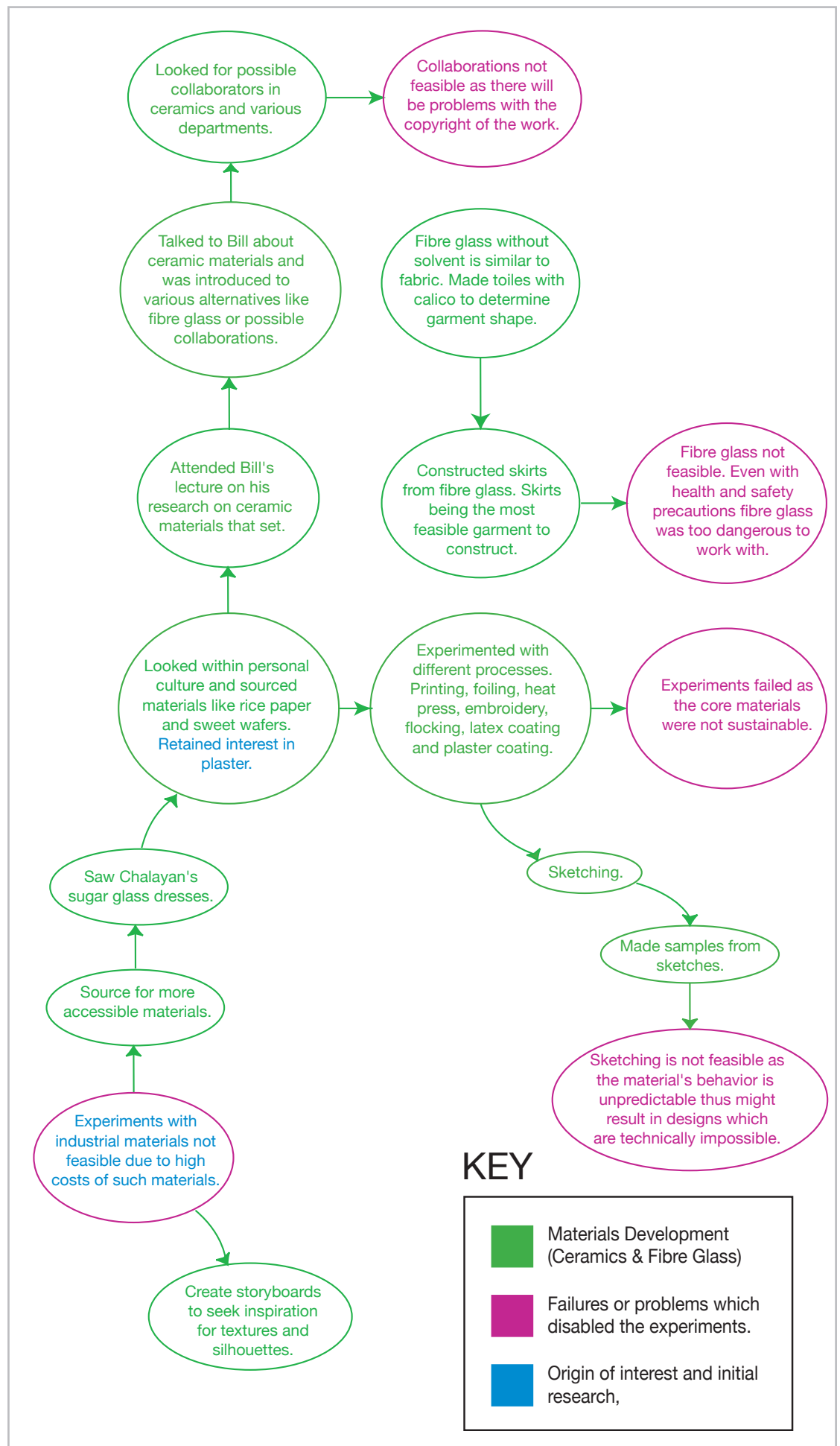


Fig.5.2a:
Work Process Chart 1
Materials development.

personally conducted interviews, it became clear that most of the garments made from non-clothing materials were made solely for the catwalk with the purpose of such garments being to inspire and create publicity. (Hoggard 2001:45) Often these garments were not sold in retail shops, this was not because they were unwearable but because the garments were labour intensive and it would have been impossible to mass manufacture them. This also prompted the researcher to question the 'wearability' of her collection. Thus by reviewing the work of other practitioners and through the results of experiments, these processes enabled the researcher to focus. The decision was to target the collection as an inspirational collection for the catwalk and define 'wearability' as being able to be worn by a model on a catwalk and for publicity/ photo shoot purposes including being displayed on garment stands for exhibition purposes.

Inspired by Chalayan's use of edible materials, such as sugar glass the researcher sought culinary inspiration from her own culture and experiences and sourced materials such as rice paper and sweet wafer papers. The potential of these materials was subsequently explored through experiments with different processes such as printing, foiling, heat press, embroidery, flocking, bonding, expandex, latex coating and plaster coating. After exhaustive experimentation, some materials and processes proved to be more feasible than others.

Rice papers come in the original form of dried flat opaque disks. They were brittle and difficult to work with when dry. The rice papers had to be dipped in water,

Fig.5.2b:
Vietnamese rice papers.



Fig.5.2c:
Softening the rice
papers in warm water.





Fig.5.2d:
Rice paper bustier.



Fig.5.2e:
Rice paper bustier
disintegrated after
constant exposure to
open air.



Fig.5.2f:
Sweet wafer paper.

which then caused them to become malleable. None of the printing experiments worked on the rice paper. Experiments demonstrated that the only feasible way to utilise this material is to form structures with it when it is in a wet state. It was easy to mold the rice papers around a mannequin to form a bustier-like structure. The structure was set in place when it was dry. Unfortunately, the structure was also very stiff and brittle when dry and had to be handled very carefully or it would disintegrate. The researcher attempted to reinforce the structure by coating it with latex or plaster but the material was still too fragile.

Sweet wafer papers⁴ responded well to the various printing experiments. The wafers could not be subjected to intense heat, as they burn to a crisp. When applying heat during foiling or heat pressing, instead of using the heat presses, the researcher had to protect the wafer with silicon paper and use a conventional iron for a few seconds. After several successful experiments with bonding, embroidery and foiling,

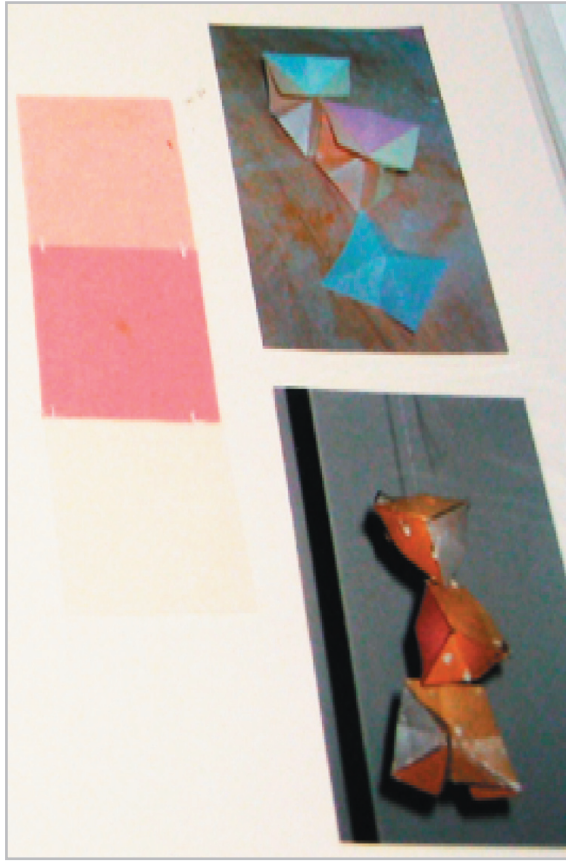


Fig.5.2g:
Sweet wafer paper
samples.



Fig.5.2h:
Sample of ceramic
materials, which sets at
room temperature.

in which the applied decorations were permanent and did not affect the fragile state of the material, the researcher attempted to construct bigger samples. These attempts were unproductive, as prolonged exposure to the open air made the materials very brittle and fragile, thus making this material impractical for the structure required of wearable garments.

At the same time, the researcher attended Bill Brown's⁵ lecture on his personal research in ceramics and archaeology. During the lecture, he mentioned some hybrid ceramic materials he had developed, which will set without having to be put through the kiln. These hybrid ceramic materials would have solved the problems that the researcher encountered during the initial experimentation stage. A material which sets at room temperature would enable the researcher to produce samples which were more visually pleasing than clay which is set to 'biscuit' state in the kiln. This further sparked the researcher's interest in ceramic materials. In

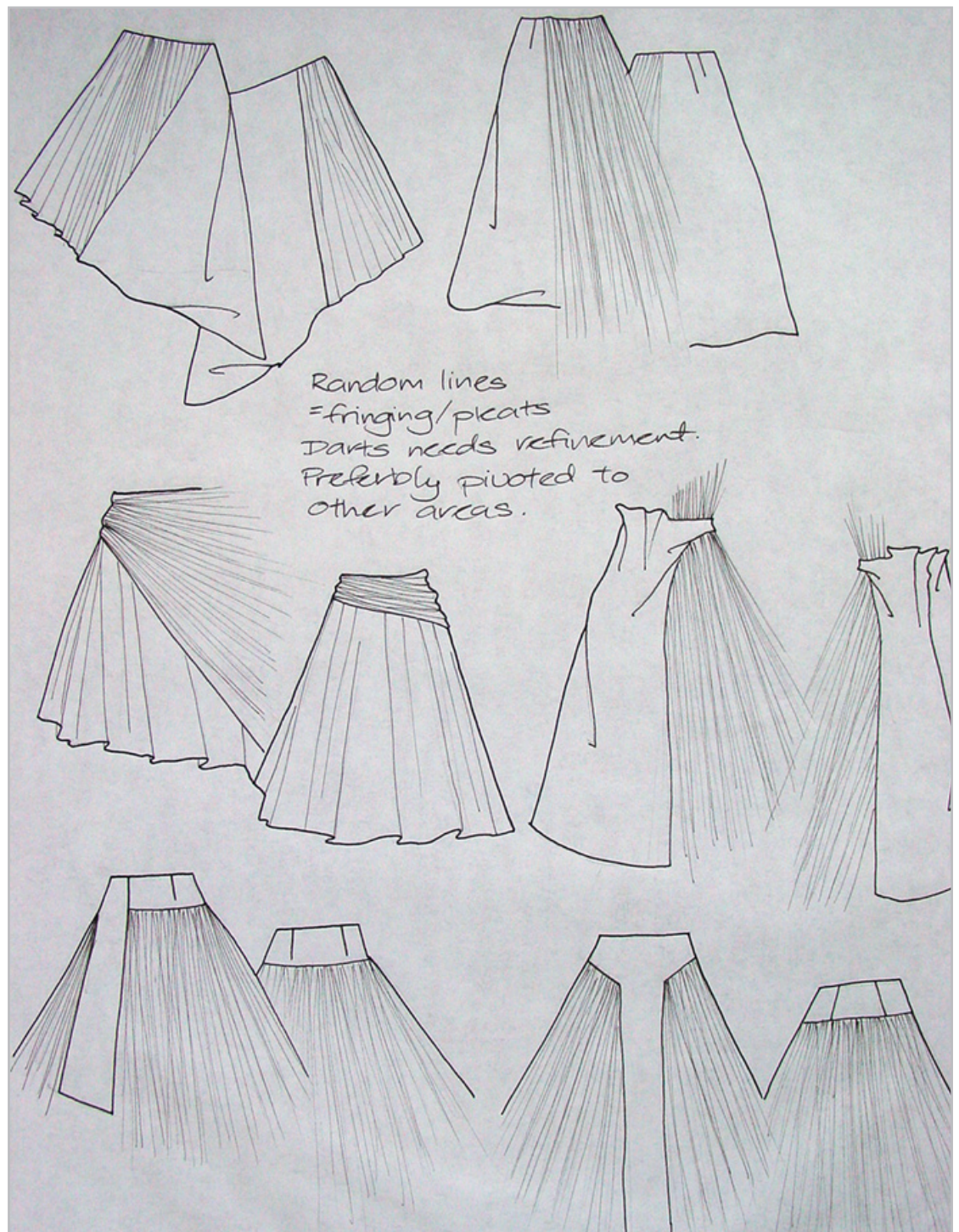


Fig.5.2i:
Sketches for fibre glass
samples.

further discussions with Bill Brown, he recommended and introduced me to various other materials that were available from the ceramics department. The researcher, understanding her limited knowledge of ceramics sought for possible collaborators within the field. This idea was also later rejected, as upon further consideration, the researcher realised there would be a conflict of interests with regards to the copyright of the end products.



Fig.5.2j:
Jane Watt, wearing
safety gear while
handling fibreglass.



Fig.5.2k:
Fibreglass skirt toile

One of the materials, recommended by Bill Brown, was fibreglass. Under the recommendation of the ceramic technicians, the researcher sourced woven fibre glass from the Glaswegian company, Allscots. (Allscots is a company which specialises in model making supplies.) Woven fibreglass without solvent felt very similar to fabric. In fact, its handle was very similar to that of calico. In order to find the right design and structure to construct the garment, the researcher sketched and made toiles⁶ with calico first before making them in fibreglass in order to keep the costs low. This method of designing whereby the researcher first sourced the material sketched and then toiled on calico and then onto actual material was again impractical. As it turns out fibre glass had a handle similar to fabric but behaved in a very different way thus rendering the sketches and previous toiles obsolete. After further experiments with the construction of garments of fibreglass, the material also proved to be impractical. Even after implementing the recommended health and safety precautions

of wearing protective aprons and masks, the fibreglass still caused both the technician and the researcher to have allergic reactions.

The experimental process, which the researcher utilised during the initial process, was brought over to this phase of the work process.

This research phase showed that:

- Individual ideas could lead to a range of different ideas. Even when an experiment is unsuccessful, the process might reveal other avenues, which the researcher can pursue thus proving that the process is often exploratory, evolutionary and accidental.
- The experimental research should be limited to 'low tech' and 'hands on' approaches with inexpensive materials where the researcher can directly control the process from beginning to end.
- Due to the unpredictable behavior of these materials it proved better to let the material 'lead' and suggest the designs. Letting the design 'lead' proved unviable as this often resulted in designs which are technically impossible to construct.
- A theme for the collection was required to help keep the material experiments and developments focused.
- Collaborating with other craftsmen or organisations was not an option due to time and copyright constraints.

5.3: Materials Development. Clothing

(Please click here to refer to sketchbooks 4,5 &7)

The researcher gained inspiration for this phase of experimentation (which led to the production of the final collection, f.apothecary) from an article, which she came across while researching for the literature review of this thesis. The article was entitled, Dressing For Art's Sake: Gwen John the Bon Marché and The Spectacle

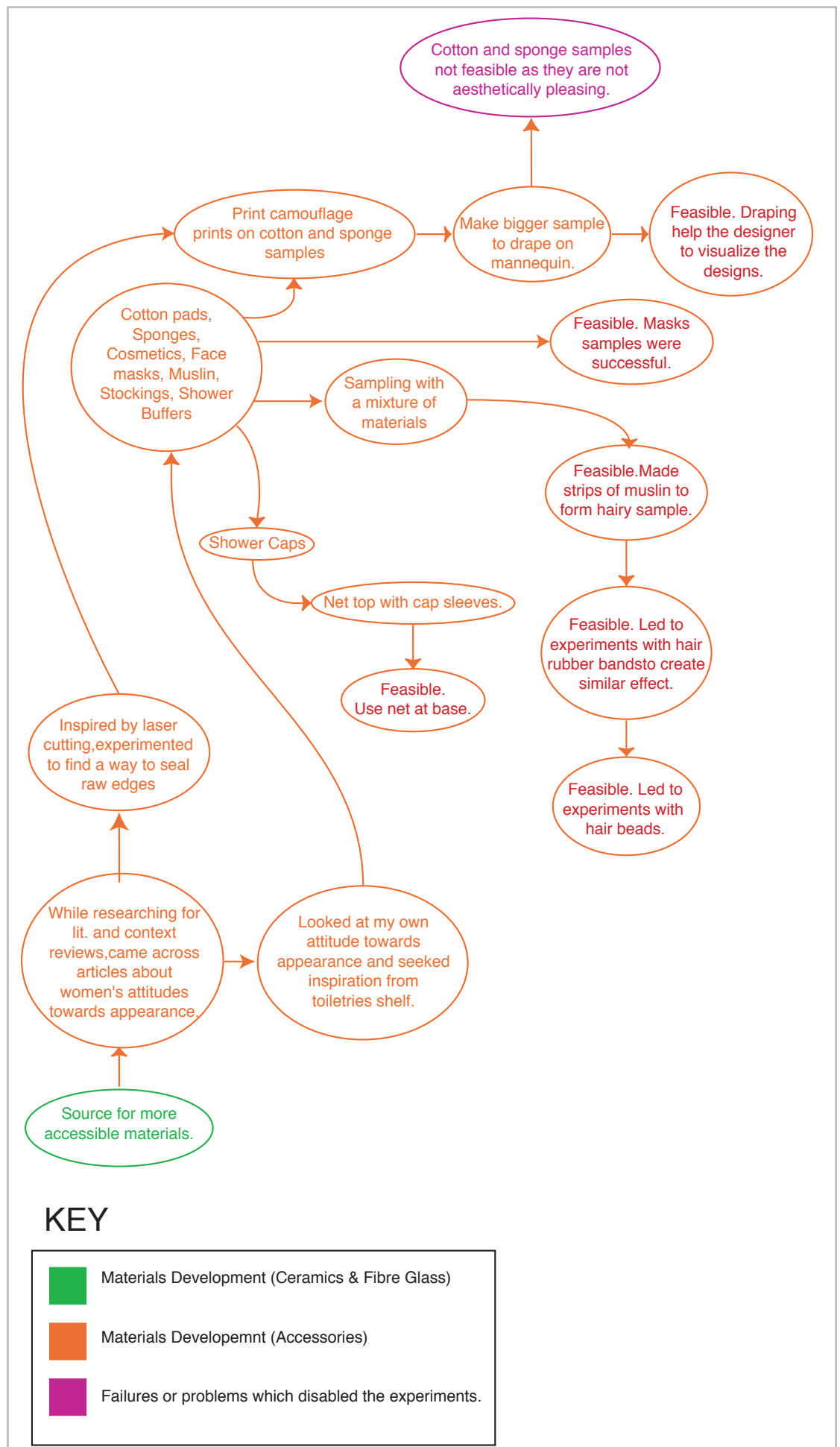


Fig.5.3a:
Work Process Chart 2
Material development.
Clothing. (Beauty
Products)

Of Woman Artist in Paris, by Alicia Forster. This article inspired the researcher to delve into the paradoxical theme of the beauty system for the final collection.

In the article, Foster looked at Gwen John's⁷ attitude towards fashion. Gwen John, in order to appear like a serious artist (within a male dominated system) gave the impression of not having any interest in fashion and projected herself as a self-neglecting artist. Yet by contrast, she was very aware of fashion and how her image could be portrayed through the right clothes. In fact she consulted fashion plates and customized the recommended looks into her individual style. She utilised clothing to give herself a visual identity. The 'look' appropriate at that time within artistic circles was a mixture of store bought garments and customised clothing in order to appear not to be a slavish follower of fashion. It is interesting to note that women's conflicting relationships with fashion and beauty were in evidence as early as the late 19th Century, in circumstances where women wanted to be recognised for their abilities. Such conflicting reactions towards one's visual appearance clearly still exist and indeed are very prominent now.

"Even though I might slather on gallons of products, my aim is to look as if I've exerted no effort, as if I was that rarest of creatures: a natural beauty."

Linda Wells, Editor of Allure May 2003

Just as how Gwen John had consulted fashion plates for the latest trends, nowadays, the availability of countless fashion and lifestyle magazines offering the latest cosmetics and skin care advice seem to fuel the obsession with the modern woman's physical image. The women's magazine and cosmetics industries exist symbiotically by projecting an idealized concept of the 'perfect girl' while at the same time encouraging "a dark vein of self hatred, physical obsessions, terror of aging and dread of lost control" amongst female consumers. (Wolfe 1990:2) Based on the above quotation from Wells, the editor of a popular magazine about cosmetics and skin care, felt a compulsion to hide her interest in beauty products. It is interesting to note that even the people who encourage an unattainable form of beauty are also susceptible to the consequences created by their industry.

Women use clothing and cosmetics to create their visual identity, both to camouflage their flaws and distinguish themselves by accentuating their features within the crowd. Biologically, women's looks are important because they indicate how healthy and fertile a woman is, whereas it is less important for men because they stay fertile all their lives and so do not require external assessment on the grounds of procreation. (Ettcoff 1999:77) In these times, where beauty products are the norm, many observe that beauty products are a "grim necessity", (Baker as quoted in Bustelo 1997: 76) working women use them as tools to have a nice healthy appearance both for attracting romance and to keep their jobs.

In a society which treats beauty as "a currency system like the gold standard."

(Wolf 1990:3)

Why do women feel that the use of beauty products is a "passive and trivial behavior"? (Craik 1994:154) There seems to be a very fine line between what is an accepted form of beauty and what is not. As noted by Rogers," good individuals who are properly feminine and bad individuals who deviate from the codes of respectable femininity." (Rogers 1999:131) In as much as it is good to be 'fashionable' and distinctive but it is also very important not to be outrageously distinctive to the point of public 'un-acceptance'. It is important to present a balanced attitude towards one's appearance, as there is a danger of appearing obsessed with one's looks thus appearing superficial to others. As if all that is not enough to worry about Craik also observes the possible negative consequences of using cosmetics.

"While body decoration creates the persona...body decoration can draw attention away from the person."

(Craik 1994: 154)

Women seem to be stuck in a no win situation. There are still possibilities of being discriminated against whether you use beauty products or not. The only feasible way for women is to conform within the thin line which society condones as

acceptable.

Feminine beauty had often seemed paradoxical.

Now “mother uses cosmetics to hide her age... daughter uses them to hide her youth...”

(Bustelo 1997: 82)

Yet ironically the attempts to preserve one's youth seem to be fruitless. “Many cosmetics are supposed to keep you young...the irony is that the very skin that you strive to keep young with creams is already dead. The outer layer is as dead as a dodo. There is nothing left to rejuvenate.” (Dekkars 2000:102-103)

It seems as with the increasing need to attain society's conformist ideology of beauty, woman are actually “censoring...real faces and bodies.” (Wolf1990: 7) As society becomes more obsessed with physical beauty which is judged on a contradictory scale, Wolf deem women as “worse off than their unliberated grandmothers” (Wolf 1990:2) Is the modern intelligent ‘liberated’ woman, supposed to understand the myth that surrounds beauty and be above and beyond the miracle creams and cosmetics that promise eternal youth and beauty?

Similar to the experience of millions of other women, the researcher's personal attitude towards beauty products is also very contradictory. She was also very aware that the superficial image created by beauty products could often be more important than the inner substance. Inspired by the theme of women's conflicting relationship between their use of beauty products and their visual identity, the researcher started to unravel the fabric of the beauty industry, using those materials which are used to create a superficial physical image to construct fashion garments.

This theme seems apt as the beauty and fashion industries are intrinsically linked both in the commercial sense and through the primary objectives that they serve. The beauty industry financially supports the fashion houses and the fashion

Fig.5.3b:
Facemask sample with
pink hairspray.

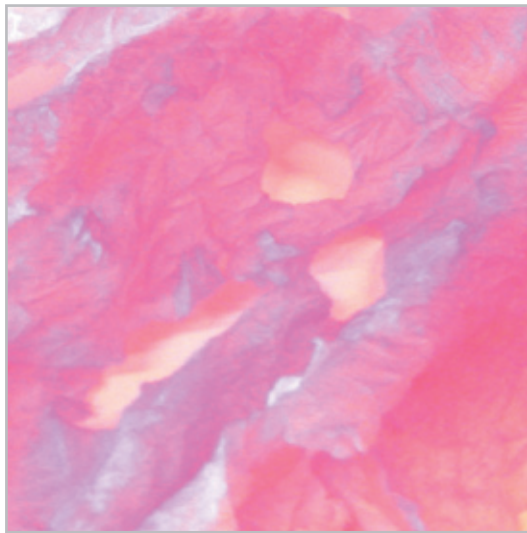
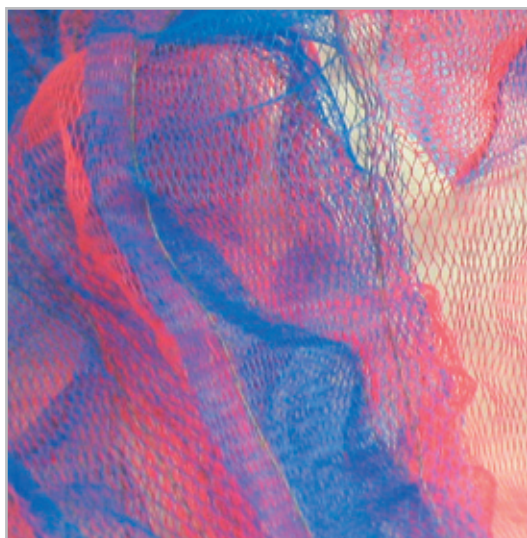


Fig.5.3c:
Shower buffer net
sample.



houses provide the exclusive image for the beauty industry which women aspire to. Women who need to create their ever-changing physical identities mainly support both industries. Consistent with the theme the collection was given the name f.apothecary. The 'f' being the initial for the word female which represents the women in the theme while apothecary is the traditional term for a pharmaceutical chemist, the chemist being the usual place where women purchase their beauty products.

Instead of treating the use of beauty products with negativity and discretely using beauty products as most women do, the approach for this collection

was to celebrate the use of beauty products by manipulating the materials of the beauty industry into flamboyant embellishments and creating obvious, colourful, playful feminine designs. Thus the collection embraces the notion of manipulating perceptions of one's physical self with beauty products by creating conspicuous designs which further accentuate the superficial self. Consistent with the theme of the conflicting relationship between women, the use of beauty products and their visual identity, the researcher looked to her cosmetics and toiletries shelf for materials. There was a long list of potential materials, cotton pads, sponges, cosmetics, facemasks, muslin, stockings and shower buffers. These materials were then deconstructed, manipulated, transformed, embroidered, embellished, distressed, reconstructed and an extensive series of samples was produced. (Fig.5.3b-e) Many feasible ideas emerged from this series of experiments. These

Fig.5.3d:
Rubber bands on net
sample.



Fig.5.3e:
Hair beads sample.



ideas then led to other viable materials (for example rubber bands and hair beads) which either look or feel similar to the original samples. Printing camouflage prints on the cotton pad samples carried through the camouflage idea. The prints came out really well but cotton pads and sponges looked raw and seemed like an overly literal interpretation of the beauty theme.

The viable materials, with design potential, to emerge from this series of experiments were: face masks, shower buffers, hair beads, muslin, cosmetics (colour hair spray) and rubber bands. All of which were sourced from the beauty industry. (Please refer to Fig.5.3f

for a detailed account of the source origins of each material.) These materials were viable for a number of reasons because they could be used against the skin without causing allergies, they were easily sewn, constructed and manipulated into garment forms, the materials could integrate into the design of the garment and fitted into the theme of the collection. There were several reasons why the researcher had utilised conventional sewing techniques in conjunction with unconventional materials, these are:

- To bring diverse elements together in order to further explore the full potential of the materials.
- To have a different approach to non-clothing materials as compared to some practitioners who often distress and deconstruct a finished,

Researcher's Personal Toiletries

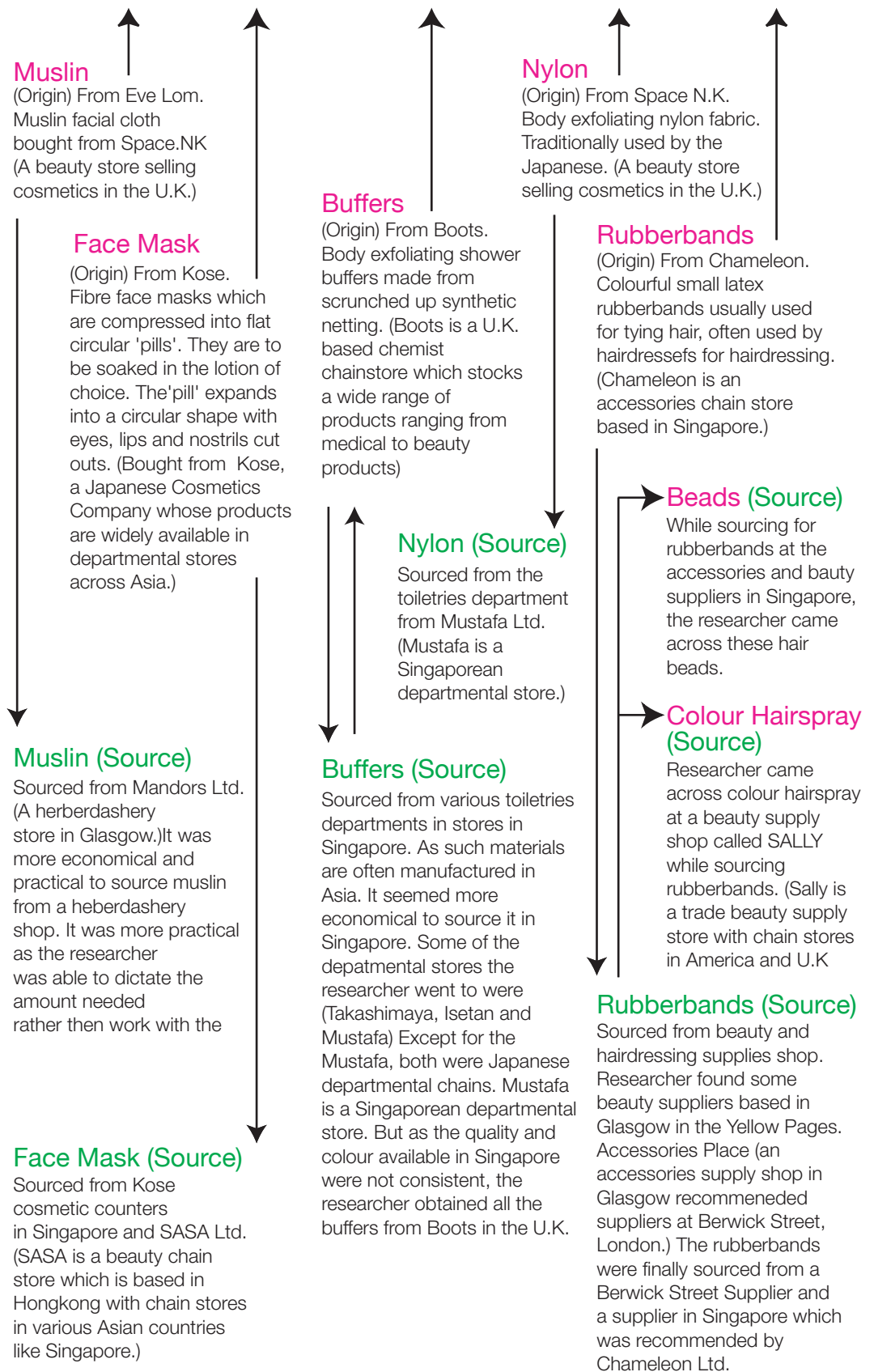


Fig.5.3f:
Sourcing Chart.

expensive garment , for example Shelly Fox's torched sequin skirts (Rogers 2000: Shelly Fox). Whereas the researcher applied expensive and labour intensive finishing on banal inexpensive materials.

- As the researcher had previous training in garment construction, this enabled the researcher to have full control over the practice without having to rely on external expertise.

This phase of experiments proved to be more successful than the previous phases because the researcher had analysed and reflected on the results of the experiments and applied the new knowledge to the subsequent experiments. The vital knowledge that was gained from previous failures was:

- To keep experiments and processes low-tech to ensure the researcher has total control over the whole process.
- To experiment with accessible products.
- In keeping with the theme of the collection, the materials dictated various elements of the designs (For example colour, material, and style) to be more focused. As the materials had dictated the colour scheme, the beauty products provided very vibrant colours as opposed to the neutral colours (Sourced from materials like industrial fabrics, fibre glass and raw clay) of earlier designs

5.4: Materials Development. Accessories

(Please click here to refer to sketchbooks 6 & 8)

Fig.5.4b:
Melting the wax and
submerging the mould
in cold water to ensure
the tiny holes in the
mold are saturated
to prevent wax from
seeping into them.



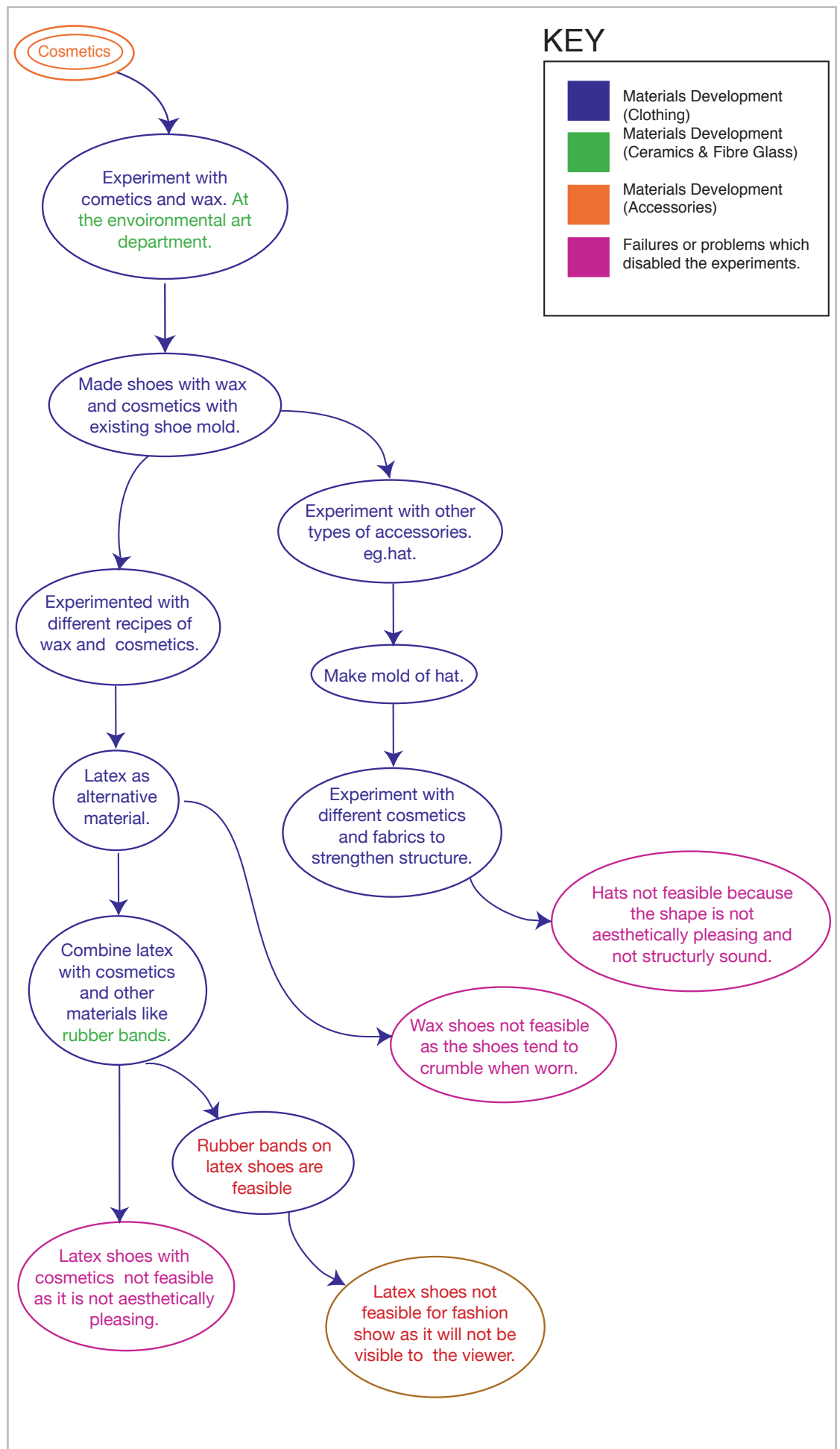


Fig.5.4a:
Work Process Chart 3
Materials Development.
(Accessories.)

Since most of the materials that were utilised in the previous experiments were feasible, the researcher branched out, and tried to create accessories to complement the collection. Retaining the contacts that she had established during the materials development phase, the researcher combined the feasible materials with techniques, which could be achieved from the ceramics and environmental art department.

From a previous visit, the researcher came across moulds for a pair of shoes within the department. Initially, the researcher utilised wax to make the shoes from the moulds. (Please refer to sketchbook 6) As wax was used as a base for many different cosmetics for example lipsticks, wax, however incongruous it might appear still retained its link to the beauty industry. There were various experiments with different combinations of wax, paraffin wax and petroleum jelly. The addition of petroleum jelly makes the wax shoes more malleable. After perfecting the right recipe of wax and petroleum jelly for the shoes, the researcher went on to combine cosmetics, in various forms, with the wax mixture.

Powder cosmetics, like powder blushers and eyeshadows will not mix thoroughly within the wax mixture. They will however, still retain their colour and create a 'sandy' effect. Wax-based cosmetics like lipsticks will blend with the wax mixture, and create an even colour. Nail varnish which is a ketone based cosmetic will not mix with the wax, instead it forms plastic-like slivers upon contact with the hot wax. The nail varnish had to be applied using a different method to the rest of the materials. The mould had to be coated with a layer of wax and allowed to set, the nail varnish is then applied to the shoe. Some time was allowed for the varnish to set and finally another layer of wax was applied and allowed to set before removing the shoe from the mold. Many different types of materials could be applied onto and integrated into the wax shoes. For example, rhinestones and fabric could be applied and integrated thus giving the researcher a wider design scope.



Fig.5.4c,d,e,f:
(Top to bottom) Wax, lipstick and muslin shoe,
paraffin and diamante shoe, Wax, petroleum jelly
and diamante shoe, wax, petroleum jelly and eye
shadow shoe.

With the success of the wax shoes, the researcher embarked on experimentation with another form of accessory, the hat. As there were no existing hat molds within the department, the researcher had to cast a mould³. The hat mold was a more complicated structure than the shoe mold, both because of the size and the amount of intruding and protruding surface areas it had.

Initially the cast was designed as a two-part mould into which wax could be poured through a small opening. It was then left in cold water to set. The mould would then be taken apart to reveal the completed hat. Unfortunately, that method was not feasible; due to the size of the mould, the hats tend to crumble upon removal. Subsequently the researcher attempted to make wax hats using the same method as for the shoes. This also proved to be unsuccessful due to the size and weight of the hat mould. Instead of swirling the liquid wax within the mould, the researcher had to paint the liquid wax onto the mould,



Fig.5.4g:
Making the hat mould.

thus resulting in a very rough wax surface. The only feasible method to achieve a smooth surface is via swirling; thus the researcher had to adapt and changed the design of the hat into a brimless hat in order to be able to apply the swirling method. Pieces of muslin had to be integrated into the design as it made it easier to remove the hat from the mould and also reinforced the structure of the hat.

Many different exhaustive experiments were carried out on the design and the structure of the wax hats. Ultimately however, both the wax hats and shoes were seen not to be viable. They still needed to go through another series of experiments to attain a more refined look. After reinforcements to their structures, they still tend to crumble and disintegrate when worn; thus the researcher had to abandon this series of experiments.

While experimenting with the wax shoes, the researcher was made aware that the shoes could also be made in latex, thus bringing back the same idea of utilising latex during the material development phase of the practice. Latex might seem incongruous to the beauty industry but it is a material that is often present as a

Fig.5.4h:
Wax mixture,
eyeshadow and muslin
hat.



Fig.5.4i:
Wax and sponge cap.



base material in mascara and adhesive glue for fake eyelashes. The latex could be applied with the same swirling technique as the wax. The latex took a longer time to set than the wax; thus it slowed down the development process. One layer of latex took several days to dry and a shoe will need three layers of latex, which amounted to a week for one pair of latex shoes. When the liquid latex was mixed with a thickening agent, it allowed the shoes to be completed with a single coat, as the single coat was equivalent to three layers of latex, it still took a week to set. The latex did not mix well with cosmetics but brilliant colours could be achieved with water based fabric dyes. Talcum powder had to be sprinkled on the inside of the shoe to prevent the surfaces from sticking.

The latex shoes turned out to be feasible, as due to the flexibility of the material, they accommodate most feet. Holes could be easily pierced through for the application of rubber bands to create surface interest. The heel of the shoe



Fig.5.4j,k,l,m:
(Left to right, top to
bottom) Latex shoe with
rubber band trimmings.
latex and dylon shoe.
Latex shoe with rubber
band rosette. Plain latex
shoe.

collapses when worn, this look could also be tied in to the original inspiration of women using cosmetics and appearance as a faux visual identity.

Due to time constraints and the invisibility of the shoes from the stage, it was not possible to utilise the shoes for the fashion show.

The key points that were raised during this phase were:

- No matter how conceptual the initial idea was, the researcher still had to set limitations and define the boundaries of the research. (For example, defining wearability within the research) this helped the researcher create a focused collection, which was aimed at a specific market.
- Practicality and aesthetics were two very difficult factors to balance. Often the practitioner will have to make a choice, especially in the case of a fashion designer. A fashion designer's products are highly visual and if the target audience could not see some of the designs, it would have been fruitless to make them, as it would have been as if they did not exist at all.

The new knowledge gained from both the successful and failed experiments of the

design processes, which were examined within this chapter. Chapter 6 will focus on the application of the new knowledge (of unconventional materials and conventional construction and finishing techniques) and the evolving design process, which aided in the creation of the final collection, professional collaborations and the final presentations in the form of catwalk shows and exhibitions.

For selected drawings and samples from the sketchbooks please [click here](#).

Endnotes

- 1 Kultaturve is a Finnish fabric made from wool and peat. Please refer to Chapter 4.
 - 2 Fimo is a ceramic material which sets on relatively low temperatures. (Domestic ovens.)
 - 3 The mould was made with the help of environmental art technician, Kath Keay.
 - 4 Sweet wafer papers are a type of confectionary easily available in sweet shops.
 - 5 Bill Brown is a researcher and ceramics lecturer at The Glasgow School of Art.
 - 6 Toiles were made with the help of GSA Embroidery technician, Jane Watt.
 - 7 Gwen John was a female artist based in Paris during the late 1800's and 1910's.
-

These six video clips show the working process of non-fashion materials used.

face mask skirt process

Work Process: Face mask. To view video click above

circular "buffer" skirt process

Work Process: Buffer skirt. To view video click above.



"hairy" skirt process

Work Process: Muslin skirt. To view video click above.



mini "porn porri" top process

Work Process: Rubber band rosettes. To view video click above.



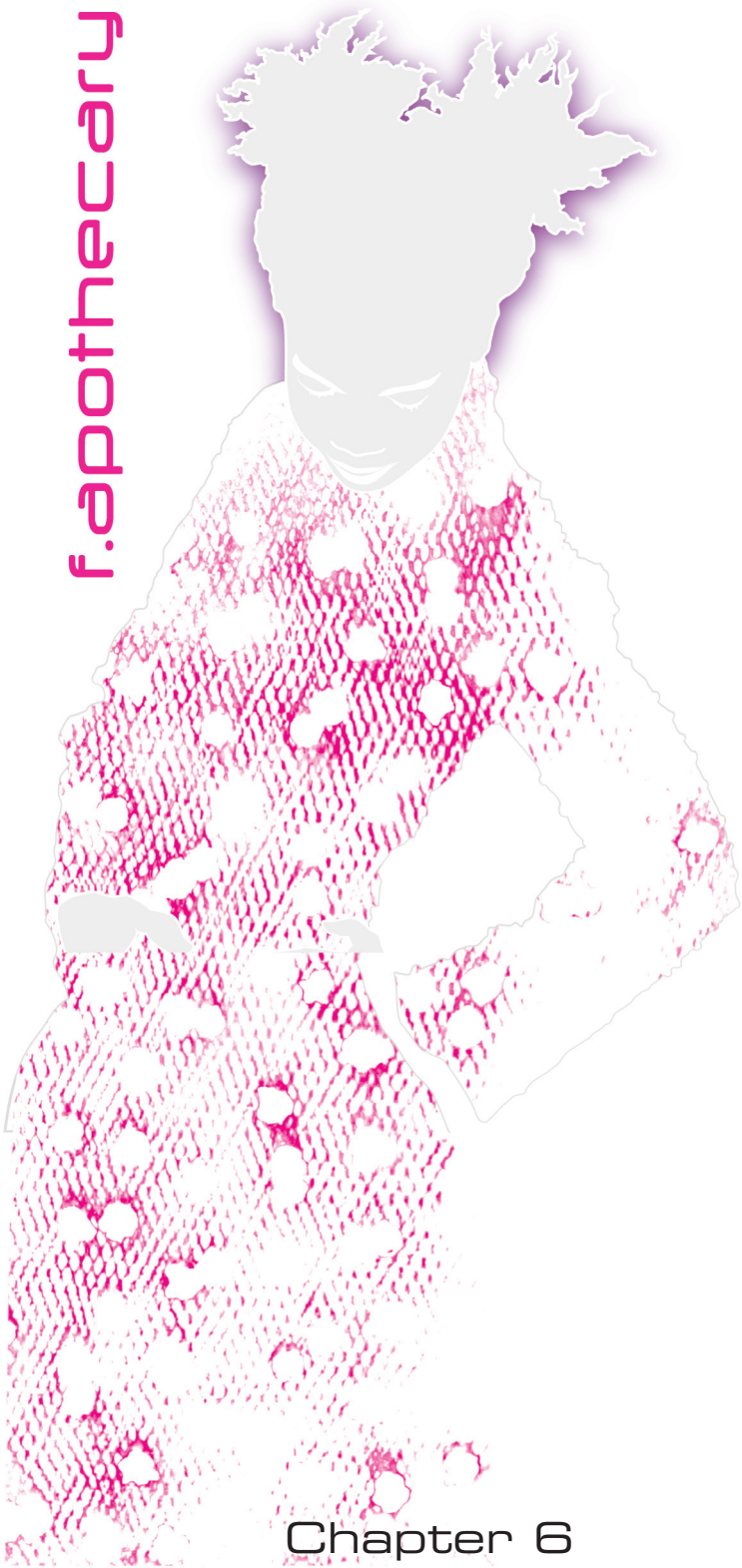
rubber band rosette process part one

Work Process: Pom pom tom. To view video click above.



"beaded" top process

Work Process: Hairclip top. To view video click above.



Chapter 6

f.apothecary



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Chapter 6: f.apothecary

(Professional Finalisation)

This chapter focuses on the development and design process of the final collection, f.apothecary. It also investigates the evolutionary design process (with its combination of unconventional materials and conventional techniques), the different roles which the practitioner had to play and the different professional collaborations which lead up to the final presentation of the collection. The research questions from the previous chapter are further explored here together with other research questions which needed feedback. Objective sources were provided with the aid of questionnaires.. A mini-documentary, which followed the collection from the construction of the garments to the fashion show and the responses of the audience, should be viewed in conjunction with this chapter.

This chapter is split into four sections:

- Design process of the final collection
- Fashion Show and Exhibitions
- Creative collaborations
- Questionnaires

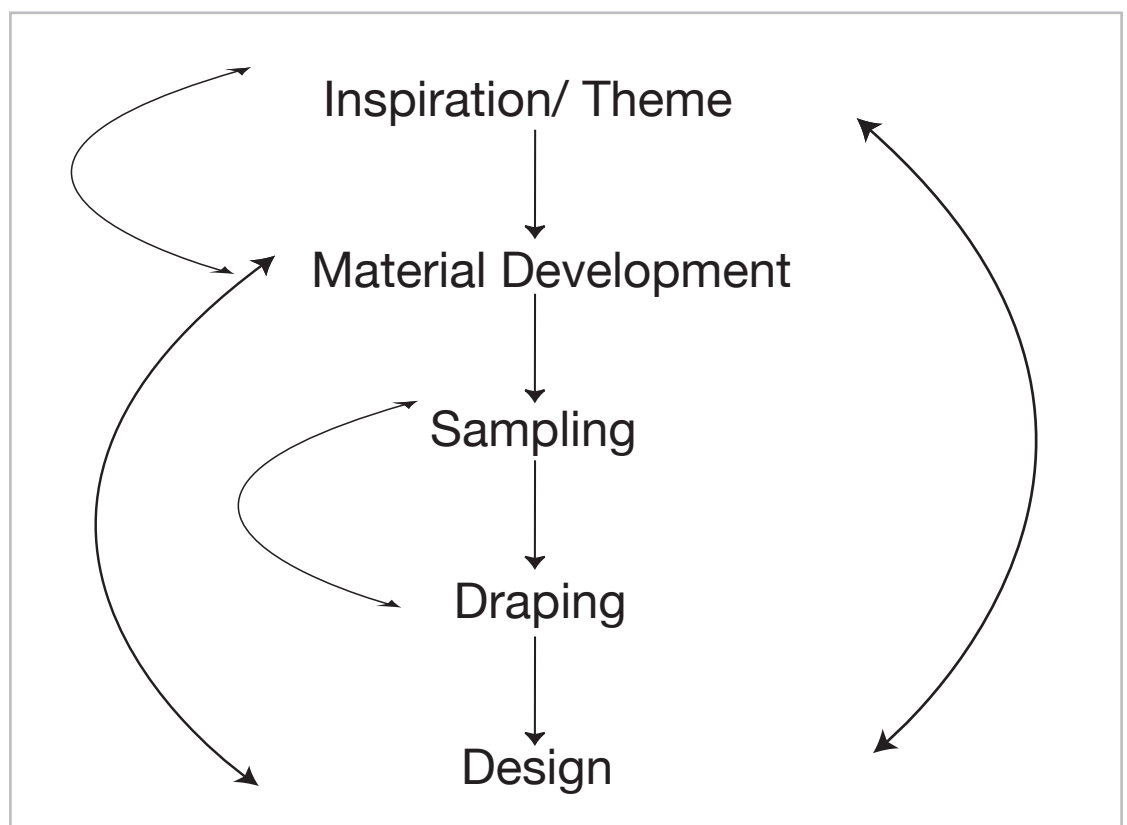


Fig. 6.1a:
Practical Design
Process

6.1: Design Process Of The Final Collection

(Please Refer To Mini Documentary)



Fig. 6.1b & c:
Colour sketches of
development designs.

Working from the beauty products which were viable (Please refer to section 5.3), the researcher designed a series of garments for the collection by sketching and designing on a two dimensional scale. After sampling, the collection did not seem to 'gel' together the garments looked too casual and flimsy. After a series of critiques with both supervisors, the researcher decided to change the general scale of the designs for example lengthening the hemlines and exaggerating the volumes and shapes of the materials and designs. Taking what was learned from previous development phases, the samples were draped and designed on a three dimensional scale rather than sketched and designed on a flat two-dimensional scale. Due to the unknown 'nature' of the materials, it was easier to develop the material, understand its handle and qualities than design a garment, which will accentuate both the design and material. Fig.6.1a illustrates the resultant flow of the design process.



Fig.6.1d (i-iv):
Rubber bands
development process.

This design process challenges the conventional teachings of the researcher's undergraduate fashion degree, which was geared towards commercial design. (Please refer to section 5.1) For the purposes of commercial design for example high street fashion, most of the designs are principally dictated by the major catwalk collections, it is essentially about translating a catwalk look to meet low prices. The objective of commercial design is to create a similar design garment in mass quantities as fast as possible thus very little time if any is given for material development.

The materials and the garments were developed, through a series of critiques and fittings. As it was important to develop silhouettes simultaneously with the materials, the material development was carried out at the same time with experiments with pattern cutting and draping techniques. This approach ensures the garment shapes will complement the materials. (Fig.6.1d-h) illustrate how the materials were developed into the final garments.

After this series of experiments the viable materials for the final collection which emerged were rubber bands, shower buffers, muslin, face masks, coloured hairspray and hair beads. Rubber bands of different qualities and sizes were experimented with, colourful hairdressing elastics were the easiest to work with as they grip the base fabric (nylon shower buffer) and retain the shape well. The rubber bands were knotted and sewn onto the base fabric, the knotting technique was the most versatile as the rubber bands can be arranged in neat

rows (Fig.6.1dii) and manipulated into rosettes of various sizes. (Fig.6.1diii)

Similar to the majority of the research interviewees (please refer to section 4.3), the researcher found that materials led all aspects of the design (For example style, colour and finishing methods). The materials were developed first to understand their specific 'qualities' and the garments were designed in a way, which can accentuate the materials. As most of the materials were very small or sheer, a large volume had to be manipulated in order to make them visible.

Muslin fabric which, is often used as facial wash cloths was cut into strips and hand rolled to form a single strand, which was then looped through the netting. This process was repeated until a 'shaggy' effect was created. (Fig.6.1gii&iv) During the experimental stage, muslin was used, as a base fabric for rubber bands but as the muslin was too visible and bulky, the netting provided a less 'intrusive' and refined alternative.

Hair beads were simply clipped onto netting base fabric. Different patterns (Fig.6.1fi) could be achieved but after several samples, the random effect was chosen as the most pleasing. (Fig.6.1fii)

When the shower buffer nettings are placed against the skin, they are so sheer that they almost appear invisible. To work this material into the design of the skirts, double layers of the netting and a traditional



Fig.6.1e (i-iv):
Face mask
development process

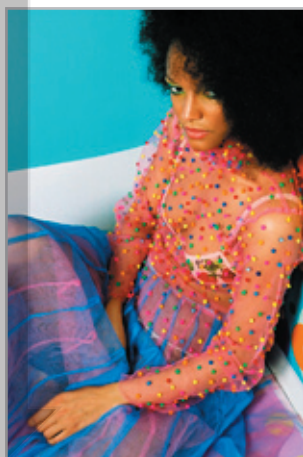
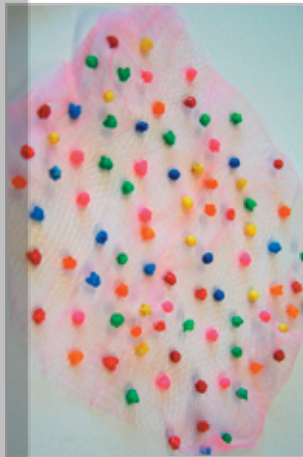


Fig 6.1f (i-iv):
Hair beads
development process

circular skirt pattern was used as this ensured that the large volume of netting was visible. The shower buffers are made of scrunched up netting which was unravelled and manipulated using embroidery, embellishment and applique. When placed against the skin, the netting was hardly visible thus providing a versatile 'nude' fabric as a base for embellishments.(Fig.6.1fiii)

The shower buffers unravel into narrow tubes of netting which had to be cut apart. As the netting was narrow, the designs had to adapt to the width of the material. The circular floor length skirts were constructed with twenty-six panels of netting and the uncut tubes of netting were used to make the sleeves of the tops. As the netting is very stretchy, it was also very versatile and could adapt to the body shape of the wearer. The netting tends to be 'chewed' up by the industrial sewing machine due to the high speed and pressure, to overcome this problem the materials had to be sewn on a slower domestic machine. The base for the shaggy skirt (Fig.6.1g i-iv) was the fragile shower buffer netting, in order to prevent the material from ripping under the sheer weight of the numerous muslin strands, the strands had to be integrated panel by panel.

Large amounts of tiny rubber bands were knotted onto buffer netting in rolls and sewn into rosettes in order to create patterns and embellishments on the tops. It was more visually feasible to form them into clusters then to knot the rubber bands individually on the garments.

The facemask came in the form of a flat compressed

circle. When unravelled, it revealed a flat mask with holes for the eyes, nose and lips. The circular masks had a crinkly quality and when sewn together they created a draped, crinkled lace effect. (Fig6.1ei) The facemask skirts were relatively straightforward to construct the process essentially involved sewing hundreds of them together. As they were circular and do not form a flat material, a rough shape of the garment was designed first, and the garment slowly took form with the continuous process of piecing the material together and draping on the mannequin then back to sewing on more facemasks and so on. The design of the facemask pieces slowly evolved through the process. The material in which the facemasks were made had no stretch and could easily be torn apart. To prevent that, large amounts had to be sewn together to form a tie-around voluminous draped skirt as opposed to a tight skirt. This allowed the wearer to have more ease of movement and prevented accidental rips and tears.

Consistent with the beauty products theme, instead of dyeing or printing the neutrally coloured materials like the facemasks and muslin colour was applied via coloured hair spray. (Fig.6.1giii) There were four main reasons for the bright colour palette: firstly they celebrated the use of beauty products in an overt way as opposed to discretely using them as most women do. (Please refer to Pg 105) The second reason was that the materials (for example shower buffers, rubber bands and colour hairsprays) mostly came in bright colours thus it is simpler to utilize the existing colours rather than dyeing the materials.



Fig. 6.1g (i-iv):
Muslin development
process.

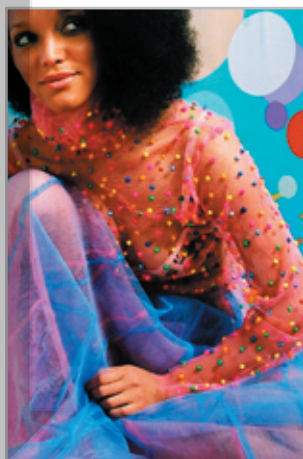


Fig. 6.1h (i-iv):
Shower buffer
development process

Thirdly, dark colour schemes were not considered because the materials would not have achieved the desired intense colours with hair dyes and sprays. The fourth reason was bright colours are eye catching, show up better on photographs and will help attract maximum attention from both the press and public when the outfits are presented on the catwalk and in exhibitions.

In order to attain a high professional standard, the finishing of the garments was also very important. All the seams were either French seams where the raw edges of the material were hidden within the seam or finished via bias binding, where a strip of fabric, cut on a bias, was sewn around and sealed the raw edges of material. (The bias binding was applied to the waistbands of the skirts to prevent stretching.) Both methods will ensure the fabrics will not fray or scratch against the skin of the wearer. No mass production finishing techniques such as overlocking were used to ensure a smooth and flat finishing. The collection was thus a mixture of machine sewing and hand sewing techniques. All embellishing work like the making of rubber band rosettes and muslin 'shaggy' strands was produced by hand and thus was a labour intensive process.

Some difficulties were encountered when making 'f.apothecary'. As the raw materials were non-clothing materials and not usually used for clothing, it was problematic when assembling the materials using conventional sewing techniques. The conflicts that arose

when combining non-conventional materials with traditional techniques were overcome by having an exploratory and evolutionary approach to both design and material. Instead of just abiding with the rules of fashion and textile design, innovative new approaches and methods were learnt and applied by working with and adapting to the materials' constraints and potential. For example, shower netting tends to get 'chewed up' by the high tension of an industrial sewing machine thus it was more feasible to use an embroidery or domestic sewing machine which have lower tensions.

The result of the experimental and construction process was the collection f.apothecary, which consisted of seven outfits. The garments were feminine, glamorous, playful in their use of colours and materials and were visually arresting. Inexpensive banal everyday materials had been manipulated using traditional craft-like processes into desirable garments. The original inspiration of the collection, which lay in the way in which women have secretly and discreetly used beauty products to both camouflage themselves and enhance their beauty lead to a celebratory and very obvious use of beauty products creating a paradoxical response in terms of the original theme.

6.2: Fashion Show And Exhibitions

"The shows are ritualised, frozen moments, aesthetic performances severed from reality in which not just designers but photographers, models, fashion journalists, make-up artists and celebrity guests are quintessential components."

(Khan 2000:114)

Khan's observation aptly describes the reality of the fashion show. It takes many different collaborations and different expertise, which audiences are often oblivious to, to put on a fashion show.

f.apothecary was shown as the opening collection at the GSA fashion show on the 13th of March 2003. The show itself was a collaboration by many professionals

such as models, audio technicians and choreographers . The fashion show was captured as part of the mini-documentary that accompanies this chapter.

“...fashion is essentially a social phenomenon.”

(Bohdanowicz and Clamp 1994: 14)

The fashion cycle is only complete when there is a consumer whether it is for commercial purposes or not. It was important to gain public acknowledgement for the collection. As fashion is a highly visual medium, the most viable way to showcase the collection other than a catwalk fashion show, was through an exhibition. One of the key objectives of this research was to investigate the practitioner's process, the exhibition enabled the display to showcase both the collection and the development samples which trace the practitioner's process. Thus it was vital to locate exhibition spaces for the research work. After submitting an exhibition proposal and presenting the work in progress to exhibition curators, Barry Frame at Urban Outfitters, Kathy Chambers of the Newbery Gallery and Catriona Duffy at The Lighthouse¹. The research was granted exhibition spaces at Urban Outfitters for the summer and both galleries for September and November 2003 respectively.

All three venues are unique and enabled different sections of the research's target audience to be incorporated into the findings. The mini exhibition at Urban



Fig. 6.1i:
Window at the
Artstore, Glasgow.
March 2003.

Outfitters, a popular Glasgow fashion store, was seen by the public who are interested in fashion. Students in art, design and textile education would see the exhibition at the Newbery Gallery. A wide range of the public interested in design will attend the exhibition at The Lighthouse.

As part of the publicity for the GSA Fashion Show, an outfit from the collection was displayed in the window of The Artstore

in Glasgow. This was the first opportunity to show the work to the public and an opportunity to see the garment as a static display². Installing the display revealed various challenges and various factors which need to be addressed such as display design, production of display props and tools for installation. They highlighted the need to source more collaborators for the other exhibitions.

The collection received good responses from the press. There were articles about f.apothecary in The Herald, The Scotsman, The Evening Times and The List. The publicity was important as it helped raised the profile of the research by reaching a wide range of audience.

The exhibition at Urban Outfitters was held on the 7th of July 2003. Each exhibition was held at different venues in order to capture the attention of specific



Fig.6.1j:
Window display at
Urban Outfitters. July
2003.



Fig.6.1k,l,m:
Exhibition at Urban
Outfitters in July 2003.

audiences. Contradictory to the purposes of conventional Ph.d research which is mainly conducted for academic purposes, this research was conducted for both academics and the average person on the street. As fashion and clothing are such integral elements within everybody's life, not only creating each person's visual identity but also acting as a sociological reflection and record of the times. It is important to demystify the design process so that fashion could be seen for its importance and social value rather than being viewed as a complex yet trivial medium.

The approach at Urban Outfitters was to present the research in a non-intimidating and accessible manner. Key points of the research were displayed on colourful flat graphic panels with emphasis on the key questions and findings of the research. With outfits from the collection displayed on mannequins, the general look was intended to create a display that was playful, provocative and informative. The exhibition acted as a form of publicity attracting more attention to the research.

In contrast to the development phases, the final phase revealed more about the actual design phase and the multiple roles, which the practitioner had to undertake.

- There are many different facets to a practitioner's work. It was not just about making the work; it was also about marketing the work in order for the public to acknowledge and value it.
- The exploratory and evolutionary approach to practice leads to the development of new techniques and methods which could be applied to overcome problems which result from the combination of non-conventional materials and conventional techniques.
- The practitioner's work was put through exhaustive experiments and developments before the presentation of the final products to the public.
- The practitioner is not solitary, there is a need to learn from and collaborate with other practitioners (either within the same field or not) in order to push the work to a higher standard.

The Herald
Tuesday March 18, 2003

Fashion | Features 1

All set to reap what they sew

Scotland is challenging the very fabric of fashion hegemony with a new breed of innovative designer.
Rebecca McQuillan explains

IN AN upstairs room in Glasgow School of Art, amid a chaotic array of swatches, paint, paper and thread, a revolution is happening. While the fashion community slavishly watches the graduates of London design schools, Glasgow is preparing to mount a challenge that could see the city become the destination of choice for the next generation of fashion designers.

Graduate turned critic in Glasgow is changing the face of British fashion by putting the emphasis on fabric rather than form - people such as Matthew Williamson, Julien McDonald, and the Welsh-Japanese pairing, Roy Kazanaka. Yet in most colleges, female students are kept at arm's length, forced to pass on their fabrics to fashion students to turn them into garments. Now, Glasgow School of Art is planning a new Masters course to give textile designers control, the only one of its kind anywhere in the country.

The college is already on the fashion map, having produced designers such as Pam Hogg and Jonathan Saunders. Tomorrow, the cream of the art school's current crop of postgraduates and undergraduates will be showing their collections at The Arches in Glasgow.

Among them will be Joanne Tan, 25, the first person to complete a new hands-on PhD for textile students with an interest in fashion. Her highly original, visually arresting work, which involves making clothes out of beauty products, no less, goes to show that the Glasgow school is in the vanguard of innovation.

Joanne, who graduated from the university of Northumbria with a first-class honours degree in design, had been searching for something new for some time when she had her big idea. She had been experimenting with the use of non-clothing materials to make clothes.

Like Archimedes, she had herureka moment in the mundane surroundings of her bathroom. Browsing through the hair and beauty accessories, she started to imagine skirts made of cosmetic cloths and

skirts made from coloured elastic bands. When a trip to a chemist started to become an artistic experience, she realised she was on to something. "I just felt like I connected with it so much."

Standing in a corridor of the art school's Mackintosh building as her creations are modelled for The Herald, Joanne explains how the outfit on show started life. The fabric, made from a range of elastic bands, was cut into strips and sewn into a skirt. The fabric form itself was cut into eye-holes and made holes, like so many ghostly faces. The fabric is composed of netting swatched from synthetic skin buffers, meant for use in the showers. On another model, she has speeded the net with an array of hair decorations, pea-sized multi-coloured studs.

She is thrilled to be doing the innovative PhD in Glasgow, where she can develop her lines instead of spending hours in a library writing essays. She set her heart on a career in British fashion as a

teenager in her native Singapore, where she devoured British fashion magazines that were banned in Singapore at the time for being too explicit. "I thought British fashion was the most cutting edge."

Her dream came true when she won a scholarship to college in Newcastle and then a place in Glasgow, and her high opinion of British fashion has only increased.

"People here are a lot more open to new and unusual things," she says. "American fashion is extremely commercial, while in the UK people are willing to die for their art, in other words, not produce and look glamorous."

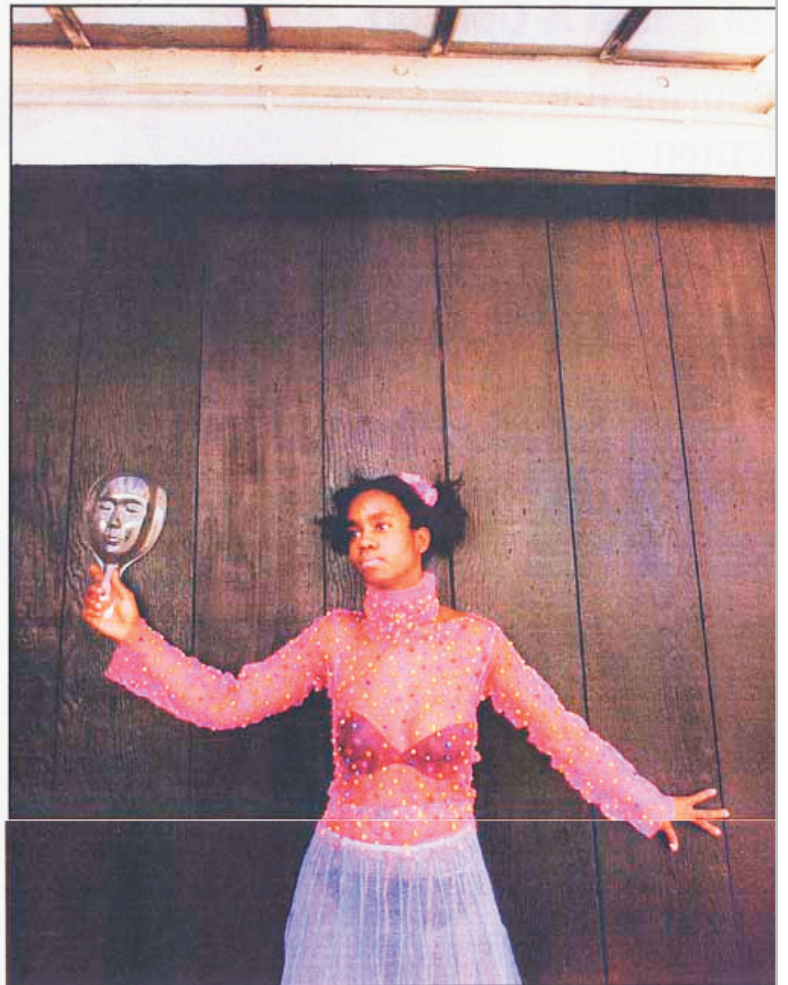
Her mentor, and the man behind the integration of fashion and textiles in Glasgow, is Jeremy Stephen-Cox, head of the textiles department, a respected designer whose CV boasts stints at Chanel and Thomme Kasar, plus a recent win at the New York store, Barney's. Explaining the rationale behind the new course, he says: "There's been a shift in fashion. There's less of an emphasis on advertising and more on the visual impact of textiles."

Julien McDonald and Matthew Williamson, who were textile designers, are now getting the kind of recognition previously reserved for traditional fashion students.

Not only does the MA course play to their skills, but by letting just one year, it is likely to attract students who might struggle to support themselves for two years doing an MA in London.

For the next Julien McDonald, watch this space.

Glasgow School of Art Fashion Show 2003, tomorrow, The Arches, Glasgow, 7.30pm and 9.45pm. Tickets (£12) from 0901022 0302.



MATERIAL GAIN: Joanne Tan's innovative approach is shown in this outfit worn by Charlotte Ross.

YELLOW YELLOW: 18-year-old textile student Lindsay Lees models a Joanne Tan design.

SKIN DEEP: an Emma Duncan creation is modelled by Mhairi Henderson, another textile student in her third year.

Pictures: Angela Eadie



TRENDY ALUMNI FROM THE GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART

Glasgow School of Art is aiming to produce the next generation of innovators in the world of textiles, but it has already produced some of the industry's leading figures.

Jonathan Saunders

This is the kind of story that isn't supposed to happen - a student graduate from fashion school and within 48 hours is signed up to sell his clothes in some of the world's top stores. It happened to Jonathan Saunders. He graduated from the Glasgow course in 2000, then went on to do an MA in printed textiles at St Martin's College, London. Following that in 2002, he showed his collection to a prestigious Milane fashion owner and was signed up to have his clothes made in Italy. He has worked for Alexander McQueen.

Rachel Roberts

So many little girls imagine

designing clothes for their dolls - when Rachel Roberts grew up, it actually happened. Roberts, who graduated from Glasgow in 1995, produced a range of clothes for Lady Gaga, an adult range inspired by the doll collection. She has established herself as a major designer, producing memorable, feminine clothes for women of all ages, including at exclusive stores including Harrods and Mr Max.

Pam Hogg

Some people dream of being in a rock band, others of a life in the glamour of fashion. Pam Hogg did both.

Some people dream of being in a rock band, others of a life in the glamour of fashion. Pam Hogg did both.

Both. After graduating from Glasgow School of Art textiles design course, Pam Hogg went to London and made a name for herself in the nightclubs and early nineties with light music, and later, in the nineties, in the fashion world. She has been featured in Vogue and her work has been modelled by Anita Pallenberg. In 1992 she gave it up to become a rock singer, returning to fashion design in 1995.

Paul Simmonds and Alastair McQuay

Graduated from the design course in 1998 and set up Timorous Street, a company producing wide, wavy, accessories, and fabrics for interior design. Past clients include The Arches Theatre, Salsa Bar, and the Arthouse Hotel in Glasgow. The pair, pictured, are much in demand in the US, one of their latest projects has been designing the fabric for a house in the exclusive Hampton district of New York.

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Fig.6.1n:
Press clippings from The Herald.

Turning over a new leaf for royal forest

WILLIAM CHISHOLM

FOR hundreds of years, it was one of the favourite hunting grounds for Scottish kings and their vast retinues, a wilderness which provided fair sport for royals and shelter for outlaws and enemies of the crown.

From the Ice Age through to the 16th century, the Ettrick Forest covered a vast area of southern Scotland, stretching from the central Borders into Dumfries and Galloway.

The middle square miles of woodland, teeming with wild beasts, deer, wolves and bears, was eventually considered too dangerous and unproductive by King James V, who introduced 10,000 sheep to what remained of the ancient forest.

Today, only tiny fragments of the original woods and scrubland remain along the steep gullies and scars inaccessible to generations of sheep.

But later this year, proposals to develop an extensive network of nature trails where the Ettrick Forest once stood will be unveiled.

The environmental charity leading the scheme is already planning some of thousands of trees to re-create wilderness on hills and in valley bottoms.

It is hoped that native species will regenerate and multiply, and confidence will grow that thousands of years ago will be created again.

hundreds, including some of the last remnants of Ettrick Forest which had species such as birch, spruce, rowan and hazel as well as oak and ash trees.

"We are devising a strategy for the area, and the aim will be to try to bring back the forest. But there is no intention of trying to close sheep farms out of the valleys. We can co-exist quite happily with them."

He believes the history of the Ettrick Forest has been underplayed, and that its story should be told not just to the Borders and south-west Scotland.

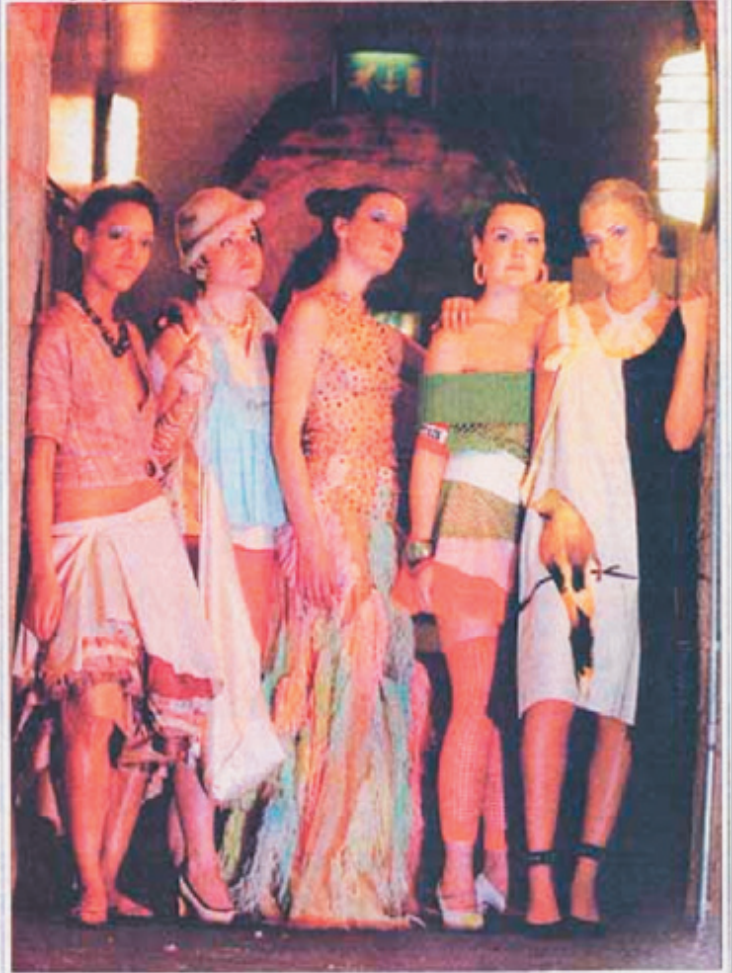
The various planning projects are to be carried out over the next ten years, but it will take a generation before people start noticing a change in the landscape.

In a number of places in the Ettrick and Yarrow Valleys - the heart of the ancient forest - centurion plantations with their origins in the 1970s are also being re-planted in that traditional way, providing an acceptable edge to afforested areas.

Frank Harkness researched the history of the Ettrick Forest and wrote a booklet explaining how Robert the Bruce granted the area to Sir James Douglas in about 1320.

He said: "His contribution to the cultural and literary life of Scotland is significant, with links to the history and King Arthur. William Wallace also found sanctuary in Ettrick."

College glad-rag day Textile students unveil their designs



Textile students turn models to show off work by colleagues at Glasgow School of Art yesterday. From left: Daisy Iles wears a design by Gaurav Barot; Louise Gray wears a Camille Washburn outfit; Alison Fitzsimons wears one by Jeanne Tan; Mhairi Henderson wears a design by Jacqueline Connery; and Lindsay Lees wears one by Mhairi Henderson. The Fashion show took place at the Artlink.

THE LIST
GLASGOW AND EDINBURGH
EVENTS GUIDE
Punch drunk too

Art listings

Exhibitions are listed by city, then alphabetically by venue. Submit listings at least ten days before publication to artlist@scot.co.uk, by post or by fax on 0131 557 8500. Listings are compiled by Helen Monaghan.

Glasgow Galleries

ANNAN GALLERY
104 Woodlands Road, 333 0028. Mon-Fri 10am-5pm; Sat 10am-12.30pm.
Mixed Show Until May 31 Mar. Original paintings by regular gallery artists.

THE ARCHES
253 Argyle Street, 0901 022 0000
Kathleen Little Until Sun 30 Mar. Digital floral works by Kathleen Little inspired by poems she has written over the last ten years.
O Glasgow School of Art Fashion Show 2003 Wed 19 Mar. 7.30pm & 9.45pm. £10. The GSA annual fashion show allowing students to show off their work in a professional environment. Highlights include Jeanne Tan's preview show, a PhD student in the textiles department whose creations mix traditional and non-traditional materials.

Shoptalk
Spend, spend, spend...

FRONTLINE FASHION
and cutting edge design will be on display for all to see at the Glasgow School of Art Fashion Show. Taking place at the Arches on Wed 19 Mar, students from the design school will showcase their work at three separate performances (1pm for schools, 7.30pm all-seated show, and 9.45pm including aftershow party). The school has produced leading fashion designers who have gone onto work for the likes of Versace and Armani, and organisers recommend paying particular attention to the work of Jeanne Tan, a PhD student who mixes traditional and non-traditional materials including shower puffs, hair clips and face masks. Tickets are priced at £10 and can be obtained by phoning 0901 022 0300.

POOR OLD HARVEY Nichols. Having invested millions on its first Scottish store in Edinburgh, it transpired last month that most of its

STUDENTS STEAL THE SHOW WITH THEIR AMAZING CREATIONS

GRAND DESIGNS

DESIGNER: LAURA GILL, 21
Student of Glasgow School of Art
Laura Gill's design for the show was a vibrant, multi-layered piece. It featured a central figure surrounded by a dense, colorful web of fabric and paper, creating a complex, almost architectural structure. The design was inspired by the concept of 'Grand Designs' and aimed to challenge traditional notions of fashion and design.

DESIGNER: JACQUELINE CONNERY, 20
Student of Glasgow School of Art
Jacqueline Connery's design was a striking, minimalist piece. It featured a central figure surrounded by a dense, colorful web of fabric and paper, creating a complex, almost architectural structure. The design was inspired by the concept of 'Grand Designs' and aimed to challenge traditional notions of fashion and design.

DESIGNER: CAMILLE WASHBURN, 21
Student of Glasgow School of Art
Camille Washburn's design was a vibrant, multi-layered piece. It featured a central figure surrounded by a dense, colorful web of fabric and paper, creating a complex, almost architectural structure. The design was inspired by the concept of 'Grand Designs' and aimed to challenge traditional notions of fashion and design.

DESIGNER: JEANNE TAN, 20
Student of Glasgow School of Art
Jeanne Tan's design was a striking, minimalist piece. It featured a central figure surrounded by a dense, colorful web of fabric and paper, creating a complex, almost architectural structure. The design was inspired by the concept of 'Grand Designs' and aimed to challenge traditional notions of fashion and design.

Fig.6.10: Press clippings from The Scotsman, Evening Times, and The List.

6.3: Creative Collaborations

An expense budget was required to cover the costs of putting up the exhibitions at The Lighthouse, Urban Outfitters, the Newberry Gallery and the website, which will ensure the research is accessible to the target audience.

The costs incurred covered various expenses such as commissioning the design and printing of the catalogue invitations, website and photography. As the costs were high it was vital to gain financial sponsorship.



A press pack, consisting of information and images of the collection and press clippings was sent to a list of potential sponsors. The list mainly comprised of corporate companies and foundations. The research was awarded sponsorship by Glasgow School of Art (Ph.D. Design Department and Exhibitions), the Lee Foundation and an anonymous artist from Singapore.



Fig. 6.2 a,b,c,d:
Photos of f.apothecary.
Models: Hannah and
Deanny from Model
Team. Make up by
MAC. Photos by
Suzanne Martin 2003.

With the aid of the crucial sponsorship, collaborators were commissioned for the exhibitions. The collaborators were Suzanne Martin for graphic design, exhibition installation and photography, Jeff Chen for video editing, Patrick Macklin for catalogue design and Vanessa Ward for website design. The researcher worked closely with each designer and oversaw the entire creative production. As discussed earlier, a designer's role is not solitary thus each collaborator's contribution towards the research and collection was vital to the final visual and theoretical outcome of the research.

For the photography and exhibition (Urban Outfitters) collaborations with Suzanne Martin, both were designed based on the original theme of the collection. The inspiration for the collection was the conflicting relationship women have with their visual image and beauty products, which they use to both, accentuate and camouflage themselves. Backdrops were specifically designed in bright patterns, colours and shapes drawn from the collection. The backdrop forms a camouflage-like

background where the shapes allow the models both to blend into and to be accentuated through contrasts. (Fig.6.2a-d)

6.4: Questionnaires

Questionnaires were conducted within this research to help evaluate whether the practice-based research had achieved the intended objective and answered the relevant research questions within the practical research. The objective of this area of research was to integrate new materials and silhouettes simultaneously into the garments. The research questions were:

- What are the 'wearability' implications of such fabrics?
- How do the media and process affect the aesthetic of the final garments?
- How might the practical research best reach the public domain?

Two questionnaires were designed to help the researcher answer some of these research questions. One of the questionnaires is targeted at models that have worn and had close contact with the garments. The other questionnaire is for the general public who had viewed the collection at the fashion show.

The researcher had chosen to administer face-to-face questionnaires as they have better response rates. (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight 2001:179) Each group of questionnaires had been colour coded to ensure there was no confusion when consolidating the data. The pilots were coded white, the models were coded yellow, the catwalk models' were coded pink and the general questionnaire was coded green.

Questionnaires were conducted at the fashion show to help to evaluate whether the research had attained the objective and answered the research questions within the practical research. The questionnaires are central to this research, as they helped to answer the relevant questions through objective sources.

Different criteria are used to help answer the above objectives and research questions. One of the primary objectives of the collection was to integrate the materials to the point where their characteristics were not obvious to the viewer or even the wearer. In order to decipher the success of integrating the materials and silhouettes into the garments, the questionnaire participants were required to view the collection as a typical catwalk collection without the knowledge of the materials.

As established earlier within this thesis, 'wearability' for this collection was defined as outfits that could be worn by models on the catwalk, as the objective of the collection was to be an inspirational collection rather than a commercial one. In terms of functionality the garments were only defined as garments that would allow the models to present on the catwalk, photo shoots and on garment stands in exhibitions. Keeping in mind, comfort as the most vital factor within the traditional concept of 'wearability', the models were asked about how they felt while wearing the garments.

Models' Questionnaire

Ten models took part in the models' questionnaire; they were sub-divided into two groups: the first group was made up of fitting models who were also students at Glasgow School of Art. The second group was made up of professional catwalk models.

The pilot was conducted with three random art school students. During the pilot, none of the candidates raised any questions or problems regarding the questionnaire.

The objective of the models' questionnaire is to consult them on their impression of the clothing and how they felt when wearing the garments. The questionnaire

comprises of six questions with various options that they can tick and a blank space was provided after each question for further comment.

f. apothecary (Model s Questionnaire)

Please tick the appropriate boxes

1) At first glance, before putting on the garments, what did you think the garments were made of?

Fabric ☐ Non-Fabric ☐ Others ☐

If others please state.

2) After putting on the garments, what did you think the garments are made of?

Fabric ☐ Non-Fabric ☐ Others ☐

If others please state.

3) After knowing what the collection is made of, does it change you view of the collection?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes please comment.

4) How did you feel when wearing the garments?

Comfortable ☐ Uncomfortable ☐ Others ☐

If others please state.

5) In what contexts would you wear these garments?

While doing everyday chores On a fashion catwalk

Within an art installation

6) What do you like about the collection?

Design ☐ Materials ☐ Others ☐

If others please state.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. The information collated from this questionnaire will provide vital data for Jeanne Tan's final Ph.D. thesis.

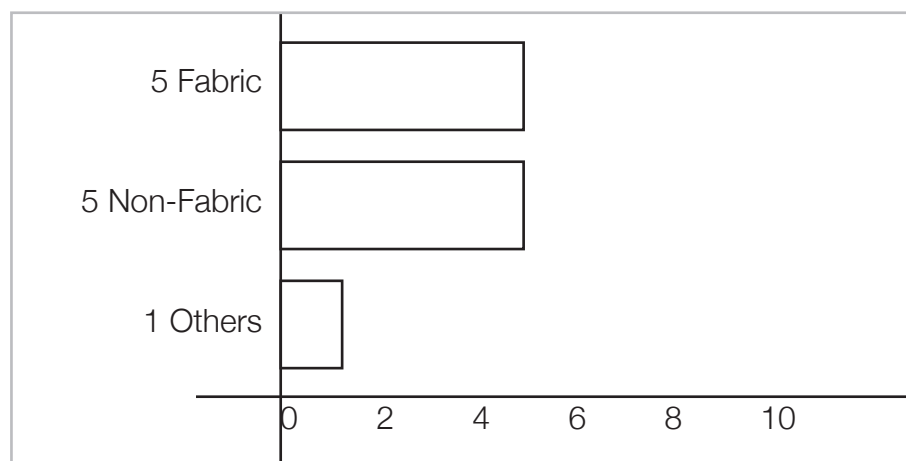
The questionnaires were conducted face-to face and were recorded on video, due to the lack of time, the catwalk models were only asked to fill out the questionnaires. The GSA models who took part in the questionnaire were Joni Kilmurry, Lindsay Lees, Charlotte Hess, Katherine Mangiardi and Alison McLellan. The results from the two groups of models are very similar. Perhaps due to their daily exposure to

textiles and fashion, the GSA models were more insightful and more curious about the collection. As Lindsey comments, “I do not know whether it is because we are also studying textiles, once we know what is made of, it makes us curious about how they are made.”

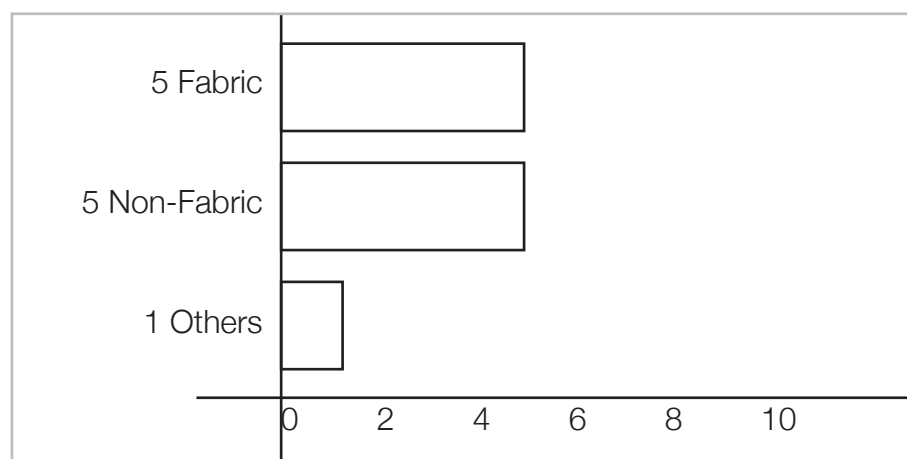
Models Questionnaires Results

The combined results of the questionnaires (models and catwalk models) are shown in the following graphs.

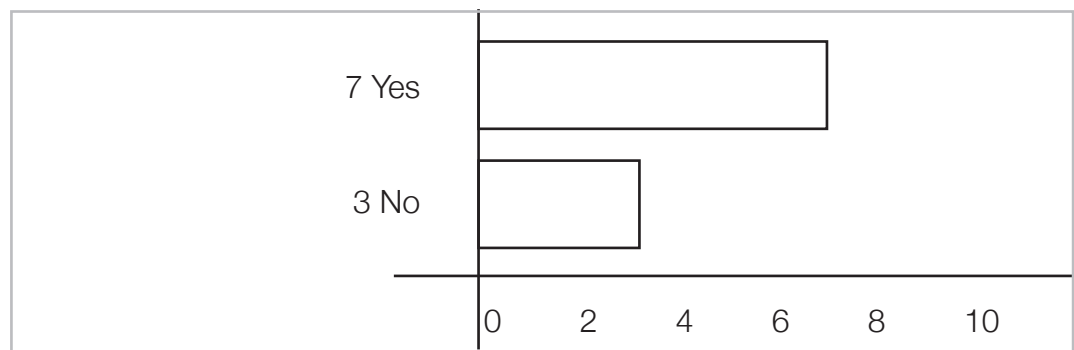
- 1) At first glance, before putting on the garments. What did you think the garments are made of?



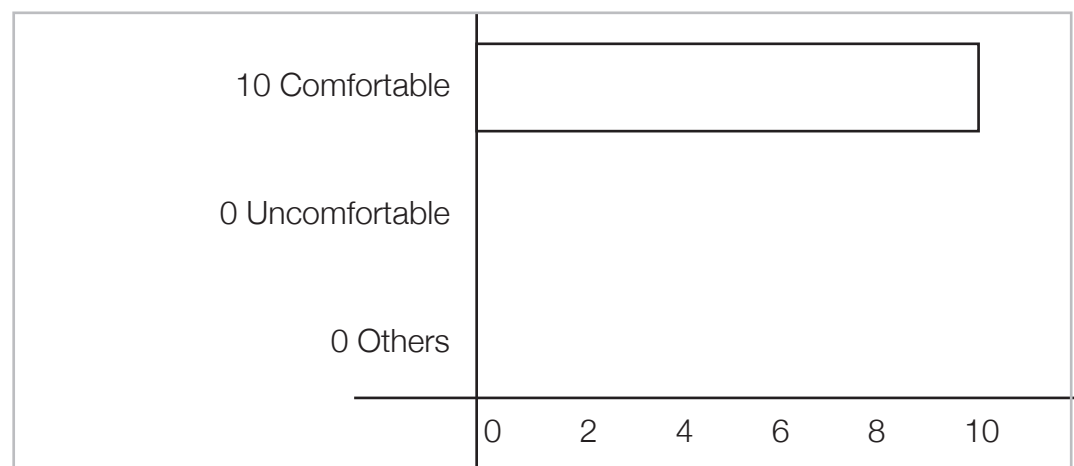
- 2) After putting on the garments, what did you think the garments are made of?



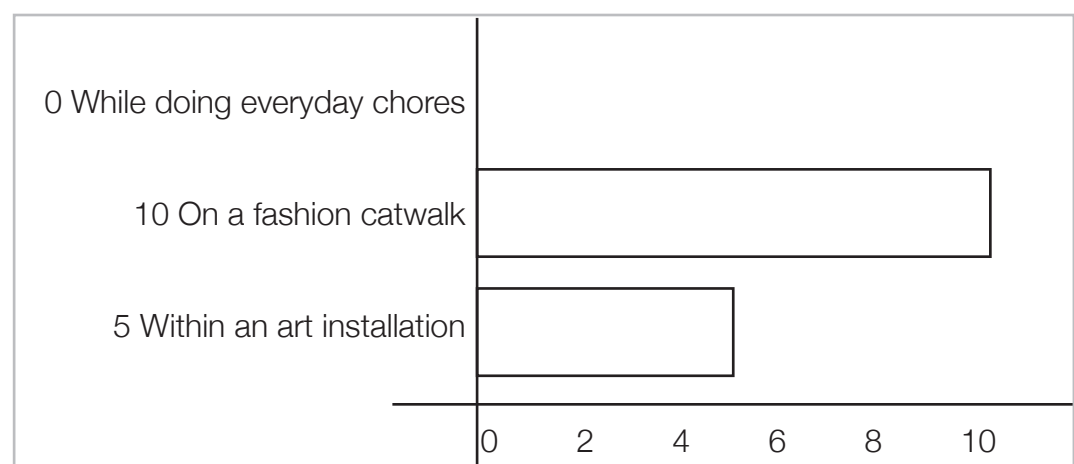
- 3) After knowing what the collection is made of, does it change your view of the collection?



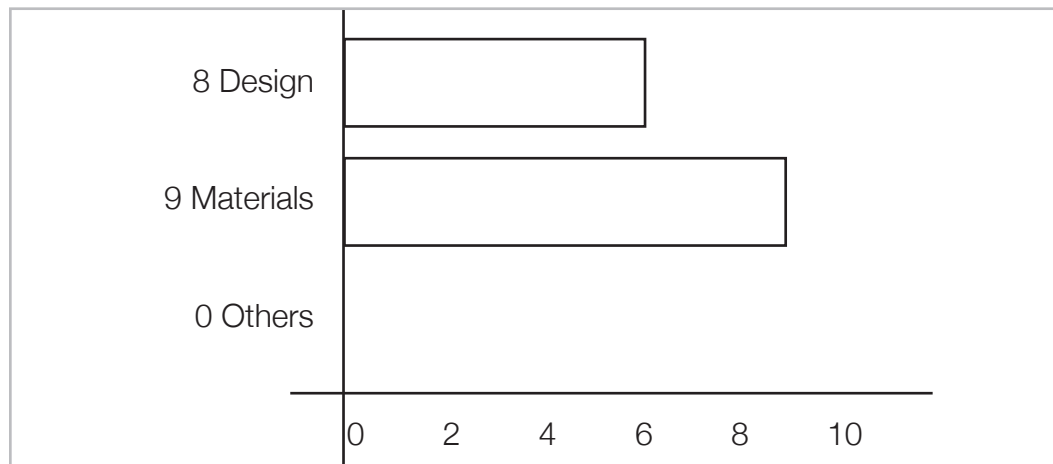
- 4) How did you feel when wearing the garments?



- 5) In what contexts would you wear these garments?



6) What do you like about the collection?



QUESTIONNAIRE COMMENTS (MODELS)

Question 1: At first glance, before putting on the garments, what did you think the garments are made of?

- Tissues but I wasn't sure.
- I thought the face mask skirts were made out of some sort of tissue.

Question 2: After putting on the garments, what did you think the garments are made of?

- The skirt was soft.
- Same as above.

Question 3: After knowing what the collection was made of, does it change your view of the collection?

- Yes, I think the collection is even more effective.
- It made the collection a lot more interesting and inspired me to look beyond traditional fabrics for my own designs.
- It makes me appreciate the amount of work and thinking which has

gone into the garments.

- It makes me more aware of the possibilities of everyday objects,
I appreciate the time and effort put into creating the garment.
- A unique idea.

Question 6: What did you like about the collection?

- The sense of fun surrounding the garments.
- Ideas behind the collection.
- Colour and texture.

Due to ideal circumstances, the researcher was able to gather the GSA models together to conduct the questionnaire face-to-face and have a short discussion. These participants' views were very insightful and helpful towards the research as they have dual roles. They were looking at the outfits through the eyes of models and textile designers thus they were able to isolate the construction of the garments from the actual textiles.

Both Lindsay and Alison reflected on their own design processes and commented on the process, which the researcher went through, this unintentionally provided the researcher with an insight into their design process.

"From scrunched up balls to garments, I started deconstructing it in my head."
"It made me appreciate the time that you must have gone through experimenting with the materials figuring out how you can work with it, instead of leaving it as a flat piece of material. You have worked the other way and formed 3-dimensional object instead of the other way round."

The process that they go through is very similar to the researcher's own design process. This supports the research, which shows that design is not an intuitive process but a systematic construction of processes and ideas.

All the GSA models also responded and commented on the concept behind the

collection. As fellow practitioners they were able to find the concept as a very relevant factor which contributes to the general aesthetic of the collection. Looking at the researcher's concept had also helped them reflect on their own design process.

Charlotte commented, "It made the collection a lot more interesting and inspired me to look beyond traditional fabrics for my own designs."

Considering that the collection was made entirely of beauty products most of which are designed for exfoliating purposes, the researcher was not expecting the garments to be comfortable to wear. Surprisingly, all the models had commented on how comfortable the garments were. Katherine commented that the facemask skirts were soft. Even the netting material that was most likely to cause irritation was also pleasant when placed next to the skin.

As Lindsay commented, "It was the netting that was surprising, I was expecting it to be quite scratchy but when I put it on, it was soft, flexible stuff so it was not scratchy at all."

The researcher's main criteria to judge the wearability of the garments was, for the model to be able to walk up and down a fashion catwalk and be able to perform basic functions like eating and drinking. The fact that the models found the garments comfortable is seen as another sign of successfully integrating non-clothing materials into the fashion system.

Even though the catwalk models responses were very similar to those of the GSA models, they had virtually no comments to make about the collection. Like the general public, these models treated the collection as 'normal' clothing and as visual products. They were looking and commenting on the final look of the garments rather than the design process or the collection's concept.

The fact that, it was only GSA models (fellow design students), who commented on the concept and the design process indicates that only practitioners were able

to consider, reflect and have insights into the design process. This emphasised the importance of using the researcher's own practise as a case study. This might also explain the emphasis on the final products rather than the design process by the public as illustrated by the lack of literature available within the area. (Chapter 3 p34)

General Questionnaire

The general questionnaire was targeted at the general public, who had attended the fashion show. The general questionnaire is very similar to the model's questionnaire. The differences were:

- The models were not asked about their sex, because it was a womenswear collection it would have been unnecessary to include such a question.
- The models were not asked about their age, as it would have been irrelevant. As the objective of the questionnaire was to question them about their experiences with close contact with the garments.
- The models were asked about their reactions before and after they have tried on the outfits and how they felt when they were wearing the garments. This was because other than the researcher, they had exclusive close contact with the garments and were the only participants who could comment on these issues.

The pilot was conducted on 4 random participants, face-to-face. The process was recorded on videotape. The original questions and options are shown on the following page.

f. apothecary PILOT QUESTIONNAIRE**Please tick the appropriate boxes**1) Sex: Male ☐ Female ☐2) Age: 18 and below ☐ 18-29 ☐ 30-39 ☐ 40 and over ☐

3) What kind of materials do you think the collection is made of?

Clothing ☐ Non-Clothing ☐ Do not Know ☐

4) In what contexts would you see this collection?

High Street Fashion ☐ Designer ☐ Fashion Art Gallery ☐

5) After knowing what the collection is made of does it change your view of the collection?

☐ ☐
Yes No

If yes please comment.

6) What do you like about the collection?

☐ ☐ ☐
Design Materials Others

If others please state.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

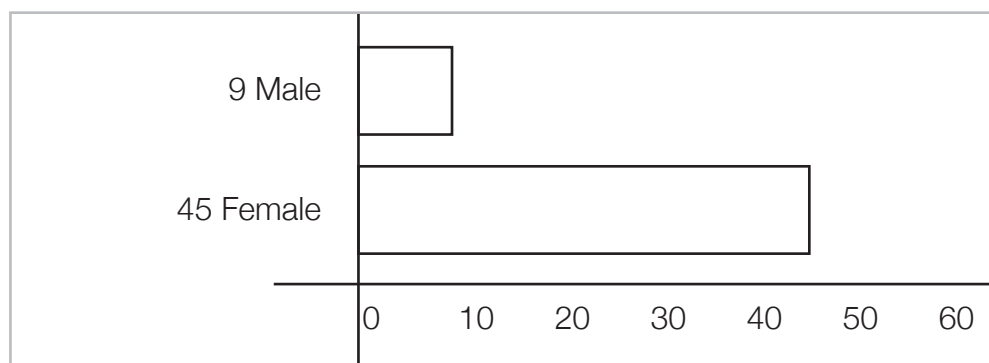
The information collated from this questionnaire will provide vital data for Jeanne Tan's final Ph.D. thesis.

2 out of the 4 pilot participants, commented on the options of question 3. They expressed confusion on the term 'clothing' and 'non-clothing'. The researcher immediately changed the options to 'fabric' and 'non-fabric' under the recommendation of the participants of the pilot questionnaire.

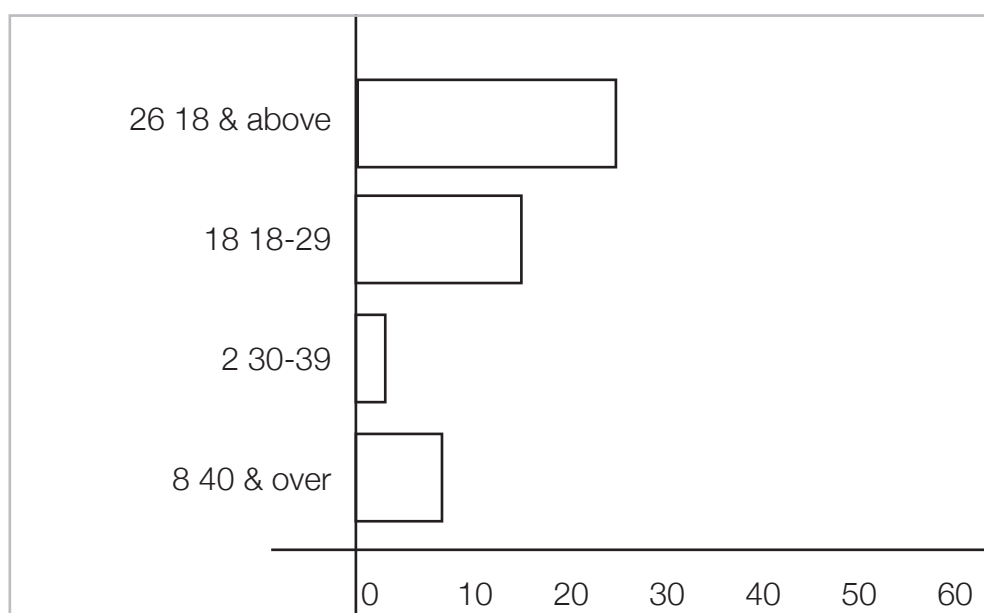
Results of general questionnaire

60 questionnaires were handed out during the 3 GSA fashion shows on the 19th of March 2003. As predicted by (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight 2001: 179) questionnaires, which were administered face to face, did get a higher response, out of the 60, the researcher received 54 completed questionnaires. The results of the questionnaires are illustrated in the following graphs.

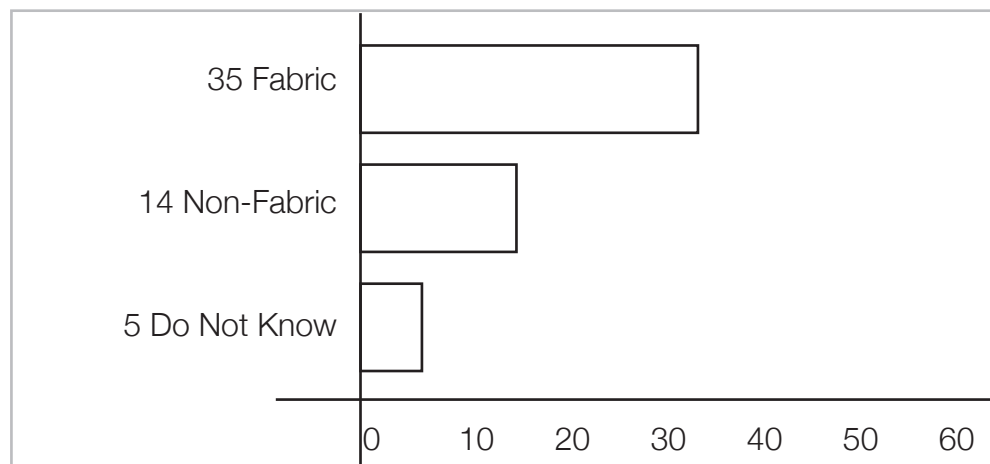
1) Sex.



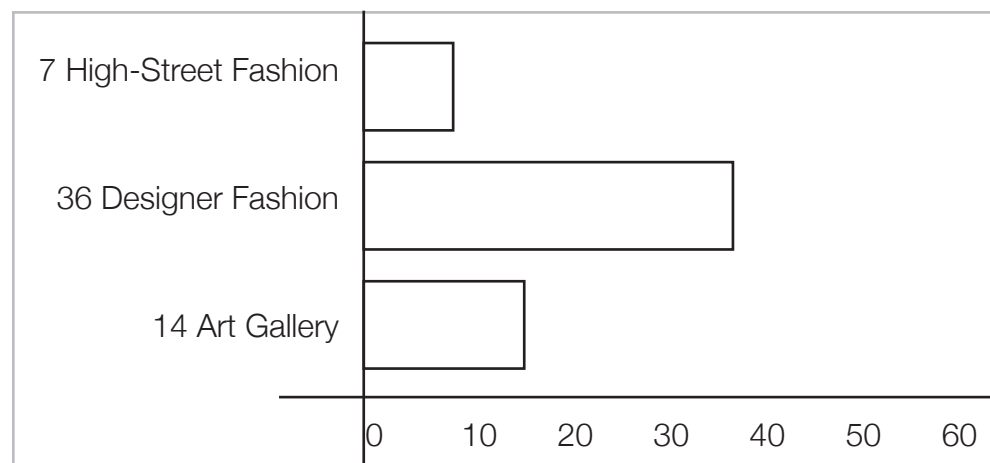
2) Age.



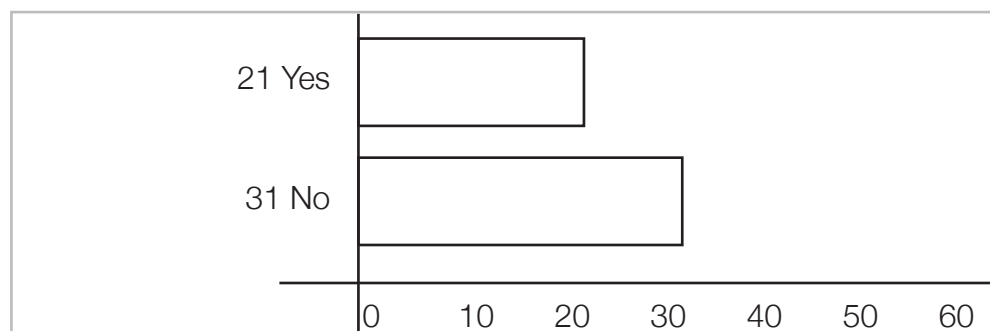
- 3) What kind of materials do you think the collection is made of?



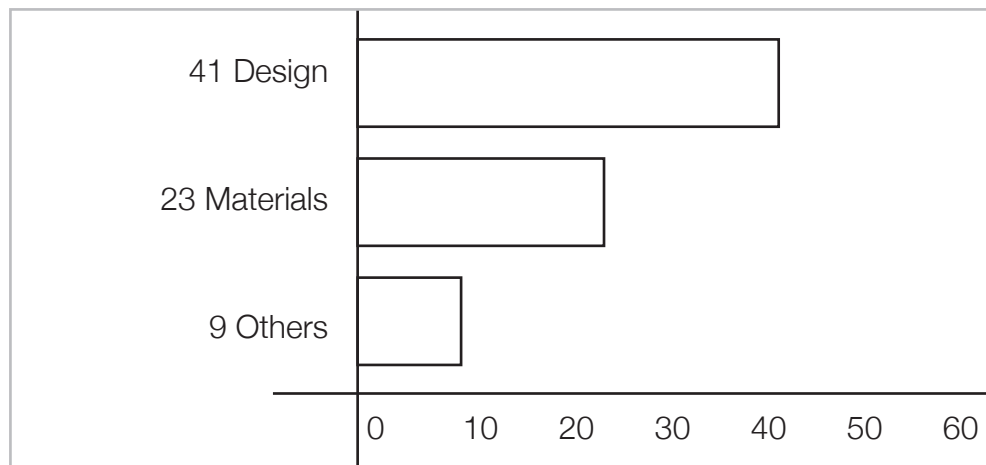
- 4) In what contexts would you see this collection?



- 5) After knowing what the collection is made of, does it change your view of the collection?



6) What do you like about the collection?



QUESTIONNAIRE COMMENTS

Question 5: After knowing what the collection is made of does it change your view of the collection?

- More impressive, want to find out more about it.
- More interesting, higher quality.
- Fantastic.
- More impressive.
- More impressive.
- Yes, more impressive.
- I am much more impressed by the design.
- Its something a little different, though I don't know how well it will wash?
- More interesting.
- Very inventive.
- It is incredible that they can be made with just those few things.
- Very imaginative, interesting- what else can the beauty industry do for us?
- Should now be in an art gallery.
- Still wearable.
- It seems more purposeful but I don't know why.
- It looked interesting anyway.
- Very clever as I thought it was fabric from a distance.

Question 6: What do you like about the collection?

- Colour
- The way it ripped off old ideas.
- Gorgeous, unusual shapes, nice detailing-beadwork etc.
(well hair accessories)

- The colours used.
- Colours, movement of the skirt especially.
- Weirdness.
- Expressiveness.
- The concept.
- Colours, embellishment (hair beads etc)
- Fact it's something else.
- I liked the colour and effect.

The emergent theme from all the questionnaires (model's questionnaire and general questionnaire) was:

- Most participants saw the collection within the contexts of the fashion catwalk and art gallery.

The main differences within the answers to the questionnaires were:

- Equal numbers of models thought the collection was made from fabric and non-fabric materials whereas the general public mainly thought the collection was made of fabric.
- A greater percentage (70%) of the models changed their opinions of the collection after knowing what it was made of. They reacted in a very positive way and expressed that they were more impressed with the collection and thought the collection was more effective. Even though, a smaller percentage of the general public changed their opinion of the collection, their comments were very similar to the models. All the participants responded positively to this question.
- All the participants in the questionnaires liked the materials and the design of the garments with a few responding positively to the colours used within the collection. Most of the general public preferred the design but a slightly higher percentage (52%) of the models were more interested in the materials.

6.5: Findings And Results

The objective and research questions that were addressed in this chapter are:

- To integrate new materials and silhouettes simultaneously into the garments.
- What are the 'wearability' implications of such fabrics?
- How do the media and process affect the aesthetic of the final garment?
- How might the practical research best reach the public domain?

The results showed that the materials were successfully integrated into the garments, 54% of the total participants thought the collection was made from fabric and had initially viewed the collection as a typical collection of clothing. The materials were not obvious to the viewer. This was especially true amongst the general public, only 35% thought the collection was made from non-fabric materials. Even though some of the pieces from the collection like the tops were constructed in a basic garment structure, experimental shapes and lines like draped and uneven hemlines together with out sized embellishments in the form of big and small multi-coloured rubber band rosettes had created new and interesting silhouettes. The interface between unconventional materials and conventional methods had created dynamic, colourful and paradoxically feminine pieces.

Other than some minor repairs, the collection had successfully survived three fashion shows and two full dress rehearsals. The outfits successfully met the criteria for being 'wearable' within this research. The model's questionnaire had also revealed, contrary to initial preconceptions that 100% of the models found the garments to be comfortable. Even though comfort was not a criterion to judge the 'wearability' of the collection, this result further reinforced the success of this collection through the traditional demand for clothing that is wearable.

The design process had helped to refine and define the final collection thus aiding it to gain a recognisable aesthetic. The questionnaire results demonstrated that the collection does have a recognisable aesthetic as almost 100% of the participants reacted positively to the collection. 54% liked the design of the collection and 35% of them liked the use of materials. The researcher was aware that the results for this question might be biased, as the participants (fashion show audiences and models) who saw the show might have been more receptive to 'new' concepts but the typical audience for most fashion shows will be informed about fashion and be more accepting of new ideas.

Another aspect, which would reinforce the fact that the collection does have a particular and recognisable aesthetic, was the amount of press coverage that it received. Before the fashion show, four articles highlighted the collection in The Herald, The Evening Times, The Scotsman and The List Magazine. Three of these featured large photo spreads of various outfits within the collection. Possible reasons as to why the collection was widely publicised could be because the designs and the colours of the collection were very 'of the moment' coupled with the novelty of the concept behind the collection. This response to the concept and the designs help reinforce the viability of the collection. The questionnaires had proven to be vital to this research, as they had helped to answer the relevant questions through neutral sources.

By exposing both the theoretical and practical research in the form of catwalk shows and exhibitions in retail shops and galleries in a very visual and 'layman' friendly format had enabled the research to reach a wide cross section of audiences who are interested in fashion.

The uncommon problems which arose from the unorthodox combination of materials and techniques were overcome by adopting an experimental approach which help created a collection with paradoxical discordant appeal. By veering

away from conventional approaches, the unconventional approach had proved to be feasible not only in practice, the resultant collection had also received great acceptance and encouragement from both the media and the public.

Video of the GSA fashion show at the Arches. To view click above.

Mini-documentary: To view video click above.

Endnotes

- 1 The Lighthouse is a prominent Scottish design museum situated in Glasgow.
- 2 The display was put up with the help of Helena Britt, a fellow research student who had previous experiences with setting up exhibitions and displays.



Chapter 7

Conclusion

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Chapter 7: Conclusion

The intentions of this thesis were to explore the utilisation of non-clothing materials within the fashion system with a focus to describe and clarify the practitioners' design process and rationale. The analysed results of the literature review, contextual review, research interviews, questionnaires and the self case study supported the research intentions.

From the literature review it became clear that, there is a 'gap' within existing literature, where the fashion practitioner is under-represented. Even though the most insightful voices within the field are those of practitioners, most texts are written by non-practitioners and often do not investigate the process and rationale behind the creations.

Due to the dual roles of the research, there were conflicts caused by the lack of literature by practitioners. For the purpose of the Ph.D. or indeed any published article, I found that I often had to support my practical work with existing literature, which might prove inaccurate as it was often written by non-practitioners. On the other hand without the support of the published text how would conventional academic standards agree to its validation? Peers instead of others who have only superficial comprehension of the area could most accurately represent the practitioner's perspective.

The historical and contemporary contexts for this research demonstrate that many different practitioners have utilised non-clothing materials for fashion garments. They come from a wide variety of backgrounds (art to fashion) with different target audiences/ markets.

The findings from the research interviews and self case study have significant similarities and reinforce each other. The results indicated that the practitioner's

process is not intuitive (Intuition is defined as understanding without reasoning or being taught. Please refer to p28) but is a systematic evolution and development of ideas. The rationale behind the practitioners' work is often due to design development or based on commissions rather than being based on artistic theories. In existing literature, fashion is often compared to or deemed to be art by theorists. This often results in people misconstruing the motivation behind the creation as artistic or highly conceptual.

The design process is a very complex process, unique to each practitioner thus difficult to articulate in text. Although the process is a systematic development, many of the findings from the experiments might have been serendipitous. And new knowledge gained from these 'happy' accidents is subsequently applied to the next phase of experiments and so on. Conflicts that arise along the way, were dealt with by having an exploratory and evolutionary approach. Instead of abiding by traditional conventions, innovative new approaches and methods were applied thus enabling the designs and materials to display their full potential. In order to keep track of this process most practitioners keep a sketchbook or a work journal as a record of their work. Often these are either private or only understood by the practitioner. The conventional role of the practitioner is fundamentally to 'make things' thus most do not have the time or interest to document this process. Another reason for this is that by revealing their process to the public their creations could easily be reproduced thus causing a commercial conflict. Within this research in order to make every part of the process and research accessible to the viewer, all the research (in the form of experiments, samples, interviews and questionnaires) were recorded via sketchbooks, samples, audio/ video tapes and presented in the forms of text, exhibitions, website and a catwalk show.

Nevertheless, the researcher feels that this area of research can develop more if practitioners are willing to share reflections about their process rather than the actual details of the process. By enabling the public to understand the complexity

of the process, maybe fashion will no longer have a low status and be understood as an important design subject. By recording and reflecting on the design process which was often taken for granted in the past, the practitioner was made more self aware of the way the design takes shape. Valuable lessons were learnt during successful and failed experiments.

7.1: Aims And Objectives Achieved

The objectives of this research were:

- To explore the integration of non-fashion materials into the fashion system.
- To investigate unconventional fabrics and non-clothing material that will be relevant to the research.
- To review current examples of non-clothing materials within fashion.
- To create an inspirational catwalk fashion collection using non-clothing materials.
- To experiment with a range of unorthodox media and materials to obtain 'new' fabrics for the collection.
- To integrate the new materials and consider the silhouette simultaneously when developing the garment.
- To make both the theoretical and practical research accessible to a wide range of audiences ranging from researchers to the general public.

In order to achieve the objectives, research questions (as listed on p6 in Chapter 1) were explored. The answers are summarised below.

- 1) How and why do practitioners utilise non-clothing materials within

the fashion system?

The fashion system spans a wide range of markets and audiences. Please refer to the chart (Fig.4.2b) illustrating the different positions occupied by practitioners utilising non-clothing materials within the fashion system. There are two main ways, in which practitioners have used non-clothing materials:

- Applied decoration (New materials applied onto fabric by means of various techniques like sewing and appliqué onto the surface of existing materials)
- Integration (Either combining different materials to form a new material/ garment or solely using a new material and combining it with construction techniques to form a new material/garment.)

Many different practitioners from different backgrounds have utilised non-clothing materials to create garments. Examples representing each section of the fashion system were discussed including:

Artist	- Jana Sterbak (Meat Fig.4.3h)
Artist /Craftsman	- Emily Bates (Hair Fig.4.1c)
Haute Couture	- McQueen for Givenchy (Glass Slides Fig. 4.3b)
Designer (Statement)	- Margiela (Mould Fig.4.1i)
Designer (Inspirational)	- Shelly Fox (Elastoplasts Fig.4.3c)
Designer (Commercial)	- Stone Island (BronzeTela Fig. 4.1m)
Mass Market Design	- H&M (Tyvek)

The research indicated that there are two main reasons why practitioners utilise non-clothing materials for fashion. Some use it as a means to innovate within their field, such as Roet who noted,” “ Using unusual materials in textiles gives it an

edge when used properly. Innovation is also a very important factor when using such materials.” Others like Toemsombat and McCabe utilise the materials as media, which help create garments, which represent their ideas.

2) What kinds of theories have been developed in relation to such utilisation of non-clothing materials in the fashion system?

“...we will throw the doors open in the ateliers to cardboard, aluminum
...gas...fresh plants...living animals.”

(Volt 1920 as quoted in Clark 2001:14)

Clark compared the work of avant-garde designers to “Futurism”.

Futurists believed in the utilisation of non-clothing materials.

(Wilcox 2001:19)

Evans, juxtaposed Margiela’s work with ideas expressed by Baudelaire about the ‘poet/ragpicker’. She viewed Margiela’s work as having parallel status to art.
(Evans 1998)

“Classifications should be secondary to the reality of the object.”

(Bates 2000:96)

While in contrast, Bates a practitioner, refused to be classified and be confined within any theories and categories.

3) How has the practitioner’s perspective been explored in the literature?

“...fashion is sometimes regarded as occupying the lowest intellectual rung of the design ladder...”

(Griffiths 2000:70)

Fashion literature is mostly written by theorists, curators and writers who have no experience as practitioners. The practitioner’s perspective had often been lowly regarded and under represented. As Griffiths (Chapter 3) pointed out, only 1 out of

39 articles published in the Fashion Theory Journal, was written by an author who had worked as a practitioner.

Existing literature deals mostly with the fashion show and the garments rather than the process. Few practitioners have articulated their process. In the book *Fabric of Fashion*, Shelly Fox one of the few practitioners in the publication described her process as experimental rather than 'intuitive'

Theory and Practice Overlaps

4) What are the 'wearability' implications of such fabrics?

One of the objectives of the practice based research for this submission was to produce an inspirational fashion collection. These inspirational collections are often shown on the catwalk almost as a separate aspect of the commercial line. The inspirational garments serve as a fashion statement and are not, wearable for everyday activities nor are they available in the retail shops. Within the context of an inspirational collection and this research, 'wearability' is defined as the models being able to present the garments on the catwalk, in photo shoots and exhibitions.

In relation to this research, the materials utilised within f.apothecary were beauty products. The base material for all the garments was constructed from ordinary, banal, everyday beauty products like facemasks and shower buffers. The buffers are originally intended for exfoliating bodies, the material in its original form and with its primary purpose to exfoliate the body inevitably gives the impression of being abrasive and uncomfortable against the skin. In contrast, the final garments were striking, feminine, luxurious looking and comfortable.

“It was the netting (Shower buffers) that was surprising, I was expecting it to be quite scratchy but when I put it on, it was soft, flexible stuff so it was not scratchy at all.”

(Lindsay Lees, Model)

The materials and garments had surpassed all expectations of just being able to be presented on the catwalk, photo shoots and exhibitions as an inspirational collection. There were no expectations or need for the garments to be comfortable yet the questionnaires demonstrated that 100% of the models felt comfortable in the outfits. There is thus a significant contradiction between the initial impression of raw material like the shower buffers and the actual feelings experienced by the wearer when in contact with the fabrics.

5) What is the distinction between the conceptual fashion practitioner and the conceptual artist/ designer?

The conceptual fashion practitioner and the conceptual artist/ designer share many similarities:

- High regard for concepts and forms.
- Willingness to explore and experiment with the same topic.
- Reviewed by critics in art journals¹.
- Work with visual forms.

The main difference is the relative importance of commercial value. Many financially successful conceptual fashion designers are aware of the commercial bottomline.

“I realise clothes have to be worn and sold to a certain number of people.”

Rei Kawakubo (Coleridge 1988:83)

“ I just happen to symbolise my ideas with clothes. I am a fashion designer

technically because my clothes are sold in shops... some of the clothes should be hung on the wall...perhaps that would remind you of things like an ornament does.”

Hussein Chalayan (Tuck 1995:28 as quoted in McRobbie 1998:109)

A fashion practitioner who leans more towards the direction of the conceptual artist, like Hussein Chalayan is not as financially successful. Chalayan was still making a living by being a fashion designer he risked alienating his customer base and being detached from his finance management by being too artistically conceptual about his work. Even, after great acclaim from both art and fashion press, Chalayan filed for financial liquidation in 2001. (Porter 2001)

A prominent example of a conceptual artist is Jana Sterbak who only presents her work within the contexts of art and not the commercial market. In Sterbak's case, there is little regard for financial gains as the intentions of her work were to be displayed and acknowledged by the art viewing public. The intentions of her work are radically different to those of the fashion designer. For Sterbak, fashion is a three dimensional medium in which she could express her concepts rather than a means of making a living.

6) How does the development of the material or the garment design influence the other?

As the non-clothing materials which were utilised in the practice have never been used before to make garments it was very difficult to gauge the materials' behavior. For example the materials do not drape or take to certain construction techniques as conventional materials do. Materials that resemble fabric do not necessarily behave the same way. Thus a large amount of time was used in experimenting with and understanding the materials, in order to fully utilise and show the unique properties of the non-clothing material. For example a material like the shower buffer netting could not be made into a draped skirt as the material is too light and rigid to hold the folds. Thus the design of the garment was compelled to adapt to

the characteristics of the material.

Results from the researcher's own practice indicate that the material dictates the design of the garment in a remarkably powerful way especially when the materials are innovative or unusual. Details like the material's weight, structure, drape capabilities, flow, transparency, ease of finishing and construction all affect the final outcome of the collection.

Other than the researcher's own practice the results from the research interviews also indicate that for the majority the material leads the design (71.5%) while for the rest of the interviewees (28.5%) both materials and design work together.

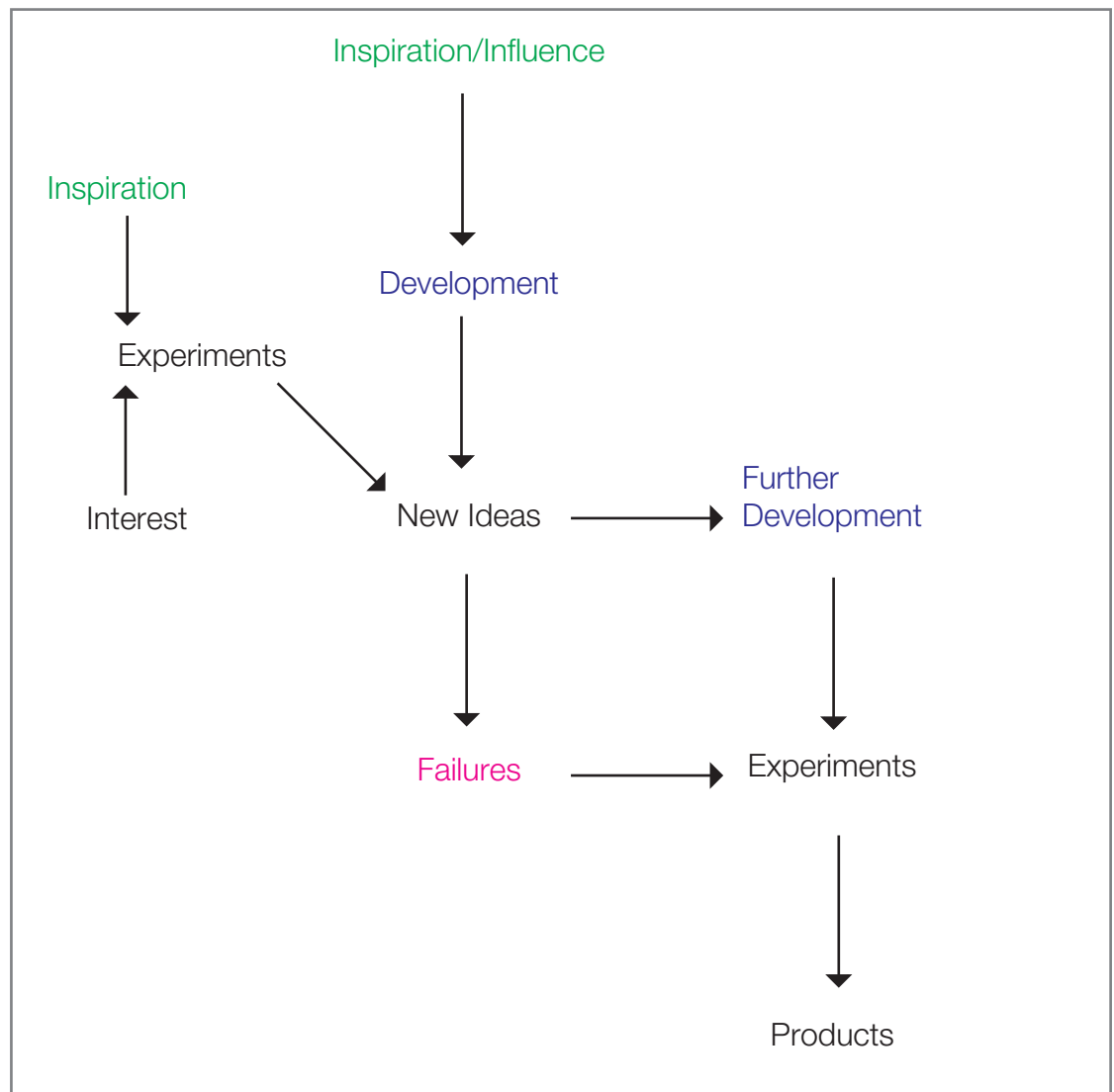
Practice

7) What types of media, materials and garments are feasible for experimentation?

A wide variety of materials are suitable for this area of research as the details of chapters 5 and 6 show.

The original inspiration for the collection was Gwen John's and the modern woman's conflicting attitudes between the image which she portrays and her actual attitude towards beauty products and her visual identity. Materials were sourced from beauty products, which were available from beauty salons, beauty supply stores and pharmacies. There was a long series of experiments with different materials. (Which also included earlier experiments before the confirmation of the final theme of the collection, with materials like ceramics, industrial fabrics and rice papers) In keeping with the theme of the collection, the viable materials for the final collection f.apothecary were:

- Hair beads
- Shower Buffers



- Hair Sprays
- Muslin
- Rubber Bands

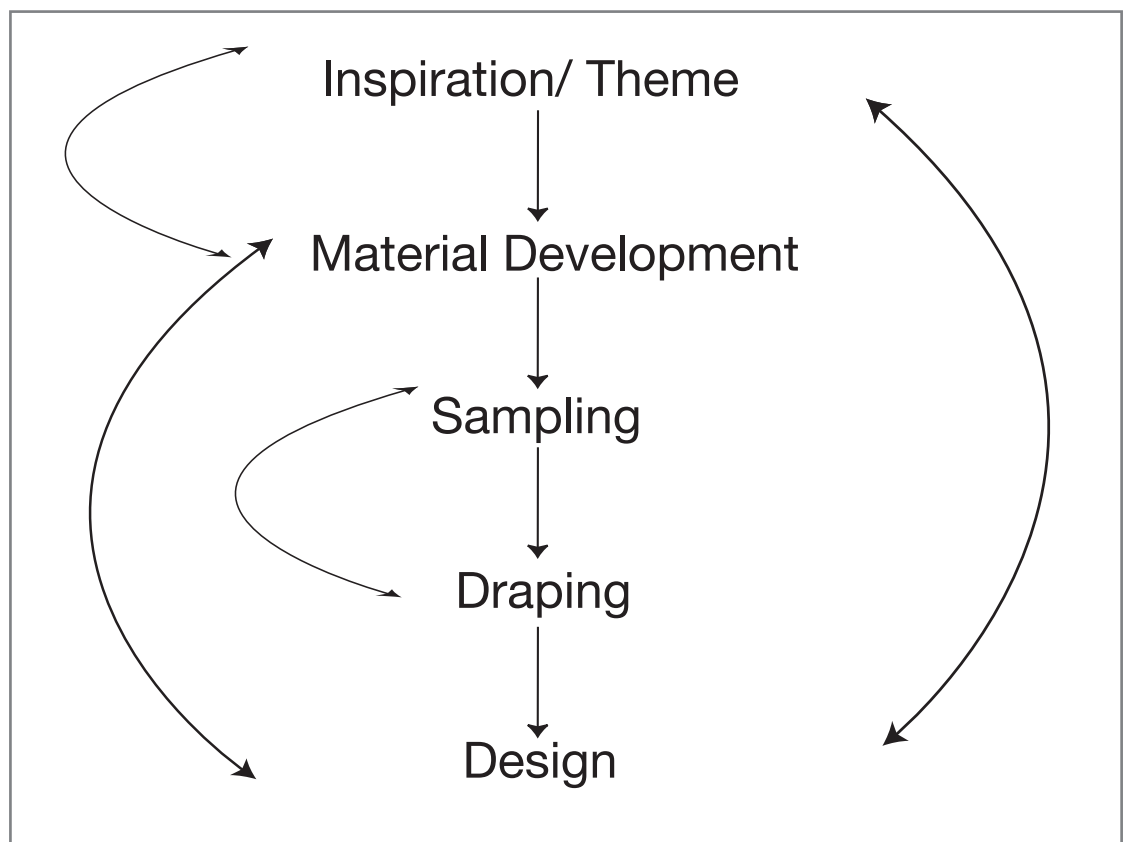
They were viable because they adapted to conventional sewing techniques and were accessible and inexpensive. (The reasons as to why the researcher had utilised conventional sewing techniques are discussed in section 5.3.)

8) How might practical experiments best be conducted and recorded?

The experiments were conducted as a systematic development from initial interest to experiment and development. The experimental process helped to refine and define the final product. Vital lessons were learnt from failed experiments which,

helped to guide the development of new and more feasible ideas. The process was evolutionary and exploratory often leading to serendipitous findings. It was also more viable when working with such unusual materials to approach it in a different way to the traditional rules. For example by combining unorthodox materials with orthodox techniques.

As both the process and the products of this research are highly visual, the best way to record the research was through a combination of documentation,



photography, audio and videotapes. The visual aids enabled the various aspects of the research, which were difficult to articulate in text to be succinctly represented in the research. As visual images are easier and faster to comprehend as compared to text, the visual elements of the research also enable the vital aspects of the research to be accessible to the general public.

9) Which processes are the most appropriate for experimentation? (Including 'conventional' versus 'unconventional'.)

The combination of both unconventional materials/ approaches and conventional construction/ finishing techniques enabled the practitioner to overcome problems resulting from the use of unorthodox materials. Due to the unpredictable nature of the materials, the practical process indicates that it was easier to start with a theme and the development of the material. The theme helps the practitioner to focus and narrow down the number of viable materials as opposed to being lost amongst the huge variety of choice. Beginning the process with the development of the material, firstly helps the designs to work with the unique characteristics of the materials to help integrate both interesting materials and silhouettes simultaneously. Secondly to enable the material and the design to complement each other. Finally to prevent designs, which are technically impossible to construct due to the nature of the material.

10) How do the media and process affect the aesthetic of the final garments?

The practical process indicates that the experiments helped to refine and define the final products. Initial samples tended to be crude and too literal in relation to the original concept. Further development and more experience with the various techniques and materials lead to new resources, which helped with the creation of the refined final product. (Fig.6.1c-6.1g)

“From crunched up balls to garments. I started deconstructing it in my head.”

(Lindsay Lees, Textile Student and Model)

“It made me appreciate the time that you must have gone through experimenting with the materials figuring out how you can work with it.”

(Alison McLellan, Textile Student)

By revealing and sharing the reflections of the researcher practitioner’s own design process, fellow practitioners like the students quoted above were prompted to self-reflect and consider the process and development thus resulting in interests with the experimental element of the research.

As Bohdanowicz and Clamp indicate the viewer/ consumer completes the fashion cycle, which is essentially based on supply and demand.

“ Fashion is essentially a social phenomenon.”

(Bohdanowicz and Clamp 1994)

Both the media and the general public reacted positively to the final collection. (Which was the product of the combination of media and process development) The questionnaire results indicate that 100% of participants reacted positively to the collection, f.apothecary. 54% liked the design and 35% liked the materials. The collection also received positive coverage by four prominent Scottish publications. (The Herald, The Scotsman, The Evening Times and The List)

The researcher is aware that this result might have been biased as it was conducted at the fashion show where viewers are more receptive to different concepts. However, the target audience for this research was people in the fashion business, fashion education and the general public who are interested in fashion. These were undoubtedly the kinds of people likely to attend a fashion show.

11) How might the practical research best reach the public domain?

To ensure that the research reaches its intended audience (practitioners, theorists, student, fashion and textile researchers and the general public who are interested in fashion) the research had to appeal and be accessible to a diverse range of people. The thesis will be accessible in its entirety in the form of a CD-Rom and a printed edition housed in The Glasgow School of Art library. The range of formats will appeal to both academics and students.

The research was also presented in venues which are accessible to the general public for example the fashion show, retail shops (Urban Outfitters and The Artstore) and a website (www.f-apothecary.co.uk). Such public presentations aim to convey the most vital elements of the research to the viewer thus they are often

presented in the form of visually arresting colourful displays with summarised key points of the research highlighted alongside the actual collection. The presentation of the research in accessible formats and venues, enabled the research to reach viewers who would normally not come in contact with postgraduate research.

7.2: Strengths And Weaknesses Of Research

The strengths of this research are:

- It explores and represents a wide range of fashion practitioners from different backgrounds and expertise.
- It emphasises and explores the practitioner's process and rationale, which had not been explored in existing literature.
- By conducting interviews with a range of practitioners, it ensured the different perspectives of the fashion system were represented.
- By using self as case study for the research, it ensured that the data collated was 'first hand' and accurate.
- By conducting interviews and questionnaires on a range of practitioners and viewers it had ensured, that the results and views collated were objective.
- The research is accessible to a wide audience.

The weaknesses of the research are:

- The data obtained from the questionnaires could be perceived to lack objectivity as the audience of the fashion show was more likely to be receptive to new fashion ideas. As the research is primarily targeted at people with an interest in fashion, the audience would have been the most feasible people to conduct the questionnaire on.
- The researcher was acutely aware of the problems involved in

representing certain aspects of 'real objects' in text form or two-dimensional illustrations. In order to overcome this and present the objects in a more accurate manner, the research is presented in conjunction with an exhibition and video clips are included within the electronic version of this thesis.

- The theoretical aspect, the examples cited within the contextual review were perhaps not sufficiently developed due to the practical constraints of the research and the sheer amount of possible examples. Thus a separate list of other examples together with references are included.

7.3: Recommendation For Further Work

Due to the various time and expertise constraints of the research, there are a number of areas, which could be further explored and developed.

- The questionnaires could be conducted on a wider and more random group of viewers to obtain a more diverse response.
- For the practical aspect of the research, the accessories for example the latex shoes could be further developed and made into final products.

The research had been exhibited at the Newbery Gallery at Glasgow School of Art on 23rd September 2003 and The Lighthouse in November 2003. Together with the fashion show, the exhibition at Urban Outfitters in July 2003, favorable press coverage and a comprehensive website have ensured maximum exposure of the research to a diverse audience from all over the world.

7.4: Contribution To New Knowledge

The contributions to knowledge, evident in this research are that:

- The research has tackled the 'gap' within existing literature by representing a practitioner's perspective through exploration and discussion of the process and rationale behind one collection.
- The researcher's personal practice integrated non-clothing materials into an inspirational fashion collection. The collection was new and innovative and the materials had never been utilised in such a context before.
- The research indicated that most practitioners would consider the rationale and design process rather than non-practitioners.
- The research has developed an overview of the positions (within the context of the fashion system) of practitioners utilising non-clothing materials for fashion. (Fig.4.2b)
- The research explores fashion practitioners from a range of backgrounds and perspectives as opposed to the conventional exploration of high profile, mainstream fashion designers.
- The research has provided a clear insight into the practitioner's process and rationale through an articulate use of documentation, diagrams, videos, exhibitions and a CD-ROM.
- The exposure of the research in the fashion show and various displays and exhibitions has raised the profile and emphasised the importance of the practitioner's process.

- The research was made accessible to a wide range of viewers via an innovative presentation of the research in 'layman friendly' format to appeal to a wide range of viewers who usually would not have any contact with academic research.

Endnotes

- 1 Examples of fashion designers being reviewed by critics in art journals.

Brackman, Yvette. "Charles Ray, Martin Margiela, Frieze Issue 44. Pg 85.1997.

In this article, Brackman reviews Ray's film "Fashions" and Margiela's Spring/summer collection within Frieze which is a contemporary art and culture magazine.

"Fashion, conceived in both Margiela and Ray's work, provides access to a Transformative experience, something that alters accepted norms and blurs the boundaries of our perception."

Lieberman, Rhonda. "Spirits Eternal" Artforum January 1995. Pg 7-8

In this article, Lieberman describes her experience as a 'real-people model' for the J.Morgan Putte's Spring/ Summer 1995 collection. She observes that, "Everyone is going to fashion, and fashion is going to art, maybe not for models but for inspiration in putting together a show...designers who want to talk about anything but FASHION, just as artists want to talk about anything but ART-testifying to some law of human nature in which everyone thinks what other people do is cool and meritorious and what they do is silly."

Als, Hilton. "Suited for Leisure" Artforum March 1995. Pg.19.

In this article, Als explore te work of 1950's American fashion designer Claire McCardell. McCardell was well known to have designed womenswear for relaxation and leisure for post-war America. Als argues in this article that her designs were "not about freedom but about low mantainence." He also observed that "Fashion never represents what a woman should look like. Fashion is about the anxiety that designers and the culture at large have about women, and what they assume women should look like."

Lieberman, Rhonda. "Survival of the fitted." Artforum May 1995. Pg 9

Lieberman reviews and discusses New York Fashion Week 1995. Noting both what is

onstage and backstage.

Als, Hilton. "Perfectly Awful" Artforum October 1995. Pg 70-73

Als, interviews fashion designer/ painter/ poet/ musician/ hair and make-up artist Andre Walker about his work in fashion over the past 15 years.

Martin, Richard. "Gianni Versace" Artforum October 1995. Pg 74-75

Martin discusses Versace's work, juxtaposing an evening ensemble from the Spring /Summer 1994 collection with cultural significance.

"Versace's evening ensemble bears witness to our global visual culture and our complex uncertainties in striving to remember, wanting to replace, and demanding to ameliorate."

Zahm, Oliver. "Langfroid" Artforum October 1995. Pg76-81.

This article was a project for Artforum presented by Helmut Lang, Juergen Teller and Oliver Zahm. It looks at Lang work tracing from the start of his career in Paris when he was 18 to the way he handles materials in his current collections.

"He is reverent toward cheap fabrics but renders sophisticated ones banal."
(Zahm 1995:76)

"Basically every collection starts with fabric, colour, form; a certain attitude also comes into play that relates lives and favours a certain look..."
(Lang as quoted in Zahm 1995: 76)

"[Inspiration] comes from different directions, from things that happen everyday."
(Lang as quoted in Zahm 1995:76)

"It's a very long process from the concept to the point where the garment appears in public and is worn...It's directly connected to people, it's transformed by interpretations, by everybody who wears it. It contains so many possibilities."
(Lang as quoted in Zahm 1995: 123)

Appendix:

Transcripts

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High Street Designer

Emma Howard Designer

1) Which commercial level and labels do you design for?

High street multiples. Oasis, Bay Trading, Alders, John Lewis. Occasionally New Look.

2) How do you decide what materials to use in your designs?

Sometimes the buyer wants to use a specific fabric. Other times I choose to fit the style and occasion it will be worn.

3) Will you use 'non' clothing materials for your designs?

(Non-clothing materials defined as materials which are not commonly associated with fashion. For example metal, paper, fungus etc.)

No, other than metal for accessories. I can't use anything that can't be washed/dry cleaned.

4) Does the garment design lead the choice of materials or vice versa?

I design both ways- choosing a fabric for a design or designing to utilise a fabric.

5) What is your design process?

-Receive a brief from customer.

-Research trends/ designer collections/ magazines etc.

-Design many variations of styles referring to fabric and trims.

- Edit as I draw up designs on computer.
- Re-edit during presentation (putting design books together)

6) What is more important? Function or aesthetics?

Commercially a balance of both is essential, although sometimes things sacrifice function (washability) for aesthetics. (New Look can often only afford one not the other.)

Personally I'd be happy to be uncomfortable if the item I wore looked outstanding.

High Street Designer

Lesley

Designer

1) Which commercial level and labels do you design for?

We design wovens formal and casual for UK High street retail chains and department stores eg. Oasis, Topshop, John Lewis, Alders. We design jersey casualwear and tops for Oasis, John Lewis, Alders, Bay Trading and others. Middle price range.

2) How do you decide what materials to use in your designs?

It varies- sometimes a customer will request a particular fabric. Sometimes we find a fabric which inspires us. Sometimes we have an idea for a style and look for an appropriate fabric. At our level in the market the right fabric at a workable price is very important.

3) Will you use 'non' clothing materials for your designs?

(Non-clothing materials defined as materials which are not commonly associated with fashion. For example metal, paper, fungus etc.)

Non-clothing materials might inspire us but High Street customers would be uncomfortable with the concept as the normal testing and quality parameters could not be applied. They might also be nervous about selling the idea to High Street shoppers.

4) Does the garment design lead the choice of materials or vice versa?

See point 2.

5) What is your design process?

We design to the customer's specific brief, or are inspired by a fabric/ trim, or see something in a magazine or during a shop report that sparks an idea. There is no real pattern. If we have a best seller it also makes commercial sense to do a follow up echoing some of the successful features of the winning style in fabric or silhouette.

6) What is more important? Function or aesthetics?

Function and aesthetics mean very little to High Street retail buyers. Their job is to source high quality fashion garments for the lowest possible price. Factories must perform exhaustive lab tests to demonstrate that the garment is suitable for the purpose intended. Aesthetically pleasing styling happens but is not guaranteed. It depends entirely on the retailers' requirements and which celebrity or designer is driving the particular look. If a successful style happens to be pleasing in proportion and fabrication of course we are delighted.

High Street Designer

Grace Lee Designer

1) Which commercial level and labels do you design for?

High Street Fashion (Tailoring/ Wovens)

Oasis, Topshop, John Lewis, Alders.

2) How do you decide what materials to use in your designs?

Depending on what customers request and also depending on fabrics that have gone down well with people buying- Best sellers. Price is another issue as well.

3) Will you use 'non' clothing materials for your designs?

(Non-clothing materials defined as materials which are not commonly associated with fashion. For example metal, paper, fungus etc.)

No, we do High Street and customers do not understand, also people buying will not buy them. In our business, things must sell!

4) Does the garment design lead the choice of materials or vice versa?

Yes, let's say for my department: wovens, covers a few different areas- going out, daywear-tailoring. In going out, I will need to use less casual-looking fabrics, more satins etc.

5) What is your design process?

Once I've wraped a design meeting with eg. Oasis, I will need to start designing

what I think is the latest trends but keep in mind what kind of people buys from Oasis (they like pretty sophisticated stuff), colours, fabrics.

6) What is more important? Function or aesthetics?

Function! Clothes must also look good of course, but if how one is going to wear it, how the garment is going to be washed etc. are not thought carefully, it will be simply a waste of time for our customer, me and the factories.

Interview with Helen Beard, May 2002 (Face to Face Interview)

Jeanne:

Firstly, can we have an introduction about you?

Helen:

I graduated last year from Edinburgh College of Art with a Ceramics degree. Since then I have moved down to London and set up a studio. And am developing myself to be a freelance artist making ceramic dresses.

Jeanne:

What exhibitions have you been involved in?

Helen:

Since graduation, the first big exhibition was at New Designers. It is a fair where everyone goes and sees all the new graduates of the year. And that was where I got all my contacts for the exhibitions I have done this year. The first one I did was at Birmingham NEC which was basically a selected group of graduates exhibit and the industry comes and look at the new graduates' work. I am not sure how my work was received, as it is more art and design. It was more conceptual then functional art. The next big exhibition was Contemporary Applied Arts and that was a jewellery exhibition. It was contemporary wearable art. That was how I fitted in, as it was art worn in a very modern and contemporary context.

That was a group exhibition of well-established makers like Alan Paxan and newer graduates. The most major exhibition was a solo exhibition for a huge festival at Cornwall called Ceramica sponsored by Seven Arts. It was basically promoting ceramics from all over the country. It was a fantastic opportunity for me to go out and show people interested in ceramics a totally different take of what they were used to. For that I exhibited 7 pieces and held a series of workshops. And that is still going in Cornwall.

Jeanne:

Were they all dresses?

Helen:

All except one. That was a very new thing for me. Everyone had always asked me why I don't do boys. I don't know why. I think it is because I have always wanted to wear the dresses. I thought it would be a lovely idea to have a couple. A girl and a boy in white with very elaborate almost embroidery on it. And they were definitely a pair. So they were two of the newest pieces and the rest were dresses.

Jeanne:

What is the main aim of your work?

Helen:

To entertain people, they are a performance piece, they amuse people and people will come and see them. People often ask what are people going to get when they come and see an exhibition of yours? What I hope they will get is that they will see ceramics in a new light they will see them as something very odd and eccentric. And they are wearable dresses in a performance. It is always important that I put video with the exhibition so that people can see how the dresses can be worn. They are strange but you can wear them. And to be taken seriously.

Jeanne:

Is there any reason why you had expressed yourself in dresses? Could it not easily been a vase?

Helen:

It was always had to a dresses or clothing. I have had always been obsessed with fashion. It was a childhood dream of wanting to do fashion. I never really worked with fabric so working with clay, working with clay is very immediate. So when I found out that I can use clay to make dresses it was just fantastic. Because I had

always loved fashion.

Jeanne:

Are there any reasons why the dresses are in the shape that they are in and not in others?

Helen:

They are all quite young, bell shaped. Childlike dresses and strangely with breasts. Maybe it is I, not being able to let go of the childhood fairytale thing. Wanting them to be women wearing them. Because I have always been interested in life drawing. Life drawing figurative stuff has always been a big part of my work. And I think a huge influence is Hussein Chalayan, The simple shapes, the simple frock shape, it does not have a big identity to it but the surface decoration is very important. And it's fun, it's a good shape from the top and from the side.

Jeanne:

So what other fashion designers are your fashion influences?

Helen:

The biggest is Hussein Chalayan and I love the furniture shirt, the breakable skirts. And after that there is a big mixture like Yohji Yamamoto for their bold shapes and people like John Galiano for their over the top fashions. Butterflies everywhere, really ornate really extravagant. I love that sort of fashion. I really like that sort of glamour. Alexander McQueen is very interesting. I would not really say that he had influenced my work. His big dress made from ostrich from the exhibition Radical Fashion was really interesting. Seeing someone wearing it was a performance in itself. That interests me but not necessary an influence.

Jeanne:

How would you define yourself?

Helen:

I wouldn't say that I am a ceramist. I am very difficult to define. In a broad sense I am an artist making pieces for performances. I am not a designer, I am an artist?

Jeanne:

Are there different sorts of clay that you use? Does the materials always lead the designs?

Helen:

I think to a certain extent, I struggled for a long time to make the dresses from bland gray clay and it was perfect and they are all ready for the kiln. And they will shatter in the kiln because it was not strong enough. The clay just takes over like any other materials you have to be aware of the way it works. And it leads you into particular shapes. I found a really good clay called white handbuilding clay and put in that extra Molokai which strengthens it. So you can do it quite fine but you have to put into account of the weight so that it won't shatter. I have to say I always have an idea what it will look like but the clay always leads the way.

Jeanne:

Do you think the form or the outer aesthetics of the piece is more important to you?

Helen:

They are both equally important. I think the aesthetic value, If I don't like the look of it, it will be rubbish. It is very important that the surface, the floral patterning, the colour blends with the form. And the form of it is very important, I very recently did two dresses where for some reason, I was struggling with the new type of clay different from the ones I use in college. I was trying to bring it in. The person who was trying to wear it was probably bigger then the last one, it got a bit bigger and

it had huge out of proportioned breasts. And I did not like it, The form is just as important as the aesthetics.

Jeanne:

Which industries had given the best response to your work?

Helen:

Interestingly, it is ceramics. Initially I really struggled with ceramics, as it was all very distant pottery stuff. It was a very bad thing to cut up ceramics to make something. If you are a really good ceramist you will be able to make a whole vessel and not alter in any way in the traditional way. The idea that I was making these solid forms and cutting them was unusual for them. The exhibition at Cornwall was purely for ceramic lovers and makers. It was amazing they were so intrigued with something so unusual and at this scale. And this made me more interested in their work.

Jeanne:

Are there any reasons why you always have floral prints on you dresses?

Helen:

I think it is because of the girly thing. And the embroidery, I like particularly on this one so it is very loose and which is something that you cannot achieve through stitching. And it is definitely a floral connection with the material; I have made some different ones with stripes, patterns and dots. And it does not interest me as much as it does not relate to the ceramic tradition. A lot of ceramic ware was with floral transfers, I like that ornate quality about that. I keep taking from that and transferring that to my work.

Jeanne:

I understand that you wanted to make dresses because it was a childhood dream are there any artistic concepts behind your work?

Helen:

That is a very difficult one. I think there was it was definitely not just a childhood thing. I definitely wanted it to be a performance, I think people can relate to fashion and performance rather than solid art.

Jeanne:

What do you mean by solid art?

Helen:

Sort of statuesque and non-moving. I was really interested in it. I was originally trained in jewellery and I got into contact with optometry. Which are a sort of moving people. And I suppose it is always like a reason how I got to here. The moving thing is always very important. It is almost like a joke. The best things I made in the optometry were little girls dancing with little shows and they would bow down. It always makes me laugh when people wear inappropriate clothing. It has now progressed to almost like a moving optometer. That in itself is a statement. It is sort of laughing at the fashion industry even though I love the fashion industry. The joke is that people can't really wear these.

Jeanne:

Can you describe your design process?

Helen:

I initially have a shape. I often imagine them from above. As I always have the dresses in performances I always look at them from above. What I will do is work out a way to produce the bell shape and make variations from them. I make different necklines and armholes. I don't particularly like them with sleeves. Because it makes them look more like a statue than a dress. I spend a lot of time life drawing. Research a lot of different fashion. Look at what is happening

in fashion for example white with green embroidery, which is something that was happening earlier this year. And all the rest is in the making, because it takes a long time, the idea develops. I will say that I am mostly influenced by fashion.

Jeanne:

Is there any reason why you chose clay? With a background in jewellery you could have easily made a dress out of metal?

Helen:

It was completely by accident. I really hated clay, because I use to dislike everything associated with it, how the ceramists are always dirty and unfashionable. I started doing ceramics one day a week as part of the jewellery course. Jewellery is not as immediate as ceramics, in jewellery you can spend days banging on a piece of metal. And if you try to make a dress out of metal it will take alot of methodical calculations, Clay becomes bigger and bigger and will stay in that shape just like fabric. Then it became possible for me to make a dress. The first dress that I made was just a really short dress. It was just a process in working out a way for the dress to fit the human form. And I had to take measurements from my figure. I also like the glossiness in clay and the colours, which you cannot get from metal. And it is very fragile.

Jeanne:

How important is the fragile element in your work?

Helen:

Yes it is fragile. Not hugely fragile it is quite robust because it is quite big. It will not crash if you knock into it. The fact that it is clay and it could smash and it is extremely heavy is the main part of it. It is not possible yet I had made it possible.

Jeanne:

What is your personal definition of wearability?

Helen:

It has to be something you can get into and you can move in.

Jeanne:

Would you say that your ceramic dresses are wearable?

Helen:

Yes.

Jeanne:

Can you tell us about the structure of your dresses?

Helen:

Yes the dresses come in parts. The ceramics weigh about 40kg and about 1.5 cm thick and gets thicker at the bottom. They are split in 2 sections and tied at the side. Another is a bell shape dress where the front and back rests and the bell shape. But they will be impossible to wear without the frame. You just climb into it. The wheels have four frames with castors. The frame is really important to me. I chose them so that they are very indiscreet so that people can see these vulgar wheels that look very strange with the dresses. I like that contrast?

Jeanne:

What are your future plans?

Helen:

I am developing it in a much more focused way now. And I am certain that I am interested in the performance side of things. Although exhibitions is a way of exhibiting in a wide scale. My main aim is to see these dresses in a dance. I am currently talking to a choreographer in Paris about the possibility of producing a

dance to complement the dresses. And so that I can televise that on the act as live performance art. And maybe making them lighter. Possibly making it in porcelain hopefully when I am serving my apprenticeship with Edmund Duvall whom is very renowned for his skills in porcelain and throwing. I think I can learn alot from him and the possibility of working with different materials Obviously the performance will get more meaningful as it gets more fragile and it might build up to having to build the dresses on sit.

Jeanne:

So which would you say would be the ultimate context for you to exhibit your work?

Helen:

The ultimate thing will be Bjork in a music video. Because she is quite well known for wearing these dresses and she is slightly odd and fragile looking. I also have used a piece of her music for one of my videos.

Jeanne:

So would you say that your work transcends boundaries?

Helen:

Yes. One of my ultimate aims is to make it trendy. I want ceramics to move into new areas. I want to approach the fashion industry and for them to approach me and not have so many boundaries in between.

Jeanne:

Thank you very much for the interview.

Interview With Tine De Ryusser May 2002 (Telephone Interview)

Jeanne:

Hello! This is Jeanne calling from the Glasgow School of Art for the interview.

Thank you for agreeing to this interview and I will like to inform you that I will be recording this telephone interview.

Tine:

That is okay.

Jeanne:

Which design background do you originally come from?

Tine:

I am a jeweller.

Jeanne:

How do you decide what materials to use in your work?

Tine:

I'm a jeweller so I wanted to use metal.

Jeanne:

Are there any special reasons why you wanted to use metal? Are there any special metals that you usually use?

Tine:

Well, because I'm usually making jewellery, really jeweller, I usually use silver. But in this case, I started in paper and thought it will be fun to make it in other materials as well. Since I am a jeweller, metal was one of the first materials that I wanted to try. And because of the way the designs are made, copper is the easiest solution,

so that's why the objects are made of copper?

Jeanne:

So why is copper the easiest solution? Is it because it is cheaper?

Tine:

Yes, it is a cheap material and it is the cheapest to use in this way.

Jeanne:

When did you start experimenting with this?

Tine:

The paper folding that started it all off happened about 4 or 5 years ago?

Jeanne:

Was that during your degree?

Tine:

Yes that was when I was doing my degree in Antwerp. And working in metal was when I was at the Royal College 2 1/2 years ago.

Jeanne:

As a jeweller, why did you start making bowls and garments?

Tine:

Well, certainly I wanted to develop the material to make jewellery while I was working with it, it feels more suitable to make larger objects than small bits of jewellery. So I started to make a large piece of fabric as big as I can make them and then I wanted to try to make garments from it. But since I do not have enough time during my studies, they ended up being prototypes of bags and bags.

Jeanne:

Did you start making the fabric or the copper versions first?

In the pack that you sent me, there were two pictures of the fabric versions, did they have any metal in them?

Tine:

No, they don't. As I mentioned earlier about the paper folding, I wanted to experiment in various materials and one of them was fabric. It is entirely made of fabric, there is a harder layer in the middle, which makes it easier to fold, and there are the copper ones like the bowls that come from the same structure.

Jeanne:

Is the design or the material the most important factor in your designs?

Tine:

The material is the most important and I work from there.

Jeanne:

Have you exhibited your designs in a fashion context?

Tine:

I have exhibited at the shows at the Royal College like the graduation show. I also made some samples that were shown at a fashion shown but within a jewellery context. It was shown on a catwalk, it was an exercise with a group of students to show jewellery in a new way because you usually see jewellery in glass boxes. We wanted to show them on the human body.

Jeanne:

Which is more important for you? The function or the beauty, aesthetics of the piece?

Tine:

That is a tough question. Really, the folding of the design is purely aesthetic; it is also functional but not really. What I really like about it is the way that it folds and is flexible so there is no real function to it unlike for example, a T-shirt with a wire connecting to a computer. Nothing functional. The flexibility is really important for me and then of course the way it looks. But I could not predict the way it looks. It is more a coincidence but it is really important.

Jeanne:

Would you say your design process is intuitive or systematic?

Tine:

It is mostly intuition; I could not have done it without doing some sort of research on certain processes. But it was really a coincidence that I found it rather than a plan.

Jeanne:

What do you think is the aesthetic appeal of your work?

Tine:

What I think is very nice about is that it looks like rigid metal but it moves like fabric so you get the best qualities of both materials. You also get the shiny bits of the metal and the discolorations that copper have. And on the other hand you get the flexibility of fabric. And a bit of the structure that fabric has.

Jeanne:

You mentioned the paper folding started 4 or 5 years ago. What inspired that?

Tine:

Beehives. That is what started everything, I wanted to construct a honeycomb

with a single flat sheet of paper without any joints.

Jeanne:

In the pack you sent me, you mentioned that if you were to construct the design in metal there would be too many hinges?

Tine:

When I made it in paper, I found out that I did not really make a honeycomb because it was really flexible. Honeycombs, of course, were supposed to be really strong and rigid. But mine was really flexible and I really liked it. I wanted to make something in metal but which will move in the same way. The only way to do that is to have rigid facets and hinges in between. That would have been an enormous job making all the hinges in between.

Jeanne:

Will that make the design too heavy?

Tine:

I don't know whether it is too heavy. But it will just be too much work. If I wanted to just make a simple bracelet, I will need to construct over a hundred facets and each has four sides and each side will need a hinge. I don't have to calculate to know the amount of work that it will take. I will have to spend lots of time, weeks and weeks, to construct one piece.

Jeanne:

What is the aim of your work? Is it to shock people?

Tine:

No. It evolved from being paper to metal jewellery that is flexible and evolved into fabric mostly by coincidence. Then I decided that it would most probably look

beautiful as clothing. There is no conceptual meaning behind it. It is just the beauty of it. I do know it looks slightly 'science fiction' but that is not intentional.

But in a way, that is a way I can see it being used. For clothing that refers to the science fiction identity. But it was not meant to be, I never planned to make this material, I never said that this was my aim. It just happened.

Jeanne:

Do you get a good response about your work from a particular industry? For example jewellery or fashion?

Tine:

At the moment, I am still trying to get a bursary to continue my research. That is why I have not done a lot of publicity for it. Because that will attract too much attention from people that I do not want attention from. This is because there is a patent pending from this. At the moment there is not that much attention on this, for the moment, we are trying to hold the back the information. Sorry, that is why I am not being specific in explaining the process to you.

Jeanne:

No, it is all right because I am trying to find out more about how your designs evolved and your design process. Thank you for the interview and good luck.

Interview With Emma King May 2002 (Interview Via Correspondance)

Copy of Emma King's letter (Responses to Questions)

1) Which design background do you come from?

Due to my degree course being multi-disciplinary, I don't feel I really fit into a specific 'design background', as I was allowed to work with any medium and methods I liked. However if I was forced to label myself I would say I probably lean towards Fine Art. This is because the garments I have made are not intended to be 'fashionable'. Instead I make them with a function in mind, which I consider more so than the look.

2) How do you decide what materials to use in your work?

The materials I use are dependant on the function of the piece for example:

The strawberry laces were used to make the 'smell/taste garment' as they are edible and have a strong smell and were intended to create a desire in the wearer to need to taste the strawberry laces.

3) When did you start using 'non' clothing materials?

I have always had a tendency to use unusual materials in my work as it presents an out of the ordinary view to my work and an element of surprise when you realise what the material that's been used actually is. (For instance from a distance the strawberry laces when knitted look like red wool.) Though its only been since my degree course that I have been using them to create garments.

4) Why did you decide to use 'non-clothing' materials?

As above.

5) How do you decide which materials to use?

Same as question 2.

6) Does the garment design lead the choice of the material or vice versa?

A bit of both really as obviously if you use strawberry laces there is only so many ways you can make a garment (knitting being one of them). But designs do come into it also, as the purpose of the piece is the function at the end. Therefore it had to come up over the mouth otherwise there wouldn't be any point to the piece.

7) In what contexts have you exhibited your work?

The context of which I have exhibited my work varies from each piece, So I have exhibited various pieces on:

- The catwalk (in a fashion show)
- The beach
- Pizza Express (To show function, the piece was gloves that had extended fingers that made touch and using your hands impossible. The intention is to demonstrate everyday tasks can be impossible through wearing these gloves. To try and suggest importance of touch and mobility that is

often taken for granted.)

- Various exhibition spaces such as Blichling Hall, John Innes Centre)

8) Which is more important? Function or aesthetics?

Both are important but as mentioned before mostly the function.

9) What is the aesthetic appeal of your work?

I would say the aesthetic appeal of my work is the surprise of the use of unusual materials.

Interview With Michael McCabe May 2002 (Telephone Interview)

Jeanne:

Hello! This is Jeanne calling from Glasgow School of Art for the interview.

Michael:

Yes, hello!

Jeanne:

Thank you very much for the pictures.

Michael:

Were they okay?

Jeanne:

Yes they were great. Can you talk to me about the pieces in the pictures?

Michael:

They were part of a project that I had done. One of them was influenced by reptilian things and armor plating, basically anything that is telescopic. And the surface was like insects that sort of thing as well. And the other one came from an idea of electronic jewellery. I wanted light and sound to be incorporated into the piece.

Jeanne:

What was the telescopic one made of?

Michael:

The main body was made of neoprene, which is a wetsuit material. Basically you can cut it up from an old wet suit, which was what I did, you can cut it up into sections and remodel it into things. It doesn't tear easily and is a nice material to

work with and recycled plastic is used to make rivets.

Jeanne:

What kind of design background do you come from?

Michael:

Well, I did quite a lot of small-scale design diplomas like Btecs and I did a degree in 3-D design and focused on jewellery in the last two years of the course. It was jewellery mainly.

Jeanne:

Would you say that your designs are to be worn as part of the garment or would you say that it is a separate accessory?

Michael:

Both really. I have made things for shops that are individual pieces. Some have been incorporated into shirts. I had actually made a piece that comes out into a piece of fabric so they are more like costumes. I am definitely interested in making costumes.

Jeanne:

Have you got any pictures of those? They sound really interesting.

Michael:

Yes, but they are more difficult to get a hold of as I haven't looked at them for ages. If you have got a bit of time, I can most probably send them to you later on.

Jeanne:

Yes, that will be great! How do you decide what materials to use in your work?

Michael:

Generally, I like to work with things that use to be something else. That is the concept behind it, in the case of the electronic piece other than the electronics parts, the rest of it was made up of found objects. So they were totally recycled. I like turning something made for something else into something else. I like to sort of re evaluate the item.

Jeanne:

These materials are very unusual, when did you decide to start using them?

Michael:

If I got a project in mind, I usually go looking for things that are in the same vein, for example the electronic design, I went to a broker's yard and they were tearing seat belts out of cars and I had wanted to make a sort of wearable car which was really difficult to make but the logistics of it did not really work. They really wanted me to make it when I was at college because it was really outrageous. But I ended up making something that was inspired by people wearing seat belts in cars. I also wanted to make something more elaborate and that evolved to something different completely. Basically, I go out looking for things that sound interesting and then see whether it will work or not. That is how I start basically.

I like taking things apart as well, I really like destroying things and see how they look half broken and then tidying them up and see how they look in pieces.

Jeanne:

So what inspired you to want to make things out of other things?

Michael:

I honestly don't know. That is a natural thing, I am interested in, like if there is nothing to use on earth and having to use things that were done before. I really dislike using things that are normal, I find it really difficult to go and buy materials and go right, I am going to do this with this material. I find it too restrictive. I really

like things that are already lying around and they really inspire me.

Jeanne:

Is the design or the material of the design more important? Which leads which?

Michael:

That is really difficult. Obviously if it is something for a shop and someone is going to buy it, it have to be of a certain standard and not be dangerous and be wearable and not be an abrasive material unless that is the intention. If it is for a shop it will have to fit in with a look. For example, the spiky ones, they went down quite well with clubbers and some dodgy S&M people. I've got lots of feedback from people like that. And so the design is important but unusual materials and that sort of thing is probably the most important thing. Slightly more important then the looks.

Jeanne:

When you are designing do you decide on the material or the design first?

Michael:

Can be both. Sometimes I have a strong idea in my head about what I want or sometimes someone else will want me to do something else and I will do it. Somethings, literally I will be looking at a bag and think that is interesting And wonder whether, whether this with this will work. So yes, both.

Jeanne:

Have you exhibited your work in a fashion context or others?

Michael:

Just on a small scale, nothing major. I am friends with a lot of fashion students and they have shows and so often I will give them pieces to use. If they have some clothes and want something to bring it out a bit more or present it differently. They will ask me for some pieces. But mainly no. It is mainly in the shops and I don't

really exhibit. It is more commercial.

Jeanne:

What kind of industries are interested in your work. Will you say there is a particular sector?

Michael:

Well at the moment, I am talking to some people in Cornwall. They have just opened a radical wearable shop. I think they are serious into making into a mainstream shop based on the idea of unusual artists and designers making slightly strange things. And start making it commercial. I am really interested in what they are doing and I have sent them some stuff. And also there is a shop in London called Cyber.Dot. which is a futuristic sort of shop where people want to dress up like blade runners and science fiction. Also fetish clubs tends to go for what I do. Alternative clothes shops and things like that.

Jeanne:

Which do you think is more important, the function or the aesthetics of the piece?

Michael:

At one point, I was really into making a range of functionless bags that had no purpose and you can't put anything in them and they can't work as bags. I don't know whether you went to that exhibition. The satellites of fashion, and it were like hats had to fit the head and the shoes have to fit the foot. But bags don't. But anyway, I really got into that and thought it will be interesting to make a bag that has no function but was a bag still and I'll say the aesthetics of the object is more important. I will get more excited about something that doesn't work.

Jeanne:

What do you call yourself? A jewellery designer, a fashion designer or an artist?

Michael;

That is a very difficult question. I had always got into trouble at college for not clarifying my status. I will say jewellery designer I suppose.

Jeanne:

Do you think there is a particular aesthetic to your work?

Michael:

The things that I hear, people tend to like them and people seem to like unusual materials and the colour schemes. I tend to go for bold colours. Things that stand out.

Jeanne:

Do you mind telling me which university you graduated from?

Michael:

It was the University of Wales. I went there specifically because I was not interested in working in metal. I basically went because I could make whatever I wanted with whichever I wanted. And they will supply materials and workshops even though they are quite obscure.

Jeanne:

You mentioned before that you started designing some pieces in garment form. What prompted you to go into that direction?

Michael:

I really like film and theater and I really like costumes and like fashion designs that make things for films. So I won't mind doing things in that sector. Particularly films

or performances. That is what I am getting at now, something more elaborate.

Jeanne:

Are you doing this full-time?

Michael:

No, I am teaching part-time obviously it is difficult to do it part time.

Jeanne:

I understand. So what are you teaching?

Michael:

I teach art and design but I try to get a fair amount of body adornment or jewellery into the course. If there is an opportunity, I always jumped at the chance to make wearable stuff. The kids really go for it. Because I teach young ones like 7 up to 18. I don't think they are getting enough of that in school. Thinking about the body and 3- dimensional artwork in general. They are very into painting and I can understand that but I just think wearable things make you more conscious about the environment and you can get environmental issues into that.

Jeanne:

In your work you mentioned recycling. Is that a really strong concept for you?

Is that what drives you for all your projects?

Michael:

I think it is definitely very important. I don't like working with machines at all. Everything I make is hand made, literally every bit. Everything is hand crafted. There are no reasons to use dangerous stuff there are plenty of other recyclable things around. It is very important.

Jeanne:

Do you think your design process is a systematic development or intuition?

Michael:

Well, I believe in working in a very natural way. I don't try to contrive it too much.

Jeanne:

Would you say that it evolves?

Michael:

I would definitely say that. And it is still evolving. I was showing my designs at the New Designers Exhibition in London one year. I got asked by a company called Go, which is a travel product accessories company. They saw my designs and really wanted to work with me. But when it came to what I wanted to do, they really wanted to make everything commercial. I was really angry with them. They are the people that are a real danger to hand crafted stuff and I hate mass manufacturing. And that is all hitech?

Jeanne:

Is that why you have decided to go about it slowly so that you can do it your way?

Michael:

I really like lo-tech but there is no reason why low tech cannot be made to look hi-tech. I have somethings that could have been passed off as high tech.

Jeanne:

Thank you very much. Your views are very interesting. Thanks. Bye.

Michael:

Bye.

Interview with Xavier Navarrow 2001 (Interview Via Fax)

Translated from French.

Question 1

- Non –Fashion - Rhodoid
- Camouflage Knit

- Fashion/Textile - Hair
- Hair Lace
- Whale bone
- Towelling
- Bath Mat

- Other - Champagne Bottles (Metal)

Question 2

- a) Non Fashion

Rhodoid Photos: 1.3.6.7.8.9.11.13.14.17.18

The properties of these materials are Transparency, flexibility, lightness, effects, the weight catches the light , the colour, particularly the movement when it gets some crystal and metal aspects.

Very interesting embroidery, the rhodoid is treated in a spirit of ennoblissement of fabric with added materials, in a non-traditional way. (on the principle of sequins or reflective things)

Camouflage Knit Photos, 17/sample fd

Idea of knit is to be simple and complex. Transparence effects to create with a cut

out effect. (micro-relief bicolour)

b) Fashion

The materials employed in Haute Couture, to divert around from the exterior.

Hair (4,5,8,

The same idea as the knit,

Transparence at the same time stiff and supple.

All these effects obtain grace, charm with different widths of strips:

- Frayed and aspect of feathers, bristles etc.
- Graphic
- Coque
- Bubble

Hair Lace

Transparence, stiff, employment of the lace with a modern graphic technique.

Frayed Fabric

Stiff, with edges that catches the light. The fibre aspect, movement with the length, and the capture of light.

Textile

Sponge Fabric

Floating threads, Fray, to turn away from ?

Bath mat

Visual aspects, relief all over, the texture gives a hair or fur effect.

b) Other

Champagne bottles

Repeat of one of the elements of make up the bottles of champagne. For a dress that evokes the essence of champagne.

It employs a sort of embroidery manner, divert and utilise the dents?

Question 3

Synthetic (It includes the hair):

I employ things that support natural fibres like (cotton, wool, silk) especially organza material based on haute Couture (Transparent, flesh coloured that becomes invisible on the skin.)

4) Fashion and not art, see response to 8.

5) Some of the exhibition pieces that had been made for the fashion show or for the photo sessions.

Models non-portable because

- impossible to sit up with the rhodioid
- pinch (frayed hair)
- Transparent (nude)

Experimental: avant-garde, haute couture (to catch a laboratory of ideas)

Exception : The creations for Torrentes ready to wear but the models are portable to capture the details of the experimental models.

6) The press makes part of the fashion industry at the time. As always had a curious attitude and considers my models innovative, creative and modern.

The industry does not have the same reaction.

7) A number of the clothes are of the orientation of the models not the clients.

On the other hand, in the framework of the shows, to have show-manship.

8) Not like the first object

I consider my models like a pure creation without any real practicalities. If these are not for the contemplation and the condition of the soul that they provoke. It is suppose to be thought provoking and for people to look at. The uniquely shaped object personal close to the search for beauty.

I take into account the constraints of the body, form, volume:

A large preoccupation for:

- The technique: pinching, closures, (zippers)
- The result: Haute Couture.

I don't write the mode in the fashion of art.

My thought process are not fashionable or commercial, but orientated towards the temporary, the constance in the time Classic, never out of fashion.

The garments are not there for commercial of 'fashionable' purposes.

These are for my medium of expression. I don't compare myself to an artist but to a couturier who creates the dresses and sometimes these displayed in museums.

9) Influences of my previous experiences (costume wardrobes, music hall, carnival) You can perceive these thought processes in the spirit of the unique pieces exclusively for shows.

This is a personal conception of the beauty, which rejects all the ideas of ugliness trash and respects my image of the woman.

My source of inspiration comes from nature (Vegetable world, Marine and animal and mineral world)

Leaves, branches, prickles, waves, feathers, corals, seaweed, hair, fur etc

I employ cheap materials daily.

I search for materials because these are the field that I feel most comfortable.

This work is natural for me. The colour and the cut are always subordinate to material

The garment is always a barrier and a partition (second skin) and one may never touch the woman: she bites.

Interview With Sophie Roet 2001 (Interview Via Fax)

Interpreted transcript

Sophir Roet utilises a wide range of natural and synthetic materials to create her textiles. Some of the materials that she has used are polyamide monofilament, bubble wrap, plaster, cellophane, foam, horsehair etc. Roet specialises in creating new textiles via techniques like weaving, bonding and heat treatments.

Roet regards 'innovation' as a very important factor for creating new textiles and finds that the utilisation of non-fashion materials give textiles an 'edge' if used properly. For example, she had recently created a woven fabric with feathers or coins inserted into the fabric. These fabrics will have to be produced on very old looms because such looms will enable the weaver to insert the coins and feathers manually thus such fabrics will require a lot of time and manual labour to achieve. Such fabrics are very expensive and near impossible to re-create on an industrial scale as modern looms will not have the capacity to be programmed to insert the coins and feathers thus these fabrics are created exclusively as inspirational pieces or as one-offs.

Even though most of her innovative textiles are not produced for main stream fashion the responses to her work has always been good. "Very positive response from a large variety of fashion designers with regards to both the visual and tactile qualities of my designs, however few designers have the budget to pay for my textiles as they are created exclusively."

Interview With Montri Toemsombat May 2003 (Interview Via E-mail)

Copy of e-mail response

1) What kind of design background do you come from?

I come from fine art (visual art).

2) How do you decide what materials to use in your work?

I use materials to link with a concept that I previously imagined.

3) When did you start using 'non-clothing' materials?

I started with my project "Rice/Life" Natural Born Consumer in 1997.

4) Why did you decide to use non-clothing materials?

Since all my projects were linked with materialism, consumerism (and then fashion as a development of it), I just wanted materials to express the idea that life sticks with materialism. Nature works with consumerism and I have chosen the cyclic process of the plant growth (rice) to be the symbol of human life, my life. Rice naturally appeared being the most representative element of my culture (I belong to a family of farmers from Issarn-Northeastern province of Thailand) My father provided the seeds.

(What inspired you to use rice and silk in your work?)

Rice and silk were actually two different projects. Silk ("Cocoon/ The Renaissance" was a development of my first main project "Natural Born Consumer". The idea came from an observation I made in Jim Thompson's farm (a big silk producer in Thailand) The process of the silk fabrication includes the killing of the moths just before they have a chance to go out of the cocoon. The obtainment of this material needs the artificial brake of the cycle of life. I tried to research a way to prevent this break and a way to obtain naturally a raw silk giving a chance to let the moths live. Inspiration was born from the cycle and transformation of my own mental development.

5) How do you decide which materials to use?

The material needs to be a symbol, an image or concretization of an abstract idea. The material itself (rice or raw silk) has intrinsic meaning, it is an important element of my roots and traditions.

6) Does the garment design lead the choice of material or vice versa?

The material leads the design. My work is art first, fashion is a support, a media that actually fits with my concept base, consumerism and materialism.

7) In what contexts have you exhibited your work?

Art exhibitions; fashion shows, art performances, etc.

8) Which is more important? Function or aesthetics?

The function of art is important.

9) What is the aesthetic appeal of your work?

Aesthetic is a dimension to be transcended in Arts, in this case aesthetic will give life to the material and let the material transform itself. The work has to make the audience think.

Illustration Credits

Fig.2.1a: MacIlsac's chart showing the cyclic nature of action research. Chart by MacIlsac. MacIlsac, Dan. 1996. *An Introduction to Action Research*.

Fig. 4a: Sorenson's 3 tier chart. Chart by Sorenson. Chart from Easey, Mike. 2002. *Fashion Marketing* p15.

Fig.4.1a: Elsa Schiaparelli. 'Glass' cape made from synthetic materials. Image from White, Palmer. 1986. *Elsa Schiaparelli: The Empress Of Fashion*. p126.

Fig.4.1b: Paco Rabanne. Dress self-assembly kit consisting of 750 discs and 1300 rings. Photo by Paco Rabanne Archives. Image from Kamitsis, Lydia. 1999. *Paco Rabanne* p16.

Fig.4.1c: Paco Rabanne. Models in 'unwearable' dresses 1965 with Dali. Photo by Paco Rabanne Archives. Image from Kamitsis, Lydia. 1999. *Paco Rabanne* p24.

Fig.4.1d: Giorgio Sant'Angelo. Corrugated cardboard outfit from the 60's. Image from Lobenthal, Joel. 1990. *Radical Rags Fashion of the Sixties*. p70.

Fig.4.1e: Elisa Stone. Paper dress 1965. Photo courtesy of Ulrich Franzen. Image from Lobenthal, Joel. 1990. *Radical Rags Fashion of the Sixties*. p93.

Fig.4.1f: Diana Dew. Light up dress from the 60's. Photo by Burt Glinn. Image from Lobenthal, Joel. 1990. *Radical Rags Fashion of the Sixties*. p100.

Fig.4.1g: Proto-Punks Philip Sallon and Yelena with bin liner outfits. Image from Polhemus, Ted. 1994. *Street Style* p89.

Fig.4.1h: Issey Miyake. Rattan Body, Spring/ Summer 1982. Photo by Tsutomu Wakatsuki. Image from Holborn, Mark. 1995. *Issey Miyake* p73.

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- Fig.4.2f: Hussein Chalayan. Aeroplane Dress. Spring/ Summer 2001. Image from www.uol.com.br/.../london_link/museu/jam/img05.jpg.
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- Fig.4.2h: Martin Margiela. Mould and fungus dress from 'La Maison Martin Margiela (9/4/1612)' Photo by Faust Marina. Image from Derycke, Luc and Van De Veire, Sandra. ed. 1999. *Belgian Fashion Design* p63.
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Fig.6.1h(iv) Jeanne Tan. Shower buffer skirt 2003. Photo by Suzanne Martin.

Fig. 6.2 a,b,c,d: Jeanne Tan. f.apothecary. 2003. Photos by Suzanne Martin 2003.

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