

FRAGMENTS

METHODOLOGIES OF MAKING FASHION



EDITED BY

ALANA CLIFTON-CUNNINGHAM & ALISON GWILT

First published to support the exhibition:

FRAGMENTS

METHODOLOGIES OF MAKING FASHION

UTS: DAB Lab Research Gallery
April 10th — May 9th 2008
www.dab.uts.edu.au/dablab/

Fragments: Methodologies of Making Fashion © DAB DOCS [07] 2008
Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building
University of Technology, Sydney
703 - 730 Harris Street Ultimo
PO Box 123 Broadway NSW 2007

ISBN: 978-0-9775325-7-5

Copyright © 2008

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form, or by any means, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Article Imagery © Amy Common
Creative Works © Alana Clifton-Cunningham & Alison Gwilt
Text © Kees Dorst, Timo Rissanen, Alana Clifton-Cunningham, Lucy Godoroja & Alison Gwilt
Photography © Paul Pavlou

Editors: Alana Clifton-Cunningham & Alison Gwilt

Book Design: Amy Common

Printed and bound in Australia by UTS Printing Services

Proudly printed on Raleigh 100% Recycled Mohawk Options PC 100 paper.



CONTENTS

- 04 FORWARD
KEES DORST
PROFESSOR OF DESIGN,
FACULTY OF DESIGN, ARCHITECTURE & BUILDING
- 05 SELVEDGE
TIMO RISSANEN
- 06 COMPONENTS
ALANA CLIFTON-CUNNINGHAM
- 07 NOTIONS
LUCY GODOROJA
- 08 ORNAMENTATION
ALISON GWILT
- 09 THE EXHIBITION
ALANA CLIFTON-CUNNINGHAM & ALISON GWILT
- 10 THE CREATIVE WORKS
- 16 SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHIES &
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
- 17 ARTISTS BIOGRAPHIES

FORWARD

If design is the noble pursuit of creating value for people, then sustainable design must surely be the creation of truly long lasting value to people. This may seem an easy proposition, but it isn't: what is long lasting value? How does one create objects and environments that give people a sustained feeling of pleasure, something that they truly love?

The answer is in the details. Only through very fine detailing, achieved through painstakingly long and dedicated design work, can one achieve a finesse that will make a design sustain its attraction. That means designing far beyond the relatively easy achievement of what has been called the first "WOW" of instant attraction (this is the kind of attraction that marketing aims at, connected as it is to the buying decision). It means accepting the much bigger design challenge of creating the second "WOW", of designing something of a subtlety and deeper quality that people will only gradually discover when they interact with the design. Through these mini-discoveries, a strong and deep relationship is forged. Our ambition should be to create designs of a subtlety that people can really get attached to, that they love and care for... This is the highest a designer can achieve.

This is true for all of design - but it is especially true in fashion design, with its tendency towards flashy first "WOW" designs and the lamentable proliferation of low-quality, throwaway garments that truly only last a season. Yet fashion also offers a great opportunity for creating garments with a true second "WOW" value - they are so close to our bodies, our sensitive skin, our daily lives, that they have the potential to become very close and intimate companions in our lives. The courageous designers that have created the work you will see in the next pages have gone beyond the superficial, they have ventured deeply and lovingly into the fine details of fashion design - towards the creation of garments of a quality that we can truly love and savour, and that we will keep as companions for as long as we can.

KEES DORST
PROFESSOR OF DESIGN

SELVEDGE

TIMO RISSANEN

Fabrics in fashion fall into three categories based on construction: wovens, knits and non-wovens. Woven and knit fabrics have two yarn directions: the warp (along the fabric) and the weft (across the fabric). Fabrics produced through weaving (wovens) have two selvages (self-edge) running the length of the fabric. The selvedge does not fray as the weft yarns wrap back into the fabric. Knits do not always have a selvedge as many are knitted as a circular tube and then cut to produce a flat fabric. The cut edges may be finished with glue for stability. Non-wovens, made directly from fibre, generally do not fray and the finished edge may be a simple cut.

In mass manufacture, selvages are often regarded as waste and thus cut away before cutting the garment pieces. A printed fabric may have plain selvages while velvet may have a selvedge without the pile. Selvages can, however, be useful as Shaeffer¹ points out. They may be used as cut strips to stabilise or reinforce seams or edges, or they may be left in the garment piece as an internal or external edge finish. A selvedge can also become a seam finish in a straight seam; the selvedge may then substitute overlocking, binding or other finishing for the raw seam edge. Yeohlee Teng and Yohji Yamamoto are contemporary fashion designers who frequently incorporate selvages in their garments. Bespoke tailors sometimes use the selvedge inside pockets to facilitate later identification of the fabric².

If fabric is cut to make a garment, seams are required. Seams are the joins that hold fabric pieces together to make a garment; seams may be sewn, fused, welded, etc. Usually a seam allowance is required; the allowance is the fabric between the piece edge and the line of stitching and it is commonly hidden inside the garment. On a garment edge a hem allowance is usually required to turn the fabric back. Some literature on garment manufacturing treats seam and hem allowances as waste and advises to keep these to a minimum³. The allowances, however, enable many transformative practices, such as repair and alteration; reducing them may reduce a garment's potential for future transformation. To facilitate sewing, seam allowances are commonly parallel to the stitching line and a uniform width through the length of the seam, but bespoke tailoring and contemporary fashion (by Zandra Rhodes, for example) demonstrate that this is at times unnecessary. Seam and hem allowances do not need to be hidden, either; Rhodes often incorporates seam allowances as external decorative elements in her garments, beading and embroidering them. Perhaps the most modern of designers, Madeleine Vionnet used seams as the only decorative element in some of her garments, making them explicit through a variety of techniques such as faggoting⁴ and tucking.

Fabric and seams are the fundamental elements that the fashion designer manipulates to create fashionable forms, affecting silhouette and line. Other elements rest on these foundations.

1. Shaeffer, C. B. 2001, *Couture sewing techniques*, The Taunton Press, Newtown, pp. 49-50

2. Most fabrics used in tailoring have the fabric information woven in the selvedge.

3. For example see Cooklin, G. 1997, *Garment technology for fashion designers*, Blackwell Science, Oxford, p. 10

4. Faggoting is an openwork technique of joining two pieces where a gap is left between the pieces by the thread that joins them, creating a lace-like effect.

COMPONENTS

ALANA CLIFTON-CUNNINGHAM

Historically, female dress was formed as an assemblage of individual garment components¹. These components such as collars, cuffs, pockets, separate sleeves and stomachers were designed and constructed in manner that allowed them to be transient. By detaching them from outer or under garments through a process of pinning² or using simple tying mechanisms, they could be easily interchanged with existing garments, laundered, repaired and redesigned³.

These components were often considered treasured pieces, which could feature ornate embellishments such as embroidery of silk and gold thread, and beading utilising precious and semi-precious stones. The quality of material and the techniques of construction utilised to make each piece was far superior to general clothing and undergarments worn, which with care, allowed these pieces to have an extended shelf-life and be kept as family heirlooms over several generations providing the fashion of the period did not change radically.

During the 15th and 16th centuries, this method of dressing by both men and women allowed a basic garment to be dressed up or down, or transformed through the addition of a set of components or 'robings'. Some garment components were designed to match the main dress or outer garment fabrication, and due to the elaborate detailing that often featured on them, they were almost considered pieces of lavish jewelry. As fashions changed, so did the shape and decorative nature of these components. Stomachers during the Elizabethan period extended below the waistline by fifteen to twenty-five centimeters, making it impossible to sit or bend comfortably, cuffs on the other hand due to the extravagant proportion and weight of the intricate surface embellishments and decorations, could be heavy and cumbersome for the wearer. Pockets for the female wearer were considered a necessity for storing small precious belongings, and even though these were highly ornate, they were concealed beneath layers of petticoats, accessible for the hands through small open seams. Eventually detachable pockets evolved into a small bag referred to as a reticule, which was carried over the wrist or by hand.

Today, the approach to designing fashion for mid and mass markets is extremely different. Clothing is frequently designed as a 'look' or ensemble, with for example components such as pockets, cuffs and collars 'built-in' to the final design. With designers employing a mixtures of fibres and materials, form and shape, and techniques of making, this combination makes the final outcome difficult to launder, repair and reuse at the end of its lifecycle. If one was to reconsider the opportunity to design components of dress for contemporary fashion, could this in turn re-revolutionise how we approach fashion design for the mid and mass mainstream markets and potentially extend the shelf life of garment? For example, designing a jacket with interchangeable pockets, cuffs and collar, could this be a solution to slow down the pace of consumption in fashion and also provide an opportunity for traditional techniques and methods to be re-explored to create innovative outcomes?

1. During the 17th and 18th centuries, dress components referred to as robings played an important role in the embellishment of dress. Sets of 'robings' included an edge trim that featured on the edge of a garment, with matching cuffs or stomacher for the female wearer. These were often used for special social occasions and were worn to indicate societal wealth and standing. (Mackenzie 2004, p. 26)
2. Garment pin holders would be attached to belt from the waist and the pins would be used to fasten the garment components to under and outer garments. For example, decorative sleeves were often produced separately to the main garment making them interchangeable, easy to launder and repair.
3. Due to the value of the fibres and yarns used to create these pieces, a technique known as 'drizzling' was used to recycle these materials allowing them to be reused. Examples include fibres, precious metals and stones were painstakingly unpicked for reuse. (Mackenzie 2004, p. 26)



NOTIONS

LUCY GODOROJA

Today, buttons are a familiar accessory often taken for granted. They are expected to perform a multitude of tasks, from simple fastening to ornate adornment, frequently at the same time. They eagerly take on the pressure of regenerating an outfit, but are generally assumed to be inexpensive and with an expectation to withstand any form of laundering. In reality, they are creatively designed miniature works of art that not only deserve our respect in terms of beauty, but also as hardwearing, utilitarian, practical objects.

The origin of buttons predates the Bronze Age (3500BC – 1100BC), where button-like items were found in excavations in Egypt, Iran and Greece. These appeared as toggle type fastenings that probably were held in place by leather loops. While German tribes from 500BC used small animal bones as fastenings, predating the cufflinks we know today, buttons were not recorded in history until the 12th century, where they were regarded by Middle Age man as something small and worthless.

During the Renaissance there was a move away from utility to luxury, with many buttons being fabricated from solid gold and silver with precious stones. In Baroque times, these precious metal adornments on men's clothing equalled an investment they carried with them, "...and it was believed at the time that someone whose clothes bore twenty gold and sixty silver buttons could never go bankrupt"¹.

The late 17th century saw the beginning of industrial mass production, alongside artisan-crafted pieces. This coincided with buttons and buttonholes finally coming together in 1860 as a way of fastening clothes rather than purely decorative. New materials were appearing from which buttons could be created such as Mother of pearl and "vegetable ivory" which was a by-product of ships' ballast².

Buttons were historically the domain of men, with men utilising two-thirds of the world production of buttons, but, by the mid 19th century, women's fashions also took on a more decorative approach to fastening. In the last quarter of the century, this led to the need to indicate the difference between the sexes – men would button left to right, using their left hand in order to keep their right (weapon) hand free, while women would button right to left.

In the 20th century, new types of garments dictated by fashion, sought out new methods in button production. The natural plastics, namely amber, tortoise shell, horn and shellac, gave way to research in new materials. 1907 saw the first cast phenolic resin in the form of Bakelite®, a product made under heat with phenolic resins, formaldehyde and a catalyst. This product proved to be so successful that it was immediately elevated to the production of imitation jewellery. However, this also led to its demise – in 1942 it was considered that luxury items must give way to essential items³.

Mass production of buttons today includes a variety of known materials. Metal buttons are generally made of zamac, and in the realm of plastics, injection moulded nylon takes position at the lower end of the spectrum, while polyester and casein are at the high end. Buttons are still manufactured from wood, horn, leather, bone, shell, corozo, coconut, as well as passementerie, corded, beaded or embroidered. Small artisan studios produce metal and resin enamelled luxuries. With today's focus on sustainability, button manufacturers are forever looking at ways to approach their production from a greener perspective. Recent achievements include reusing waste material – my favourite has used dyed sawdust in the place of glass enamel on a wooden button to mimic cloisonné⁴.

1. de Buzzaccarini, V. 1990 *Buttons & Sundries*, ZanfiEditori, Modena, Italy, p. 14
2. This corozo or tagua, the dense centre of the nut of South American tropical plants, lay on the wharves of Hamburg from the 1830's before being shipped up river to Bohemian towns inland for the Steinnusse button industry.
3. Although this was meant to be a pause in its production, with the post-war economy and changing technology, it never resurged. Today it is highly collectible.
4. A technique used in the decorative arts, which consists of soldering delicate metal strips bent to the outline of a design to a metal surface. Once the design outlines have been achieved the cellular spaces are filled with enamel paste.



ORNAMENTATION

ALISON GWILT

As a signifier of conspicuous consumption the couture garment is, as Harold Koda states, "...the modern equilibrium between the garment as exquisite aggregate and the burgeoning notions of fashion as a system."¹ For the couturier the couture garment provides the creative freedom from within which to experiment with materials and ornamentation and the couture collections become an exponent of lavish fabrications and resplendent embellishment.

Ornamenting the couture garment can be achieved by many methods. Fabrics may be printed through an amalgamation of techniques including screen-printing, hand painting, embellishment and finish². Typically these techniques are applied by hand and their application method is characteristically traditional. However, new technology has inexorably disturbed the traditions of couture through the use of techniques such as digital printing and laser cutting. Collaborating with local artisans, textile designers and manufacturers the couture house will frequently commission exclusive textile work that is generated from a given theme. In the couture house ateliers printed fabrics can be deconstructed and reassembled to create unique patterning, alternatively print details may become appliqué motifs. In assigning the embroidery work the couture house will carefully detail the application of every thread, bead, and sequin or the couturier may select from the new season's samples, as prepared by specialists such as the house of Lesage. In applying embellishment the materials utilised are vastly diverse; beads are constructed from wood, glass, bone or wood; sequins are made from metal, plastic or gelatine, and threads are spun from silk, linen, metal and cotton. Whatever the method of application the luxury embellishments observed in the couture collections remains sumptuous.

But can a reflection of these typologies encourage creative sustainable responses? As couture garments habitually utilise rare and expensive fabrics their selection remains indicative of luxury high fashion. Fabrics can be complicated to manufacture or require specialist care, however whether couturier or ready-to-wear fashion designer the material components of fashion can be selected to avoid environmental and social harm. While aesthetic evaluations are considered in the design of the fashion garment, sustainable decisions can be applied in the selection of textile fabrications. Materials can be derived from organic, renewable or biodegradable fibres whilst new textile creations can be fashioned using recycled fabrics, manufacturing off-cuts or discarded garments. According to Kate Fletcher we need to change our patterns of producing and begin "to link a fibre with its lifecycle, a material with a user."³ Indeed the lifecycle of the fashion garment itself can be reconsidered if we begin to accept that the function of a fashion garment means different things to different users.

Furthermore, it may be through original ornamentation that materials for sustainability could be creatively investigated. Ornamentation can, for instance, be applied to high wear areas in fashion clothing thereby reducing the necessity of washing. Moreover, the choice of fabrication can be manipulated and enhanced through surface decoration and embellishment, offering limitless creative potentials. Regrettably material selection alone will not radically transform the destructive habits of the fashion industry⁴, but innovation and luxury in fashion need not suffer in the pursuit of better sustainable practices if we begin to accept that these new parameters are an integral part of the brief.

1. Martin, R. and Koda, H. 1995 *Haute Couture*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, p. 11
2. Seeling, C. 1999, *Fashion, the Century of Design*, Konemann, Cologne.
3. Fletcher, K. 2007, *Sustainable Fashion and Textiles - Design Journeys*, Earthscan, UK, p. 4
4. Ibid

THE EXHIBITION

"To create something exceptional, your mindset must be relentlessly focused on the smallest detail."

— Giorgio Armani

Everyday fashion components and elements such as the pocket, the sleeve, or the seam often become eclipsed by the theatrics of the fashion spectacle. Very little time is dedicated to the study of fashion in detail and the intricacies of high fashion become invisible in the catwalk show or fashion photograph. Through an examination of the details in fashion garments we can reconsider traditional methods and techniques of fashion making and lead designers to explore new innovations.

Since modern living has encouraged us to buy mass-produced clothing that is inexpensive and of inferior quality this exhibition aims to examine the potential in creating high quality, individual or limited edition garments through an exploration of the specialised techniques applied in high fashion. In particular this exhibition suggests that through this method of specialisation the lifecycle of a fashion garment may be extended. With end-of-lifecycle in mind the designer and user could further consider the fashion garment as an item that could be repaired, transformed, or designed for disassembly in an effort to become better citizens. As we become increasingly aware of environmental and social issues the fashion industry could be more proactive in becoming a responsible industry, and the fashion designer unquestionably has the opportunity to appoint changes in the way that fashion is created. Nonetheless, we continue to see thousands of tonnes worth of 'fast fashion' dumped in landfill every year. Whilst the exhibition does not attempt to offer all the solutions, it presents a range of creative responses that aim to engage and inspire other fashion designers to devise new creative interplays between contemporary fashion practice and sustainable methods.

ALANA CLIFTON-CUNNINGHAM & ALISON GWILT



OPPOSITE:

Flourish II – Sleeves, 2008

Machine knitted wool, cotton, recycled glass crystals, timber veneer

Dimensions: 410mm x 100mm (pair)

BELOW:

Flourish II – Pocket, 2008

Machine knitted wool, cotton, silk, recycled glass crystals, timber veneer

Dimensions: 235mm x 310mm



Artist statement

This body of work deconstructs the notion of 'garment', through the creation of a set of components inspired by historical references that can be transformed through detachment, allowing the pieces to be reconfigured and transformed through the act of wearing.

'Flourish II' draws inspiration from rich ornate floral tapestry and embroidery of the 18th and 19th century, with each piece 'fully-fashioned' on a domestic knitting machine using Australian wool. 'The pieces' incorporate old and new technology and applications such as hand embroidery, and laser cutting of timber veneer. These materials, techniques and the form used to create the pieces have been considered so that the 'shelf-life' is extended, making them treasured objects.

ALANA CLIFTON-CUNNINGHAM





Flourish II – Stomacher, 2008
Machine knitted wool, cotton, silk, recycled glass crystals, timber veneer
Dimensions: 440mm x 235mm

Artist statement

The textile samples presented are a creative response to the challenge of incorporating sustainable principles within fashion and textile design. Through material selection and applied ornamentation, the textile samples reflect such methods as the use of complementary fibres *pink hemp, hemp sequin* (2008), concepts for disposable fast fashion *white tyvek, print stitch* (2008), and the upcycling of damaged fashion items *grey wool, blue stain* (2008). The samples parallel a range of techniques applied in various levels of the luxury, high fashion sector. However, these fragments are intended to provoke new approaches and ideas in the design and creation of sustainable fashion products.

ALISON GWILT



grey wool, blue stain, 2008
Wool / cashmere blend, ink, silk, plastic
290mm x 370mm



ABOVE:

white tyvek, print stitch, 2008

Tyvek, aqueous ink, cotton, aqueous varnish
290mm x 370mm

OPPOSITE:

pink hemp, hemp sequin, 2008

Hemp / silk blend, natural dye, cotton
290mm x 370mm

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Selvedge:

- Burnham, D.K. 1973 *Cut my cote*, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto
Kirke, B. 1998 *Madeleine Vionnet*, Chronicle Books, San Francisco
Rhodes, Z. and Knight, A. 1984 *The art of Zandra Rhodes*, Cape, London

Components:

- Harris, J. 2004 *5000 years of textiles*, The British Museum Press, United Kingdom
Laver, J. 1982 *Costume and fashion: a concise history*, Oxford University Press, New York
Mackenzie, A. 2004 *Buttons and trimmings*, The National Trust Enterprises Limited, United Kingdom
Mackenzie, A. 2004 *Embroideries*, The National Trust Enterprises Limited, United Kingdom
Rothstein, N. (ed) 1992 *Four hundred years of fashion*, V & A publications, London
Trilling, J. 2001 *The language of ornamentation*, Thames and Hudson, United Kingdom

Notions:

- Davidov, C. 1988 *The Bakelite jewellery book*, Abbeville Press, New York
Hughes, E. 1981 *The big book of buttons*, New Leaf Publishers, Sedgwick, Maine

Ornamentation:

- Wilcox, C. 2007 *The golden age of couture: Paris and London 1947-57* V & A publications, London

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the following people for their support:

Aanya Roennfeldt, DAB LAB Research Gallery
Jim Griffiths and Niki Gasper, DAB marketing and communications unit
Professor Kees Dorst, Associate Dean Research, Faculty of DAB
Professor Desley Luscombe, Dean, Faculty of DAB
Associate Professor Douglas Tomkin, Head, School of Design
Glynis Jones, Curator, Decorative Arts and Design, Powerhouse Museum
Lucy Godoroja, Director, All Buttons Great and Small
Timo Rissanen, Phd Candidate, Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building, UTS
The UTS Fashion and Textile team; Eric Hagen, Val Horridge, Dr Vicki Karaminas and Milena Ratkovic
Wojciech Wawrzyniak, Digital Workshop Manager, UTS

Alison Gwilt would like to thank:

Ian Gwilt, Petroula Boutsikakis (DuPont Australia), Cecilia Heffer and Phil Inwood

Alana Clifton-Cunningham would like to thank:

David Cunningham, Colin, Faye and Jodie Clifton