

SOMA POIESIS:

*An exploration of the redirective potential of  
somatic experiences in fashion*

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## CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, Todd Robinson declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Design at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

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## ABSTRACT

Representational practices play a significant role in fashion. At a general level they depict and display fashionable bodies. Fashion images foreground aesthetic practices showing bodies wearing a variety garment styles, understood with reference to brand or designer, or visual properties such as form and silhouette as well as novel combinations of surface characteristics such as colour, image, pattern and texture.

These images circulate within the global fashion system providing an array of fashionable opportunities for consumers but also design possibilities in the form of styles, materials, themes and colours as well as novel garment features that represent an emergent creative context for fashion design.

Feminist and gendered perspectives claim that fashion images negatively impact women through the propagation of narrowly defined body aesthetics. These arguments contend fashion images place inordinate emphasis on how one's body appears to others and generates a distance between observers of the image and those depicted. Such a view also conceives images as ideological mediums through which recognizable messages are conveyed and that fashion itself is a symbolic system.

While this highlights the impact of fashion images, more recently there has been a focus on understanding fashion beyond a visual phenomenon by considering the interaction between bodies and garments in terms of the body's comportment and movements in space. This foregrounds living bodies and material garments in specific acts of wearing.

These new perspectives are informed by gendered concepts of wearing and renewed interest in the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and reminds us fashion cannot be understood without reference to somatic experience. A focus on the experiencing body shifts emphasis from bodies as passive objects of the gaze to something experienced at a first person somatic level. This also highlights the potential of corporeal experience to enhance rather than decrease the potential benefits to women as well as other groups that participate in fashion.

This research is concerned with an exploration of the significance of embodiment in fashion. My position moves beyond recovery of the somatic body, to consider the re-directive opportunities embedded within presentational and representational practices of fashion.

Re-directive practices are oriented towards the processes and mechanism of the way practices change. The practices of concern to this enquiry are fashion design as well as those representational practices of fashion, with a particular focus on moving image practices. This enquiry provides re-directional resources in the form of an observational framework, an enriching vocabulary, garments and films that support new perspectives of value to fashion practitioners.

This thesis considers in what way these resources are tied to the question of how corporeal representation can offset forms of corporeal detachment realized by representational practices germane to fashion. Drawing on the field of Sensory

Ethnography, I develop of a visual methodology using moving images to foreground tactile, kinaesthetic and interoceptive aspects of dress while at the same time supporting an empathic mode of fashion design practice.

The enquiry employed an iterative process encompassing making garments and their use in *sartorial sessions*. This involved participatory activities where individuals wear purpose-designed fashion garments in combination with sensory-tactile materials such as water, sand and seeds. These sessions generated responses such as bodily movements, which are then subject to examination and exploration.

This written thesis reflects upon my readings of the body and its movements in these sessions. It draws on my experiences as both a maker and wearer of fashion. These movements are examined from the perspective of a theoretical framework drawn from corporeal phenomenology. The practical work invites viewers to identify directly with moving images through representations of sensorial experience of those depicted on screen.

Thus, the significance of this research emerges from examination of the relationship between fashion and embodiment and the re-directive potential stemming from representations of sartorial experience grounded in the shared-ness of sensorial experience.



## INTRODUCTION

*On the need to address the embodied experience of being dressed*

This research acknowledges sartorial life is an unfolding exchange between the body and self. As theorist of the dressed body Joanne Entwistle points out ‘the experience of dress is a subjective act of attending to one’s body and making the body an object of consciousness and is also an act of attention with the body ’ (2015, pp. 30-31). This reflects on the way we deploy our bodies expressively towards a world we share with others and a way in which may self-reflexively attend to our garments and bodies in different ways.

Being dressed emerges as part of an ongoing and continuous reciprocal relation between our corporeal movements and the garments we wear. *Being dressed* in this formulation are first person somatic experiences of wearing clothing within a world we share with others. It is also the case that we can be more or less conscious of our bodies depending on the situation we are in. In this respect consciousness of our bodies when we are dressed is highly variable, although overall our bodily awareness tends to *be primarily a part of our background awareness*.

This perspective acknowledges how we experience, understand and use our bodies is conditioned by our situated-ness (Entwistle, 2015) within social and cultural contexts that we share with others. These provide a range of sartorial possibilities as appropriate or inappropriate, permissible or impermissible, desirable or not. In this sense the dressed body can be viewed as a product of structuring influences that constrain what can be done with or to the body.

This reflects structuralist and post-structuralist accounts of the way in which the body is a product of discourses and institutions, as well as particular social and cultural practices, societal norms and conventions. These perspectives follow in the wake of work by Mauss (1973) and Douglas (1973) who argued the body is socially constrained to act and behave in particular ways, while Michel Foucault's historical studies of institutions and practices showed how various techniques of social control and discipline are instigated (Foucault 1975, 1977, 1980).

For example, the gendered nature of dressing is one obvious example of the way in which implicit norms regulate appropriate ways of dressing for biological sexes. Individuals make dress choices that reflect these gender binaries of male and female. Yet the emergence of 'gender-neutral' or 'gender-fluid' dressing in fashion reflects attitudinal shifts in the way in which gender is understood and practiced while at the same time illustrates the constructedness and relative fluidity of such distinctions.

These perspectives have provided valuable perspectives of the way social, political, economic and sexual forces act upon and through the body and thus account for cultural and historical variations in dress. Such perspectives consider the body a matrix of these power relations and articulate how these forces are expressed at the level of the body. Yet such perspectives do not sufficiently account for how these forces actually work to constrain possibilities of dress, or what mechanisms link experiences of body with such forces, or what this might look like in practice. Such theories also fail to provide human

beings agency to adopt new practices, resist or alter habituated routines in such a way to elaborate novel and varied performances of sartorial practice.

A number of theorists have challenged post-structuralist theories of the body arguing that the emphasis on discourse, signs and structures does not sufficiently account for the lived dimension of embodied existence. Nor does it sufficiently account for forms of resistance, creativity and change (Crossley 1995; Csordas 1993). In other words, these frameworks are divorced from the lived experiences of wearing garments.

The small number of theorists to focus specifically on the body in fashion articulate a position that acknowledges the socially constructed nature of the body while at the same time, acknowledge the lived body in terms of embodied participation in practices, as well as the somatically experienced dimension of fashion and dress (Candy 2005; Entwistle 2000, 2015; Negrin 2012a, 2012b, 2016; Sweetman 2001; Woodward 2007).

The work of Joanne Entwistle in particular has been influential in foregrounding practices ‘directed to the body and by the body’ that encompass ways of being dressed (2015, p. 39). This encompasses ways of experiencing and understanding the self *as dressed*. She has shown how the garments we wear inform experiences of the body, such as the experience of walking in high heels; the experience of breathing and moving whilst wearing restrictive clothing (2015); as well as ways of acting and behaviour in corporate environments (1997).

These perspectives draw attention to the relationship between structuring forces working on and through the body, as well as the way the body responds to such forces at the level of individual bodies and its actions. Entwistle's work develops a theoretical position that acknowledges limitations of post-structuralist frameworks while aiming to integrate the lived experiences of the body with reference to corporeal phenomenology.

Fashion theorist Lewellyn Negrin has argued for a move beyond conceptions of fashion understood as primarily visual, expressive and aesthetic practice. She calls for acknowledgement of the somatically experienced nature of fashion and dress. Her perspective draws on the corporeal phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty as well as critical engagement with feminist philosophy, such as the work of Iris Marion Young who critically engages with questions of embodiment and agency for women (2005) as well as fashion and its representational practices (1994).

Young describes the dominant way women participate in fashion as emphasizing the body as an object for a public world to admire or judge. She draws upon feminist philosophy to argue this phenomenon internalizes a gaze that reflects a masculine way of looking, evaluating and assessing the image of a woman as an object of specifically heterosexual male desire (Mulvey 2009). By acknowledging the tactile experience associated with wearing clothing Young argues there is a possibility of an investment in clothing that goes beyond dressing for an other.

Negrin's position is a critical one that highlights an over-emphasis of the visual that is closely associated with fashion's representational practices depicting women through the

lens of narrowly defined body aesthetics, and constrains women's fuller participation in the world and fashion. According to this perspective the dominant way of participating in fashion for women is one that emphasizes the body as a passive object. She contends an increased emphasis upon first person experiences of dress, in relation to haptic and somatic experiences of dressing, as well as a focus on the bodies' comportment in space, promises the possibility of an investment in clothing that goes beyond dressing for an other (Negrin 2016).

Negrin's focus on the experiencing body intersects with discourse on fashion as visual art (Negrin 2012a, 2012b) as well as the post-modern perspectives that suggest fashion possesses an emancipatory potential via the capacity to construct one's image and self-identity through one's dress choices (Negrin 2008, 2010). She views post-modern perspectives that reject association to the 'biological' or 'natural' body with some scepticism. She writes:

While postmodern theorists of fashion have revealed the untenability of the notion of the 'natural' body as a criterion by which to assess the rationality of particular modes of dress, their alternative definition of liberatory dress is equally limiting insofar as it fails to question the privileging of the cult of appearance over all other sources of identity formation which has become a hallmark of postmodern culture (2010, p. 100).

Her advocacy for the somatically experienced body with reference to the corporeal phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty resonates with recent materialist perspectives that

consider the ‘corporeal’ a substance where cultural systems are mediated (Bolt 2013) .

This acknowledges the body is not only a product of abstract cultural codes but a fleshy being who actively participates in social and cultural life. (2016, p. 121).

The advantage of phenomenological perspectives is their capacity to integrate the structuring role of discourses, norms, conventions, practices, systems and institutions we interact with, while admitting actual experiences of the body. The corporeal phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty provides an insightful perspective that indicates via our immersion and dynamic interaction in the world that we *embody* the wide range of cultural, social skills and practical skills that make us human.

Merleau-Ponty has elaborated the way we acquire practical and cultural skills is through embodied participation with the world and existence of a ‘body schema’ (2002, p. 164). The body schema confers upon the body a spatiality of situation and orients us towards the successful realisation of practical tasks we may be disposed towards. The ability to learn and become accustomed to new things, situations and experiences involves changes to this corporeal schema. These experiences are integrated into our bodies as fine embodied dispositions in such a way that we are able to respond to the wide variety of events and situations without conscious thought.

The application of frameworks from corporeal phenomenology emphasise the body as an active agent immersed in practices. This signals a move away from analyses of cultural representations of the body. Negrin frames this as a shift from ‘the body as image’ to the ‘felt body’ (2016, p. 121). A shift towards the somatic experiences of the body

foregrounds the concrete practices of dress in terms of the body's interaction with garments in specific acts of wearing.

*Towards a design practice-oriented ethnographic approach for exploring the embodied experience of being dressed.*

While calls for embodied perspectives in fashion are an important contribution to advancing the field these tend to be presented as arguments for greater acknowledgement of the body in fashion and discussion of particular frameworks or perspectives by which the body can be addressed. Despite the prevalence of the term 'body' in discourse surrounding fashion, surprisingly little research has been devoted to the frameworks, research tools and methods that would enable fine grained and detailed exploration of the embodied and sensory dimension of fashion.

An objective of this research has been to develop a framework, research tools and methods that enable investigation of the experiential and non-verbal dimension of sartorial experience.

The challenge confronting researchers pursuing this kind of question is – how to investigate what is lived as a part of embodied and often unreflective activity? Despite proponents of practice-based research arguing its methods recognise the situated-ness of practice and embodied activity, approaches have tended towards critical reflection on the iterative dimension of creative work or approaches directed at the theoretical level.



An important element of this research was the development of an appropriate method for exploring somatic experiences of fashion that draws on a fashion design perspective entailing the conception and creation of fashion garments that correlate with *wearing*. Practitioners of fashion can benefit from this perspective by envisaging new ways in which fashion design can transcend the specification of a ‘look’ but rather conceive garments in terms of the potentialities that arise from attentiveness to the way fashion is a temporal, materially inflected and embodied practice.

A key aspect of this study is the development of a series of fashion garments as tactile provocations to *generate* rich visual data for exploration. In doing so I draw upon a distinct research approach – *Design Probes* – integrating this approach with the approaches adopted from the field of *Sensory Ethnography*.

*Design probes* were originated by Gaver, Dunne & Pascenti (1999) and utilised ambiguity to elicit responses from participants. They reconceptualised the designed objects from functional things to objects capable of catalysing novel perspectives within participatory research settings. Design Probes engage participants in activities to produce data for capture and qualitative interpretation. In their original iterations, the emphasis was on inspirational data and creative thinking rather than objectivity. Following this intent, I designed a series of tactile garments to act as provocations and were designed to be *open and ambiguous* to elicit a range of responses.

While Design Probes have been mobilized within Human-Computer Interaction research in particularly novel and wearable forms (Wilde & Andersen, 2009) they are less

prevalent in fashion research, which arguably have been slower to address the embodied and sensory aspects of dress. Design Probes emerged in relation to a ‘critical turn’ in design in the mid 1990s. Critical design explicitly questioned the underlying assumptions of design practice and industry, in relation to the development of electronic products (Dunne, 1990). This focus has since expanded to encompass a range of disciplines, concerns and practitioners embracing the participatory, critical and speculative. Di Salvo identifies the underlying motivation as “Making visible and known the complex situations of contemporary society, so that people might take action on those situations” (2009, p. 49).

Following these precedents, the garments created for this research bring into view phenomena we would not normally be aware of. Mike Michael suggests probes create ‘unexpected relationalities’ that ‘de-sign’ or ‘ambiguate’ the conventional significations of the object (2012, p. 178). The garments produced challenge conventionally held meanings of fashion garments and open up new ways of understanding sartorial practices. They support a critical questioning of the expected relationships in which they are held.

Garments are largely understood as commodities, functioning as signs and symbols within a capitalist system. The making and use of these garments in the research context has enabled and instantiates new ways to understand the fashion garments and new ways to understand the body in fashion. It is worth pointing out these research garments are not oriented towards enlarging the available repertoire of creative opportunities for designers through novel combinations of visual elements, which is an implicit orientation

for designers (Eckert & Stacey 2001; Sinha 2002) or new methods of practice, but rather, offers resources that cultivate and enhance corporeal attunement in fashion.

As discussed, the framework in which probes have been most commonly employed is associated with critical design, which sought to offer a methodology to gain insight into complex design issues. This research is distinguished through its use of *redirection* and *redirective practice* (Fry 2007). Redirective approaches are associated with practice-theoretical perspectives and refer to frameworks and forms of practical action that change to the way practices are enacted to effect social change (Spinoso, Flores & Dreyfus 1999).

The emphasis of redirection is the multiplication of practice transformations and the development of transformational resources that support practice change. Redirective practice on its own is not sufficient to generate shifts in the orientation of practice. They require re-directional resources that enable practices to be understood and enacted in different ways.

This research produces transformative resources in the form of an approach drawn from Sensory Ethnography (Pink 2009) which is a field of research concerned precisely with such fine grained and detailed studies of embodied and sensory experiences that are the focus of this study.

*Sensory Ethnography* is a field of practice and enquiry that acknowledges the potential for reflexively orienting one's capacity for felt experience towards the meaning of those felt experiences in order to assist modes of empathic understanding. An emphasis on the

exploration of embodied sensations and experiences associated with Sensory Ethnography offers the potential to become reflexively oriented towards one's own as well as others' sensory capacities. In this sense the approach to this enquiry acknowledges the 'self-conscious and reflexive' use of a researchers' sensory capacities as a critical and strategic act (Pink 2009, p. 50).

*Sensory Ethnography* encompasses a body of literature spanning theoretical, methodological and practical material. Sensory Ethnography is defined as a 'critical methodology' that embraces a 'reflexive and experiential process through which understanding, knowing and (academic) knowledge are produced' (Pink 2009, p. 3) . In this research, Sensory Ethnographic resources have provided a sensitizing lens and critical framework from which to address the body as it is experienced in fashion.

The objective of Sensory Ethnography is to access forms of understanding and knowing that resist techniques of observation and interviewing associated with classic ethnographic practice. It foregrounds the role of the senses and perception in human understanding and points towards what is *implicit and background* in our experiences as a significant aspect of what makes particular experiences meaningful for individuals. Sensory Ethnography collapses distinctions between a sensing body and a reasoning mind.

Pink characterises Sensory Ethnography *as a practice* in the following way:

Doing Sensory Ethnography is a series of conceptual and practical steps that allow the researcher to rethink both established and new participatory and

collaborative ethnographic research techniques in terms of sensory perception, categories, meanings and values, ways of knowing and practices. It involves the researcher self-consciously and reflexively attending to the senses throughout the research process, that is during the planning, reviewing, fieldwork, analysis and representational processes of a project (2009, p. 1).

Sensory Ethnography is a qualitative research practice that involves participatory research emphasising the situatedness of human experience by attending to issues of sensory perception and multi-sensory experience. As a methodological stance, it acknowledges the inter-relationships between forms of knowing, perception and sensory experience as well as how material things and others are perceived and experienced as a part of this knowing.

An important component in Sensory Ethnography is the notion of *emplacement*.

Emplacement highlights the embodied multi-sensorial experiences *in context*. Pink highlights the importance of the environment in the following way:

emplaced ethnography attends to the question of experience by accounting for the relationships between bodies, minds, and the materiality and sensoriality of the environment (Pink 2009, p. 25).

Emplacement recognises the embodied nature of a research context and how meaning emerges from the situated-experiences and activities of both the participants and the researcher. An important driver underlying Sensory Ethnography is recognition of the

*sensing* and *active* body, engaged in ongoing and reciprocal relations with others and with material things.

Emplacement points towards the situated and emergent nature of *knowing in practice*.

Knowing according to Wenger is 'located in specific practices, where it arises out of specific competencies and an experience of meaning' (Wenger 1998, p. 142). This is an important basis upon which to understand the researchers' encounter with the research context, the research participants and research material that is produced.

My encounter as researcher with the research context encompasses theoretical engagement and practical activities. These engagements and what they mean are informed by the disciplinary orientation of *my own emplacement* in fashion as both a maker and wearer of fashion. Thus, the framing of this study, the research design and the encounter with the research material generated by the methodology are inextricably linked to the disciplinary shaped ways I perceive, experience and understand the corporeal experiences of my own body, as my body is involved in fashion, as well as the bodies of others that do the same. I reflexively and self-consciously utilize these disciplinary ways of knowing to draw out the significance of distinctive movements enacted by bodies that participated in this research, against a background of my own strongly felt, embodied historical experiences in fashion.

Sensory Ethnography uses literature as a *sensitizing resource*. I have become sensitized to the embodied and sensory experiences through my engagement with this field and some of its texts, which address methodological approaches by which to explore and consider the role of the sensorial in our experience. My analysis is also sensitized by texts drawn

from a tradition of corporeal phenomenology including Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962; 1969), Samuel Todes (2001), Hubert Dreyfus (2002a; 2002b), Drew Leder (1990) and Carrie Noland (2007) . A distinguishing feature of these texts are insightful accounts of the body that show it to be something that is accessible to first-person experience, but in ways that transcend an explicit thematic awareness (Wrathall, 2009). This in part motivates the current study to articulate in a fuller, richer way the modalities by which the body is experienced and can be understood and explored in the context of fashion.

An important strand of sensory ethnographic literature is to consider projects that attend to the world in relation to sensory categories. For example, approaches may focus upon particular sensory modalities such as sight, touch, taste, smell or sound. Other approaches may focus on inter-relationships between specific sense modalities. The specific focus of a research enquiry will determine the particular sensory framing or focus. The specific focus on this research is the bodies' visceral and embodied sensations, such as our experiences of epidermal contact and the sensation of garments against the skin, and the experiences of our clothed bodies moving in and through space. It is also concerned with how we observe and understand the movements and sensations of our own bodies' and the bodies of others through a way of seeing that incorporates the tactile and kinaesthetic experiences of the body.

Moreover, Sensory Ethnography's emphasis on emplacement foregrounds the situatedness that results from embodied perception and immersion in contexts of activity whereby:

perceptual systems not only overlap in their functions, but are also subsumed under a total system of bodily orientation ... Looking, listening, and touching, therefore, are not separate activities, they are just different facets of the same activity: that of the whole organism in its environment (Ingold 2000, p. 261).

This draws attention to the relationship of human beings to their environments they experience *through movement*. A sensory ethnographic perspective offers an important opportunity to explore the significance of the body's movements in space and relation to material things.

Sensory Ethnography has examined practices drawing key insights from the dynamic of those practices. For example sensory informed studies have addressed movement based activities such as walking (Pink 2007), participation and experiences of skill acquisition and ways of looking (Grasseni 2004), body based skilled activities such as dancing (Hahn 2006) and martial arts (Downey 2005), dynamically oriented equipmental practices such as cycling (Spinney 2006) and or craft based practices with embodied interaction with materials (O'Connor 2005). These studies foreground the dynamic and materially inflected experiencing body in the midst of sensory experiences that transpire at the level of the body.

The acknowledgement of movement in these studies draws attention to the body as a site of embodied sensations that emerged from epidermal contact with material things that we interact with through the *tactile system* of the skin and hands and *kinaesthetic* experience of our bodies in movement. For example practices that foreground the bodily



sensations of sports (Allen-Collinson & Hockey 2011), corporeal awkwardness and dysfunction when learning new skills (Leder 1990) or pleasurable feelings of flow and effortless coordination when doing things we are skilled at (Csikszentmihalyi 1996) have been the subject of sensory focused studies.

It is pertinent to consider the nature of these as somatic or felt experiences. They transpire at the level of the body. Phenomenological informed studies of sport and leisure have similarly highlighted the significance of the kinaesthetic sensations associated with physical activity and bodily experience in skill-based activities. A key example of this approach is Stephanie Marchant's (2011) investigation of underwater diving, which explores the viscerally felt sensations of the body when immersed in an aquatic environment.

The challenge of a study like this is to access what are *background* and difficult to articulate somatic sensations such as the kinaesthetic sensations experienced proprioceptively at the level of the body. Marchant's study utilized digital video to record dive sequences and to explore these with participants. She refers to the material produced as "embodied, sensuous and pre-reflective data" (2011 p.62). The significant advantage of this sensory ethnographic approach is that it can bring to the fore sensorial experience that would not normally be 'consciously reflected upon and given meaning in written and verbal accounts' (Marchant, 2011 p.61).

The specific focus on somatic experiences that reside in the background is also a significant challenge for this study. This challenge is both practical and methodological.

It is a considerable obstacle to capture sartorial movements that are embedded in unfolding flows of human action. It is also a challenge to reflect upon these as they are experienced as part of an undifferentiated pre-reflective background of embodied sensation. It is also the case somatic experience is experienced at the level of the body and is largely invisible others in the vast majority of day-to-day, face-to-face encounters with others.

With regard to the documentation of relevant phenomena I draw upon precedents within Sensory Ethnography. Sensory ethnographic practice embraces digital and audio-visual technologies. Visual methods offer a means by which embodied material can be *captured, documented and interpreted*. For example, digital-video-graphic approaches associated with Sensory Ethnography are viewed by a number of authors as providing significant opportunities and flexibility to examine the non-verbal or tacit aspects of practice (Marchant 2011; Pink 2007, 2009). These aspects include movements, gesture, performed skills, interactions with material, equipment and behaviour.

In my study, I similarly used digital video to capture, document and explore sartorial movements, bodily gestures with a focus upon very close readings of these movements, in order to examine the interaction of the body and the garment as an unfolding flow of embodied movement.

While sensory ethnographic practice is concerned with the interpretation of sensory material as a means of accessing and exploring sensory knowledge it is also concerned

with the *communication* and *representation* of sensory knowledge. This is an important aspect for this research as it pertains directly to the re-directive ambitions of this project.

A sensory perspective can find form in the powerful and affective representations of sensory experience. Pink (2009) draws on a number of practitioners and theorists who have explored the affecting richness of moving images to communicate ethnographic knowledge. These include MacDougall's (2005) use of moving images to communicate ethnographic knowledge through filmic and non-text based media as well as Laura Marks' (2000) exploration of examples of 'haptic' cinema to transcend gaps in cultural understanding. Pink points out 'reflexive and body-conscious' uses of this sensory knowing in working with visual media is capable of evoking 'empathetic and intercultural understandings' in others (Pink 2009, p. 50).

This has significant implications for use of digital visual media as a tool *to represent* and *evoke* sensory experiences *in others*, whereby moving images can be deployed as re-directive resources to cultivate a reflexive and self-conscious *attending* to one's own 'sensory subjectivities' (Pink 2009, p. 50). This offers the potential to orient, direct or persuade others towards perspectives, activities or practices that cannot be achieved through textual approaches alone.

The investigation of somatic experiences in fashion carries significant advantage over what have been persuasive *arguments for* acknowledgement of the body in fashion, to *attune* others to what are potentially new ways to understand, participate and experience what it is to be dressed. The potential emerges from an engagement with a series of

moving image works foregrounding the sartorial body in the midst of sensory experience complemented by observational frameworks, a new vocabulary and visual methodology, all of which also serve as a sensitizing resource to one's own sensory capacities.

When we encounter moving images, they are perceived and experienced at the level of the body. As such they offer the opportunity to sensitize observers through the medium of one's own somatically experienced body. In doing so the films cultivate the potentiality of a mode of empathic attunement in fashion, based in the shared-ness of sensorial experience and the identification of the sensorial experiences of an other.

The videos foreground sartorial experiencing bodies and orient towards the embodied and sensory capacities of those that encounter them. As re-directive resources the videos show bodies in the midst of an ongoing process of reciprocal exchange with the world, which is experienced sensually at the level of the body. The ambition of this approach is to reorient designers, educators and students of fashion towards a somatically experienced dimension of wearing clothing as a common ground of fashion practice, and to counter dominant representational conventions of fashion and conspicuousness of the 'posed body' (Barthes 1981; McDowell 2017).

The video works are disseminated as an immersive video installation. In this respect they require a form of embodied spectatorship whereby a viewer encounters the images, standing upright, as life size correlations of their own body. The videos can also be understood as a form of critical engagement with the representational practices of fashion.

The primary objective of this research then, is to move beyond advocacy for the lived body in fashion to the development of a set of re-directive methodological and practical resources that foreground the *somatically felt* experiences of fashion *in practice*. In contrast, this enquiry is focused upon the creation of *redirective* resources (Fry 2007) that support makers and wearers of fashion becoming sensitized to what is predominantly a background concern in the field.

### *Readings of sartorial movements*

This thesis is presented in six chapters including the introduction and conclusion. The *Introduction* and *Chapter 1* should be read in close conjunction as they detail the primary methodological orientation of the research. *Chapter 2-6* report on key findings of the thesis. A *Conclusion* presents the key findings in three sections as well as providing opportunities for future research. Chapter 2-6 reflects upon distinctive types of movements made by participants as well as the specific situations in which they emerge, to identify a number of corporeal orientations that are important in understanding a dynamic of the dressed body. It makes use of the video documentation of these movements. The video content is referred to as video still compilations embedded in the body of this text or alternatively on a USB as individual files that are included with the thesis package.

In *Chapter 1 Provocations, sartorial sessions, digital investigation: Key elements of a research approach for exploring somatic experiences in fashion* I provide a description of the methods

used in this practice-oriented enquiry. The chapter articulates the key practical components that were used to *elicit* and *generate* sensory material as well as methods for the *documentation* and *examination* of this material.

I discuss the design and use of fashion garments as ‘probes’ as well as the use of sensory materials, such as water, sand and seeds in concert with probes. I detail the conception of a participatory research context referred to as ‘sartorial sessions’ and their theoretical underpinnings. I also discuss the invitation of participants, the use of digital media to capture sartorial activities that emerged and my approach examining those movements.

This provides information on how the research was conducted, data produced, captured, examined and analysed. This establishes a background practical context for close engagement with the research material as discussed in the chapters that follow.

In *Chapter 2 Exploring sartorial vitality* I address the video works a reader/observer will encounter in relation to the practice component. I detail how the video works have been produced, how the original footage was examined, and how they are conceived to draw out and emphasize what is specific instances of body-garment interaction from a background of mundane and largely undifferentiated chains of human movements.

I do this with reference to *vitality affects*, a concept proposed by developmental psychologist Daniel Stern (2010; 1985). Vitality affects are associated with a pre-reflective background of undifferentiated kinaesthetic sensation. Stern argues that these

affects can become available to us through a variety of methods including representational and audio-visual media.

The chapter foregrounds sartorial bodies as embedded within a background of micro-corporeal movements not generally available to unmediated perception. This introduces a way of observing the body through a *micro-corporeal* lens as well as foregrounding the focus upon the movements of the body.

In this respect I consider the role of *digital media* in revealing and then amplifying these background movements so they can become thematized and available for others. I contextualize this approach with reference to works by video artist Bill Viola, who similarly is renowned for image manipulation to excavate the background corporeity underlying human affect.

Importantly, I address how the video outcomes of this research are not presented as unmodified video footage but rather highly crafted *sensory works*, conceived, produced and oriented as re-directive resources towards the sensorial capacities of observers. The works are channelled through neurological mechanisms that realise ‘embodied simulation’ (Gallese 2005); to offer affective and evocative experiences via sensory correspondences between sartorial bodies depicted on screen and the bodies of observers.

*Chapter 3 Chiasmic movements* serves to sensitize readers and observers to a way of observing and interpreting the movements of the body that I utilised in my interpretation of the video material. The chapter introduces a framework to account for the way in

which movements of the body are indicative of a number of corporeal modalities encompassing dialectical relations between self, body, garment, world and others. This chapter is oriented towards the movements of the body via a sensitizing lens drawn from theoretical accounts of the dressed body (Entwistle 2000, 2015) which I supplement with theoretical perspective from corporeal phenomenology.

The chapter foregrounds the reciprocal relationship between the body and the garment through the lens of Merleau-Ponty's concept of the 'Chiasm' (1969) while additional theoretical explanation is drawn from accounts of body-equipment interaction in the *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962).

I undertake close readings of the movements enacted by participants as well as reflections upon my own sartorial experiences, to draw out what is significant about these movements in the context of fashion. I develop a perspective on the sartorial body as a highly variable sensory and chiasmic structure. What are conventionally understood as distinct categories of sight and touch, subject and object, as well as body and garment are observed and understood to be closely intertwined and interlaced with one another.

The discussion points towards the sartorial body as something that while being available to others as visual phenomena it is also something that is *tangible for itself*. These two modes of engagement with the body intersect. While we can self-reflexively touch our bodies, that touch may be inscribed with the visual sense of how we appear to others. It is also observed that when dressed we are both touched by the garments we wear and at the same time, touch them. This chapter contributes to an emergent framework whereby



specific readings of the body can be linked to sensory-perceptual modalities. This framework is further developed through each of the chapters and realised in the conclusion of this thesis.

This approach to reporting on the findings is to use the interaction between observation and description and theoretical reflection. In the text, theoretical material illuminates what was observed in the sartorial sessions while observations illuminate relevant theoretical material. Moreover, the application and use of theory in concert with observation serves to sensitize readings of particular aspects of bodily movement that emerged in the research. This approach is used in *Chapter 2-6* of the thesis. There is an additional sensitizing lens that involves my personal and disciplinary background as a designer and wearer of garments. This perspective is interwoven through the chapters. It includes reflections upon my own sartorial experiences that I invite readers to identify with through reflections upon their own histories of wearing clothing.

*Chapter 4 Attuning movements* focuses discussion on the phenomenon of *adaption* and adaptive movements that were observed in the interaction between the body and garments in the sartorial sessions. These are examined through the lens of Samuel Todes concept of *Poise* (2001) and Merleau-Ponty's notion of 'maximal grip', both of which address the body's propensity to seek and maintain a felt sense of equilibrium in our interactions with things and others.

Distinctive movements were observed as micro-corporeal and incremental bodily adaptations seeking a sense of equilibrium with the situation participants are immersed in.

These adaptive movements are emblematic of bodies' continuous and ongoing process of reciprocal exchange with the world. The movements show the concrete processes by which the bodies are mediated by cultural, social and environmental forces that act upon it. This chapter foregrounds the sartorial body in terms of emergence and process.

*Chapter 5 Expressive gesture* approaches the expressive dimension of fashion through analysis and discussion of gestural movements that participants enacted within the sartorial sessions. What initially appeared as uncomplicated instances of communicative or expressive gesture, when subject to close consideration, produced significantly different ways expression can be understood in the context of fashion.

This discussion draws on movement and dance theorists Rudolf Laban (1980) and Carrie Noland (2010) to articulate the inter-relationship between externally visible movements and somatically experienced sensations of those movements, with reference to the somatically experienced aspect of expressive movement. This chapter furnishes the possibility that there are opportunities for investments in fashion that go beyond dressing primarily for (the visual experience of) oneself or an other. In addition, it provides an important theoretical scaffold that connects what are observable movements of the body to somatic sensations associated with them.

*Chapter 6 Movement as body style* discusses an emergent dynamic paradigm to understand the dressed body. *Body styles* are distinctive ways of movement demonstrated by each of the participants. These movements are discussed in relation to the notion of body comportment from feminist philosophy (Young 2005) and contemporary applications of

Martin Heidegger's existential phenomenology (Spinosa, Flores & Dreyfus 1999) that tie body comportment to conditions affecting the agency of women.

In this sense body styles are tied to actual consequences; political, ethical as well as economic opportunities associated with particular genders. I propose body style as a dynamic alternative to dominant semiotic perspectives of fashion which foreground static bodies and deny wearers much in the way of agency. In this respect I raise the issue of the extent to which individuals can become attuned to their own *body style* and others, and can realize opportunities to exploit variations in our performances of movement in order to develop new ways of comportment.

The thesis concludes by drawing out the significant contributions of this research: the generation of an observational framework; the development of a vocabulary to understand and orient ways of participating, making, and investigating fashion; and the synthesis of a methodological approach to support the exploration of the somatic experiences in fashion.

The ambitions of this thesis revolve around ethnographic work addressing the somatic experiences in fashion and more strategic and self-conscious objectives that pertain to the way in which variations in the way we experience our bodies in fashion generates potential to renew the way fashion is practiced, represented and understood. In this respect the ambition is a practical one. It is aimed at drawing attention to what are significantly background concerns in fashion, as such they can become more central to fashion practice.

## CHAPTER 1

*Provocations, sartorial sessions, digital investigation: key elements of a research approach for exploring somatic experiences in fashion*

Somatic experiences are embedded in the unfolding flow of everyday life. Specific methods are required to *elicit* or *generate* sensory material for investigation and others to *document* and *examine* this material.

Key considerations in the development of this approach include:

1. *Elicitation: Purpose made fashion garments for both men and women.*
2. *Elicitation: Use of materials such as sand, water and seeds for use as sensory-tactile provocations or elicitation devices.*
3. *Elicitation: Design of participatory sessions to provide a context for sartorial activities to take place.*
4. *Elicitation: The inclusion of participants.*
5. *Visual documentation: Capture of sartorial movement.*
6. *Visual interpretation: Digital exploration of sartorial movement.*

#### *1. Elicitation: The purpose made fashion garments for both men and women*

Two ranges are produced iteratively. These are produced to elicit or provoke physical and sensory responses from participants when worn. The first is made up of a series of simple black women's garments; the second a men's range consisting of two identical designs.

The design of both ranges is informed by the research objectives.

Garments are understated and made from a lightly textured linen material. It was important their design did not signify or reveal the idiosyncratic functionality of the tactile provocations. The garments' shapes were developed from a combination of drape

for the womenswear pieces and menswear coat with flat patternmaking and block modification. An intent motivating their design is to appear as largely conventional fashion garments in accordance with contemporary aesthetics and functionality.

The garments are also designed to coordinate as a range which offer a variety of sartorial possibilities and associated physical and somatic experiences. Garments may enable particular movements while others constrain particular movements. In this respect different garments in the range relate to different parts and zones of the body. For example, some garments are in direct contact with the body, while others produce more space around it. For example, a dress design has a pencil skirt shaped section which is fitted closely around the hips, yet is combined with an oversized blouse section.

While other garments such as the women's skirt and men's coat and trousers produce a sense of space internal to the garment around the body enables ease of movement and increased scope for interaction and play with the garment. This oversized quality and freely flowing fabric aids study of the bodily movements. Fabric's propensity to respond to movement in highly distinctive ways provides a rich aesthetic quality for video exploration and is further developed in the second iteration of menswear garments.

In the womenswear range, there are pockets with seeds located in a small pouch on the back of garments or within deep pockets integrated into a skirt. The seeds function as an anomaly within what is normally an unproblematic activity of dressing. The tactile provocations elicit a different kind of experience, in as much as the additional element is new and unusual as commented on by all the participants. They can be felt on the skin

and their weight can be felt via the pull of the garments, as well as faintly heard in their movements. The process of getting dressed in these garments is complicated by a process of placing seeds into these pouches.

In this respect, I assist participants by adding seeds into the pockets or at other times I also remove them. This places emphasis on these novel elements. Participants manipulate and play with the seeds in their pockets and also move their bodies to get a sense of the weight of the seeds. For example, a participant asked me to remove seeds so the sensation of the weighted garments was comfortable. This highlights the embodied sensory capacity to reach a level of comfort.

I also consciously ensure no mirrors are available for participants to observe their appearance from an external point of view. They are left to their embodied and visceral sensations to guide their movements and activities in the sessions.

*2. Elicitation: The use of materials such as sand, water and seeds for use as sensory-tactile provocations or elicitation devices*

I use materials for their aesthetic and material attributes. For example, I consider the usefulness of the transformative properties of water and the fine granular quality of sand to produce sensory effects and bodily movements. There are precedents for the use of materials as sensory apparatus or instruments. The most relevant for this research is the work of Brazilian artist Lygia Clarke whose artworks recalibrate and subtly disorder sensorial experience. Clarke deployed materials and created specialised sensory

instruments such as masks or other wearable or interactive structures as part of an artistic strategy to reduce the art to experience (Brett 2004).

Similarly, I am concerned with producing sensory experiences, but also in visualising how sensory experience are associated to the movements or behaviour of the body in some way. For instance, I paired sand with the sand coloured outfit. When sand is dispensed from above the participant is camouflaged against the sand fabric of the outfit. What *becomes* visible is the participants' energetic movements, which appear decontextualized as there are no visible clues as to why the participant moves the way he does.

The use of water and the blue outfit works in an inverse way. When the water contacts the body of the participant, it transforms the surface of the fabric and its material properties. The blue fabric becomes a glistening deep blue, and clings to the wearers' body. The participants' movements are also affected by the change in materiality. These strategies build aesthetic richness and complexity.

### *3. Elicitation: The design of participatory sessions to provide a context for sartorial activities to take place*

The enquiry embraces an iterative process, involving making of garments and the use of garments in *Sartorial sessions*. These sessions are participatory events where participants try on, interact with and experience a series of purpose designed fashion garments. The participants' responses are video recorded and subject to exploration and analysis.



Sartorial sessions establish a space and context where sartorial activities can take place, and be documented. Participants' interactions with the garments in these sessions are recorded for subsequent exploration and analysis. The aim of this approach is to produce sufficient live complexity in which I can examine and reflect upon (Rokeby, 2006).

This approach draws on 'event' or 'event thinking'. *Events* are situated within an intellectual lineage ranging from Deleuze (1993); Casey's phenomenology of space (1996); human geography (Massey, 2005), and Sensory Ethnography (Pink, 2009). 'Event' or 'Event thinking' emerged in the field of social theory in relation to Whitehead's philosophy of relatedness and interdependence of all things (Fraser, 2010). Events enable an examination of relationships in terms of process and emergence. In other words, the sessions are conceived as things, people and relationships coming together. In this way the individual physical components employed within the research methodology - garments, accessories, participants, sensory-tactile materials, digital technologies, and the environment, can be understood as emergent, in relation to each other and the network of relations that constitute them.

The Sartorial Sessions are as open and flexible as possible to enable participants to interact and express themselves freely. This resonates with Rokeby's (2006) analyses of immersive, dynamic and interactive environments typical of much contemporary art that *instantiate relationships* rather than finished artworks. Sartorial situations are akin to 'heuristic systems and research environments' as opposed to simply instruments for the production of creative work.

*The first iteration – tactile provocations*

The first iteration of the research focuses on womenswear garments with the inclusion of black seeds as a tactile provocation, embedded into the garments. The events involve participants trying on the garment in a change room off-camera, then once dressed they enter an area framed by the camera. An i-phone is used in these sessions, located in an unchanging position on a small tripod and records the sartorial activities that took place directly in front of it. The video documentation shows participants moving in and out of frame, talking, moving around and manipulating the garments they wear. This approach to documentation is based on the camera remaining discrete and unobtrusive as well as simple to use. The approach also provides good quality documentation for analysis and is amenable to digital investigation.

Activity is undirected and participants are free to move around as they wish. The camera records a number of perspectives, some close up which reveal small micro-movements of the hands and body and others show the human figure against a background.

*The second iteration – Sensory tactile materials*

The menswear garments are used in association with *sensory-tactile provocations*. This involves the introduction of water and sand in two sessions. The sensory-tactile materials are dispensed from a container controlled by a simple pulley system above the wearer. Each of the outfits is identical in design and consists of an oversized coat, relaxed pleated

trouser and a plain t-shirt. Like the womenswear garments they are produced from lightweight linen cloth.

The outfits are linked to the sensory-tactile material by colour. The blue outfit was paired with water, the beige outfit with sand. Each of the outfits have an additional bag accessory, to be used as a prop in the sensory-tactile sartorial sessions. The underlying premise for the use of these materials is their capacity to produce noticeable sensory affects in participants that *registers in bodily movement*.

The primary objective of these sessions is quite intentionally to generate strongly felt sensations and physical movement. This contrasts with the tactile dresses that elicit subtle somatic provocations and are oriented towards somatic self-consciousness for a wearer. Somatic is used in the sense to explicitly refer to the subject's self-consciousness or self-awareness of corporeal sensations.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I use 'somatic', drawing upon Richard Shusterman's (Shusterman, 1990). deployment of the term 'soma' in the context of Somaesthetics, described as:

an interdisciplinary research product devoted to the critical study and ameliorative cultivation of the experience and use of the living body (or soma) as a site of sensory appreciation (aesthesia) and creative self-stylization.

The term soma derives from the Ancient Greek word 'soma' for body and is considered superior to other nomenclature 'body', because it treats the body as sentient and receptive body rather than the body being treated as an object among others. Somatic is also used within disciplines and discourses of movement and dance studies, corporeal philosophy, cultural anthropology, medicine, psychiatry and psychology as well as body based practices such as Feldenkrais and Alexander technique.

#### *4.Elicitation: The inclusion of participants*

Three women are involved in the first iteration, while two men in the second. The participants are all drawn from informal creative and professional networks I am a part of. I am familiar with some through my academic work, for example in the first iteration of the tactile dresses one was a fashion academic, while the other two were arts workers. These individuals were invited to participate due to what appeared as a sensitivity to fashion and practices of self-styling. They were selected on the basis of what I assumed was a deeper connection to fashion and dress, which could enable them to be more comfortable as participants in a fashion research project. They ranged in ages from early twenties to late forties.

Two men were invited to participate in the second sessions incorporating the sensory-tactile elements. They were invited less on the basis of their relationship to fashion, and rather more on what I intuited as an openness to unusual activities, such as interacting with sand and water whilst dressed. One of the participants is an actor and musician. The other an artist's assistant. Each of the men have long hair which I considered a useful and potentially interesting way of concealing the face and to create material-textural continuities between hair on the body and fabric in their garments.

#### *5. Video Documentation: Capturing sartorial movements*

I employ digital video technologies to capture and examine interactions. This encompasses documentation of sartorial activities and deep engagement through viewing,

reviewing and manipulation of digital visual material. Techniques such as framing and cropping serves to foreground and background particular activities, while temporal deceleration provides opportunities for close observation and study of bodily movements. This process of digital manipulation focuses on close examination of physical movements, such as bodily position, orientation, gestures and behaviour.

The significant advantage of using video is richness and complexity is captured as a part of an unfolding context. Pink (2007) argues that video recording brings together a context where things, people and sensory experience interact. Digital video also captures bodily action in lived body-time (Featherstone 2010) and provides opportunity to examine bodily movements and its interactions in very close detail. Featherstone writes:

The moving body and its image in the cinema, television and video, then, can be seen to work more as a movement-image, a body in process, which can convey and receive a range of affective responses, intensities which are palpable, but difficult to decipher and articulate in language – especially in the duration of lived body-time. Fortunately, the digital technologies of the new media, especially video, have the capacity to record, capture and slow down the body moving-image. They enable us to view in slow-motion the ways in which affects are communicated by the face, gestures and body movements, to observe the affect thresholds which cannot be perceived in the normal choreography of face-to-face interactions, but can be felt – e.g. the ‘gut feeling’ (2010, p. 199).

Digital video possesses significant flexibility to *view* and *review* material in very slow motion and opens up an opportunity to subject bodily movement to close examination. It enables the viewing to be undertaken repeatedly and to explore the significance of small fragments or corporeal movement not available to unmediated perception. This enables bodies to be explored as a *process*, in terms of the body's relationships with material things and others. In this case, it brings the micro-corporeal interaction between the body, movement and the garment into a view as a network of mutually interdependent elements.

#### *6. Visual Interpretation: Digital exploration of sartorial movements*

The approach to interpreting the visual material that is produced from these sessions is driven by a search for distinctive movements or interactions of some kind. Each of the sessions generates a significant amount of footage. As sole researcher and coordinator of the sessions, I am integrated into the activities. I set up the camera, orchestrate and manage proceedings, as well as assist participants to get dressed. It was only when I returned to the footage in the days after that I could review the footage and begin the process of interpreting the material.

An important aspect involved the use of digital video software which enabled the repeated viewing of the footage. This enabled a very close examination of the footage and in doing so particular aspects or sequences of movement emerged as significant. This process encompassed identification of distinctive sequences of action, and isolation of those sequences for further examination. I also cropped visual material to a position

outside the original frame as well as discarding unwanted sequences. This process of identification and isolation served to distil the footage by focussing on a repertoire of distinctive sartorial movements. The use of freeze frame and slow motion also enabled an exploration of movements that in unmediated perception escape recognition. These tools and capacities were crucial in the development the research.

I reframed the video to conceal participants' faces which draws attention to the body. This reductive strategy also involves removing the audio track, except on one video. This establishes a reduced 'sensory frame' to the embodied sensations associated with movements of the body and brings the focus onto the micro-corporeal movements and coordination of the body in relation to the garment. This opens a reading of the body based on the subtle complexities of sartorial movement and body–garment interaction.

Digital technology facilitates examination of sessions as unfolding contexts of exploratory and interactive activity. Novelty, complexity and open-endedness are characteristics of these sessions. In other words, sessions generate bodily movements that are produced by the garments and sensory materials and the bodies' response to negotiate them. The documentation of this process enables a close and extended examination of how participants' bodies contend with novelty and serves to draw out and make visible the inter-relationships between the bodies of participants, the garments and *what they indicate*.

These inter-relationships provide a sensory-perceptual framework <sup>2</sup> that I apply to relevant aspects that emerge as significant within the research context. As the methodology develops, it results in increased attentiveness to bodies on screen, and through focused exploration of those movements I learn to understand them in a particular way.

It is important to emphasise that these engagements are informed by the disciplinary orientation *of my own emplacement* in fashion as one who has designed clothing as well as someone who takes an interest in clothing that I and others wear. In this way what emerges as being distinctive and significant is linked to the disciplinary shaped ways I perceive and understand bodies in the field of fashion, be it my own or others.

My professional and personal history as a fashion designer is perhaps important to relay at this point. To acknowledge my background is to point towards the significance of my disciplinary experiences of what it is to design and experience fashion, both in a material and intimate sense as one who works with the medium of textiles, clothing and bodies, as well as the cultural, social and industrial context of fashion. It also raises the significance of those experiences and how those experiences came to be meaningful to me via my own embodiment and acculturation through my participation in fashion and how they inform this study. Through the mid 1990s to the early 2000s, I designed and worked in independent practice focussing on menswear but also designing womenswear. I presented collection solo shows at Mercedes Australian Fashion Week and the

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<sup>2</sup> See p. 171



Melbourne Fashion Festival and distributed my work throughout Australia as well as operating a studio where clients and the public could view and purchase my clothing.

Throughout this formative period the sensation of being dressed, that is the physical sensation of clothing upon the body ( be it mine or others) emerged as an abiding element and consideration of my design work. Alongside this interest was a growing awareness of the prioritization of the visual in fashion; that is the emphasis on the appearance of bodies, the 'look' of the garment, the power of the fashion image and its inordinate importance in field of fashion – an emphasis which eclipses the embodied experiences of wearing clothing and the materiality of the garment itself. Around that time, I began to articulate design rationales for garments that addressed the tactile and kinaesthetic senses of wearers or at other times subverted this inherent visualism. For example, I produced garments inspired by pillows and doonas, which were soft and tactile. I produced garments in which beads and threads were trapped within their lining. I produced intentionally generic looking garments , in the form of striped shirts, which were illustrated by hand. Each hand drawn shirt took considerable time and craft to successfully realise. In each and all of this works I was concerned with redirecting wearers to that which is not immediately visible to an observer but which is acutely felt and experienced by the wearer, via one's embodied visceral senses.

In this respect this thesis and the readings of bodily movements it contains, draw on my experiences of those activities and elaborate those particular orientations through the descriptions of those bodily moments and my interpretations of them. Thus, my

readings are informed by my embodied understandings of those orientations, of sartorial making, sartorial experience and the observations of sartorial movement.

*A note on images and video material*

In the chapters that follow I proceed to discuss the primary findings of this research. The focus of the discussion is the distinctive movements that transpire in the sessions and my analysis of them. Each chapter has a specific thematic focus that is drawn out with reference to a number of participants' sessions and theoretical contextualisation.

Distinctive phases of movements are discussed with specific reference to images that are embedded within the text. These images are in the form of video still compilations. They feature multiple images in succession, drawn from sequences of distinctive movement. A reader may refer to the images in the text or the video files which are included with this thesis. Each video is referred to by name in the thesis that corresponds to a video file on USB. Also, included in this thesis but not on the USB is 'research footage' from working files.

The videos are listed below in order of mention in thesis.

1. *Bruno (Sand)* (2017)  
Todd Robinson  
HD video without sound
2. *Sam (Getting Dressed)* (2017)  
Todd Robinson  
HD video without sound

3. *Sam (Attuning Touch)* (2017)  
Todd Robinson  
HD video without sound
4. *Joy (Material Sensing)* (2017)  
Todd Robinson  
HD video without sound
5. *Bruno (Sweat)* (2017)  
Todd Robinson  
HD video without sound
6. *Zepp (Wrap)* (2017)  
Todd Robinson  
HD video without sound
7. *Zepp (Crouch)* 2017  
Todd Robinson  
HD video without sound
8. *Joy (Expressive Gesture)* (2017)  
Todd Robinson  
HD video without sound
9. *Zepp (Watercatcher)* (2017)  
Todd Robinson  
HD video
10. *Narmine (Expressive Gesture)* (2017)  
Todd Robinson  
HD video without sound

## CHAPTER 2

### *Exploring sartorial vitality*

Bruno's body moves in response to the sand that has fallen over his body and is trapped in his hair and through the garment. His movements are forceful. They erupt suddenly without warning. His arms surge forward accelerating towards their full extension. They reverse with a whiplash movement to flick the sand away from his body. He rubs the part of his neck under his hair with the palm of his hands, to wipe away the sand. He uses the back of his hands and fingers as a brush, to remove sand caught in the open weave of the linen fabric of his garments. The patterns of movement repeat, each time with improvised variations. He stretches the hem of his t-shirt backwards pulling it tight and then shaking rapidly to bounce away the sand stuck to its surface. These actions are multi-directional, moving outwards, inwards, in front, then behind, high and low.

The video sequence is about four minutes in duration and reveals the motions of the body as an ongoing and interlinked series of movements. It is important to point out the footage consists of a series of movements that under normal conditions of everyday perception escape our notice. This is particularly relevant when considering sartorial movements: they are often not identifiable, as they consist of smaller micro-corporeal movements embedded within larger chains of human action that take place outside our explicit awareness.

Sartorial movements are quite ordinary and mundane micro-bodily adjustments that bodies are always making. For example, we might make a small movement of the hand to smooth or adjust a garment, or adopt a change in gait, posture or orientation, or any of the multitude of movement variations human beings are capable of enacting when

dressed. Yet many of these variations in the body would not be considered 'distinctive' movements in themselves but rather smaller fragmentary components of larger sequences of movement.







Image 1: *Bruno (Sand)* (2017), Todd Robinson, video still compilation

In his book *The interpersonal world of the infant* (1985) psychologist Daniel Stern characterizes the movements of neo-natal infants as indicative of a realm of dynamic sensibility or ‘vitality’. He associates ‘vitality affects’ with an infant’s first experiences of movement with ‘the body’s sensations of itself as animate form’, one that is constantly in movement and ‘involves kinaesthetic distinctions, such as jerky versus smooth, taut



versus relaxed which correspond to the infants first experiences of movement' (Noland 2007, p. 19) .

According to Stern, the experiences of movement comprise the infants' entire existence and involve a range of pre-personal, pre-reflective sensations that transpire prior to the ascription of meanings through socialization. For example, babies learn to imitate facial responses of their mother and associate what are initially undifferentiated kinaesthetic experiences of muscular movements around the eyes, mouth and face. For example, the eyes are implicated in a smile which then render emotion and thus an inter subjective meaning (Meltzoff & Moore 1977; Stern 1985).

Stern distinguishes vitality affects from categorical emotions such as anger, sadness and joy by pointing out sensations of movement precede the acquisition of emotions developmentally and thus underpin all mental and emotional experiences. While adults' sensitivity to kinaesthetic discriminations are somewhat desensitized, he argues they can be retrieved by using time based art forms such as music, dance and theatre (Stern 2010). In other words, while these sensations are tied to a pre-reflective background of undifferentiated kinaesthetic sensation they can *become available to us*.

Carrie Noland takes up this point in relation to the use of digital media and film media in Bill Viola's video and film works. Bill Viola is a widely acclaimed video artist that has developed a significant body of work focused upon corporeal representation and depictions of human emotion. Through a critical analysis of key examples Noland contrasts a perspective of Viola's work focused upon representations of categorical

emotions depicted in the face with variations in movements or ‘tonicity’ of the face and body (Noland, 2007).

One of the primary conceptual innovations of Viola’s work has been depiction of people in the midst of emotional experiences, shown at significantly decelerated speeds. His videos reveal movements of the human body imperceptible to unmediated perception. In works such as *Anima* (2000) and *Quintet of the Astonished* (2000) what is in fact witnessed is not emotion per se but rather the ‘micro-stages’ in between emotional states (Hansen 2004, p. 587). These are the imperceptible movements that Viola reveals rippling through the skin and muscles observable on the surface of body and face.



Image 2: *Anima* (2000), Bill Viola, colour video triptych on three LCD flat panels mounted on wall

Noland characterizes these movements as ‘projections’ towards more resolved significations. She writes:

However, these (as yet) non-taxonomized micro-gestures, these in-between phases through which the muscles pass, are nevertheless already directed toward, moving toward, the legible gestures between which they fall. To that extent, they remain elements of skilled practice, points on a movement continuum that the gesture, as sign, splits into fragments (2007, p. 12).



Image 3: *The Quintet of the Astonished* (2000), Bill Viola, colour video rear projection on screen mounted on wall in dark room

### *A kinaesthetic background*

What emerges in Noland's analysis of Viola's work is how a focus upon micro-movements *of the moving body*, in contrast to the emotions of the face, draws attention to a *kinaesthetic background*; made up of the proprioceptive information or feedback the body is continuously in receipt of via its own movements (Noland 2007).

Noland's analysis not only points to a way beyond analysing the movements of the body in terms of their legibility, but rather focuses on the human beings' movements, as tied to particular projects and implicit concerns and commitments we are invested in. This

provides something of an alternative to a focus on characterizations of ‘affect’ and ‘emotion’. Many of the distinctive movements that transpired in the sartorial sessions, like Bruno’s movements above, transpire as smaller micro-corporeal movements that can be situated in larger contextual frames.

In line with this focus upon micro-corporeal movements, I have developed a methodological approach that foregrounds movements of the sartorial body that normally escape our notice in the context of daily life. Yet, I do not *re-present* movements as documentary evidence of a pre-existing reality, rather they are subject to processes of digital manipulation that extends and *amplifies* those movements.

For example, in *Sam (Getting Dressed)* (2017) and *Sam (Attuning Touch)* 2017 the footage is edited down from 20 minutes through the isolation of distinct sequences. The first taken in front of the bookcase lasts 2 minutes, 11 seconds. The second, 4 minutes and 30 seconds, takes place in the corner of a semi-industrial space where a steel roller door meets a wall. The participants location reflects their largely independent and undirected activities and movements in the space. Each of these sequences consists of a series of what appear to be unreflective self-touching, where the hands and their movements are directed to the body and the garment. These movements appear un-theatrical and largely unconscious.

In the normal course of life these movements would go unnoticed. In fact, in the sessions when the footage was recorded, both Sam and I had no recollection of these movements. For example, I produced an edited sequence of her session, of which *Sam (Getting Dressed)* and *Sam (Attuning Touch)* is based. When I showed her this edited footage she notes her surprise at the movements she made, adding she has no recollection of making them.



Image 4: *Sam (Attuning Touch)* (2017), Todd Robinson, video still documentation

The scenes are created firstly by identifying particular movements in the flow of action that appear distinctive or noteworthy. This is a gradual and iterative process that takes long periods of exploration. I observe the footage and over multiple encounters with it, begin to notice and pull out sequences of movements as noteworthy or interesting in some way. Distinctiveness in this regard refers to those sequences where the body and the garment are in some observable form of interaction.

Much of the footage itself is mundane and quite uninteresting. For example, there are scenes where little movement or activity takes place. Yet there are particular movements

and sequences, which I might isolate and watch many times. These are often a very small movements which transpires over a few seconds or much longer periods of movement, yet the noteworthy phases that emerge in this exploration, open up novel perspectives upon the sartorial body when subject to close reading.

Through digital exploration I identify the distinctive sequences of bodily movements, then I extrapolate that sequence through temporal manipulation, including reversal and repetition using digital editing software. The first sequence in *Sam (Getting Dressed)* (2017) focuses on movements that distribute fabric around the waist while the second concentrates on smoothing and pressing motions of her palms on the body with a focus on the hips.

Each of these sequences uses digital documentation of human movement and manipulates that movement through a process manipulating a small sequence of movement. This involves reversing bodily micro-movements within that sequence, then copying and re-pasting that sequence, connecting it with the first, to create, a discontinuous, yet rhythmic, sequence of corporeal movement. This extends the sequence of movement beyond what was initially a single instance that might take a few seconds, to a much longer and significant sequence. In doing this I transform what is normally mundane and unnoticed into a *visible and significant thematic concern*.

It is also important to clarify the video does not utilize identical copies of the same sequence; rather the copy and its manipulation are used in an iterative crafting process that involves a more complex imbrication of the original footage and its fabrication.

In a similar way to Viola's works *Anima* and *Quintet of the Astonished*, I do not present footage as unmodified documentary material, but rather I present the footage, as manipulated digital material of the body's movements. The process of identification, manipulation and iterative repetition that I employ, much like Viola's deceleration of the image, serves to make available what is normally background aspects of corporeal life.

Mark Hansen refers to this feature of Viola's work as an 'expansion of the image' which reveals what are the 'interstitial' moments in between images and provides an observer a glimpse of the 'affective tonalities, corporeal movements' or 'vitality effects', which are the imperceptible facial and corporeal movements, that 'signal the vitality of our aliveness' ...into the 'purview of perception' (2004, p. 587).

Through the capture of sartorial movements as digital information and its subsequent manipulation I am able to draw out what is a background aspect of human behaviour to become an explicit theme within the video work.

In the context of this research, I am interested in amplifying mundane movements that are associated with sartorial experiences, in order to bring to consideration, what is largely a background and unconsidered aspect of sartorial life and within the larger field of fashion.

For example, introduced earlier in *Bruno (sand)*, are Bruno's hand movements. The scratching and rubbing of his neck are of the *same kind* of mundane movements all

human beings enact. The documentation and manipulation of these movements enable a viewer to observe the body in interaction with the garment.

These inter-connected and coordinated movements are actions human beings enact regularly. We touch our face, scratch our leg, fiddle with our hands, adjust our seating position or move our head position and orientation to see something or speak to a friend or colleague. We enact these kinds of movements, with considerable variation, depending on the specific circumstance, all the while, either walking, standing sitting or even lying down. The mundane origin means such movements rarely become subject of consideration.

Bruno's movements can be delineated from more legible or clearly articulated movements of the body. The work of Stern here is again useful to consider the way in which these smaller dynamic components of movement resist articulation. He writes, vitality affects:

are not direct cognitions...they have no goal state and no specific means. They fall in between the cracks. They are the felt experience of force – in movement – with a temporal contour, and a sense of aliveness, of going somewhere. They do not belong to any particular content. They are more form than content. They concern the “How”, the manner the style, not the “What” or the “Why” (2010, p. 8).

It is though important to distinguish the movements of the body are not in themselves vitality affects, rather the movements of the body are associated with the dynamics of



human experience, which involves qualitative variations that we may become more or less sensitive to. It is these qualitative variations that Stern refers to when he writes of vitality effects. This draws attention to not movement per se' but how sartorial movements are *associated with kinaesthetic and tactile experiences*, which themselves reflect the dynamic and fluid nature of movement and experience in general. It is useful to address the sartorial movements and their associated dynamics of experience of the body from this perspective.

It this case the movements that Bruno enacts originate from the sensation of the sand on his body. Yet if we consider their content, that is what it is they carry, it is also the case they derive from the tactile sensations upon the body. The variation in movements that Bruno enacts can be understood to represent the sensory–tactile variations that he experiences upon his body.

In this sense, the movements participants enact in the research sessions are not only visible, *they are indicative* of a range of somatically experienced sensations. It is also pertinent to consider how such representations are perceived by others. For example, I showed a colleague two video works from this research, both featuring the use of sensory-tactile materials. They reacted quite different to each. The reaction to *Zepp (Crouch)* (2017) where water is used as the sensory tactile material appeared as an overall satisfying or even aesthetically pleasurable viewing experience. Perhaps the deep blue colour, depictions of water and sensual movement is an aesthetically pleasing combination of visual elements.

In contrast the experience of viewing *Bruno (Sand)* (2017) appeared somewhat more provocative. His jerky actions and the thrusting movements of his body were discomfiting. She expressed a grimace. She asked about his experience of the session. What was notable about her response, once that I explained the source of Bruno's movements, was that it seemed almost impossible for her *not* to identify with the sensory – tactile experience depicted on the screen. My explanation did not reduce her discomfort at the moving image. I took her response to derive from recollections of somatic memories of her own body.

*Empathic encounters with an others' image*

The existence and role of a mirror neuron system underlying human relationships and inter-subjectivity in general is now well documented (Gallese 2001; Rizzolatti et al. 1996). Research into mirror neurons found 'the very same neural substrates are activated when these expressive acts are both executed and perceived' (Gallese 2005, p. 520). In other words, when we observe another person enacting a specific task, experiencing an emotion or particular sensation, the same parts of the brain are activated in both the observer and the one enacting or experiencing that event. As Gallese puts it:

a common functional mechanism – embodied simulation- mediates our capacity to share the meaning of our actions, intentions , feelings and emotions with others , thus grounding our identification and connectedness to others (Gallese 2005, p. 520).

This body of literature from cognitive science, foregrounding our identifications with others or ‘we-ness’ (Gallese 2005, p. 520) has significant implications for how we represent others in images. In other words, the findings suggest the way in which we represent or depict the bodily movements, experiences and activities of others, offers the potential to cultivate more empathic modes of engagement.

This foregrounds the encounter with images in terms of *sensual correspondences* that are established between the subject of the image, the image itself, and the observer as of considerable importance to those interested in redirecting the practice of fashion design. This means that any corporeal behaviour we encounter in the context of a moving image enables a possible identification to our own situated felt-lived-experiences.

Film theorist Vivien Sobchack advances this point. She argues our common sensory and perceptual ways of being means our encounter with moving images *can* make sense to us, pointing out it is not only the filmmaker and the spectator that possess these same ‘embodied structures and modes of being’ but also the film itself. She writes, ‘if the film is to make sense, it must indeed possess the very same sensory and perceptual structures for it to signify and be meaningful’ (1992, p. 6). In this way the video works are informed by a sensory and perceptual logic such that they are sensitive to the ways in which human beings experience the world as sensorial and perceiving creatures.

While I may have taken my colleagues’ grimace to be a negative response to the sensory-tactile movements expressed in *Bruno (Sand)*, I could also read my colleagues’ response more positively, to indicate an instance of empathic and embodied identification with an

other. It is important to point out the basis of the correspondence in this case is not the emotion experienced by Bruno (his face is not visible) but rather the common somatic experience between two bodies. In other words, it is based in the common experience of *being a body*.

This is a particularly relevant consideration for this research and has broader implications for the field of fashion. In other words, the significance of this research emerges from the examination of the relationship between fashion and embodiment and the re-directive potential stemming from representations of sartorial experience grounded in the shared-ness of embodied sensory experiences. In this research, there is a focus on the somatically experienced senses such as the tactile as well as the kinaesthetic experience of our bodies moving in space, which is viewed to be constitutive of the experience of being dressed.

Stern points out the value of attuning oneself to the dynamics of human experience is fundamental to our existence as well as essential for expressions of ‘empathy, sympathy and identification.’ He questions, how can those inter-subjective bonds that ground human relationships be ‘explained without in some way capturing the exact movement characteristics of a specific person?’ (Stern 2010, p. 13). To observe and begin to understand Bruno’s movements is to tune into the sensory experiences of his own body using the empathic sensitivities of my body or your own.

The way in which we can begin to identify with Bruno’s movements, or any of the other participants examined in this thesis is via the correspondence between my bodily experiences and theirs. This is the inter-corporeal ground upon which all our inter-

subjective emplacements are based. All the sessions can similarly be understood in the same way.

Moreover, by foregrounding Bruno's reactions to the sand upon his skin, and through his hair, and its activations of his body and limbs as he tries to remove it, it makes observable a body in the midst of an intense sensorial experience. It also pertinent to note that those irritations experienced upon Bruno's body, are not due to the sand on its own, but are delivered by the garments he is wearing and their propensity to carry and absorb the sand within its woven structure. In this sense the use of the sensory-tactile materials serves to *intensify* the tactile experiences of the dressed body to a point where we can become explicitly aware of the very existence of such sensations. This stems from the significant potential of using design probes.

While it might be true we can acknowledge the existence of embodied experiences associated with wearing clothing, we can even talk about them, they remain significantly under-explored and under-recognized in the context of fashion studies. In this sense the methodology draws upon those precedents in speculative design practice and the use of design probes (Di Salvo 2009; Gaver, Dunne & Pascenti 1999) that *visualize* and make explicit a dimension of sartorial life we would otherwise pass un-reflected. In this respect the objective of this research is to develop re-directive resources in the form of a visual methodology, garments and videos that support a deeper acknowledgement of this aspect of fashion which focuses on the visualization of experiencing bodies, in such a way to generate sensual correspondences in the observer.

In conclusion to this chapter the edited video sequences foreground the kinds of movements made by the sartorial body that we would not normally observe and not simply because they are ephemeral and transitory, but rather their embeddedness within the unfolding flow of human activity means they don't carry the legible meanings that we are conditioned to see, and thus pass unnoticed within the vast majority of our day to day, face to face interactions.

The visual methodology with its combination of live participation, sensory focus, fashion design, videography, and digital exploration reveals a form of sartorial vitality that escapes our natural modes of perceiving the world. This has significant implications for fashion design as well as the representational conventions of fashion.

This is to say that the motions of the body that we experience as well as observe in others, as well as the vitality affects that carry, can become available to us in more explicit ways. It is important to point out fashion's vitality is not expressed in the spectacle of the fashion system; it is rather quietly expressed in the micro-corporeal movements of fashion as it is lived in the movements of those that participate in it.

In this way the research foregrounds the movements of bodies, those everyday and micro-corporeal motions of the sartorial body, and in doing so, draws on the shared identification with the sensorial experiences of an other. These movements are amplified via the methodology and drawn out from what are undifferentiated tactile and kinaesthetic sensation of being-dressed. In this way something of the ways in which the

body moves and carries itself in space, such as the specific shape and flow of these expressions of movement, their force and intensity, become more clearly distinguishable.

## CHAPTER 3

### *Chiasmic movements*



Sam was the first participant. She chose to wear a black dress which integrated shiny black turtle seeds into a small pouch on the back of the dress. The dress was conceived in two sections. A top, consisting of a slightly oversized t-shirt with crew neck and wide, open sleeves, while an attached skirt section is straight in shape, and skims the body closely over the hips. The dress was made from a linen fabric and possessed a slightly striated texture. The design of the dress includes an excess amount of fabric in the top section that can be tucked in and then bloused over the skirt section.

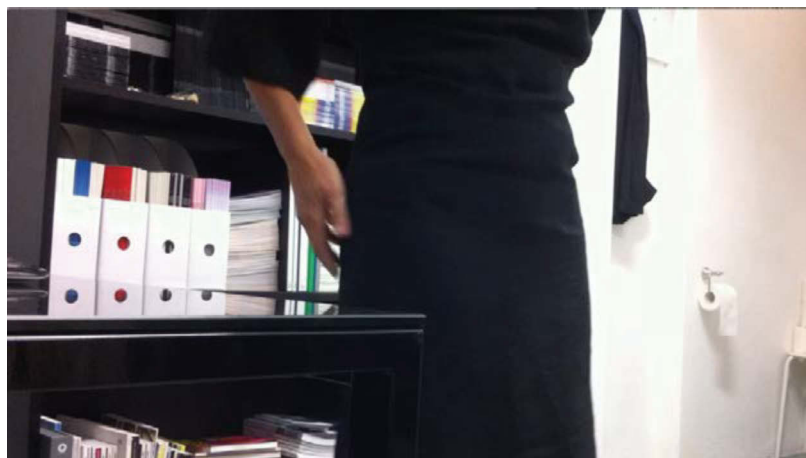




Image 5: *Sam (Getting Dressed)* (2017), Todd Robinson, Video still compilation

In this session, there was a repertoire of self-directed movements which can be seen in Image 5: *Sam (Getting Dressed)* (2017). These movements transpired right after Sam

emerged from a bathroom that was used as a change room. She can be seen drawing up a zipper located at the centre back seam of the garment. Using her hands and fingers she manipulates and arranges the fabric around her waist. Her hands move rapidly from back to front. As she moves, her hands skim past her hips and she traces her fingertips across their surface. She then pinches the fabric between her fingertips, drawing it up over her hips, then ever subtly wiggles her body side to side to realize a comfortable fit. There is a final moment when this bodywork ceases and her hands drop to her sides and she taps her hands upon her hips as if to signify completion.

This series of movements are surprisingly dexterous as they skilfully redistribute and manipulate the fabric, but they are also furtive and somewhat rushed. At the beginning there is a moment when she bends down in an attempt to see her reflection in the surface of a reflective artwork on the opposite side of the room. Otherwise, for the majority of this sequence she attends to the garment. Her hands display remarkable coordination as they work in concert with phases of movement transitioning one to the next with a smooth flow and fluency. This skilled handwork is notable when considering the procedure is undertaken unsighted. She does not look down at these actions but is able to successfully achieve this sartorial work using the sensitivity of the hands and her body.

This indicated a number of distinct sartorial/corporeal orientations that were at play in this sequence. These included:

- 1) *Attending to the garment* – Physical actions undertaken by the hands, fingers that arrange and manipulate the garment.

- 2) *Attending to the body* - Sensing movements undertaken by the hands and fingers and body that feel and caress the body's surface.
- 3) *Attending to others/world* - The adoption of forward-facing orientation that presents the body outwardly towards a social context or faces others.

These orientations are captured in a set of relationships depicted in the diagram below. We can see that the 'being-dressed' emerges from a dialectical relationship between the body and the garment, in what is an emergent and an unfolding context of a shared world. The various orientations are described as specific instances of attending to body, attending to the garment, attending to others/world.

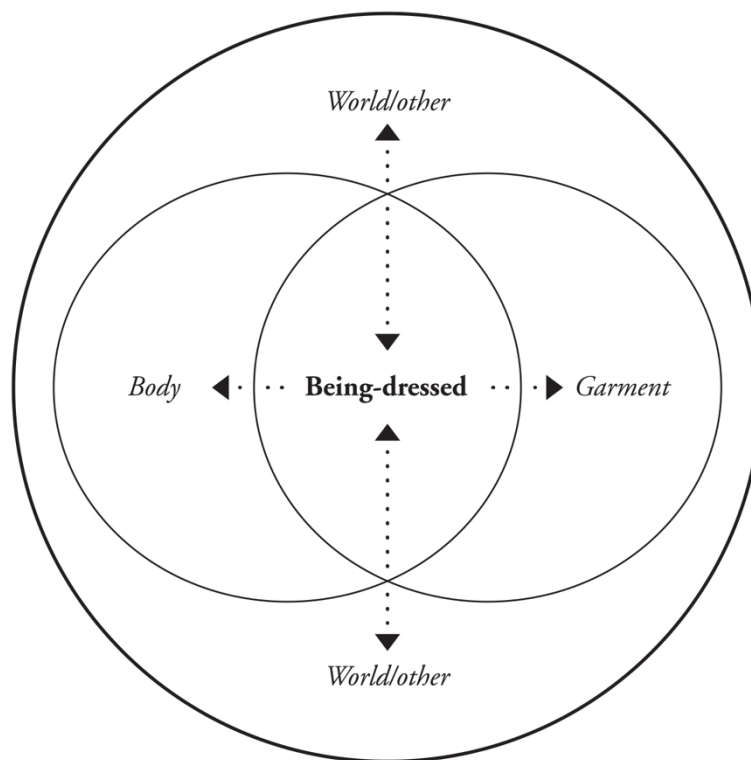


Diagram 1: Distinct sartorial/corporeal orientations, 2017

It is important to emphasise I consciously ensured no mirrors were available for participants to observe their appearance from an external point of view. Although as mentioned above there is that one small sequence where I believe Sam bends down in an attempt to see her reflection in the surface of an artwork on the other side of the room. Thus, she was like all participants left to their tactile and viscerally experienced sensations to guide their activities in these sessions.

These initial observations of Sam open up a perspective on embodied experience and how we relate to and become aware of our bodies in different ways. For example, the exploration of different movements enables a consideration of these movements as indicative of different bodily modalities and how these relate to understandings of what it is to be dressed.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty articulated a theory of embodied existence that contends, the body is the vehicle through which human beings come to know the world and that world is disclosed to human beings via the phenomenon of perception. For Merleau-Ponty 'the body forms our point of view upon the world' (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 5). Thus we do not exist independently from the world but rather through sensory perception, the body and world are in a form of communion: 'One's own body is in the world just as the heart is in the organism' (1962, p. 209).

The ways in which we attend to our body, as an object we can observe or through sensations from our contact with material things or movements in space, are not simply

different categories of sensory experience. Merleau-Ponty moved beyond conceptions of human beings in dualist terms such as subject and object, body and mind or body and world. He strongly advocated for recognition of the embodied and multi-sensorial nature of perception, arguing out sensory-perceptual experience is not experienced as discrete stimuli that are then reintegrated cognitively. Rather he pointed out sensory perception is experienced holistically and serves to situate human beings within their environment.

It is important to acknowledge sensory perception goes beyond conventionally understood sensory categories of sight, sound, taste, smell, and tactile experience. This research places an important emphasis on the experiences of the body in the interaction in material things and movements through space. This involves the body experienced kinaesthetically and relies on the tactile system of the skin, but also our proprioceptive, vestibular and interoceptive systems. The focus of this study is the *movement and contact* with the world.

Thus, sensory perception serves to provide human beings with an integrated experience of our surroundings, as well as our interactions with objects and others. In this respect the sensing body and the sensate world form two sides of one coin. Merleau-Ponty scholar Ted Toadvine, describes this in terms of ‘reciprocal exchange’ and ‘co-existence’ of the body with the world:

In other words, sensing is characterized by an intentionality that sympathetically attunes itself to the sensed according to a dialectic in which both terms—the perceiving body and the perceived thing—are equally active and receptive: the

thing invites the body to adopt the attitude that will lead to its disclosure.  
(Toadvine 2012).

In the final chapter of his posthumously published text *The Visible and the Invisible* (1969) Merleau-Ponty moves beyond the explicit focus on perception pursued in *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) to develop a concept of the body as 'flesh' and a related notion of 'The Chiasm'. The notion of the Chiasm hinges on the reversibility of tactile experience, whereby when we touch one hand with the other, two sides of our 'flesh' are revealed. In other words, in the phenomenon of self-touching we experience our carnal nature as something that can touch and be touched. Thus, the phenomenon of self-touching demonstrates we are simultaneously touching and tangible.

For Merleau-Ponty the relationship between these orders of sensory experience, should not be understood in dualistic terms, but rather as one of 'encroachment' or 'intertwining', which opens up a tactile world. He writes:

This can happen only if my hand, while it is felt from within, is also accessible from without, itself tangible, for my other hand, for example, if it takes its place among the things it touches, is in a sense one of them, opens finally upon a tangible being of which it is also a part. Through this crisscrossing within it of the touching and the tangible, its own movements incorporate themselves into the universe they interrogate, are recorded on the same map as it; the two systems are applied upon one another, as the two halves of an orange. Merleau-Ponty (1969, p. 133)

He does not limit this chiasmic concept to tactile experience alone, but rather considers this structure to mediate different sense categories such as vision and touch, where vision is ‘cut from the tangible’ and ‘every tactile being in some manner [is] promised to visibility’ (Merleau-Ponty 1969, p. 134). In fact he extends the concept in relation to a range of other philosophical categories such as the ‘sentient and sensed’, ‘body and world’ as well as ‘self and other’ (Toadvine 2016) .

Despite the unfinished and speculative aspect of Merleau-Ponty’s text it provides an explanatory framework for exploring aspects of sartorial behaviour as they transpired in the research. In particular the concept of ‘The Chiasm’ foregrounds sensory perception not as separate categories of experience but rather closely interwoven aspects of a broader shared inter-corporeity or ‘flesh’ of the world we inhabit.

Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the Chiasm assists in the exploration of movements and their *sensory indications* drawn from the video footage, as observed in Sam’s movements above. It makes it possible to articulate inter-relationships *between* the senses; between touching and seeing, between touched and touching. This is a particularly pertinent way to examine the variations in perceptual orientation and directedness contained in the visual material generated in this research and also identified within accounts of the fashionable body.

In *Image 6: Sam (Attuning Touch)* (2017) she is observed standing in the corner of the gallery. This video sequence reveals a decidedly highly reflexive mode of bodywork. The palms of the hands press and smooth the body with emphasis on the hips. These



movements differ from the previous instrumental type of action as they *attend to the body* in contrast to the garment. The body appears to be touched *as* something underneath the garment. The open palms firmly press and move across garment's surface seeking the subtle variations, the body's topography. The broad span of the hand maximizes the sensual contact with the body. The motions indicate a form of assessment or survey, which is undertaken through the tactile senses of the hands.



Image 6: *Sam (Attuning Touch)* (2017), Todd Robinson, video still compilation

The top of the dress is cut loose with a simple crew neck with wide, open sleeves that finish at the forearm, while the skirt shape is straight almost pencil shape and skims the body closely over the hips. Moreover, it is this area of the body that Sam directs her touch. It is arguably the tight fit of the garment around the hips that produces localized tactile sensations as well heightened awareness about that part of the body.

I read into Sam's movements an awareness of exposure to the gaze of others. I observe this in the furtive quality of those movements when tucking in her blouse. The movements can be compared to activities of grooming and preparing the body to make it presentable for a social context. I also read into pressing and smoothing movements an evaluative touch, where one's hands are employed to assess the body either in the midst of, or in preparation for public display.

Two modes of touching are observed whereas each attend to the body in different ways. It is evident these forms of self-touching can be understood in the context of self-management or preparation of the fashionable body for public display.

Sam's self-directed movements, her bodily orientation towards or away from others, suggest the sartorial body emerges reflexively through these interactions with her body and the associated variation in orientation from body to garment to world/others.

Understanding these changes in corporeal orientation benefits reflection upon one's own bodily experiences. When I wear garments that skim close to my body this can produce a sense of awareness or even self-consciousness about my body or even the garments. I may wear a shirt or jacket that is tight across my chest or shoulders. I will often use open

palms to press or contour this part of my body, assessing its firmness. This action may be tinged with fear of the exposure my body might be subject to. Alternatively, I might be satisfied with the firmness of body or uncomfortable with a sensation of slackness or softness in my skin and body. If unsatisfied I may take up a small area of fabric in my fingers, pulling it away from my body, as an attempt to conceal and recover that part of my body.

In this way, the sensations of my body, and the way in which I touch it are, inscribed with a sense of how my body appears to others. These exploratory and sensing touches indicate the categories of touch and sight, are not completely separate but rather are interlaced within the other.

Instances of sartorial behaviour that transpired in Sam's session indicated the absence of an external point of view such as a mirror. Used to evaluate one's image as it appears to others, the body's movements - in particular the forms of self-touching, can serve to reconcile one's body image with how one's body is somatically felt from a first-person perspective. In these instances, the hands via their tactile sense, can take on a role the eyes would normally fulfil.

This interpretation of Sam's sensing hand movements resonates with Deleuze and Guattari characterization of the relationship between tactility and vision as 'haptic'. They note the term haptic, 'is a better term than 'tactile' since it does not establish an opposition between two sense organs, but rather invites the assumption that the eye itself

may fulfil this non-optical function' (1987, p. 493). Particular forms of touching Sam enacted reveal a blending of what are often considered discrete sensory categories of vision and sight, and also reveal the tactile senses taking on the role normally undertaken by vision.

The relationship between images of the body and the sense of the kinaesthetically experienced body has been raised in the context of body-based industries such as fashion and cosmetic surgery. Mike Featherstone (2010) defines the 'body-image' as 'mental image' of how one looks to others. This can be contrasted with the notion of the 'body schema', which refers to the haptically experienced body. The body schema is a non-visual sense of the body, and points to the role of the viscerally or somatically experienced sensations involved in kinesis and tactile experiences.

In my encounter with video material from Sam's session I can identify a sensation of sartorial contact of the garment against Sam's hips, as I too can feel garments upon my own body. I identify in the movements and directedness of her activities a survey and affirmation of the status and appearance of her body. Notably I observe these movements with my eyes but understand them through the experiences and sensations of my own body.<sup>3</sup> In this sense what are conventionally understood as separate categories of touch and sight, are experienced as interlaced upon one another, while our experience of detachment and separation between us and others, is replaced by correspondence and proximity.

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<sup>3</sup> Readers should note the gendered nature of these observations which are addressed on p.197 of this thesis.

It is also pertinent to this discussion to consider Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of the variations in our experiences of the body when we interact with material artefacts. A consideration of the garments as forms of equipment is a worthwhile perspective by which to enrich our understanding of sartorial life. In *The Phenomenology of Perception* he provides an account of a blind man's cane, where the cane becomes incorporated into the sensory-tactile system when touching the ground. The tactile sensation is not upon handle of the cane but rather on the surface of the ground through the point of the cane.

He writes:

The blind man's stick has ceased to be an object for him and is no longer perceived for itself; its point has become an area of sensitivity, extending the scope and active radius of touch and providing a parallel to sight. In the exploration of things, the length of the stick does not enter expressly as a middle term, as an entity-in-itself; rather, the blind man is aware of it through the position of objects through it. The position of things is immediately given through the extent of the reach which carries him to it, which comprises, besides the arm's reach, the stick's range of action. (1962, p. 165)

Garments in contrast inhabit a more indeterminate albeit intimate zone of the body. The experience of clothing emerges on or around our body, and generally has none of the compelling nature of objects in our visual field or bodily or perceptual augmentation of a cane for example.

Its sensations are diffuse, ambiguous, often lacking clear articulation. Garments' proximity to us physically and phenomenologically makes it difficult to distinguish where we stop and they begin. Feminist philosopher Iris Young takes up this issue of separation versus contact with respect to the gendered nature of dressing. She points out the tactile experience of garments for women is one of proximity and continuity while visual perception is one of distance and detachment. Wearing of garments complicates what is commonly thought to be a separation between bodies and garments. She describes the sense of sartorial contact as:

Less concerned with identifying things, comparing them, measuring them in their relations to one another, touch immerses the subject in fluid continuity with the object, and for the touching subject the object touched reciprocates the touching, blurring the boundary between self and other. (Young, 1994: 204)

In this sense the indivisibility of being dressed is not surprising when we also consider the dressed body the visible envelope of the self. We address the world, dressed, and in turn, it responds to us as dressed. In Entwistle's words dress is 'not only the visible form of our intentions, but in everyday life dress is the insignia by which we are read, and come to read others. (2015, p. 35).

This continuity of the body and garments was detected in micro-corporeal movements of Sam. When I observed a subtle movement of the hips, or a shift in weight, I can sense, if almost see, Sam's body touching the garment, as if from the inside. The dress she wears forms a contiguous epidermal covering around large sections of her body, as my clothing

does to mine, and in her movements her body perceptually projects outward to contact it.

At other times, her body recedes, and the dress impresses upon her and she is touched by the interior surface of the garment, the seams and other internal elements virtually pressing gently against her skin. The proximity of clothing to our body and our sensory nature indicate sartorial experience is an unfolding and ongoing reciprocal exchange, between touching and being touched; between an active touching of the dress, and a more receptive acceptance of the dress's touch.

If we locate this dialectical exchange in the temporally unfolding context of being dressed, we can observe in sartorial movement a dynamic chiasmic interplay of the body and garment as both touching and being touched by the body, and at the same time, we can see how our somatically experienced sense of our own dressed body is simultaneously interlaced with our visibility and concerned exposure to the outside world.

It is also important to note as motile beings, our experiences of tactile sensation of a garment upon our bodies, is intertwined with kinaesthetic experiences of movements of our bodies moving through space. In this way the dynamics of sartorial movements, comprises both the proprioceptive information of our bodies' movements interlaced with the ongoing and continuous variations in tactile sensation upon our bodies.

In recent years there has been calls to move beyond treating fashion as a visual phenomenon. This has signalled a move towards a greater acknowledgment of the

somatically experienced dimensions of dressing. Strongly informed by the gendered nature of dress and the corporeal phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty this perspective reminds us that fashion cannot be understood without reference to the ‘experience of dressing’ and that beyond the spectacle of fashion lies a ‘kinaesthetic sense of ourselves’ (2016, p. 130).

It is also worth noting this perspective foregrounds the movements of the body and its orientation in space as well as something that is experienced somatically (Entwistle 2015, pp. 29-35; Negrin 2016). These perspectives aim to redress a significant bias towards understanding of fashion as primarily a visual, expressive and aesthetic practice by acknowledging the somatic dimension of wearing clothing.

In conclusion the analysis undertaken above focused upon distinctive movements made by Sam in the context of her sartorial session. This foregrounded sartorial movement and the emergence of those movements in context. This serves to draw out a number of distinct corporeal orientations. These provide important perspectives by which to deepen our understanding of the dynamic nature of dress, as something enacted by the body in space in time and in social contexts we share with others.

For example, by undertaking a close reading of particular sequences of movements, it was observed the way in which the dressed body, is not solely an object of the gaze but rather, a highly variable sensory and chiasmic structure, that oscillates between a number of divergent perceptual and corporeal orientations. In this sense the sartorial body via its movements can be understood in terms of distinctive orientations. These include a



directed-ness towards the garment. This is when the body is self-directed and is observed by the actions of the hands, that are directed towards the garment as something worn on the body. At other times the sartorial is observed as oriented towards the body underneath the garment.

In this sense, there appears to be an awareness of the body as something that while covered by garments, is also something that can be revealed through the garment, particularly in relation to areas of the body which come into close contact with the garment. The sartorial body was also observed to lose itself in its immersion in the world. These were instances where wearers are not self-directed rather, a wearer oriented towards others and the world in such a way that a concern with the way in which the body is dressed is subsumed beneath a wide variety of concerns and commitments that underpin human existence.

These modalities were observed to transcend what are often understood to be separate categories of body and self, body and garment, self and other, touch and touched, sight and seen, touch and sight.

This somewhat surprisingly suggests, rather than disavowing the visual, which has been a critical undercurrent in applications of corporeal phenomenology in fashion, an acknowledgement of the inter-relationships between the visual and the somatically experienced dimensions of fashion would offer a more nuanced perspective to complement existing accounts of the somatically experienced body in fashion.

In the following section, I move beyond the exploration of the body's movements in terms of sartorial modalities to examine how sartorial movements are observed as dynamic adaptations to novelty or anomalies. This locates sartorial movements as an aspect of human beings' involvement in continuous and ongoing, micro-corporeal adaptations to changes in circumstance.

## CHAPTER 4

### *Attuning movements*

In *Sam (Getting Dressed)* (2017) she is observed in the midst of trying on the fashion garment. The ‘tucking in’ that transpired at the beginning of the session and the pressing and smoothing movements can be understood as bodily movements that serve to achieve and maintain a sense of socially and somatically experienced equilibrium.

In this sense when we interact with new things we ‘try them on’ and ‘get used to them’ by physical interaction. This eventuates as a feeling of being comfortable. This does not happen automatically but is something that is *achieved* by the body through series of micro-corporeal and ongoing reciprocal movement interactions with the garment.

#### *Sam Attuning Touch*

*Sam (Attuning Touch)* (2017) can be seen pinching fabric from the area over her hips. She drags it upwards and then downwards. In the first image of the compilation her hands are poised at the moment she prepares her hands and fingers to gather this fabric. In the second image the fabric drawing is drawn up and pinched over the hips. The third image shows Sam re-pinching and then drawing down the fabric, to compensate for the prior adjustment that went marginally too far.



Image 7: *Sam (Attuning Touch)* (2017), Todd Robinson, video still compilation

This series of coordinated movement is analogous to ‘tuning’ an analogue radio where for example, you want to find your favourite station or song worth listening to, using hands and fingers, in a coordinated fashion you rotate the dial, back and forth, until you tune into the song. At the same time those hand movements are responding to the variations in sounds, listening closely for that optimal zone, where the music is at its peak clarity and sharpness.

Similarly, Sam's movements seek out a kind of 'best fit' with the garment. This is not a precise state but rather a somatically experienced sensation of ease or comfort.

Importantly this sense of fit cannot be obtained immediately but often involves sequences of movements, with each calibrated as a more refined response or adaption to the one that precedes it.

If I reflect upon my own experiences of clothing my sense of sartorial comfort is determined by what *feels* right. Due to the nature of the fashion garments, as soft, semi structured things that wrap around our bodies; the way in which this sense of fit, or ease is realized and maintained requires a series of sensitive and adaptive movements. I might adjust the garment in different ways. For example, I might roll up my sleeves or hitch up my trousers so they sit a bit higher on my hips. This sense of ease or comfort achieved by these movements isn't a static point, but rather a forward going series of movements where the body and garment respond to each other in a mutual kind of becoming or exchange.

Samuel Todes in his book *Body and World* (2006) refers to the propensity for human beings to successfully negotiate a wide range of interactions with objects, situations and others as *Poise*. He characterizes Poise as 'The primary form of directed action' which is 'an intention of the body or body-directedness' of the active body employed in our dealings with 'things and persons around us' (Todes 2001, p. 65).

*Poise* is the way in which we remain *in contact* with objects and others. He distinguishes ‘Poise’ as the ‘active intention of the body’ to its correlate ‘Pose’, characteristic of the inactive body (Todes 2001, p. 65). The distinction highlights the felt or somatically experienced aspect of Poise as a sense of being at ease, or in contact with a situation, while ‘Pose’ is denoted by a loss of balance, or separation from a situation, and which necessitates actions of some kind to recover one’s loss of contact.

Thus, when one fails, in what he is attempting to do, one necessarily loses his poise, and is, at least momentarily, thrown off balance, however quickly one might recover his balance and poise. To be poised is to be self-possessed by being in touch with one’s circumstances. To lose touch is immediately to lose one’s poise. (Todes 2001, p. 66).

While his articulation of this concept has a strong corporeal register, it does not solely refer to practical interactions with the material world, but also pertains to social interactions even in the realm of the imagination (Todes 2001). In addition, Poise should not only be associated with dynamic actions of the body but rather is present even in moments of inaction. When simply participating as a spectator, Poise maintains a level of responsiveness: ‘in order to be at ease in my inactivity in respect to what I see, I must maintain reliably active sense of poise and balance in place where I am standing, or sitting’ (Todes 2001, p. 70).

There are extended parts of the video material in which participants are relatively still, or immobile, although this is not to suggest these moments are empty. Rather they can be

understood as those phases of non-movement, where the body is *at ease* with inactivity, but remains poised and connected to what is taking place and they are ready to make the necessary response when required.

Poise is the way in which human beings maintain continuous contact with situations and are able to anticipate and realize appropriate responses. As Todes writes ‘There is no interval between the having and meeting the anticipation of poise. Poise functions exactly at the threshold of response time’ (2001, p. 72). In this way, the body moves towards equilibrium with the things, around it, which is experienced somatically and can also be observed in the micro-corporeal adjustments that ‘tune’ the body into its surroundings. The examples of sartorial movement discussed above are visible examples of the way in which the body adapts to changes in circumstance and novelty.

As spatial and temporal creatures, being dressed unfolds in time and our bodily movements can be understood as ways in which we respond to and adapt to changes in the situation we are immersed in or the activities with which we are engaged. With reference to Sam’s movements above, or more general experiences of dressing we can reflect upon, this sense of Poise might be experienced as a sense of physical or social comfort. It may be a sense of appropriateness for context, the experienced knowingness one is dressed well and is in accord with implicit norms and codes, associated with a social, cultural or professional context. It may be experienced as a sense of ease or effortlessness, in terms of the physical sensation of movement. It may also be experiencing oneself in accord with a prevailing sense of style or in tune with aspects of our identity and self-understanding we consider important or meaningful.



These experiences of dressing can be compared to those experiences of *unease* when we under or overdress for a social occasion, or we may notice an unsightly hole or stain on a sweater we just left the house wearing; or it occurs to us the garments we are wearing have perhaps grown too small for us, fallen out of fashion, or generate a discord with how we perceive ourselves to be. At these moments we may feel self-consciousness, or feel out touch with the situation, we may feel like we do not *fit* and we become awkward, static and posed. Or our unease might be associated with being too cold, or too hot, or particular garments might scratch or irritate our skin.

It is important to recognize, that while I have focused attention on specific sequences of movements that transpired in the research, they are fragments drawn out from longer chains of human action. Moreover, it is possible to consider small micro-corporeal adaptations observed in human beings as part of implicit human projects and practices we are invested in.

I experience life as a complex amalgam of practices and social roles, such as living life as a male, academic, designer, husband, father, son, friend, doctoral candidate, plus many other permutations that are used to denote one's identity. Yet the lived experience of these often divergent categories impinge on me in ways that are not straight forward or in any way inseparable, but do so through the medium of my body.

There are two concepts provided by Merleau-Ponty that provide a way of understanding the link between the micro-corporeal adaptations observed in human beings and implicit

human projects we are invested in. These are *maximal grip* and the *intentional arc*. He describes *maximal grip* in terms of the way our interactions with the environment are guided or solicited into a kind of contingent and dynamic optimum.

For each object, as for each picture in an art gallery, there is an optimum distance from which it requires to be seen, a direction viewed from which it vouchsafes most of itself: at a shorter or greater distance we have merely a perception blurred through excess or deficiency. We therefore tend towards the maximum of visibility, and seek a better focus as with a microscope. (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 302.)

In other words, ‘meilleure prise’ is a human tendency to deploy their bodies in responsive adaptations to changes in circumstance, to novelty or disequilibrium. Hubert Dreyfus applies these concepts to explorations of human expertise and skilful action arguing ‘maximal grip’ is a pre-reflective corporeal tendency that underpins all physical interactions. He writes:

in our skilled activity, we move to achieve a better and better grip on our situation. For this movement towards maximum grip to take place, one does not need a mental representation of one’s goal. Rather, acting is experienced as a steady flow of skilful activity in response to one’s sense of the situation. Part of that experience is a sense of when one’s situation deviates from some optimal body-environment relationship, one’s activity takes one closer to that optimum and thereby relieves the “tension” of the deviation. One does not need to know

where the optimum is. One's body is simply solicited by the situation to get into equilibrium with it. (Dreyfus, 2002, p.12)

The result of this propensity to adapt to situations is that we acquire skills, capacities and dispositions over time which are underpinned by an *intentional arc*:

The life of consciousness – cognitive life, the life of desire or perceptual life – is subtended by an “intentional arc” which projects round about us our past, our future, [and] our human setting. (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 136.)

These build up as fine discriminations that enable us to respond effectively in a wide variety of situations. For Dreyfus ‘an intentional arc is meant to capture the idea that all past experience is projected back into the world’ (2002b, p. 377). Such that the intentional arc gives coherence to what presents themselves to human beings – we encounter things on the basis of prior experiences and the skills and capacities we have acquired. This structures the way in which the world appears for someone, as such it provides capacity to make sense of and to respond to things appropriately.

Thus, rather than focusing on explicit objectives Merleau-Ponty identifies an implicit tendency to project through these intentional arcs. These link the micro-corporeal movements of dynamic existence with longer-term human projects. Importantly these are both characterized by a tendency to pursue equilibrium with the world:

Whether a system of motor or perceptual powers, our body is not an object for an “I think”, it is a grouping of lived-through meanings which moves towards its equilibrium. (Merleau- Ponty 1962, p. 153.)

This tendency to find a balance with the situation we are confronted with is observed in the both Sam’s and another participant, Joy’s movements. The video studies show their bodies’ trying on a new garment, as well as the new and unconventional activity they are confronted with. These micro-corporeal, incremental and improvisational moves are the embodied process by which bodies proceed towards of the garment into their embodied habits and attitudes. These micro-corporeal adjustments are also links in more extensive series of movements. These may encompass the largely unconscious and routinized activities, such as getting dressed or making a cup of tea, as well as new and novel experiences.

### *Incorporation*

When we buy new garments we become sensitive to their look and feel. We observe our external appearance in a mirror to assess our appearance, paying very close attention to the ‘look’ in the reflected image of our body. The feel of the garments on our bodies is also something we are more sensitive to. The first few times we wear a garment we are much more conscious of the garment, than other garments that have been wardrobe staples. This process of incorporation into our embodied habits is also marked by a less explicit focus upon that garment.

The movements observed in the sartorial sessions can be understood as corporeal responses to novel objects, and the process by which those garments become incorporated into our embodied habits. According to Merleau-Ponty these changes of habit involve ‘the rearrangement and renewal of the corporeal schema’ (1962, p. 164). All our perceptual and embodied actions in the world are integrated within our corporeal schema. Often repeated movements sediment into habitual and unreflective patterns of action and routine, while novel experiences, we encounter as anomalies and learning new skills involves much more significant change of the corporeal schema.

The ability to learn how to manipulate and become accustomed to new things involves changes to the corporeal schema which corresponds by gradual withdrawal of new pieces of equipment from explicit awareness. The blind man’s stick discussed above ‘has ceased to be an object for him, and is no longer perceived from itself’ (1962, p. 165).

Sam’s movements show her seeking a best ‘fit’ with the new garment. It follows the incorporation of this new garment and enables new inflections for corporeal experience and potentially new capabilities or perspectives.

*Joy: attuning touch & material sensing*

Joy was the second participant in the sartorial sessions. She chose to wear a pleated black linen skirt, along with her own grey marl top and shoes. The skirt has large vertical pleats running around the body in an irregular pattern, a zipper in the centre back seam and paper bag style waist. It also has angled side pockets with very large pocket bags inside of which are the black seeds. The pockets are about twice as large as you would expect to find in a pair of men’s trousers.

Joy session took place in the same space as Sam's. The white walls, grey floor and orange stools are familiar elements in the video works and provide a continuous background against which distinctive movement can be identified across both sessions. In the first part of the scene Joy is standing close to the camera, her hands are clearly visible against the black linen fabric of the skirt she wears. The auto light meter in the camera struggles to balance the changes in light as she moves around in front of the camera blocking light from its lens

These movements immediately reminded me of *Sam (Attuning Touch) (2017)* with their swift coordinated actions between the hand and the fingers. There are two distinct sequences of movement warranting consideration. All of these involve the hand movements coordinated with the body and garment.

In the first sequence of movement Joy's hands move in the front section of the skirt. Using both hands, she uses her fingers to pinch a small amount of fabric drawing it outwards away from her body, see Image 8: *Joy (Material Sensing) (2017)*. This movement pulls the fabric tight across the front of her legs. She releases the fabric.

She repeats the movement again but this time the finger pads of her slightly cupped but still open hand trace across the surface of the skirt. Her fingers tap very lightly against the fabric, tentatively seeking out contact upon its surface. There is also a greater spread of the fingers, and the movements are gentler, and appear more aware than before.

There is an accompanying movement of the leg beneath the skirt, which moves forward to meet her hands (see Image 8: *Joy (Material Sensing)* (2017) frame 4). The series of movements is slower than the first, appearing more composed and considered. In Image 5 once the leg is withdrawn the hands again tap the surface of the fabric as if gauging its tension, and then rise up out and of the frame.

I read into Joy's movements like that of Sam, a way of adapting, or *tuning* into this novel situation she finds herself in. Yet this particular repertoire of movements displayed significant differences.

The movements of Joy's hands are located in the front area of the skirt. Notably they do not address the grey marl top (which is hers) or any other part of her body, but are drawn to the front surface of skirt. She interacts with this area of the skirt as a membrane of some kind, as a gently tensioned tissue stretched across two points.

This takes place in the following way. Her first action involved pinching fabric between the fingers and drawing it out towards the sides of her body. This created a tensioned skin or membrane, while the second set of movements is directed towards an exploration of the surface, as if 'playing' the surface of a small drum. Her finger pads gently tap the surface, although not to produce sound, but to explore its surface, to examine or test the limits of the tension with tiny applications of pressure.

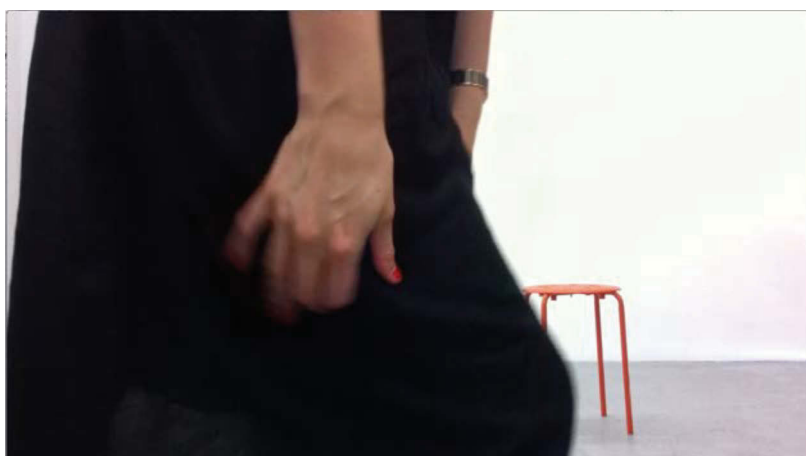
The shape of this skirt is quite different to the dress that Sam wore in the first session.

Joy's skirt projects outwards, away from the body. Sam's above was cut close to the body,

particularly close to the hips. Notably, Sam's tactile exploration discussed above employed contact of the open palms to press and smooth the body, indicating the use of hands and their tactile sense to survey or assess. This movement also suggested the tactile sense was oriented towards the body beneath the textile.

Joy's touch is via the fingertips and pads and explored the tensioned surface of the fabric. This was firstly through tensioning the fabric herself, then using her finger pads to explore the skirt surface as if a membrane. In both cases there is no mirror to observe oneself and it is arguable this modality of touching gathers information about the status and appearance of the body.





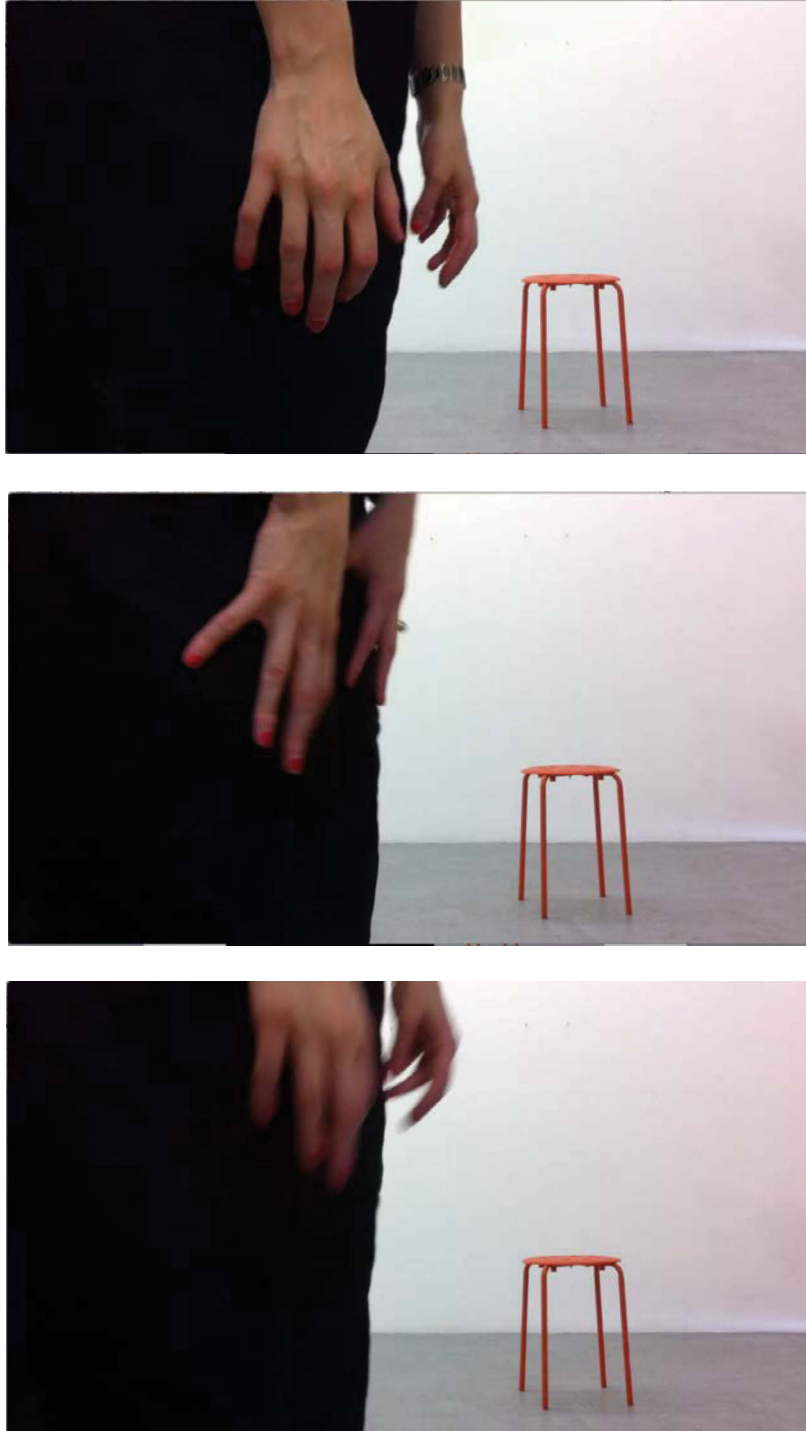


Image 8: *Joy (material sensing)* (2017), Todd Robinson, video still compilation

Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the spatiality of the body, articulated in *The Phenomenology of Perception* is useful to understand the significance of these micro-movements. He addressed the variable nature of the body, in relation to our engagement with material things. For example, things worn or employed by our bodies can augment our experience of space as well as enlarge our perceptual scope. In addition to the example of the blind man's cane discussed above, he also considers an example of a woman wearing a feather in a hat that augments the spatiality of her body in such a way:

that the woman, without calculation, keeps a safe distance between the feather in her hat, and things which might break it off. She feels the feather where the feather is just as we feel where our hand is. (1962, p. 165)

In other words, the exterior threshold of the woman's body is experienced at the tip of the feather and not at the top of her head. He explains the hat has:

ceased to be an object with a size and volume which is established by comparison with other objects. They have become potentialities of volume, the demand for a certain amount of free space (1962, p. 165).

This perspective can be also applied to clothing. Things we wear upon our bodies over time become incorporated into our corporal schema or habit. Moreover, the example implies there is a period of time, through which this process of incorporation, takes place. Conceivably this would have encompassed instances of striking the feather on door-

frames or other overhead impediments, that over time, would modify the experience of one's body when wearing the hat.

I would like to offer a reading of Joy's hand movements as they transpired in that first scene that draws upon the perspective; that our bodies' movements, and interactions with things are the visible ways by which the body gathers information about the environment.

This indicates a potential reading that Joy's tracing, and tensioning of the surface of her skirt, that suggest her movements reveal a somatically experienced body, delineating the exterior threshold of her dressed body, and that such movements are a visible indication of a process of both adaption to novel circumstance and incorporation of novel equipment.

Her touching maps the exterior limits of her dressed body, which can be observed in the silhouette which outwards projects from her hips and body. And like the woman wearing the hat with the feather, the exterior limit of the skirt, would not be experienced as the cutaneous surface of her legs plus the indeterminate amount of textile beyond, but rather the body actively incorporates the skirt as the exterior threshold of the dressed body and an interior volume it conceals.

Conceivably this process would take place over multiple times a garment is worn, but in this initial episode, the sensual and exploratory mode of examining the garment through

tactile contact, suggests the beginning of this process of incorporation, where the body, seeks to come into closer contact with this new garment.

Close examination of Joy's *attuning touch* highlights something about material specificity that remained background in Sam's example. Joy's touch appeared both sensitive to and sentient of the particular properties of the material she was interacting with. This may have been due to the style of garment, as it pitched away from the body, or perhaps an acquired sensitivity on the part of Joy<sup>4</sup>. Either way she displayed skilful handling of the material in how she firstly, manipulated the fabric, through the stretching of the fabric, between her fingers, then how in her subsequent movements she gently yet confidently, explored that surface tension, mapping its surface.

Each of these movements appears as a more finely calibrated response or adaption to the one that precedes it. The series of movements also revealed the way in which she brought out a particular property of the material, that it is crisp, parchment like, membranous quality, in this movement. She could have made a wide range of kinetic responses to the garment, perhaps swaying in it, or pressing/smoothing as in Sam's case, but the specific repertoire of movements to emerge in that interaction did bring out a quality that resonates with me as the designer of that garment. That crisp, parchment like quality, was elicited through those small sequences of movement.

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<sup>4</sup> Joy works as a fashion academic, and participant in fashion. She worked as a sales assistant in a high-end fashion boutique selling Belgian labels notable for quality, innovative fashion garments. As such she is knowledgeable of fabric, garments styles and details and contemporary fashion.

*Zepp: environmental adaption*

Zepp was the fourth participant in the series. He wears a blue linen outfit consisting of a long and unstructured coat with matching trousers. There was also a small bag I produced that was cut from the same fabric. It was teamed with a white t-shirt and off-white canvas sneakers. The rationale for the session in contrast to Sam and Joy was to use water to generate bodily movement. The garments would act as a carrier for a material and there would be a visual correlation between the movements of the body and the visual effects of the water on garment.

Water was deployed as an *environmental* provocation. This contrasted Sam and Joy's sartorial sessions where the use of seeds was subtly integrated into the garments as a somatic elicitation device. The subtlety of the sensory-tactile stimuli in those cases hovered at the limits of participants' conscious awareness. As such particular movements indicated their bodies were deployed their motor-sensory powers to locate and assess the status of the stimuli in relation to bodily comportment. The presence of these tactile elements was not obviously visible to an observer. It was only through the movements of the body was their presence examined.









Image 9: *Zepp (Dry)* (2017), Todd Robinson, video still compilation

In contrast the use of sensory-tactile materials influence the body through transformations of the garment and physiological effects. This draws on textiles' function as a carrier of materials and for the garment to change when it comes into contact with materials. This approach foregrounds mediation between the sartorial body and environment, as well as how the body is susceptible or vulnerable to the environment it inhabits. This inverts what is the usual role of clothing to keep bodies within a range of comfort as well as a general protection from the environment.





Image 10: *Zepp (Getting Wet)* (2017), Todd Robinson, video still compilation

At first, Bruno moves about manipulating the garment in different ways. The movements are tentative. The movements appear to help him to get used to and understand the garments and to relax into the research context. He rolls up one sleeve, as well as explores the bag by opening and closing it. He wraps the garment around his body every now and

then by doubling it over the front. In this scenario he appears much more aware of the camera. The movements are tentative and exploratory.

Water was dispensed from above. The water drips out slowly at first giving Zepp an opportunity to manage the flow and avoid feeling completely overwhelmed by the water. He was given an instruction to 'capture' which is as much a poetic and dramatic instruction as a practical one. He initially avoids the flow of water. As he gets used to the water it corresponds to the garments' degree of wetness. This can be observed in the image compilation where there is a cumulative process of the garment transforming from light to dark blue.

The transformation of his visual appearance signals a more extensive metamorphosis of the body that can be observed in subsequent movements. As the water soaks deeply into the fabric it changes from bright blue crisp linen to a glossy indigo colour fabric. The tiny creases and striations of the dry linen become longer glistening folds, which wrap around the body as the fabric clings and sucks to the body.

The movements which were tentative, are now directed towards plucking the wet fabric away from his body. The drenching necessitates a new phase of bodywork as fabric is drawn away from the body by his hands. These actions are similar in orientation to Sam's, as they are directed towards the garments, yet different in origination. They are clearly in direct response to the environmental disturbance of water. This contrasts with the culturally inscribed movements of Sam as she prepared and managed her body for

public presentation. Zepp's movements are more akin to an organism responding and adapting to changes in the environment.

Noticeable physiological changes take place in his body. There is a moment when his shoulders and torso rise and expand over a few seconds and it becomes apparent he draws a deep breath, which is exhaled, signified by the drop of the shoulders. This effect is known as a dive reflex or 'diving bradycardia' and involves a breath-holding reflex and slowing of the heart rate. It is typical of all mammals and is said to be a reflex response characteristic of all mammals to water that is believed to conserve oxygen during immersion in water. (Gooden, B. 1994).

Physiological processes could also be observed in Bruno's session. Bruno was the final participant and instead of water, sand was used as the environmental provocation.





Image 11: *Bruno (Sweat)* (2017), Todd Robinson, video still compilation

Towards the end of his session two irregular patches of sweat started to form on his back, no doubt generated by the intensity and exertion of his physical movements to remove the sand from his body. These are shown above in Image 11: *Bruno (Sweat)* (2017).

These markings offered a unique phenomenon in the context of this research. It pointed towards internal bodily processes going on that are distinct from the bodies' visible and often intentional actions and movements that are available to others. The marking

indicated those ongoing silent biological processes that reveal themselves infrequently. Leder refers to this as the ‘recessive’ body (1990) .

There were other movements in Zepp’s session that are physiological in nature. He wraps wet fabric around his body in order to preserve body temperature. He also enacts other movements to smooth his wet hair away from his face - not as a preening gesture, but rather simply to enable him to see. There is something basic about these series of corporeal movements and their emergence signalled a modality of movement aligned with survival and changes to environmental conditions. In these movements the body emerges in terms of its vulnerability and relationship to the broader physical environment.





Image 12: *Zepp (Wrap)* (2017), Todd Robinson, video still compilation

These movements stemming from environmental and non-cultural anomalies are in contrast to Joy and Sam's culturally inscribed physical adaptations for public display.

It is also illuminating to consider in close detail a crouching movement that Zepp enacted to reveal the complexity of sartorial coordination. In *Zepp (Crouch)* (2017) he is completely wet and the garments cling to his body, limiting his movement. He stands as a wet and glistening, blue clad figure, his long saturated hair concealing his face.



His movement traces a path up and down; the full extension of this movement constrained by the height of his body and also garments clinging to him. He bends at the knee and at the same time his hands, manipulate and arrange fabric bunching at the front and side of his coat pocket. As he rises up, he hitches up his trousers to move his body into a crouching position. The soaking garments cling to his body and the 'hitching' action releases the fabric and frees his movement.







Image 13: *Zepp (Crouch)* 2017, Todd Robinson, video still compilation

The sequence reveals the subtle complexities of what is normally considered a mundane activity. That anyone who has worn trousers would somatically understand, the need to hitch up a small amount of fabric onto your thighs when sitting down or crouching to accommodate the change to the body's position.

The experience of viewing what is normally an inconsequential movement is enhanced and intensified through the viewing of this sequence in wet clothing. The wetness elicits a haptic viewing of the body where the sensorial dimension of movement is evoked by movements of the body and the depiction of materiality.

This simple and ordinary movement of hitching his trousers up brings into view the way in which the body's movements and the garments are coordinated and set in a relation of mutual affect. The body and the garments reciprocate each other's movements.

In conclusion, garments are things we need to incorporate and in doing so become a part of our habits and routines. These movements can be understood at the micro-corporeal level as incremental and improvisational bodily adaptations to find a felt-sense of equilibrium with the world. These movements are also links in much longer chains of human movement. This point is crucial because it suggests even the micro-corporeal can be understood in relation to implicit concerns and commitments we have, that are played out over much longer time periods, and inform the nature of our engagement with the world.

These movements can be understood as a part of our cultural and expressive practices as well as our biological movements or adaptations to the environments we inhabit. This is potentially a significantly under-explored aspect of fashion, and lends itself to new ways by which to understand the interaction of human beings with their environments and the way in which what we wear upon our bodies mediates our interactions with the environment.

This perspective is salient within a context of environmental change and global warming, whereby frameworks and understandings that foreground the reciprocal nature of our relationship to our environments, as well as our vulnerability to changes within it, would indicate a more sustainable way of conceiving and participating in fashion.

As highlighted, human beings experience the world, not in terms of geometrical space, or a spatiality of position but a 'spatiality of situation' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 115). The garments and the broader research design of these activities serves to prioritize these embodying aspects of dress and show how their wearers become embodied through them.

The video studies bring explicitly into view the situated, embodied and materially inflected aspects of wearing clothing. This perspective is absent within discourse on fashion and dress. Fashion theorist Alison Gill argues the material and mundane is largely absent in accounts of fashion. She writes:

In dress studies, although there may be an increasing awareness of the public spectacles of fashion that disseminate through the culture-scape, variations on the

theme of the body (images and forms), situating bodies historically and ideologically, there is little explicit analysis of dress as mundane and habitual practice which shapes the daily appearance and experiences of being a clothed body (Gill 2002).

While the literature in Fashion Studies accounts for the social forces producing these dressed-bodies, readings of the bodies in the research show these concrete processes in play. What can be viewed are the *embodied responses* made in the context of fashion's disciplining dimension whereby dress codes, beauty and aesthetic regimes delimit a range of possibilities.

## CHAPTER 5

### *Expressive gesture*

*Joy: Expressive gesture*

Two participants can be observed either side of the frame. Joy is on the left. Another figure dressed in blue stands on the right. Joy on the left begins to gesticulate, with movements of her arms and body towards the other figure.

She makes a series of circular sweeping movements around her torso with the palms facing her body. Other instances of movement include an ‘unfurling’ motion with her hands and fingers. When unfurling her hands in this way, they move progressively outwards, with the palms open, and the circular movements progressively expand on each successive rotation.

It is obvious from watching these movements these are gestures that accompany speech in the context of interpersonal communication. What makes these movements particularly interesting for this study is that they are closely related to her spoken reflections upon what she wears, which includes reference to the types of garments as well as the way she likes to wear them.

In this respect these gestures are *self-referential* and point to the relationship between observable movement and embodied sensations. While enacting these movements Joy explains the way she wears clothing as well as her sartorial dispositions; in other words what she likes and doesn't like. In her explanation she refers physically to different parts and zones of her body, such as the waist and hips for example, while verbally making reference to different types of garments, skirts and dresses.



At one point she places her hands flat across her abdomen then at another, she moves down her front and collects a small piece of fabric in her hands and shakes it. In other instances she points to or touches a particular part of the body, or the garment, while at other she enacts movements in space.







Image 14: *Joy (Expressive Gesture)* (2017), Todd Robinson, video still compilation

Gestures are human movements located in the realm of visual perception. Gesture can be understood in its conventional meaning as ‘a movement usually of the body or limbs that expresses or emphasizes an idea, sentiment, or attitude or ‘the use of motions of the limbs or body as a means of expression’<sup>5</sup>. This definition has a semiotic or symbolic connotation in that gestures have codified meanings transmissible to an observer. Notably gestures in this sense are enacted as a means of expression usually directed towards someone else. We can understand the meaning of such commonly used gestures such as a wave goodbye, or a nod of the head signifying recognition. Yet some of the gestures produced within sartorial sessions problematize this narrow understanding of gesture whilst also producing new ways in which the concept can be enriched.

The work of movement practitioner and theorist Rudolf Laban is relevant here. In his work in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Laban analysed movements breaking them into basic actions as well as a wide number of derivatives. He elaborated a systematic typology underpinned by a ‘movement drive’ that is revealed through effort qualities (1980, p. 67). These effort qualities are manifested in bodily actions through the following dimension: weight, time, space and flow elements. He writes ‘the action drive is characterized by performing a function which has concrete effect in space and time through the use of muscular energy or force’. (1980, p. 68)

He makes some important points which I have considered in my exploration of sartorial kinesis. His main thesis, is that human beings’ movement is rich in expression, and that

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gesture>

human beings movements communicate something of their 'inner being'. (1980, p. 68)

At the same time he advocates for the cultivation of awareness and sensitivity to the expressive effects of our movements on both ourselves as well as others. In this sense the movements that have been generated in this research, albeit many which would not be recognised in unmediated perception, when subject to close examination have offered a considerable insight into the life of the body.

An insight to flow from Laban's studies of human movement is that it is possible to perceive qualitative differences in one's own movement when we are somatically attuned. It is also possible to observe qualitative difference in others' movements. According to Laban, 'each phase of movement, every transference of weight, every single gesture of any part of the body, reveals some feature of our inner life' (1980, p. 19). Laban does not distinguish different kinds of movement; he considers *all* human movement to be worthy and capable of analysis.

The source of these movements is the 'inner life' of the body that 'originates from an inner excitement of the nerves' and derives from some immediate sensory stimuli or is produced by our prior somatic experience of movement, or in other words our embodied history of movement. These results in 'voluntary or involuntary' efforts or impulses to move (1980, p. 19).

More recently theorist Carrie Noland, made a similar point on the relationship between externally available movements and the sensations of enacting those movements. She highlights attending to the felt experience of enactment of movement. She describes the

corporeality of a graffiti artist and the movements they enact both in terms of the inscription of the artists' identity or 'tag', which is at the same time 'simultaneously measuring [of] space, monitoring pressure and friction, accommodating shifts in weight' that are experienced by graffiti artist somatically (2010, p. 2). She points out how the 'kinaesthetic' and 'interoceptive' experience of human movement *exceed* the communicative and instrumental dimension assigned to a particular task or gesture.

This is particularly pertinent to this study, for when we observe Joy's movements in the session, such as her gestures, and the actions she directs towards her body and the garment, we observe what are complex yet largely under-determined significations visible to view, but they are *also* movements that are shaped by the somatic sensations of enacting them.

This means the notion of gesture can operate as semiotic material in the context of interpersonal communication while *also* being indicative of private somatic experience. For example in Joy's first sequence of movements the palms face inwards towards her torso and abdomen, and make circular sweeping movements towards her body. These movements refer to a particular zone of her body while the unfurling gesture can be read as a 'drawing out' as one would a length of ribbon out of a pocket. The gestures metaphorically draw out somatically experienced sensation from a background of ambiguously differentiated visceral sensations.

The sequence highlights the complex interaction between the supposed semantic content of a gesture and its lived experience. In other words, while Joy makes those gestures to

support her verbal statements they serve to signify and at the same time reflexively *recall* what are privately experienced somatic experiences of being dressed. While these gestures are under-determined and ambiguous they nonetheless highlight the continuities between the physical enactment of those symbolic gestures and how the kinaesthetic experience of making those gestures informs the *shape* of those gestures. As Noland insightfully points out, the experience of producing a gesture, ‘contributes to a sign’s contour, dynamic, duration, and communicative force’ (2008, p. XIII).

In other words in our readings of gesture, we can learn to see something of the qualitative differences to those movements and to see variations in the tonicity of those movements:

in all cases gestures manifest a broad range of “effort qualities” (Laban’s term) – tentative or firm, bound or flowing, lethargic or rushed – that affect their meaning both for others and ourselves. (Noland 2010, p. 6)

Comparatively, wearing clothing is not only about protecting one’s modesty, or a public presentation of our sociality, gender, sexuality or occupation; or in other words, any of the complex significations of our identity/s we perform through our dress practices, but is also constituted by the tactile, kinaesthetic and interoceptive sensations of being dressed.

It follows Joy’s gestures, or Sam’s tucking movements or smoothing, all *indicate* a variety of privately experienced somatic sensations, such as the sensation of the fabric against the skin, its weight registering on-at different parts of the body, around the waist, the thighs etc. as well as the sensation of sartorial kinesis as the dressed body proceeds, moving

through space and garments drape and shape around the body as it moves. It is also the case sensations of bodily movements can be conjured from our embodied memories of prior experiences of how we have experienced our bodies' in movement at different times.

*Zepp: Capture*

Zepp is standing still. The blue coat he wears is neatly buttoned up. His long hair divides across both shoulders. As the water begins to flow he lifts and cups his hands to the water. The flow increases to a point whereby he rotates his hands outwards and the water begins to fall on the backs of his hands. The singularity and stillness of his standing posture, emphasises the expressive movement of the hands. The movement appears as a transitionary moment or shift in orientation. The series of movements is depicted in *Zepp (Watercatcher)* (2017) video compilation below.













Image 15: *Zepp (Watercatcher)* (2017), Todd Robinson, video still compilation

While the cupping of the hands is in itself practical and purposive, the rotation of the back of the hands towards the flow of water is in contrast, ambiguous. Samuel Todes pointed out our bodily structure is fundamental to how the world is experienced. He describes this initially through our sense of direction which he links to the ‘functional symmetry of our front-back structured body’ (2001, p. 106). Our practical forward oriented way of encountering the world creates an ‘invariant sense of direction’ (2001, p. 106). While we can change direction, our sense of direction as upright, bipedal forward-going creatures cannot change; we always *face* forward. This produces a spatiotemporal field where that which is faced and dealt with makes up an emergent and unfolding context of activity. At the same time what has already been faced and dealt with is behind us or in our past and history.

While Todes focused on the invariant sense of direction produced by our forward facing anatomical and perceptual structure of the body, it is worth reflecting upon the structure

of our hands and relation to the rest of the body. While we work generally with our hands in front of us, they can also reach objects behind us, or to the side or above us. Our hands are also able to rotate and move freely in space, albeit with some assistance of the arm and lateral constraints.

The hands' structure itself is defined by its two sides; the palm of the hand and the back of the hand. The palm is not a face or a front, but most usually an organ of the body that faces inwards towards the sides of the torso. At other times the palms of the hands open and busy themselves in practical work or social interaction.

Zepp's sartorial session is structured around the activity interacting with water dispensed from the bucket and pulley system installed above. The use of the flowing water creates a simple narrative of corporal transformation of dry to wet. By orienting the backs of the hands to flowing water Zepp appears to shift from an active mode where he catches the water in cupped hands to an acquiescent relation to the water. At the moment he rotates his hands to the back he orients his body towards the water, such that it flows directly onto his body falling onto his shoulder and hair.

This simple gesture fulfils an analogy for the body as a whole. While these hand movements have a practical purpose to catch the water, they reveal an expressive mode, where the simple rotation indicates a more acquiescent relationship towards the water. The expressive gesture sets in train more extensive series of corporeal transformations. These were observed in his movements, gestures and behaviour and the garment he wears.

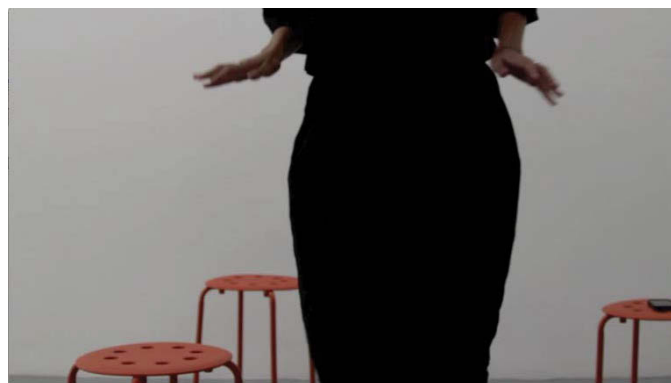
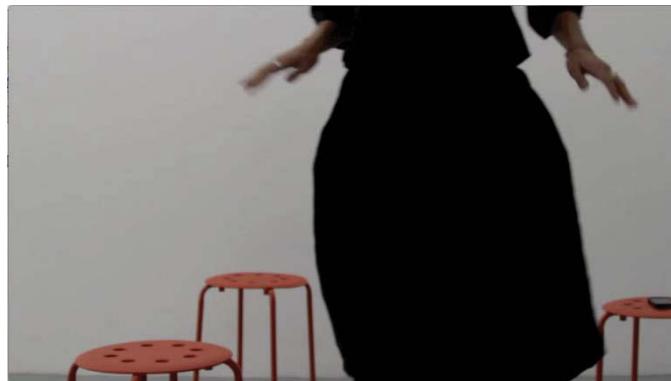
In the case of Zepp these movements signalled a more extensive metamorphosis of the body that were observed in subsequent transformations of the surface of the body through change to the colour of the fabric as well as the hair. The water soaks the linen fabric, transforming its crisp blue surface to a glossy and glistening wet skin. The fabric clings and sucks to the body. The transformation also reflected in his movements from 'dry' movement to 'wet'.

*Narmine: Expressive Gesture*

Narmine is the second participant. She enacts a number of distinctive hand movements in her session. Initially these appear similar to the kinds of gestural expression enacted by Joy. Yet, Narmine's movements are not oriented towards anyone in particular, nor were they self-directed movements such as those made by Sam. They were movements that appear for the simple pleasure or benefit of their enactment.

These gestures are clearly articulated and produced in the space in front of and to the side of the body. Yet these movements do not accompany verbal statements, nor are they directed towards another person but are observed to flow directly from the interaction with the garment.







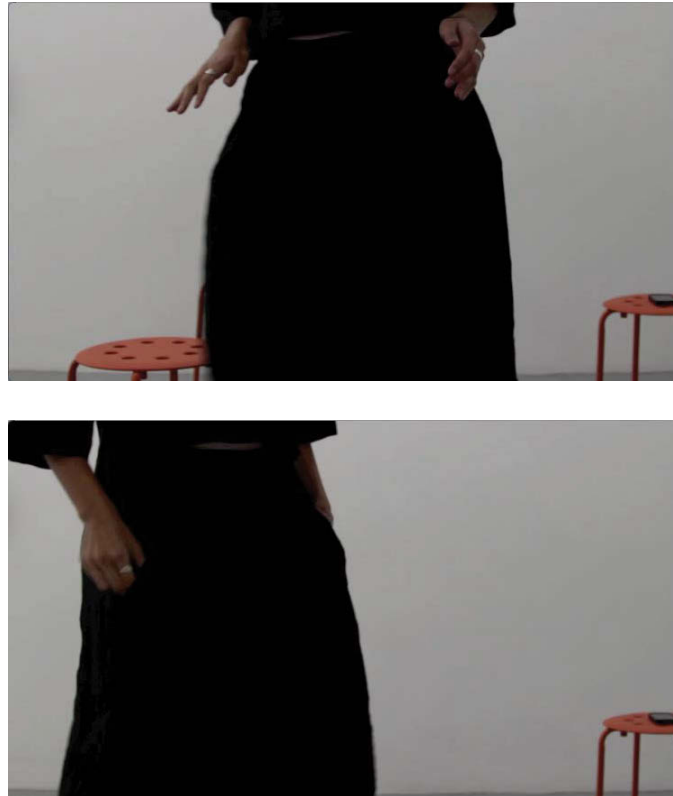


Image 16: *Narmine (Expressive Gesture)* 2017, Todd Robinson, video still compilation

In *Narmine (Expressive Gesture)* 2017 above, Narmine moves in and across from a distance of two or three meters from the camera, moving from left to right. This traces a sweeping arc through the space occupying the orange stools leading her towards the centre of the frame. In the middle series of video stills she removes her hands from her pockets, and with palms facing down, raises her hands and fingers from the wrists with the fingers rolling outwards. This is reminiscent of the unfurling movement enacted by Joy, yet the difference here is the palms face down towards the ground and the limbs and forearms are relatively immobile.

The movement at that moment is a kind of ‘roll out’ and release of effort through the fingertips. She is also walking whilst undertaking this movement. At the completion of the movements her hand and finger position remain poised ever so briefly. The

movements display a flowing continuity. Then with a very subtle extension through the heel of the hand and then a spread of the fingers, they appear to 'break' her movement and bring the gesture to its terminal velocity. The final few images of the sequence show her hands beginning to retract from the extension of the fingers, as well as bringing her limbs closer to the sides of her body and finally to the pockets.

There are two basic modes of movement taking place in this sequence. The first is the movements of the fingers, hands and arms. It's worth remembering inside the pockets are a small handful of shiny black smooth turtle seeds, which are an element not visible to an observer. The movement Narmine makes with her hands can be read as a response or reaction to the manipulation of the seeds that transpires out of sight in her pockets.

It is also worth noting the downward facing orientation of the hands, with palms facing downwards, produces the wing-like distinctiveness of this movement. This suggested the orientation and movement of hands in this gesture carried within them an anticipatory awareness that they would return to the pockets and the seeds.

In this way, the gesture is formed within the interval between tactile contact of the hands and appears as almost a compensatory gesture for the seeds' absence. Either way the movement appears as a response to them. The movements are seamlessly integrated and possess a forward going anticipation, as well as a trace of their prior movement. Todes refers to this phenomenon of movement, pointing out bodily experience is not made up of a series of discrete orientations rather the concluding orientation is experienced as an outcome of flow, 'from the initial to the terminal' (2001 p.110).

The second mode of movement is locomotion. Narmine walks around the space while moving her arms, legs, hands and torso. On these walks she manipulates the seeds, often making gentle bouncing actions with her body, correlated with her steps, to move the seeds up and down. She shakes and jiggles the seeds using hand, arm, leg movements in an energetic yet coordinated fashion.

Narmine's movement in this instance provides an example to reflect upon the significance of movements and what they *indicate somatically*. There are two ways I read these movements, both of which are relevant to deepening understanding of corporeal experiences of dress. The lyrical feel to this movement underscores its expressive quality, however the movement was enacted in the absence of spoken words, nor was the movement made to anyone in particular. The movement was enacted for the *benefit or pleasure of expressing that movement in itself*. In this sense this gesture signified the fulfilment of a sense of equilibrium or balance with the situation and the garment.

In *Women Recovering our Clothing* (1994) Iris Marion Young writes about opportunities for women to find pleasure in clothing. She discussed women taking pleasure in the sensory experience of clothing as well as through the use of fantasy, and a sensate or 'tactile' imagination, as opposed to 'visual' imagination.

Young emphasizes tactile experience as a way to gain pleasure from clothing that is not tied to an imagined observer or a male gaze. Drawing on feminist critiques of a 'female spectacle' she describes a dominant way participation in fashion emphasizes the female

body as an object for a public world to admire or judge (1994, pp. 201-203). This phenomenon internalizes an objectifying male gaze. This voyeuristic gaze reflects a masculine way of looking, evaluating and assessing the image of a woman as an object of specifically heterosexual male desire. By acknowledging the tactile experience associated with wearing clothing Young argues there is a possibility of an investment in clothing that goes beyond dressing for an other.

She writes:

When I “see” myself in wool it’s partly the wool itself that attracts me, its heavy warmth and textured depth. Some of the pleasure of the clothes is the pleasure of fabric and the way the fabric hangs and falls around the body. Straight skirts may give thigh to the eye, but the skirt in all its glory drapes in flowing folds that billow when you twirl (1994, p. 204).

Narmine’s movement described above complicates the notion that sartorial expression is produced for the visual consumption of another. It can be said public performances of dressed bodies are an important aspect of fashion as a cultural practice. This aspect is also pleasurable through participation in a shared social and cultural community as well as the visual pleasure of looking and being looked at.

Yet Narmine’s movements indicate there are ways of being comported in public space that does not orient the body *towards others*. Within those unusual, yet graceful movements I identify a somatically experienced sartorial pleasure in being dressed. For

example, there are moments when I have experienced the sensation of sartorial movement in the experience of walking, this sartorial, sensate walking can induce moments of reverie and one is happy in one's skin.

Narmine's movement is somewhat resonant with Baudelaire's flâneur (Benjamin 1999) .

Born of 19th century Paris, the flâneur was a well-dressed gentleman, who walked without haste and was led by the visual lures of a then incipient modern metropolis. Ambling through the newly built Passages Couverts de Paris (covered shopping arcades), galleria, public parks and squares the flâneur was distinguished by an excessively leisurely pace and a complete abandonment to the aesthetic pleasures of urban life.

The flâneur would be pursuing no particular end nor making his way to any particular destination, but would be completely absorbed in a kind of reverie. According to the poet Baudelaire, the flâneur could quite paradoxically lose and find himself in the faces of passers-by, their fashionable dress, in building facades, advertisements and the new, seductively displayed goods found in shop windows.

The fluency of the movement expressed by Narmine indicate a similar mode of absorption but not in the visual displays around her, as there was little for her to observe in the gallery space, but rather in the self-fulfillment or Poise, when one achieves a felt sense of comfort of Poise in what one is wearing. It is not important to the flâneur if he is the subject of the gaze of others or not. His pleasure derives from aesthetic absorption of the urban environment around him, not from the availability of his body for others.

I would like to emphasize that Narmine, just like the flaneur, is perambulating when she makes that gesture. And in that moment, there is an expression of Poise that registers as a dynamic effect in space. This dynamically expressed movement of Poise contrasts to the static intentionality of the posed body. When observing sartorial movements in *Poise*, we can observe finely calibrated qualitative differences in movement at the level of the micro-corporeal.

This brief and enigmatic gesture point towards ways of participating in fashion that transcend the notion that fashionable bodies are *only* exterior surfaces for the visual consumption of others. The movement points to a somatic depth and sensory experience of one's body as *tangible for itself*. This movement also questions the contradiction between dressing for oneself, as a disavowal of expressive dimension of fashion and an expressive dimension of fashion that is tied to the *self-satisficing* of oneself.

This perspective is particularly relevant in the context of critical discussions of fashion addressing its over emphasis on the expressive dimension to fashion and dress. The movements made by Narmine in this session suggest there are ways of gaining pleasure in fashion for oneself, that is not tied to the availability of one's body to the gaze of others, but is based in the achievement of poise and the self-satisficement through sartorial movement.

In conclusion, three instances of what initially appeared uncomplicated instances of gestural expressive movement have under close consideration, produced significantly

different ways in which we can understand movement and gesture in the context of fashion.

For example, the gesturing of Joy was observed as expressive movements of the limbs and hands oriented towards others that carry with them the shape and contours of what are somatically experienced sensations of the dressed body. In this sense, bodily movement can indicate something of the qualitative variations to somatic experience that we are at times capable of experiencing and observing.

Gesture has also been observed as movements and articulations of the body, that indicate variations to the way in which the body is comported to the world. Gesture of the body in this sense, indicated the implicit qualities of somatic experience can be examined by the movements of the body, not by direct correspondence, but rather by the way in which gestural movements can carry with them clues to the bodies' future projects, in where it is going and where it has been. In this sense gestures operate less as signs but rather as thresholds and markers.

Thirdly, the corporeal movements enacted by Narmine suggested expressive movement need not only be directed towards and for others but may itself simply be an outwardly oriented expression of pleasure or satisfaction for the one who makes it. This point is particularly salient, in the midst of discussion about ways to participate in fashion, that transcend the idea that fashion is solely about the gaze of the other. Yet at the same time preserves the fundamentally world oriented or inter-subjective dimension to fashion as taking place in a world we share with others.

## CHAPTER 6

### *Movement as body style*



Narmine chose to wear two items from the range. This included the black pleated skirt and a black top. The skirt has seeds within the pockets and in a pouch on the back of the top. She enacts a diverse range of movement including interactions with the garments, using her hands, as well as movements of her body as a whole. A distinctive aspect of the session is a focus upon the seeds indicated by her movements.

Overall, she is mobile, lively and active. She can be seen moving in and out of the frame from left of screen and then back to centre. These trace a lateral pattern of movement along with associated bodily actions. These include using her hands in her pockets to manipulate the beads, and as well as making subtle shaking or jiggling movements of the skirt. She repeats these movements a number of times. She undertakes these movements while stationary and when walking. The depth of the pockets means she cannot quite reach the seeds without arching her body from side to side. Her movements are lively and animated, and involve the use of the hands and arms, as well as her torso and legs. Her hands move in and out of the pockets at regular intervals.

Narmine's movements encompass patterns of walking, gesturing with the arms and hands, as well as more purposive actions of the body and legs. Some of these movements 'fine tune' the number of beads. For example, I would remove a few beads and she would walk off, and with a gentle bouncing movement she attempts to tune into the *feel* of the garments, and the seeds inside them. This is associated with hand movements as well, so overall her body was moving in a coordinated manner with arms, legs and torso, all working to activate the sensation awareness of the seeds.

Every now and then I would be place seeds into the pouch on the back while at other times remove them. At these times I would assist Narmine to find that sense of somatically experienced comfort where the amount of seeds was just right. This was a point of balance and comfort between the garment and the body. This process indicated a process of attuning her bodily sensations to the presence of the seeds and sartorial comfort, ease or poise.

In the image below *Narmine (Finding Balance)* (2017), she can be observed grabbing the collar of the top, and drawing it forward to reposition the weight of the garment to the front. As the seeds were in the back they tended to pull the front neckline up. Thus, a certain amount of seeds were needed to balance or to minimize the sense of discomfort around the base of the neck.

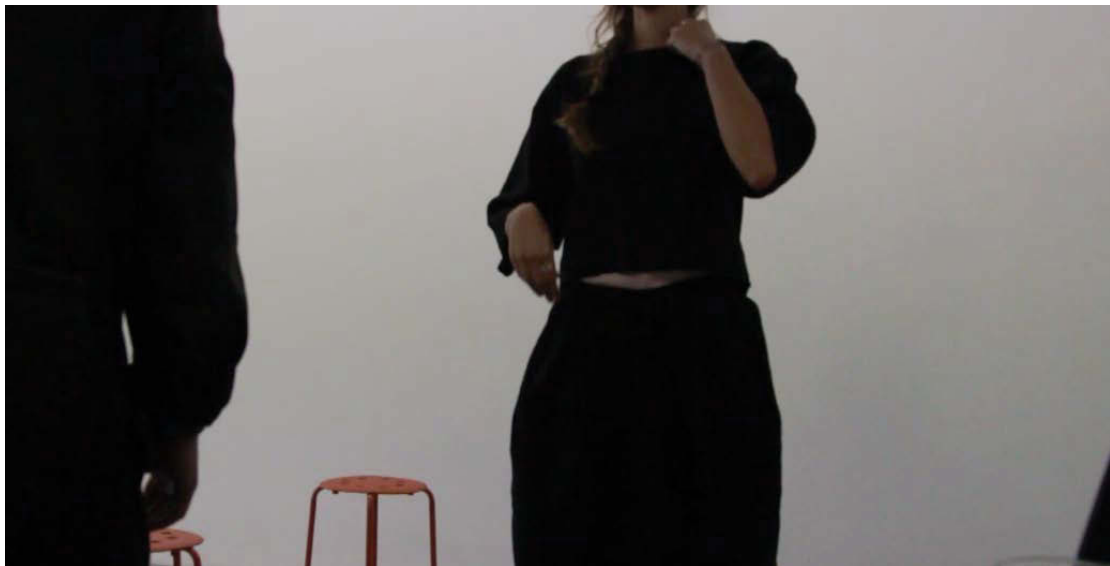


Image 17: *Narmine (Finding Balance)* (2017), Todd Robinson, video still

Iris Young in her essay *Throwing like a girl* (2005) addresses differences in ‘body styles’ between men and woman. She argues, due to realities of women’s socio-historical

situation there are particularly ‘feminine modalities of bodily comportment’ (Young 2005, p. 29). This comportment relates to women’s orientation and movements in space specifically in relation to purposive practical action in the world. She also points out this comportment is revealed in the ‘observable’ ways in which women adopt a ‘manner of moving’ and ‘relation to space’ and that these movements, can be ascribed an intelligibility and significance (2005, p. 29).

From examination of the video material Narmin’s *body style* is typified by continuous movements around the space and movements of her limbs and torso. This manner of moving was typical of the vast majority of her session. Overall, her bodily demeanour was dynamic, active and lively.

It is worth reflecting upon the relationship between movements displayed by Narmin and the ensemble of garments she wore. In addition to the skirt and top selected from the range she wore trainers and black leggings that were her own items. She also chose to wear the skirt over the leggings and the top over a singlet that can be seen as a horizontal slash of pink across her waist.

The way she coordinated those pieces on the day either reinforced a style of movement typical of her everyday movements, or those garments enabled a way of moving her body that was not normally expressed or only expressed in garments that afforded that particular way of moving and experiencing the body. The bodily style she displayed reflected a ‘sporty’, mobile and active corporeal attitude, towards the environment around her. Another way to express this is to say that her selection of research garments

to wear, as well as the choice of garments to team them with, resulted in an ensemble that was expressed as through her movements as 'sporty'.

Joy also managed to coordinate the garments and accessories in her session, with the limited choices available to create an ensemble that produced a distinctive style. Each of the participants revealed a style of movement that was distinctive, and typical of their session. This sense of movement style is associated with the garments and the body's movements.

The distinctiveness of Narmin's session originated in constant movement of her body and movements around the space. In contrast Sam and Joy did not walk as much. They tended to be stationary and express their movements through the torso, arms and hands. Joy's movements were fluid and expressive and expressed through arms and hands. They formed shapes that rolled out as successive iterations, each with a slightly different inflection. The expression was clear and grounded.

Sam's style tended toward *discontinuousness*, with less continuity or fluency across the different kinds of movements she made. For example, some movements were sharp and intense, when for example she tucked her blouse in, while at others, firm and sensual, when she smoothed and pressed her hips.

It is important to consider the dress choices of each and how these may have contributed to particular kinds and styles of movement. A selection of garment can work to enable or constrain movements in particular ways. Different garments in the range relate to

different parts and zones of the body. For example, some garments are in direct contact with the body, while others produce more space around it. It appears clear from the observations that the garments were associated with particular ways of experiencing the body, noted by the differences in movement and self-directed actions and action across all participants.

These observations suggest particular kinds of garments are associated with particular corporeal experiences and a manner in which we move. For example, the 'fit' of the garments Narmin wears are slightly oversized, and there is observable space between her body and the garments. They afford considerable movement as they do not impinge upon her body's movement in a visible way.

Yet Sam's fitted skirt seemed to focus her attention on her hips as well as physically restricting her movement to a certain degree, due to the limited size of a step that can be made in the pencil shaped skirt.

It is also useful to reflect upon the inclusion of the seeds that complicated the conventional experience of dressing for Narmin. Her movements were continuous as she moves about the room. It is arguable her movements indicate a form of 'body consciousness', as they reveal a level of somatic engagement with her body. Yet this is completely different from our accepted notion of 'body-consciousness' which is heightened awareness and self-consciousness of how the body may appear to others.<sup>6</sup> This

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<sup>6</sup> 'Bodycon' is a term employed to refer to a particular type of clothing that exposes the body either through the revelation of flesh or tightly contoured garments that fit the garment close to the body.

alternate notion of body consciousness is a somatically experienced sensitivity and attunement to how the body is oriented and moving in space. This notion of body consciousness is more aligned with Richard Shusterman (2008) notion of Somaesthetics.

The extent to which a particular body style is innate to a person is beyond the scope of this study yet it is possible to posit that that a *body style* manifests in relation to the clothing that is worn and that individual's express distinctive styles of movement or 'movement signature' as evidenced by all three womenswear participants. The distinctiveness is revealed in the manner of their movements and their interactions with the garment, their bodies, and others as well as their movements in space around the room.

A comparison of each of the participants, dress styles along with their movements, and the way in which they were enacted, enables the distinctive styles of movement to be identified and discussed. For example, Sam wore a garment ensemble of slightly oversized top section, while an almost pencil shaped skirt was closely fitted on the hips. Sam's body style was primarily reflected in the movements of the hands and arms, as she remained stationary for longer periods. There was an intensity to some of her movements contrasted with other movements which were slower. The furtive quality to her movements is underscored by this intensity and directed concern with exposure or appropriateness. In some ways the body style appeared discontinuous in contrast to fluid and thus reflected a more inhibited or concerned style.

In contrast Joy, was fluid and grounded, more poised in a conventional sense and her movements were assured and clearly expressed. Her style also suggested some kind of corporeal discipline and somatic awareness. Perhaps she studies dance, ballet or some other body practicing requiring an attentiveness and posture and deportment. While Joy's movements showed concern, with how the body is viewed, there was no indication of inhibition. Her body style was measured and comfortable.

It is also interesting to reflect on Joy's manner of movement, and the choice of outfit. She has a background in fashion, works as a fashion academic and also worked in a designer boutique for many years. This background disciplinary knowledge may account for her mode of assured yet expressive movement and a level of comfort in clothing. She chose to team the skirt with a light grey knitted top she wore on that day. She commented she liked the skirt and it seemed to me she was comfortable in the ensemble and at the same time, aware that her 'image' as it appears to others was a relevant aspect of this research. The ensemble she put together generated a strong silhouette. When she took up a stationary position in front of the camera, she was active, and dynamic in that position. The stationary position underscored the clarity of gestural movements.

In this regard it is worth noting that despite a limited choice available, both Narmine and Joy managed to personalize their dress choices on that day, by teaming pieces from the range provided with garments from their own wardrobe. Sam's selection of the dress as a single piece meant this was not possible. Perhaps this may account for the fluency and clarity of the body styles expressed by Narmine and Joy, while the discontinuous and

concerned movements of Sam was a result of the garment stifling or distorting Sam's regular way of moving and acting.

In summary, each of the participants displayed a distinctive manner of movement and corporeal comportment indicated by how they moved in space, as well as how their movements appeared inflected by the garments they wore. This distinctiveness is evident even though there were similarities in the types of movements that were disclosed in the session. There were a variety of movements that involved activity and focus on both the dress and body, as well as a focus upon others. In this sense the body style displayed transcends a specific repertoire of movements but is associated to the manner of movement or *how* the movements are enacted.

This would highlight the value of approaches to identify and distinguish qualitative differences in movements, in order to enhance our understanding of corporeal movements, styles of movement and how bodies are comported in space.

For Spinoza, Flores, and Dreyfus 'style is the ground of meaning in human activity' (1999, p. 20). By this they mean style is the way in which human beings conduct themselves in the manifold activities that comprise human life. According to the authors, style is what distinguishes particular ways of doing things that can be observed across culture as well as gender. What they in fact are talking about is the way in which human beings are observed in the midst of human practices. It is the texture of what transpires, and what links together specific actions and movements that comprise particular practices.



For these authors 'style' is important because it opens a 'disclosive space'. This is a term drawn from the work of philosopher Martin Heidegger, to mean a set of 'inter-related and organized practices that produce a self-contained web of meanings' (Spinosa, Flores & Dreyfus 1999, p. 17). It is the meaningful context where life transpires for individuals within a world shared with others.

Style is important because it is what actually coordinates or links together the wide variety and range of corporeal movements enacted by human beings in the conduct of their practices. They make the point, that style is what coordinates actions, such that practices have discernible styles at a cultural level. If the style changes, what becomes meaningful and important for a particular societal group is also likely to change.

It is also the case with sartorial practices, which encompasses a manifold of human actions associated with being dressed. They are similarly coordinated by a style that includes both what people wear, but also *how* people wear those clothes. It is also arguable this can be observed at a cultural and subcultural level. Laban concurs this, pointing out: 'certain epochs' ... 'particular occupations' or 'cherished aesthetic creeds' display variations in styles of movement that indicate preferences for particular 'bodily attitudes' (1980, p. 84).

Style for fashion and dress conventionally refers to the way in which an individual coordinates a series of individual garments, in such a way that the overall effect is one of a harmonious and pleasing ensemble of garments. The sartorial sessions indicated that there was a distinctive style displayed by participants but this was expressed in relation to

movement *and* the garments they were wearing. This importantly brings a dynamic modality to an understanding of fashion and style, which is not limited to garments alone but something that emerges in the interaction between body and garment.

This research reveals style to be a visible way of wearing clothing that produces visible effects in space with and through their bodies. These effects have qualitative differences that are noticeable between people, and that style is produced from the reciprocal exchange between body and garment. In other words, garments don't generate style; the garments inflect and shape an individual's movements.

Spinoza, Flores and Dreyfus (1999) make a similar point when they talk about, the way in which in different cultural settings, style means that some things are more important or 'show up as mattering' in particular ways. A cultivated personal aesthetic and corporeal comportment towards display matter in a city like Milan, while the same corporeal style in regional Australia would appear quite odd and out of place as more practical modes of dress and more practical modes of corporeal comportment are the norm. Style in dress, with this in mind, is not only the coordination of garments, but also a way of wearing them, and along with it, the visible way in which people interact with the world.

As described above, garments appear to produce or at least play a role in the expression of style and thus play a role in concrete ways in which people interact with the world and others, and indeed shape that world. For example, the body style displayed by Narmin might indicate a culture that values a sense of individualism, physical activity and

efficiency, while Joy's movements would indicate a concern with communication, dialogue as well as aesthetic ideals.

It is also worth noting that the distinctiveness of body styles emerged in relation to ensembles of dress that were decided upon by the participants, albeit with designated constraints. In this sense, the display of a particular body style may be associated with specific dress choices an individual could make, the specific design and material form of that garment ensemble, as well as a bodily disposition inflected by the clothing that one wears and is mediated by the context one is in. This complex interaction underscores recent discussions of fashion in relation to bodily comportment. This points to how dress choice is associated with agency.

Negrin (2016) applies a phenomenological perspective to the work of celebrated designer Rei Kawakubo of *Comme des Garçons*. She analyses Kawakubo's collection *When dress meets body when body meets dress* (1997) pointing out body and clothing form a 'reciprocal relationship', which are 'indistinguishable from each other as soft, malleable' things that 'work in concert with each other'. She also goes on to say in this instance 'dress is not treated as an object, which exists independently of the body and which is subsequently inhabited by it, but as inextricably intertwined with it' (2016, p. 127).

This analysis is valuable as it addresses the actual design of clothing as having specific *consequences* for the way in which we move. This is a much-needed addition to accounts of fashion and dress that emphasize the 'meaning' of the dressed body through semiotic frameworks. This perspective fails to acknowledge the lived experiences of wearing

clothing, nor the design's role in shaping those experiences. As a study of power dressing suggests there are political, ethical as well as economic consequences to the way in which dress is worn, experienced and interpreted (Entwistle 1997).

Discussions of fashion through the 'designer' lens are useful touch points for raising questions around fashion design and bodily comportment. Yet I would suggest focus on 'spectacular' fashion tends to affirm ingrained ways of conceiving fashion as a visual and aesthetic practice and somewhat misleadingly suggests only designer garments shape and inform bodily comportment.

It is not *only* Kawakubo's padded dresses that produces changes the way in which the body is experienced but *all* clothing. For example, Joy, Sam and Narmine's bodily comportment was revealed in the specific way in which they moved. These were simply designed and understated garments. They are not spectacular in the sense of much designer fashion.

In conclusion, the identification of distinctive body styles across the three participants indicates individuals display a distinctive movement signature or manner of moving that while unique to an individual, shares similarities across particular social or cultural formations. The clothing that we wear is an important component in the way a body style is expressed and that body style emerges in the interaction of the body and the garment.

It was also discussed, individual choices of clothing that people wear have the potential to enhance particular ways of moving that may not be expressed in other pieces of clothing while at the same time, may stifle or diminish other ways of moving. This particular aspect foregrounded the potential for enhanced agency in relation to body style.

In this sense the extent to which individuals can become attuned to body style more generally as well as their way of moving point towards opportunities to exploit variations in performances of movement. I contend we should develop resources that challenge existing representational practices in fashion that foreground the *look* of the garment. These resources should be oriented towards cultivating sensitivities to the embodied aspects of fashion and may include different ways of representing the body in fashion which foreground movement and interaction, while other resources, could take the form of educational or cultural programs that are directed towards shifts in cultural values and attitudes around the body and appearance.

By attuning wearers and makers to the ways garments shape experiences offers the potential to modify our existing styles. Noland makes a similar point in relation to the extent and sensitivity to ‘experiences of movement’ that make possible alterations to habituated routines on an individual level, but also contribute to wider cultural change. She argues that while we are capable of embodying and enacting shared ‘bodily practices across culture’ we are at the same time capable of ‘variations in performances’ of those embodied practices. She identifies the source of these variations in the:

embodiment of the habitus, [that] generates a far greater number of variations than the hazards of iteration can explain. These variations can accumulate and cascade into forms of innovation, and yes, resistance that produce profound effects on behaviour, effects that spread out, into the realm of conscious decision making, and other more mindful areas of cultural and political practice (2010, p. 3).

I would add an important caveat here, while attentiveness to our embodiment may offer opportunities to change our existing practices, it may also offer ways in which to resist new body practices, with deleterious effects or to retrieve marginal body-based practices with potential ameliorating effects of our current paradigm.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis concludes with discussion of the research's major contributions. These revolve around a set of resources by which to understand, explore and participate in fashion. The contributions are organized in three sections.

The first is the development of a new observational framework for fashion that is based on the embodied, sensory and perceptual aspects of being dressed. The framework offers a perspective that moves beyond the study of cultural representations of the body towards explorations of the fashionable body as a dynamic, sensory and chiasmic structure, that oscillates between a number of corporeal modalities. The framework carries the potential to deliver a nuanced and enriching account of sartorial experience.

The second contribution is a new vocabulary to understand and orient oneself to ways of conceiving, participating, making and researching fashion. The vocabulary is organized around the concept of *Poise*. *Poise* opens a perspective that emphasizes sartorial movement, temporality and the interactions of the body in terms of the adaptive movements that transpire at a micro-corporeal level.

*Poise* offers a way of understanding fashion as a multi-sensory, body-based, dynamic practice, enacted by individuals in relation to sartorial life. It offers an alternative to conspicuous intentionality of the posed body associated with existing conventions of fashionable representation by foregrounding micro-corporeal dynamics of the lived body.



The third contribution is the development of a participatory model of qualitative research that synthesises methods and methodological perspectives borrowed from *Sensory Ethnography, Design Probes and explorations of embodiment in the field of digital media* in order to elicit, explore, examine and communicate the embodied processes at play within sartorial activity.

*Development of an observational framework for foregrounding embodied sensory and perceptual experience in fashion.*

This research has led to the development of an observational framework that is capable of foregrounding the embodied sensory perceptual dimension of sartorial experience. This makes a contribution to ethnographically grounded exploration of somatic experience in fashion that moves beyond what have been largely theoretical applications of corporeal phenomenology in fashion.

The analysis shows the body to be a highly variable sensory and chiasmic structure, oscillating between a number of corporeal modalities. The findings of this perspective are summarized in the table below. It presents the five modalities organized in the following order: *Touch - Character, Body style, Integration, Orientation and Adaption*.

These modalities emerged from a close examination of individual participants' movements and behaviour as well as comparative analysis across each of the participants discussed in the chapters. The modalities provide an observational framework to examine and understand sartorial behaviour in terms of what are revealed to be general aspects

that comprise *being-dressed*. These aspects of sartorial experience emerged in relation to bodily movement, interactions with the garments, sensory materials and others in the sartorial sessions.

The first modality *touch character*, is related to participants self-directed touching of their body or the garments they wore. Touch character was observed as either ‘task oriented’ or ‘sensing’. Task based activities are enacted by the hands and are directed towards achieving a practical purpose, for example tucking in a shirt or adjusting a collar. Touch was also at times a ‘sensing’ modality oriented towards gleaning information.

For example, Joy’s touch was ‘sensing’ in the way her hands and fingers were oriented towards gleaning information about the skirt she was wearing in *Joy (Attuning Touch)* (2017). As discussed there was a suggestion this attuning touch was oriented towards gleaning information about how she might look from an observers’ perspective, noting there were no mirrors to self-assess one’s appearance. It was also observed her touch was ‘materials’ oriented, ‘exploratory’ and ‘fine grained’. In this way it was observed to be oriented towards the properties of the skirt, its fabric, the form it took.

Participant	Touch - character	Body style	Integration	Orientation	Adaptions
<b>Sam</b>	<i><b>Task focused</b> Furtive <b>Sensing</b> Evaluative</i>	<i>Discontinuous</i>	<i>Less integrated</i>	<i>Body conscious</i>	<i>Cultural</i>
<b>Joy</b>	<i>Material <b>Sensing</b> fine Grained &amp; exploratory</i>	<i>Fluid &amp; grounded</i>	<i>Integrated</i>	<i>World /others communicative</i>	<i>Cultural</i>
<b>Narmine</b>	<i><b>Sensing</b> Playful /Expressive</i>	<i>Poised &amp; playful</i>	<i>Integrated</i>	<i>Self-movement conscious</i>	<i>Cultural</i>
<b>Bruno</b>	<i><b>Task focused</b> Strong &amp; energetic</i>	<i>Strong Energetic &amp; poised</i>	<i>Integrated</i>	<i>Self-sensory- tactile conscious</i>	<i>Biological</i>
<b>Zepp</b>	<i><b>Task focused</b> Sensing/sensual</i>	<i>Poised &amp; smooth coordinated</i>	<i>Integrated</i>	<i>World /others performative</i>	<i>Cultural &amp; biological</i>

**Table 1: *Being-Dressed***

In *Sam (Getting Dressed)* (2017) the touching was described as ‘task’ oriented as it was directed towards the practical work of tucking in the top section of her dress, while the quality of ‘furtiveness’ indicated by the hurried character and what I took to be concern with exposure to the gaze of others. In *Sam (Attuning Touch)* (2017) the touch was ‘sensing’ and ‘sensual’ as it was oriented towards gleaning information about her body beneath the garment.

Narmine's touch character observed was 'sensing' in its orientation towards the seeds located in her pockets while qualitatively 'playful' and 'expressive' exemplified in *Narmine (Expressive Gesture)* (2017).

*Body style* refers to a manner or style of movement enacted by participants in their sessions. The body style observed in participants reveals the distinctive way the participant moved and was observed to be closely related to the specific ensemble of garments the participant wore. Body style is associated with how participants' movements were observed to be 'in tune', at ease, or comfortable with what they were wearing. Body style also points towards a particular way of experiencing one's body or being comported towards the world.

For example, Narmine's particular way of moving can be said to emerge in relation to particular somatic experiences of her body *in movement*. Her lively and animated manner is a way of moving that indicates the importance of movement and action for her. This distinctive body style was evidence in her lively and constant movements, as well as the playful and expressive gestures and movements of her hands, both in in her pockets and when she enacted gesture outside of the pockets.

Bruno's energetic body style emerged in relation to the sand upon his body, and the somatic drive to remove it. His movements were strongly expressed and physical. In contrast Zepp's body style overall was typified by a 'smooth and sensual coordination of this body in mutual interaction with the 'wet' garment. This highlighted a dynamic

chiasmic interplay of the body and garment as both touching and being touched by the body.

Joy's body style was expressed in fluid movements of her limbs as well as a grounded quality. In this instance she was less mobile around the room, but expressed movement through her limbs from a static position. This contrasted with Narmine who expressed animated and lively movement through her limbs and in her movements around the room.

*Integration* refers to the extent to which the garment was incorporated into the body of the wearer. *Less integration* refers to episodes where either the body or the garment was the subject of focal attention or activity. *More integration* referred to when participants were outwardly oriented towards a shared context and the garments were incorporated unconsciously into the habits of the body. In these situations, they attended outwardly towards the world through their bodies in contrast to attending directly to their bodies.

In most sessions there were *high levels of integration* between the body and the garment. In these instances, participants appeared comfortable, and at ease with the garment, to the point where their perceptual focus is outwardly focused towards others and the social context they are immersed in. The only exception was Sam and Bruno. In *Sam (Getting Dressed)* and *Sam (Attuning Touch)* *less integration* was evident in the way she attended towards the garment and at other time her body as specific objects of attention. While Bruno was focused upon the sand on his body but interestingly demonstrated some level

of integration in the way he manipulated the garments in order to remove sand from them.

*Orientation* refers to the directedness or orientation of participant activities, movements and behaviour. There were episodes of movement where participants attended to the garment as an autonomous artefact, while at other times attended to their body as something potentially available to the gaze of others. It was also observed participants' attend to the world or others through their bodies 'as-dressed', when for example we become immersed within shared social contexts, as an integrated and dressed self.

As mentioned above, Sam was oriented towards the garment in *Sam (Getting dressed)* and towards her body in *Sam (attuning touch)* while Zepp was outwardly focused in the performative presentation of his wet body in *Zepp (Crouch)* (2017). Bruno was focused upon his strong tactile sensation experience of his body in *Bruno (Sand)* (2017).

It is useful to consider how Joy, in contrast to Sam demonstrated a more outwardly oriented modality. This holistic orientation was noted in less focus upon the garment as individual artefact, rather her touching of the garment was viewed to be oriented towards, gleaning information about the form of her appearance as-dressed. In this sense her orientation was outwardly oriented towards a shared context. Her outwardly oriented modality was also evidenced in her attending to others through self-reflexive gestural movements of her body. Her fluidly expressed movements overall indicated a grounded and fluid style in contrast to Sam's discontinuous and movement style which indicated a more self-conscious or inhibited mode of being dressed.

*Adaption* refers to movements enacted by participants observed to achieve and/or maintain a sense of socially and somatically experienced equilibrium. Two distinct types of adaptations were identified. Cultural adaptations refer to the ways the body's movements are enacted to make the body presentable, appropriate or attractive for display in a shared context. Biological adaptations refer to adaptive movements akin to organisms responding to non-cultural or environmental anomalies and changes in circumstances.

For Bruno and Zepp, adaptive movements were considered as responses to the environmental provocations such as water and sand. These adaptive movements were less cultural but rather 'biological' adaptations to the environment. The movements generated by the sensations of the sand upon Bruno's body are almost reflex type responses; immediate and intense while Zepp's bodily movements correspond to the wetness of his clothing. In this sense Zepp's adaption was evident in the way his body style emerged in reciprocal relation to the water, and the resulting change in the garments as they clung and stuck to his body.

Zepp notably displayed an awareness of his body as a subject of somatic enquiry and aesthetic display. In many ways he *performed* these adaptations for capture by the camera. In this sense Zepp's adaptations are a combination of cultural/biological movements. This is in contrast to the intensity of the sensations experienced by Bruno, whereby the sand and their sensations consumed the entirety of his attention.

Reflection on the variation in adaption between Sam and Joy provides an interesting perspective. The character of Sam's touch and body style overall indicated a focus upon the way in which her body was potentially a focus of the gaze, in that the activities were oriented towards management of the body for public display, while Joy's movement indicated an outwardly focused orientation with the body as a medium by which to communicate and interact with others. In this sense both sessions indicated these movements to be primarily cultural modes of attunements or adaptations, yet these are expressed in different ways.

*In summary*, the observational framework provides an important perspective that moves beyond understanding fashion as a solely visual phenomenon to reveal how movement is associated with somatic experience and movement based visual methodologies to deliver more nuanced, and enriching accounts of the somatic aspects of fashion.

Calls for increased recognition of somatic experiences have focused primarily on arguments for particular approaches or perspectives (Entwistle 2001, 2015; Negrin 2016; Sweetman 2001). In this respect, these authors have identified and discussed perspectives that enable fashion to be understood beyond the cultural representations but have nonetheless limited these discussions and arguments for the adoption for particular perspectives, most often presented in written form.

For example, Paul Sweetman has argued for greater acknowledgement of 'embodied realities' of participants in fashion subcultures in order to foreground 'affective socialities' based in shared sensuality of the lived body (Sweetman 2001). While Negrin



has identified the significant potential of corporeal phenomenology to admit the experiences of the body, as well as new forms of agency that come with an acknowledgement of bodily comportment in the fashion. Despite the significant contribution of these studies, they remain textual in orientation.

In contrast, this observational framework is grounded in the ethnographic work on the experiential body. It highlights movements of the sartorial body as they unfold in space and time and thus bring a new dynamic framework to understand the way fashion is experienced. The framework highlights variations in a wide range of sartorial based movements in terms of their orientation, types of adaption, levels of integration of the body and the garment. The table also allows qualitative variation through the inclusion of descriptions for each modality thus preserving detail, nuance and the potentiality for further elaboration to enrich understanding of those modalities.

Thus, the observational framework contributes an ethnographically grounded perspective to complement what have been arguments for acknowledgement of the lived body in fashion. Importantly the framework acknowledges the role of structuring forces working on and through the body, primarily through the adaptive movements of the body. The framework shows how the body responds to those structuring forces at the level of individual bodies and their actions, yet at the same time, it provides significant level of detail, to advance new knowledge in relation to the somatically experienced dimension of fashion and dress.

Thus, this enquiry brings concrete detail to the ways in which sartorial practices do not only possess an expressive dimension but also haptic and somatically experienced components. These are crucial for fuller understanding of the experiences of being dressed. Somewhat surprisingly this framework suggests rather than disavowing the visual, which has been a critical undercurrent in applications of corporeal phenomenology in fashion, an acknowledgement of the inter-relationships between the visual and the somatically experienced dimensions of fashion. This would offer a more nuanced perspective to complement existing accounts of the somatically experienced body in fashion.

The observational framework provides an important re-directive resource that supports a move beyond argument for greater acknowledgement of the lived body in fashion discourse by enabling increased attentiveness to what have been to date, background concerns within the field of fashion practice. The observational framework as a visual and analytical tool, provides a way of observing and understanding representations of the body in fashion that attunes observers to a kinaesthetically experienced background of fashion.

Thus, moving images of the fashionable body can be examined, perceived and understood at the level of the body and as such can sensitize observers through the medium of their somatically experiencing and perceiving body. In doing so the observational framework supports the cultivation of more 'reflexive and body-conscious' forms of sensory knowing that are useful in attuning one towards the sensory capacities

and experiences of another. In this way the framework advances the potentiality of new modes of empathic attunement in fashion, based in the sharedness of sensorial experience

*Poise is an enriching lens to advance new perspectives in the field of fashion*

A central contention of this thesis is that significant aspects of being-dressed reside in the background of awareness. This research has developed an enriching lens termed *Poise* and associated vocabulary to advance a new perspective in the field of fashion. *Poise* foregrounds what have been to date, largely background concerns in the field of fashion. *Poise* opens a perspective that acknowledges sartorial movement, temporality and the interactions of the body in terms of the adaptive movements that transpire at a micro-corporeal level.

I have maintained a focus on forms of experience of being dressed as much as on language for talking about these background aspects of fashion and clothing. This perspective goes beyond a term such as *Pose* that refers to the *conspicuous* and *intentional* presentations of the body in fashion. *Poise* has the advantage over the term *Pose*, which is understood as a ubiquitous feature of the representational practices of fashion that points to a cultural bias towards the expressive and symbolic in fashion. The potential of this perspective to enrich fashion is captured in the table below that establishes paired terms that emerge from the dialectic of *Poise* versus *Pose*.

Poise	Pose
<i>background/micro-corporeal</i>	<i>conspicuous/spectacle</i>
<i>dynamic/active</i>	<i>static/inactive</i>
<i>Phenomenology</i>	<i>Semiotics</i>
<i>somatic/multi-sensory</i>	<i>vision</i>
<i>body style</i>	<i>personal style</i>
<i>body movement</i>	<i>Face/Facing</i>
<i>contact/participation</i>	<i>detachment/distance</i>

Table 2: *Poise v Pose**Background /micro-corporeal v Conspicuous/spectacle*

The interpretive work in this research highlighted *Poise* as it transpired at a micro-corporeal level beyond what we would normally be explicitly aware. *Poise* is associated with a way of looking and experiencing fashion that is in direct contrast to the encounter with the kinds of fashion images associated with the mediated spectacle of contemporary fashion. In other words, *Poise* foregrounds a host of sartorial phenomena that remain invisible to the dominant ways in which the fashionable body is currently presented and represented in fashion.

Poise reveals fashion to be a finely calibrated micro-corporeal interaction between the body and the garment. This perspective is largely invisible to the focus on the conspicuous and intentional modes of presentation of the body employed in global fashion media.

*Dynamic/Active v Static/Inactive*

Poise is an enriching concept highlighting the bodies' *active* embodied participation in fashion. It provides a new way of observing, participating and interpreting fashion that is in contrast to our encounter with the inactivity or statically posed body. As discussed in Chapter 5, *Poise* derives from the corporeal phenomenology of Sam Todes. Poise is a lived condition and general tendency for us to find and maintain a felt sense of ease or balance in our interactions with objects and others (2001, p. 65). It points towards what are largely unconscious and implicit ways in which we attend to the world, others and things through our bodies. For Todes, *Poise* is a form of somatically experienced *contact* with objects and others.

Todes distinguishes 'Poise' as the 'active intention of the body' from its correlate 'Pose', characteristic of the *inactive* body (2001, p. 65). The distinction highlights the felt or somatically experienced aspect of the body as a sense of being at ease, tuned into, or in contact with a situation, while *Pose* is denoted by a loss of balance, separation or *detachment* from a situation, and that necessitates actions of some kind of recovery of one's loss.

Moreover, Poise encompasses the *dynamic* and *active* orientations of the body, while pose in contrast is a *static* or *inactive* modality. Poise denotes a form of *contact* or active attunement with the situation we are in, while Pose is associated with a sense of *detachment* or distance from a fuller kind of participation of whatever it is that we are doing.

### *Phenomenology v Semiotics*

The prioritization of Poise facilitates a move away from the use of *semiotics* and concern with meaning of fashion images towards *phenomenology* and a focus upon somatic experience, the senses, perception, movements of the body, associated sensations and their meaning. A phenomenological perspective highlights the lived sensuality of fashion with reference to the felt sensations of the body in movement, emphasizing agency and experience. This contrasts with the dominant ways in which fashion has focused upon analysis of cultural representations of the body, which consider the fashion bodies, signs and symbols, and the practice of fashion the manipulation of signs.

### *Somatic/multi-sensorial v vision*

The notion of *Poise* successfully integrates a way of observing and interpreting the movements of the body with associated tactile and kinaesthetic sensations of the sartorial body. This enriches accounts of sartorial practice with reference to a number of modalities observed to be features of sensory–perceptual experience in fashion. In this

respect the notion of *Poise* collapses traditional distinctions between *vision* and the *somatic* senses of tactile and kinaesthetic sensations of the body in movement and sartorial contact. This significantly enriches fashion with the renewed emphasis upon attributes traditionally excluded from fashion, such as the somatic or visceral experiences of the body that are activated in both viewing and wearing fashion. This offers the potential to strategically reconfigure current modes of fashion spectatorship.

### *Body style v Personal style*

*Poise* also brings into view *body style*. *Body style* is a particular way of moving and emerges in the interaction of the body with the garment. It is viewed as a far richer concept than *personal style*, which refers to the fashionable ensemble of garments worn at any one time. *Body style* is a distinctive manner of moving that is inflected through the garment and thus emerges in the interaction between the garment and the body. *Body style* also corresponds to the concept of the 'body schema', which is the dynamically integrated experience of the entire body in movement versus the 'body image' which is a mental construct of how our body appears to others (Featherstone 2010; Merleau-Ponty 1962).

In this sense *Poise* is an enriching concept by which to enhance relations wearers can have with their garments. It makes possible new ways of participating in fashion beyond, the latest look or branded garment. *Body style* brings the focus to how garments can facilitate particular ways of being comported to the world, in the sense that some garments support particular kinds of positive sartorial experience which others may inhibit or stifle.

This particular aspect of Poise foregrounds the potential for an enhanced sartorial agency whereby one can become more self-consciously attuned to one's body style, while designers similarly can attune their practices towards this dynamic movement-based framework associated with Poise. This means orienting their designing towards particular ways of being comported, expressed through movement, in contrast to the conception of design as primarily a visual two-dimensional representation of a fashion garment.

In relation to garment design *Poise* was revealed in the level of integration participants had with their garments. This is understood as how 'in tune' wearers are with what garments they wear. For example, while Narmine displayed a body style which was lively and animated, this displayed a sense of Poise although not in graceful movement. Rather her animated and lively expressions of movement were observed as 'in tune', with what she was wearing, note the particular ensemble she wore was styled and expressed a 'sporty' feel.

Poise offers a pluralistic conception of 'style' that goes well beyond the look and appearances or even the expressions of a particular kinds of movements. *Body style* indicates Poise is expressed at the level of the individual, and reflects the kinds of concerns, commitments and human projects an individual may be invested in.

*Body movement v facelfacing*



*Poise* brings emphasis to the *body in its movements* that contrast with *Pose* with its emphasis on the *face/facing*. *Pose* is an intentional form of corporeal positioning or stance that involves making oneself for another (Barthes 2006). *Pose* implies our anatomical, forward facing structure and cultural disposition towards presenting the body for others, while *Poise* refers the *self-satisficing*, adaptive activity of the body in movement.

This is closely associated with modes of fashion spectatorship and the way in which we look at bodies. *The Pose* emphasizes the frontal view, and specific beauty ideologies associated with *the face* while *Poise* emphasizes tangential views of the body in passing. (Von Slobbe 2010).

*Poise* preserves a level of autonomy for wearers of clothing that is not solely determined by external forces, and shields the face from the insistence of beauty regimes, expressed in significant growth and availability of cosmetic surgery.

These somatic and background aspects of fashion associated with *Poise* are an important aspect that should be cultivated. The prioritization of what Buckley and Clarke point out are ‘predominant’ fashion ‘syntaxes’ of the young, the novelty of the ‘look’, and the currency of the latest style (2012, p. 19) generate a significant distance from everyday experience of fashion and dress, and its amenability to *participation* in style or its potential to enhance one’s well-being or quality of life.

*Participation v distance*

*Poise* operates in a strong corporeal register and is potentially a democratizing modality, where it can reduce the significant *distance* between the passive encounter with fashion, which most often transpires through the pages of a magazine or web site to genuine *contact* through embodied *participation* and being more closely attuned to somatic experiences of wearing fashion.

*The development of a visual methodology integrating Sensory Ethnography, Design Probes and explorations of embodiment in the field of digital media to uncover and communicate background aspects of sartorial experience*

A primary objective of this thesis was the creation of specific methods and a framework enabling exploration of somatic experience. The significant challenge of this is due to the ephemeral nature of somatic experience. Sartorial experiences are non-verbal, emerge through our bodily immersion and interaction with the world, and are primarily experienced at the margins of conscious awareness. I have developed a methodology for the generation and capture of embodied data that can be subject to iterative exploration and analysis in order that background aspects can be articulated and represented, so others can engage with these findings.

This challenge is practical and methodological. It is a significant challenge to capture and interpret sartorial movements and actions of the body. Bodily movements transpire in unfolding flows of human action; the vast majority of which don't carry legible

meanings that we are conditioned to see and thus pass unnoticed within our face-to-face interactions.

In addition, somatic experience transpires at the level of the body and is largely invisible to an observer. Therefore, a sartorial focus upon the lived body required specific methods to generate, capture and then interpret corporeal material. Importantly this involves the creation of sensory material and a process of sensitizing oneself to the corporeal meaning of corporeal movement and behaviour.

A significant contribution of the methodology is that it moves beyond auto-ethnographic textual/verbal reflections of embodied sensation. This has been the main approach adopted in a small but growing area of sports and leisure focused studies foregrounding embodied and sensuous experiences of bodies *in movement*. In contrast I have embraced a participatory model of qualitative research by synthesising methods and methodological perspectives borrowed from *Sensory Ethnography*, *Design Probes and explorations of embodiment in the field of digital media* in order to elicit, explore, examine and communicate the embodied processes at play within sartorial activity.

An important contention of this thesis is that significant aspects of being-dressed reside in what Drew Leder describes as a ‘field of immediately lived sensation’ whose ‘presence is fleshed out by a ceaseless stream of kinanesthesias, cutaneous and visceral sensations’. (1990, p. 23) Significantly, the methodology that has been developed does not abstract experiences from where they reside in this field; that would carry a danger of distortion. Rather the methodology integrated the capture of sartorial movement and readings of

those sartorial movements as *indicative of* somatic experiences. It also synthesizes findings in visual form such they can be communicated via the sensory-perceptual capacities that engage with them.

The idea here is that embodied experiences remain embedded within the flows of action that comprise human existence and the findings of this enquiry provide an enriching account of this embodiment. The exploration of corporeal movements is undertaken through sensory and perceptual readings of sartorial movements that emerged in the research. The interpretation of these movements points toward what is implicit and background in sartorial experiences as a significant aspect of what makes experiences meaningful.

This perspective drew upon the phenomenological notion of ‘indication’ (Streeter 1997) and studies of movement and gesture (Laban 1980; Noland 2010) whereby representations of human movement point towards or *indicate* somatically felt experiences of being dressed. In practical terms, I developed an interpretive scheme whereby participants’ distinctive movements are read in terms of sensory-perceptual orientations which are then synthesised in the series of video works. My engagement with the video material was a process whereby I sensitized myself to the *sartorial meaning* of movement and behaviour that emerged in the sessions.

These engagements and what they mean are informed by theoretical engagement and the disciplinary orientation *of my own emplacement* in fashion as both a designer and wearer of fashion. Thus, the way in which I have approached the study is inextricably linked to

the disciplinary shaped ways I understand the corporeal experiences of my body, as a maker and wearer of fashion, as well as the bodies of others. I have reflexively, self-consciously and *strategically* utilized these ways of knowing to draw out what is distinctive in the research context. This distinctiveness emerges against a background of my own felt, embodied and historical experiences in fashion and wearing clothing.

In this way the integration of a *Sensory Ethnographic* perspective as part of a practice-oriented enquiry, carries with it significant advantages over non-practice methods. It enables the researcher to draw out, what is important on the basis of what *matters in practice*. This orientation is quite different to questions of concern to scholarly researchers in fashion, or fashion theorists, who pursue analysis and critique of competing frameworks, along with consideration of the merits or otherwise of what those frameworks include or exclude.

I have adopted and embraced a practice perspective concerned with embodied experiences of fashion and how sensitivity to the lived experiences of the body foreground a set of concerns relevant to the *participation* in fashion. These practical and sensory orientations foregrounds things that *matter* to wearers and makers: questions such as how do I feel in these garments? Am I comfortable; physically, emotionally, socially? Do I feel 'in place', 'at ease' or 'out of place'? Is this sartorial experience an enriching one? Do I enjoy wearing this? Am I in tune with myself and my context? Are my garments assisting me in the projects and commitments that are important to me? – are relevant to this perspective.

These questions derive from a consideration of how fashion is meaningful to its participants. I contend, these kinds of questions should be a more central concern to the practice of fashion, and it is my contention that sensitivity to the embodied experiences of being dressed, brings these kinds of questions to the fore.

The integration of creative practice into a research methodology is also a significant aspect of this research. The opportunity to design provocations in the form of *design probes* lay in their potential to elicit or generate embodied experiences, interactions, that we would either not be able to capture or that are unavailable to unmediated perception. The use of design probes implies a conceptual-creative approach that integrates conceptual work with practical and embodied activities of making things and situations to produce embodied-experiential data that can be examined, explored and shared with others.

The garments produced were conceived and designed to address the tactile and kinaesthetic sensitivities of participants and to bring out those embodied sensations that normally we would not be aware of or able to capture. Probes as material artefacts used in participatory contexts, move beyond talking about, describing or theorising things but instantiate complex ‘events’ that can be captured and reflected upon. As embodied events that can be documented and provide the opportunity for others, such as other researchers, or participants in fashion, to interact, explore, examine and reflect on those activities in embodied ways.

In this sense this methodology synergises the advantages of probes and sensory ethnographic methods. A sensory perspective acknowledges the inter-relationships between perception, sensory and embodied experience as well as how material things are experienced as a part of a temporally unfolding context of activity. This foregrounds the *dynamic* processes typified by interactions with the things, the self and others. Design probes as material artefacts play an important *focalizing* role where things, people and sensory experience are drawn together. In this sense, the integration of these two methods creates an innovative approach where sensory material can be brought to a particular kind of presence, to be captured examined and shared.

The significant opportunity for integrating fashion garments *as probes* into this research, is that it opens up new perspectives on the significance of fashion garments because of the way in which they can be *observed* to generate sensory affects. Garments from this fresh perspective do not function as commodities or signs involved in the transmission of messages about wearers, or aesthetic propositions, but rather *sensory artefacts*. I should point out, this research is not focused upon enlarging the available repertoire of creative opportunities for designers through novel combinations of visual elements, which is an implicit orientation for designers (Eckert & Stacey 2001; Sinha 2002). The use of fashion garments as probes in this research is focused on the creation of redirective resources that cultivate and enhance ways of understanding and experiencing the body in fashion.

The use of *digital technology* was a crucial component in this methodology, which works in concert with both the sensory focus and instantiation of events. Digital technology

enabled a particular way of capturing, sensory data ‘as digital material’ and a way of engaging with that research material.

Mark Hansen has theorised the ‘embodying’ potential of the digital media which I have utilized in this research. In this scenario the body plays an increasingly central role as the ‘selector’ of images or the ‘framer of information’ (Hansen 2006, p. xxii) in a digital context. Hansen elaborates this perspective in the context of debates of the role of technology and the extent to which it modifies human subjectivity. In contrast to post-human perspectives Hansen argues for a strong sense of embodiment in a digital context.

He writes;

...the image has become a process and, as such, has become irreducibly bound up with the activity of the body. Thus, rather than simply abandoning it to its own obsolescence or transforming it into a vehicle for interfacing with information, we must fundamentally reconfigure the image...In sum, the image can no longer be restricted to the level of surface appearance, but must be extended to encompass the entire process by which information is made perceivable through embodied experience. This is what I propose to call the “digital image”.(2006, p. 10)

Digital media can bring to the fore what is distinctive about embodied life. It is able to capture undifferentiated visual material but also enables a body to ‘filter’ this information. As discussed earlier, this process is not arbitrary, but rather the interpretive and analytical process takes place against a background of embodied memories, discipline



specific skills and knowledge, particular ways of feeling and experiencing the field of fashion.

This ‘digital framing function’ that takes place through identification of corporeal movement and emphasis on distinctive movements, corporeal zones (and the concealment of others), allows for the extension and elaboration of specific sequences of bodily behaviour and action. This authorises a digital body, that no longer ‘serves merely as a medium of expression, as semiotic layer towards the outer world’ (Wegenstein 2006, p. 161) that we might find in conventional representations of the body in fashion, but something more akin to a corporeal digital-medium or material that others can engage with.

This digital perspective integrates both an interpretive dimension as ‘filtering’ the body, but also a communication of those research findings through rich and evocative images of the digital-sensory body. In this sense, the series of videos that have been produced synthesize the primary findings in a visual form and invite somatically felt reflection upon them. In this way the methodology remains consistent with the ambition to consider the re-directive potential from representations of sartorial experience that are grounded in the shared-ness of sensorial experience.

Importantly the capture of human movement as digital information enabled what is background and undifferentiated human movement to become *thematized*. The approach extends a sequence of movement beyond a single instance or episode to become a much longer and significant sequence. In doing this I transform what is mundane and often

fragmentary sequence of movement, imperceptible in unmediated perception, into a visible and significant thematic concern.

This amplification means that others can observe and experience these sequences as well. The use of digital media opened up a micro-corporeal perspective upon the sartorial body for both myself and others. This was a central aspect of the methodology as it enabled micro-corporeal sartorial movements to be analysed in terms of sensory-perceptual orientations. This approach is indebted to analytical work of Carrie Noland and Mark Hansen, who have provided significant insight into the potential of digital media to excavate aspects of corporeal life unavailable to our natural perception.

It is also important to acknowledge while the methodology generates and explores sartorial movement, it also disseminates the results of that exploration. This acknowledges the existence of mirror neurons and the role of ‘embodied simulation’ in perception (Gallese 2005). In this respect the dissemination of the research through moving images is based in a shared identification with the sensorial experiences of an other. This means that the sartorial activities we encounter on screen are oriented towards the identification of the shared-ness of sensory experience.

As a practice oriented investigation of somatic experiences in fashion, this research carries a significant advantage over non-practice oriented methods in attuning others to the potential of sartorial life. As moving images, they are perceived and experienced at the level of the body and as such they serve to sensitize observers through the medium of

one's own somatically experienced body. In doing so, the videos cultivate the potentiality of new modes of empathic attunement in fashion.

### *Future research*

This research has generated resources that represent an emergent observational framework, vocabulary and methodology. The research has provided significant insight into the somatic experiences of fashion as well as provided a new observational framework from which to examine and explore sartorial life. The framework is *emergent* in character and provides significant opportunities for further research, in terms of further development of the observational framework, as well as applications for the observational framework to apply to other contexts of sartorial life.

As a doctoral research project there are limitations in size and scope, as well constraints upon the research in relation to the nature of doctoral study as a developmental stage in research pedagogy.

The study was limited to five participants with three women and two men. An increased number of participants could enable exploration to move closer towards saturation. Another potential limitation of this study is men and women were treated differently.

Literature addressing fashion and embodiment most relevant for this study emerges from critical debates on women's historical engagement in fashion, corporeal representation of women in fashion and feminist phenomenology. Questions of power, agency and corporeal representation come to the fore in this literature. This literature opens critical

questions about the extent to which the culturally ingrained ways of understanding, exploring and representing women's bodies in fashion limits other ways of fashionable participation. As research sensitized to and informed by relevant literature these issues necessarily frame an exploration of embodiment in relation to these feminist and gendered perspectives.

Moreover, my concern as a designer-researcher has been on how we experience our bodies in clothing. This has naturally emphasized bodily interactions with garments and employed ethnographically informed visual methods in order to explore and examine this interaction. My approach reflects sensitivity to bodily experiences, materiality of the garment as well as the practical concerns associated with fashion that include making, wearing and representation of fashion garments for women and men. In this respect I have undertaken the research by being attentive to a gender balance through the inclusion of both men and women, while also acknowledging both men and women are sensory creatures with particular investments in fashion.

This research makes a contribution to understanding this investment, which is reflected in the gendered aspects of some of the findings, but also the gender neutrality of others. Yet practical constraints on the research and its iterative nature meant I commenced with women's garments, then iterated the method, as I progressed to men's garments based on insights from the womenswear sessions. This approach somewhat inadvertently preserves gender distinctions. The development of the observational framework redresses this to some extent, whereby both men and women's movements are explored from the same over-arching perspective. It is though undeniable the readings of sartorial movements are

informed by my own gendered experiences of making and wearing clothing, and historically gendered readings have had significant deleterious impacts upon women and other groups. On this issue I recommend the observational framework as amenable to use by women and others and as such, the framework itself and its findings can be further elaborated and/or modified to reflect differently gendered as well as differently abled perspectives.

An exhaustive approach to the research could embrace both increased numbers of participants, gender balance and application of both variants of the research method. This would further strengthen the framework and its potential value.

The invited participants in this research were drawn from a loose network of people involved in creative practices in Sydney Australia where this research was conducted. For example, one particular future area of study would be to target specific groups of individuals, who engage with fashion or other forms of sartorial practice. For example, Sweetman's exploration of subcultures (Sweetman 2001) could potentially be a rich area of investigation whereby movement and physical interactions between participants open up new ways to understand the embodiment in fashion in the context of strong affectual ties between participants of a subculture.

The identification of distinctive 'body styles' challenges some of the dominant orientations adopted by educators and designers when conceiving and designing clothing (Eckert & Stacey 2001; Sinha 2002). Traditional design education often utilizes a reductive modernist vocabulary of design elements such as line, shape, colour, textures,

silhouette etcetera and their application (Kim 2006). An orientation towards *body styles* and use of a dynamic framework to orient design towards bodies' behaviour and movement would enrich design perspectives for both designers and design students.

For example, dynamic design might be a useful perspective for designers to orient themselves. The design approach that generated the garments was exploratory and experimental rather than systematic. There are opportunities to develop garments in the context of applications of the methodology with a more refined and targeted approach to the way in which garments address the body. For example, while each of the garments obtained a specific relation to the body, a more methodical and systematic approach could elaborate a closer relation between design of garments and the way in which the body is comported and moves in space.

Further exploration of the design of garments could be oriented towards exploration of modes of bodily comportment that were generated from the observational framework. How might for example designs support a body style displayed by Narmin? For example, how can design be oriented towards individual self-reflexive movement expressions and dynamic movement, or in Joy's case how might design enable communication and dialogue with others as well as aesthetic ideals?

Moreover, the overarching ambition of this research is to contribute to the renewal of fashion. This ambition is closely associated with self-conscious and strategic objectives associated with my own somatic experiences in fashion and a disjunction between those experiences and the larger fashion domain. My approach to address this disjunction has

been to generate redirective resources that draw attention to what are significantly background concerns in fashion. This opens a possibility that others may interact, use and build on these resources such that the somatic experience becomes a more central concern in the field of fashion.

## VIDEOGRAPHY

*Bruno (Sand)* (2017)

Todd Robinson

HD video without sound

*Bruno (Sweat)* (2017)

Todd Robinson

HD video without sound

*Narmine (Expressive Gesture)* (2017)

Todd Robinson

HD video without sound

*Joy (Material Sensing)* (2017)

Todd Robinson

HD video without sound

*Joy (Expressive Gesture)* (2017)

Todd Robinson

HD video without sound

*Sam (Getting Dressed)* (2017)

Todd Robinson

HD video without sound

*Sam (Attuning Touch)* (2017)

Todd Robinson

HD video without sound

*Zepp (Watercatcher)* (2017)

Todd Robinson

HD video

*Zepp (wrap)* (2017)

Todd Robinson

HD video

*Zepp (Crouch)* (2017)

Todd Robinson

HD video without sound



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