Claudio Alcorso and Post-War Textile Culture in Australia

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, Tracey Lisa Sernack-Chee Quee declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Design, Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise reference 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

This study of Australian textile manufacturer Claudio Alcorso (b. 1913 Rome, Italy - d. 2000 Hobart, Tasmania) reconsiders the role of the Italian-born entrepreneur, tastemaker and cultural broker with a focus on his commissioning of artist-designed textile prints from 1945 to 1970. As well as being a design history, it provides a wider cultural study of the agency of European migrants and their impact on the post-war Australian textile and fashion industries. This historical study of Alcorso's life, family background, international outlook and connections of his Australian-based businesses Silk & Textile Printers (STP) and Universal Textiles Australia (UTA), provide insights into the workings of a local manufacturing industry that had largely vanished by the end of the twentieth century.

The study aims to address the relative paucity of academic studies of the relationship between Australian fashion and textile producers of the second half of the twentieth century. Its focus on textile production for the middle-class supplants previous histories that have tended to focus on elite culture, fashion couturiers and artisanal textile producers who designed and produced exclusive, limited edition products. New findings are presented concerning the inter-relationship of artists and designers who created textile prints, workers who printed fabrics and design intermediaries involved in the manufacture and distribution of fabric. Considerable attention is paid to fashions and furnishings sold in retail chain and department stores in Australia and overseas, presenting new findings on Australian post-war consumption.

It is argued here that Alcorso's contribution to Australian textile culture in relation to design commissions and textile manufacturing was more expansive than previous writing about him suggests. A previous focus on his celebrated Modernage collection of artist-designed textiles produced in 1946-

1947 has tended to obscure the more complex series of events and impacts initiated by the Modernage episode. By examining Alcorso's production of commercial, artist-designed textile prints in with a new, archival focus on the ecology of his business associates, customers and competitors, a new picture emerges of the integral contribution of innovative art and design to commercial success in the textile industry during the second half of the twentieth century. The study further demonstrates the impact of global networks and the local agency of migrant entrepreneurs such as the Alcorso family on the art, design and textile ecosystem in post-war Australia.

1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This research uses an account of Claudio Alcorso (b. 1913 Rome, Italy - d. 2000 Hobart, Tasmania) and his businesses Silk & Textile Printers (STP) and Universal Textiles Australia (UTA) to explore interrelationships between art, design and the textile industry that manifested in artist-designed prints after World War II. This narrative about Claudio Alcorso reveals a wider history of the agency of European migrants on the textile and fashion industries and broader Australian culture. It is the history of an important industry sector that substantially disappeared at the end of the twentieth century, but has the potential for reinvigoration due to new digital printing technologies.

There have been few academic examinations of Australian fashion and textile producers of the latter twentieth century operating in the middle market. Previous academic and public histories have mainly concentrated on fashion couturiers and artisanal textile producers who produced exclusive and limited-edition designs. This account of Alcorso's textile businesses encompasses a wider narrative about artists and designers who created textile prints, workers who printed fabrics, channels of fabric distribution and manufacturers that converted Alcorso's fabrics into fashions and furnishings sold in boutique chains and departments stores in Australia and overseas.

Previous academic studies of Alcorso have centred on his experiences as an Italian migrant[1] and his internment as an enemy alien during World War II.[2] Academic investigations of Alcorso's agency in the textile industry have

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[1] Joseph Gentilli. 1989, v.10, part 5. "Italian Jewish Refugees in Australia." *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, 420-441.
Joseph Talia. 2000. "Claudio Alcorso: an adventurer's life." *In Search of the Italian Australian into the New Millennium: Conference Proceedings, 2000.* Accessed July 4, 2017. https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/52138995.
—. 2000/01. "The Alcorso Story." *Italy Down Under*, Summer: 34-41.

[2] John Gatt-Rutter. 2008. "You're on the list! Writing the Australian Italian Experience of Wartime Internment." *Flinders University Languages Group Online Review.* November, Vol 3. Issue 3. Accessed January 21, 2011. http://ehlt.flinders.edu.au/deptlang/fulgor/.

concentrated on the Modernage collection of 1946-47[3], known mainly within curatorial and design circles. This thesis reveals that Modernage initiated a series of events in the production of commercial, artist-designed textile prints by Alcorso, his business associates, customers and his competitors that has not been previously examined by scholars in Australia.

The Alcorso experience is typical of the many migrants who brought the cultural capital of Europe to Australia because of dislocation before and after World War II. Arriving in Australia as business migrants in 1939, the Alcorso family established STP, a producer of screen-printed fabrics for fashion and furnishing using the then cutting-edge technology of screen printing. Later, when STP amalgamated with other businesses to form UTA, it became the largest textile printing business in the southern hemisphere.[4]

A paper written by Pippa Dickson on Claudio Alcorso[5] provided the original impetus for this research. It outlined Claudio Alcorso's personal, business and cultural achievements and the activities of philanthropic Alcorso Foundation set up in his honour after his death in 2000. The Alcorso name was immediately familiar, as my family's former clothing manufacturing business Rain'N'Shine Pty Ltd routinely purchased his fabrics. It became clear from reading Dickson's article that Alcorso was the instigator of many textile business and cultural initiatives that were worthy of further academic investigation.

Reading Claudio Alcorso's memoir revealed that he was one of the first Australian manufacturers to source silk textiles from China and partner with

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Gitano Rando. 2005. "Italo-Australians during the Second World War: Some perceptions of internment." *University of Wollongong Research Online.* Accessed October 18, 2012. https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1123&context=artspapers.

[3] A review of the literature on *STP's Modernage* collection of 1946-47 is contained in section 2.2.5.

[4] Clothing News (Supplement). 1966. "Family Name now Household Word - 'Alcorso'." January (VIC : Thomson Publications, 1947-1968) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 23.

[5] Pippa Dickson. 2010. "Craft Australia Library Series." *Crafts Council of Australia.* 16 June. Accessed June 18, 2010. http://www.craftaustralia.org.au/library/review.php?id=the_cycle_of_giving.

synthetic fibre producers in Japan and that he had also founded Sheridan. After leaving the textile industry when UTA was taken over by Dunlop Industries in 1969, Alcorso became the first chairman of the Australian Opera, leading it to independence from the Elizabethan Theatre Trust. He re-initiated and promoted Tasmanian winemaking and produce at his property Moorilla near Hobart[6] and was an active participant on state-based and national Arts and Education Boards.

As a champion of all things Australian and of Tasmania where he lived and worked, he had ensured the conservation of convict-built stone warehouses at Salamanca and Sullivan's Cove in Hobart and was a high-profile advocate against the damming the Gordon below Franklin River. He advocated equal rights for our first Australians and energetically campaigned for an Australian Republic. He was a highly significant figure in the wider Australian cultural landscape, whose contribution has yet to be fully examined.

This writing of this thesis was informed by knowledge and experience acquired from over thirty years of working in Australian fashion design and production and ongoing study and practice as a design researcher, artist, textile and fashion designer. This experience, knowledge and practice have enabled me to make connections between divergent forms of evidence, leading to conclusions that may not be obvious to researchers specialising in the individual disciplines of art and design practice and design historiography.

The thesis also draws upon the cultural heritage of Jewish ancestry, shared by the Alcorsos and my family. Unlike most Jewish migrants working in textiles and fashion arriving in Australia just before or after World War II,

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[6] Claudio Alcorso's former property Moorilla outside Hobart was acquired by David Walsh in 1995 and is now the location of the Museum of Old & New Art (MONA). The brand name Moorilla was retained by Walsh, who still produces wine at MONA and other vineyards previously owned by the Alcorsos.

neither my family the Sernacks, nor the Alcorso family, arrived in Australia as refugees. My family's Polish ancestors arrived in Australia via England in the early nineteenth century as convicts and free settlers. One branch landed in Hobart, whilst another settled around Maitland in NSW. Yet another branch of tailors and leatherworkers arrived in the early twentieth century, seeking a better climate and less professional competition – the opportunity to be 'big fish in a small pond'. Some entered fashion manufacturing and retail, whilst others took up creative practice as commercial artists and photographers.

Like myself, Alcorso did not identify as Jewish. He was in fact baptised as a Catholic, but acknowledged his ancestry, which was responsible for the family's decision to leave their home and textile businesses in Italy when Mussolini's fascist regime began expropriating non-Aryan companies before World War II. His family brought money, experience and a wealth of cultural capital from Italy, which were utilised in equal measure in his Australian business and personal cultural pursuits. He was well prepared by his father Amilcare, mother Niny and grandmother Nonna Amalia for his life as a textile industrialist. His childhood was filled with cultural activities designed to develop his aesthetic skills and affinity for textile design, production and sales, the focus of their family business Amilcare Piperno Alcorso, based in Rome.

Figure 1.1 shows Claudio Alcorso wearing the uniform of the bourgeois European child – a tailored woollen sailor suit – in an informal photograph taken at the age of about 5 years in 1918. He looks like he has been interrupted from a game, or from climbing over the fence. His demeanour shows the beginnings of the confidence he later exhibited as a textile entrepreneur, although at this age had no idea that his father was consciously grooming him for a role in the family business.

Figure 1.1 Claudio Alcorso c1918.[7]

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[7] Image courtesy of Caroline Alcorso. Used with permission.

His father Amilcare hired governesses to teach him the languages of European business and provided him with specialised tutors to give him a thorough grounding in Italian art, colour, composition and design. He was encouraged to develop new textile colourways for his father's business to earn pocket money and spent the school holidays working in fabric warehouses owned by family friends so he would learn the names and types of fabrics.[8]

My father Sidney Sernack employed a similar grooming process to prepare me and my four siblings for work in our family businesses. For the girls, skills needed for the business were coupled with the domestic skills required to make good Jewish marriage and home. My sisters and I were encouraged to study art, design and textiles at school, learn embroidery and do our own basic clothing alterations and repairs. I used scraps of fabric from the factory cutting room floor to make fashions and furniture for my Barbie dolls. My sister, grandfather and Uncle Max variously tutored me on how to use and maintain a sewing machine from the time I was ten years old. Dad and Uncle Max taught my brother simple wood and metalworking skills, which later became quite handy for renovating showrooms and retail stores to sell the products from our fashion manufacturing businesses.

We were put to work early, as models for the family businesses clothing lines, or in advertising in trade journals. My father's first business Sidney Sernack Pty Ltd manufactured mantles (coats) and suits for all ages, as well as dresses, ensembles and leisure wear. In 1964 I was photographed as the model for a print advertisement promoting the relocation of the business to the garment district of Surry Hills. He named his brand of junior coats and jackets 'Janny Junior' after my older sister Janet. Sidney Sernack Pty Ltd closed in the 1965 after a bad business deal and my father went to work for John J. Hilton

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8   Claudio Alcorso. 1993. *The Wind You Say*. Pymble, NSW Australia: Angus and Robertson, 38.

and then RH Taffs. I have heard stories about these companies, who also appear in this study on Alcorso, for most of my life.

My father and uncle established Sernack Fashion Agencies and Rain'N'Shine Pty Ltd in 1967. They were both involved with the founding of the Garment Industries of Australia (GIA)[9] in the 1960s, which was initially led by Jack Shaw, principal of the House of Leroy, one of Alcorso's major clients in the 1950s. My family had many friends in the industry that I came to know as 'uncle' and 'auntie'. Gloria Smythe (also known as Gloria Mortimer Dunne), the former designer at Cole of California (another Alcorso customer) and long-time head designer at Speedo, was a friend of my father's. He knew her from the time he studied art at East Sydney Technical College under Phyllis Shillito, who also trained the textile design staff for the Alcorsos. My sisters had holiday sales jobs in retail stores owned by our customers before we established our own chain of boutiques in the 1970s. Two of my three sisters and my brother worked at Rain'N'Shine Pty Ltd alongside me and my parents. My father named our brand 'Tussi' after a nickname I had at high school and in 1984 won an FIA Australian Women's Weekly Fashion Award[10] for value for money evening wear.

My early encounters with textiles developed skills in identifying fabrics - how the hand or feel of silk differed from that of nylon, polyester and rayon and the differences in appearance between cotton, ramie and linen fibres. School holidays were spent in the factory, with occasional visits to the Art Gallery of NSW, the Australian Museum and the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences where we were encouraged to look at paintings, sculpture and decorative arts as sources of inspiration for pattern and garment making. Rag-

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[9] The GIA later became known as the Fashion Industries of Australia (FIA).
[10] The "Australian Women's Weekly Fashion Award" was the name of the awards sponsored by the Fashion Industries of Australia (FIA) industry association and Consolidated Press, owned by Kerry Packer in the 1980s. These awards were previously known as the "Lyrebird Awards".

trade business and gossip was the usual topic at the family dinner table and gradually we got to know the names of all of the suppliers and customers and my father's guiding truths like "time is money"; "you have to sell yourself before you can sell anything" and "you only get what you pay for".

Claudio Alcorso stated publicly that it was not his intention to follow his family into the textile industry.[11] However, when the Fascists used his family's Jewish ancestry as a means of expropriating their textile business, he had to step up and get involved. He and his associate Paolo Sonnino smuggled money from the Alcorso's liquidated assets to London and scoped potential textile business opportunities in the British Empire and America, as far away as they could get from the imminent war in Europe.

Despite my obvious preparation, I really had no desire to enter the family business either. I wanted to be an art teacher, but the lack of jobs after I graduated from art school, coupled with staff losses in our family business meant that my choices were limited. It was the family business, or you were on your own. So, like Claudio Alcorso, it ultimately became my destiny to work in the fashion and textile industry in Australia and later to document this account of Alcorso as part of a broader history of the textile and fashion industries in post-war Australia.

1.1 Research themes and concepts

1.1.1 Culture

Culture, in all its forms, is an important concept within this study. The term culture is used to signify a collection of agreed and shared practices, values, systems of interaction and communication influenced by commonality of place, institutional, commercial, industrial, political, religious (or other

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[11] Claudio Alcorso. 1994. "Claudio Alcorso interviewed by Roger Penny." *National Library of Australia.* 21-28 April. Accessed April 1, 2018. https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/37485220.

beliefs), choices, understandings and agreements. Culture is regarded as a malleable concept, with differing meanings depending on who uses the word and the context that it is used in.[12] Culture is a phenomenon that is taught and learned and perpetuated through intergenerational learning and habits.[13]

A person who demonstrates cultural sensitivity – an emotional appreciation of culture acquired through education and experience – is generally considered to be cultured. A cultured person can be further signified by their appreciation of or participation in cultural pursuits, such as literature, visual arts, music and performance – collectively known as 'the arts'. Participation in cultural pursuits, whether as an observer or a practitioner, bring esteem from family, immediate community and even government and communities. Cultural pursuits provide enjoyment and satisfaction for audiences and opportunities for personal expression for cultural practitioners.[14]

Alcorso stated in interviews and writings that cultural pursuits – especially art and music – were what made his life worth living.[15] He had extensive knowledge of art, design and music but dabbled at the edges, never as a practitioner, but always as an enthusiastic spectator. He recognised the talent and originality of Australian artists, designers, musicians and performers. He created many opportunities for artists and designers to collaborate with his business. He enthusiastically supported artistic training for design staff in his textile business and initiated design competitions and travelling scholarships to develop artistic talent in the community.

Alcorso regarded artists who created watered-down artworks derived from the traditions of their British forbears as completely incongruous in a

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[12] Chris Barker. 2012. *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice.* London: Sage Publications, 499.

[13] Simon Blackburn. 2008. *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 86.

[14] Abraham Maslow. 1943. "A theory of human motivation." *Psychological Review*, 30-96. Accessed 14 March 14, 2018. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/h0054346.

[15] Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say* and Alcorso, *Claudio Alcorso interviewed by Roger Penny* 1994.

modern society at the opposite end of the earth. He wanted to contribute to the formation of a unique Australian cultural identity in opposition to the microcosm of British society that existed when he arrived in Australia in 1939.[16]

Alcorso rejected notions of the 'cultural cringe' – that notion that Australian cultural production is somehow inferior to work produced overseas. He believed that Australian art and design was the equal of work produced internationally and used his textile businesses to communicate this belief.

1.1.2   Culture and capital

The writings of Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) on 'culture', 'capital' and 'the habitus' underpin this analysis of Alcorso's activities and achievements. Bourdieu defined several particular 'species' or forms of capital. These included economic capital – concerned with money, assets and business activity. Social capital is concerned with broader society, networks and actors within those networks. Cultural capital is concerned with traditional, artistic and creative activities and products.

Bourdieu also conceived of capital as being utilised or leveraged by actors occupying a position in a field – a discipline, domain, sphere of influence or industry sector, which could also be conceived as spaces of competition or conflict. Agents within a field compete to gain a monopoly in the species of capital that is most effective in that field. To Bourdieu, the most important, overarching field was power. Altering the distribution and relative

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[16]   Pierre Bourdieu. 1977. "Structures, Habitus, Power: Basis for a Theory of Symbolic Power." In *Outline of a Theory of Practice,* Chapter 4. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

weight of the different forms of capital within a field measurably alters the power structure of a field.[17]

Bourdieu further theorised that fields are influenced by habitus. Habitus as the internalised embodiment of mental or cognitive structures acquired over a lifetime. It is a structure for producing thoughts and actions, which in turn creates or influences external structures. It structures and is in turn structured by the social world. Habitus can be a collective phenomenon shared amongst like-minded persons or fields. It may constrain, but is not necessarily the only factor determining thought or actions. Where an individual's habitus is aligned to a field in which they have evolved, they can intuit situations and act instantaneously as an expert. When there is a mismatch, people cannot operate effectively – they are like 'a fish out of water'. Habitus can be valuable when it is applied in an allied field, indicating that expertise built in one discipline (Alcorso's expertise in the textile industry) can be applied in other, related contexts (arts boards or the Australian Opera).[18]

To develop his cultural capital, Alcorso's family provided him with a liberal bourgeoise education in art and design, which he came to value and appreciate throughout his life. His cultural habitus influenced him to create opportunities to combine his cultural interests with business in initiatives like Modernage, the Leroy-Alcorso Signature Print Competition and the Alcorso-Sekers Travelling Sculpture Scholarship. [19] He acquired economic capital through completion of a degree in Economics at the University of Rome, developing financial and business acumen that was further enhanced through

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[17] Pierre Bourdieu. 2002. "The forms of capital." In *Readings in Economic Sociology*, by Nicole Woolsey Biggart (Ed.), 280-291. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. Accessed April 4, 2015. https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/bourdieu-forms-capital.htm.

[18] Pierre Bourdieu. 1977. "Structures, Habitus, Power: Basis for a Theory of Symbolic Power." In *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Chapter 4. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[19] The *Modernage* collection is examined in detail in Chapter 4. The *Leroy-Alcorso Signature Print Competition* is discussed in Chapter 6 and the *Alcorso-Sekers Travelling Sculpture Scholarship* is detailed at the end of Chapter 7.

working with his father Amilcare.[20] As a patron of the arts, Alcorso used his wealth – a manifestation of his economic capital – to acquire further cultural capital in the form of works of art to adorn his home and property Moorilla.

Alcorso acquired his political capital in the intellectual salons of Rome, where rise of Hitler in Germany and Mussolini in Italy were debated and discussed, resulting in the family's decision to leave their homeland. He deployed political capital by exploiting his relationships with other 'culturati' in Australia, including Ken Myer and Herbert 'Nugget' Coombs, becoming an intermediary and spokesperson for causes including multiculturalism, the republic, environmental conservation and the status of Australia's First Peoples.

Alcorso's social capital is evident from his collaborative work with artists, designers and customers and his relationships with technicians and workers in his factories. He used social capital to work with his staff to resolve issues of quality and waste, long before other Australian companies introduced quality management initiatives popular in the US and Japan during the 1960s. He knew the name of every person that worked for him and provided modern housing for newly arrived European migrants that could be bought from his business at competitive prices and with low interest loans. The skilled textile workers benefitting from these opportunities in turn added value to Alcorso's businesses, enhancing his economic capital.

1.1.3 Textile culture

In the context of this thesis, 'textile culture' encompasses all aspects of the fibre, manufacture, use and experience of fabric in all of its forms. Yarn is obtained from animal, vegetable or mineral fibres and then fashioned by twisting, intertwining, knitting, felting or weaving into textiles. Textiles are

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[20] The Alcorso family business "Amilcare Piperno Alcorso" is examined in depth in Chapter 2.

bleached, dyed and printed, then cut and sewn it to make objects to use and wear. Textile culture is experienced by everyone who wears clothing or sits on upholstered furniture. It is both domestic and industrial, public and private and the layers between these distinctions are often permeable.

By the nineteenth century some form of industrial textile culture existed in most western countries, co-existing with domestic textile culture. However, in the latter part of the twentieth century commercial textile production began to shift to countries where wages were cheaper and labour less regulated and both textiles and clothing became cheaper. As a result of this movement, western nations like Australia had little or no industrial textile culture by the end of the twentieth century.

The level of skill required to participate in domestic textile culture changed at the end of the twentieth century. Where textile skills were once taught by mothers and grandmothers and in most primary and secondary schools up to the 1970s, by the 1980s, they were no longer regarded as essential skills. Women who traditionally engaged with domestic textile culture were busy working both in and outside their homes. They had little time and no need to make garments or furnishings when the ready-made articles could be bought cheaper than the materials to make them.

Domestic textile culture is now regarded by many as a hobby and pastime and materials and tools are only available at specialist retailers, at a premium price. Skills are learned from social media rather than experienced family elders. As the slow food movement contests the global omnipresence of fast food, so knitting, crochet, macramé, weaving, hand printing and sewing offers anyone with the right materials and access to the internet the opportunity to produce something that is handmade and different – an antidote to the homogeneity of fast fashion and an outlet for their own creative expression.

1.1.4 Relationships between art, design and textiles

This study principally examines printed textiles, the specialisation used by the Alcorsos to differentiate their business from other Australian manufacturers. Understanding the interrelationship of art, design and textile printing are therefore central to any examination of the Alcorso's businesses. In examining these connections, there is no intent of privileging either art or design. No distinctions have been made between producers who identify either as artists, craftspeople or designers. These identifiers are used interchangeably, depending on the context of the narrative, nature of an individual's creative output and how those outputs were described by contemporary makers and commentators. This reflects the mix of terminology used in fashion and textile trade journals and popular magazines of the post-war era, which also used a variety of descriptions for creators.

Creative practitioners of the twentieth century spoke of themselves as both artists and designers and also adopted other personas as a means for making a living. Some twentieth century practitioners of commercial art in Australia received traditional visual art tuition, whilst commercial artists trained in technical colleges turned to painting or sculpture later in their career.[21] Australian artists of the 1930s and 1940s worked concurrently on their personal projects as well as commercial design commissions such as murals, theatre costumes and sets, travel posters and pattern design for textiles, wallpaper and wrapping paper. They continually crossed vocational

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[21] In his 1964 monograph *William Dobell*, James Gleeson documented that the painter began his career as a commercial designer at *Wunderlich*, a building supply company. (James Gleeson. 1964. *William Dobell.* London: Thames & Hudson, 16.) Anne McDonald points out that Annand began his career as a designer of murals, posters, magazine covers and textile print designs. In his latter career Annand made architectural sculptures out of stone, glass and metal, crossing the boundaries of visual art, commercial art, craft and sculpture, depending on the nature of the commission (Anne McDonald. 2001. *Douglas Annand: The Art of Life.* Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 11-15). During the nineteen seventies, eighties and early nineties Grace Cochrane aligned Annand's latter works with Australian craft (Grace Cochrane. 1992. *The Crafts Movement in Australia: A History.* Kensington, NSW: New South Wales University Press, 189), illustrating the variety of different nomenclature in use by art and design historians during the latter twentieth century.

boundaries between art and commercial design practice. Many also worked in small galleries or stores as salespeople, either selling their own output and the artwork of others.[22]

Another creative occupation mentioned in post-war creative activity is that of the 'stylist', who acts more as a facilitator or coordinator than a creator of designed products. In the context of this study, stylists are conceived as creative collaborators who work with designers and artists to develop and coordinate creative outputs that respond to customer wants and needs of the time. One of Claudio Alcorso's favourite expressions "gli artisti hanno sempre ragione" ("artists are always right") applies equally to the work of practitioners whether they call themselves artists, craftspeople, stylists or commercial designers.[23]

As an historian and creative practitioner, my personal position is that art, craft and design and merchandising are symbiotic and cannot exist without each other. In the context of this study on printed textile culture, all aspects of creativity and realisation are integral. Printed textiles cannot exist without the design of pattern by artists or designers, or the skills of craftspeople to print them. Textile collections comprising of different designs could not be coordinated into a cohesive whole without a collaborative collation process.

Textile prints designed by Australian artists are regarded as equal in stature to other creative outputs discussed in this thesis. Textile designs by artists and designers are considered alongside works produced in traditional art media including drawing, painting and printmaking and commercial print layouts, cover designs, interior designs, typography, photography, poster and

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[22] The notion that commercially driven creative output is somewhat lower in status that a universally acknowledged work of art is a particular aspect of the cultural cringe that reappears constantly in critical debate on Australian art and design.

[23] Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say*, 118.

murals. These outputs are considered alongside social, political and economic factors including Australian, regional and world events, advances in technology, communications, media and trends in visual culture in general, providing a background to the production of artist-designed textile prints.

The medium of serigraphy or screen printing itself is an intersection between art, craft, design and textile printing. It was first used to create editions of artist's works on paper and to produce cloth banners and promotional signage in volume. It allows production of multiple originals, rather than inferior copies or a creator's design. Each artist's print or roll of fabric made using this technology are part of an edition. Screen printing is a medium that allows the domains of artist, craftsperson, designer and stylist to come together to realise printed textile culture.

This study seeks to reveal practices of cultural appropriation used routinely used in Australia during the post-war period and in doing do primarily deals with designs by settler artists and designers. There is no intent to purposely exclude the work of First Nation textile artists and designers. Mention is made of known Aboriginal artists and designers who produced designs that were commercially printed by Alcorso's businesses. The appropriation of Aboriginal iconography was a common practice used by settler artists and designers, often defended as a strategy to create an identifiable Australian design style. It is a practice that unfortunately prevails in the production of so-called Australian products, including souvenirs produced for tourists in the twenty-first century. Cultural appropriation, together with other forms of imitation and reproduction of visual and intellectual property are practices that are strongly criticized within this study.

1.1.4.1 Textiles as text

Janis Jeffries, citing theorist Mary Schoesser, wrote that textiles constitute 'texts' – records of memories, ideas, allegiances, social conventions and

proprieties.[24] As a visual as well as tactile medium, textiles embody a system of signs. The colour and surface decoration of a textile – whether it be a yarn-dyed or resist-dyed patterned fabric; or a surface embellished with applique, embroidery, painting or printing - form a visual language of the textile text, whilst the hand or feel provides tactile communication.[25]

The tactile language of a textile is apparent to anyone who has ever worn a garment, walked barefoot on a carpet or sat on upholstered furniture. The physiological aspects of a textile – that is, the way a textile feels to its wearer, together with the psychological aspects of the textile – how it makes the wearer feel about themselves – are just as important as how fashionable or visually flattering a textile or garment is to the wearer. Whilst cotton and linen are comfortable and durable shirting materials, they do not compare to the feeling of wearing a fine silk shirt or blouse. And whilst wool provides protection and warmth in cooler weather, it cannot compare with the luxuriant warmth of wearing cashmere.

There are specific terminologies associated with the production of textiles that are used in this thesis. They include words like warp and weft; jacquard and dobby; yarn-dyed and piece-dyed; dyestuff and mordant; greige and substrate; grain and bias and stentering. The meanings of these terms can be obtained from the glossary of any book on textile science. Other textile industry terms used in this study have multiple meanings depending on the context they are used in. For example, the term 'converter', used extensively throughout this study, refers to business intermediaries who purchase greige (grey or loom-state cloth) in bulk and add value by dyeing, printing or using it in manufacture, or selling finished textiles to other users for profit.

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[24] Janis Jeffries. 2016. "Editorial Introduction." In the *Handbook of Textile Culture*, by Janis Jeffries, Diana Wood Conroy and Hazel Clark, London: Bloomsbury, 3. In her introduction, Jeffries quotes from Mary Schoesser's work, *World Textiles: A Concise History*, published in London in 2003 by Thames & Hudson.

[25] Jonathan Culle. 1983. Roland Barthes. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 72.

Pattern design also has a visual classification system and language. Specific symbols and visual imagery that are used in pattern design can be classified and then interpreted using the tools of semiotics. For example – floral patterns are a sub-classification of natural flora and fauna, that also includes foliage and animal-based pattern. The language of flowers ascribes symbolic meaning to the incorporation of specific flowers in gardens and floral arrangements. Whilst the depiction of flowers in works of art may have meaning, this is less likely to occur in the production of volume textile prints.

Other pattern classifications include geometric prints (lines, stripes, triangular or circular prints) and abstract prints, whose patterns can be derived from other classifications, providing endless variety. Whilst most pattern creators begin their designs from a conceptual basis, there are others who work purely from an aesthetic or even purely commercial position, creating only patterns that are like others that have been previously understood, or have sold well in the past.

1.2 Thesis overview

There are seven chapters and two appendices following this introduction that collectively make up this dissertation on Claudio Alcorso & Post-war Textile Culture in Australia.

Chapter 2, 'Methods of Inquiry', has two components. The first is an overview of the research approach, which describes the qualitative, transdisciplinary methods utilised. The second is a comprehensive review of the literature, archival material and material culture from which the thesis is constructed.

Chapter 3, 'Claudio Alcorso and Italian Textile Culture' provides background on textile history and culture in Italy and the Alcorso family's textile department store "Amilcare Piperno Alcorso". It provides information about the Piperno and Coen families and Claudio Alcorso's early life and

cultural education. It examines the rise of Mussolini's Fascist movement and explains the reasons why the Alcorso family left Italy to set up their textile printing business in Australia.

Chapter 4, 'The Alcorsos in Australia', examines the landscape of printed textile culture in Australia during the 1930s, the arrival of the Alcorsos and their establishment of STP in 1939. It reveals how Claudio Alcorso was interned as an enemy alien and how three young, talented woman designers kept the business going, making connections with professional artists that would lay the groundwork for the Modernage artist-designed textile collection of 1946-47.

Chapter 5, 'Rethinking Modernage', begins with an overview of social, cultural and economic changes experienced after World War II and their impact on textile production in Australia. This is followed by an extensive analysis of the work of artists and designers who contributed to Modernage. The launch and promotion of the collection is examined in detail, together with an analysis of the impact it made on both Australian and international audiences, challenging perceptions that the collection was a commercial failure. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how Modernage established STP as a premium textile printing facility, laying the foundation for future successes.

Chapter 6, 'STP in the Post-War Boom' examines STP's business activities in Tasmania from 1948 to 1960, including its expansion into spinning, dyeing and weaving. STP (and its successor UTA) became major employers in Tasmania and were featured in films produced by the Tasmanian and federal Australian Governments promoting the Australian way of life to potential migrants.[26] This chapter closely examines fabrics created by Alcorso for the

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[26] *STP* merged with Tennyson Textiles forming Universal Textiles Australia (UTA) in 1967. Other major Tasmanian employers in the Hobart region during the 1950s and 1960s included the Tasmanian Hydro-Electric Commission ("The Hydro"), Cadburys at Claremont, the Boyer (Norske

House of Leroy and Cole of California.[27] The Leroy-Alcorso Signature Print Textile Competition is discussed in detail, together with similar schemes introduced by STP's competitors. It concludes with an introduction to the relationship between Alcorso and Sekers Silk Pty Ltd operated by Andrew and Vera Kaldor, together with their son John.

Chapter 7, 'The Rise of Sheridan', examines the beginnings of the offshore manufacture of Australian designed printed fabrics, when Australian production was severely challenged by the reduction of tariff protection. STP's further interaction with international textile companies including Cumberland Textile Mills (Sekers Silk, UK), Carrington and Dewhurst, Courtaulds[28] and the Toray and Teijin corporations in Japan are discussed. It examines the merger of STP with other companies to form UTA and the establishment of 'Sheridan' printed bedlinen. This chapter concludes with an examination of the relationship between Alcorso and John Kaldor and a short overview of the business activities of 'John Kaldor Fabricmaker' from 1970 to 2000.

Skog) Paper Mills and the Nystar Hobart Zinc Works ("The Zinc Works") located on the banks of the Derwent River. Workplace scenes from STP, The Zinc Works and Cadburys were all included in a 1966 film titled "Life in Australia (Hobart)", produced for The Australian Commonwealth Film Unit by the Department of Film Production Hobart, to promote Hobart and more broadly Australia as a potential destination for migrants. Similar films were produced in other state capitals and regional cities, portraying ".....Australian cities and rural centres as happy, lively places where good homes, abundant jobs, schools, hospitals and amenities provide the foundation for a relaxed lifestyle where sport, shopping, religion and even art combine to create a homogenous and prosperous society." The soundtracks of these films consisted only of music – making them accessible to migrants of many locations and language groups.
National Film and Sound Archive. 1966. "Life in Australia (Hobart)." YouTube. Accessed April 16, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b69NkdZHM-U.

[27] After some company amalgamations and changes in management during the 1970's The House of Leroy was renamed "Cherry Lane" and became one of the best-known high-volume manufacturers of young fashion in Australia during the 1980s.

[28] The Sydney Morning Herald. 1963. "Courtaulds (U.K.) May Acquire S.T.P. Link." *The Sydney Morning Herald.* 14 November. Accessed March 26, 2018.
http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=lL5f5cZgq8MC&dat=19631114&printsec=frontpage&hl=en.
—. 1963. "New forces at work in textile industry." *The Sydney Morning Herald.* 24 November. Accessed March 2, 2018.
http://smharchives.smedia.com.au/Olive/APA/smharchive/Print.Article.aspx?mode=image&href=S MH%2F1963%2F11%2F24&id=Ar11100.

The thesis proper concludes with Chapter 8, which considers the overall influence of Claudio Alcorso on the ecology of post-war textile design and production in Australia. Chapter 8 also includes a section on opportunities to leverage the talents of artists and designers by establishing new commercial enterprises servicing demand for surface decoration and textile printing in Australia and globally, which are now economically viable due to developments in clean, sustainable digital and additive (3D) printing technologies.

In addition to the eight thesis chapters, there are two appendices. Appendix A provides an overview of Claudio Alcorso's accomplishments after leaving Dunlop Australia, showing how he applied knowledge and business acumen acquired in the textile industry to a diverse range of cultural, heritage, environmental and political activities from 1970. Appendix B comprises of a timeline of major events and activities involving the Alcorso family, STP and UTA, major business associates and clients. A comprehensive bibliography containing a list of all references used in this research is presented at the end of the dissertation.

2 METHODS OF INQUIRY

2.1   Research approach

Whilst this thesis is a work of design history, the many threads it draws together required the adoption of a transdisciplinary, qualitative research approach, drawn from the traditions and practices of a range of academic disciplines.

Denzin and Lincoln[1] acknowledge that qualitative research can involve a variety of empirical approaches including incorporation and analysis of personal experience, biography, interviews, artefacts, cultural texts and images. They further suggest that there is merit in using more than one interpretive practice in any study and that a number of interconnected practices assist with gaining a better understanding of the subject matter.

The research identities adopted in the undertaking of this study include the personas of design historian, biographer, business analyst, textile designer, printmaker, photographer, archivist, interviewer, cultural and industrial interpreter, writer, narrator and social commentator.[2] These identities have enabled the formation of connections and conclusions that that would not have been apparent had only one identity been adopted.

Denzin and Lincoln suggest that:

> …..a researcher taking a cultural studies or feminist
> perspective will read a text in terms of its location within
> a historical moment marked by a particular gender, race
> or class ideology.

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[1]   Normal K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln. 2003. *Strategies of Qualitative Enquiry.* Thousand Oaks, London, Delhi: Sage Publications.
[2]   Denzin and Lincoln 2003, 5.

> A cultural studies use of ethnography would bring a set of understandings from feminism, postmodern and poststructuralism to the project.[3]

As Chris Barker has also explained, the field of cultural studies is necessarily 'eclectic', utilising a number of contesting perspectives to 'intervene' in cultural politics and explore culture as "……signifying practices of representation within the context of social power". Barker's opinion is that cultural studies are 'interdisciplinary' or even 'post-disciplinary', drawing from multiple conceptual frameworks ranging from Marxism, Structuralism, Poststructuralism and Feminism. The resulting conceptual framework revolves around:

> ……key ideas of culture, signifying practices, representation, discourse, power, articulation, texts, readers and consumption" which "……can be described as a language-game or discursive formation concerned with issues of power in the signifying practices of human life.[4]

2.1.1   Transdisciplinary research approaches

As previously suggested, different approaches associated with the disciplines of history, business, art, craft, design and textiles are incorporated in this study. The narrative threads together the history of Alcorso and his Australian businesses with stories of culture, migration, post-war regeneration, the place of women, nationalism and globalisation, drawn from relevant research traditions.

Whilst biographical aspects are important to this thesis to show Alcorso's agency on textile culture, this is not a biography. Biographical

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[3]   Ibid, 10-11.
[4]   Chris Barker. 2012. *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice.* London: Sage Publications, 38.

aspects are important to show how Alcorso's cultural and business training influenced the operation of his Australian businesses and subsequently those of his competitors, who emulated his strategies. This study is not just about Alcorso. It is also about the artists who designed prints for him, the workers in his business, his customers and competitors, all of who formed an ecology within the Australian textile industry between 1945 and 1970.

There is no intention either to write a business history. Whilst some of Alcorso's business strategies including Modernage have been previously researched, few academics have studied Sheridan as a derivation of Modernage, developed to shield UTA from some of the adverse impacts of globalised textile manufacturing. Sheridan's contribution to the Australian design and textile culture of the 1960s, 70s and 80s has not been investigated academically to any great extent. Research into STP and UTA's business activities revealed connections between Modernage and Sheridan that have not previously been identified or academically examined.

This study also contributes to feminist studies by highlighting the contribution of previously unacknowledged women textile designers including Avis Higgs, Mary Curtis and Betty Skowronski, who managed the design direction of STP whilst the Alcorsos were absent overseas or interned during World War II. They are representative of the many women designers working in Australian businesses during World War II and in the post-war period.

This account also borrows from the disciplines of social history and economic geography, shows how migrants helped to shaped modernist design and technologies in Australia. Claudio Alcorso was one of many migrants who had a major agency on Australian post war design and culture. STP and UTA both attracted talented migrants from Britain and Europe who contributed their experience and expertise to development of Alcorso's printed textiles.

The drawing together of number of research traditions, together with personal experience as an artist, fashion and textile designer, researcher and businessperson, was an intentional approach that enabled the identification of connections and conclusions that could not have been recognised had only one strategy been employed.

2.2 Review of literature

2.2.1 History and historiography

EH Carr's classic *What is history?* proposes that history is constantly being revised and retold within the frame of the present, resulting in "an unending dialogue between the present and the past".[5] Carr's view of history and historiography underpin this study.

As previously indicated, both art and design history methods are utilised in this thesis. The primary reference on art history method is Fernie's *Art History and its methods: A critical anthology.*[6] Surveys of Australian painting that provided background on artists include Bernard Smith's *Place, Taste and Tradition: a study of Australian Art since 1788*[7] and his later work *Australian Painting 1788-1970*[8]; Robert Hughes *The Art of Australia*[9] and Mary Eagle and John Jones' *A Story of Australian Painting.*[10] Nancy Underhill's *Making Australian Art 1916-49: Sydney Ure Smith Patron and Publisher*[11] provided information on the workings of the commercial art world in the Australia of the 1930s and 40s.

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[5] EH Carr. 2008. *What is History?* London: Penguin, 30.

[6] Eric Fernie. 2003, *Art History and its methods: A critical anthology,* Phaidon Press Limited, London.

[7] Bernard Smith. *Place, Taste and Tradition: a study of Australian Art since 1788.* Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

[8] Bernard Smith. 1978. *Australian Painting 1788-1970.* Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

[9] Robert Hughes. 1970. *The Art of Australia, revised edition.* Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin.

[10] Mary Eagle and John Jones. 1994. *A Story of Australian Painting.* Sydney: Pan McMillan Publishers Australia Pty Ltd.

[11] Nancy Underhill. 1991. *Making Australian Art 1916-49: Sydney Ure Smith Patron and Publisher.* South Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

A number of monographs and biographies of individual artists and designers were consulted. These include Douglas Lloyd-Jenkins *Avis Higgs - Joie de Vivre*, which provided much of the information about design management at STP during World War II[12]; Andrew Montana's *Fantasy Modern: Loudon Sainthill's Theatre of Art and Life*[13]; James Gleeson's *William Dobell*[14] and Anne McDonald's *Douglas Annand: the Art of Life.*[15] The *Diaries of Donald Friend*, edited by Paul Hetherington[16] provided material on artist's lives in Sydney during the 1930s and 1940s and information on the types of commercial commissions undertaken by visual artists. The digitisation of Ure Smith's *Art in Australia* (1916-1942)[17] provided access to early twentieth century writings on artists, as well as reproductions of their early artworks.

Kjetil Fallan's *Design History: Understanding Theory and Method* was the principal source on methods for the study of design history[18], whilst Daniel Huppatz's comprehensive *Introduction: Reframing Australian Design History* was an important supporting reference.[19] Historical surveys of Australian design reviewed include Michael Bogle's *Design in Australia 1880-1970*[20] and Tony Fry's *Design History Australia*[21]. Tony Fry's interpretations of Australian national identity, isolation and marginality informed discussions on the "cultural cringe" – an Australian idea that designed products from overseas

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[12] Douglas Lloyd-Jenkins. 2000. *Avis Higgs - Joie de Vivre.* Napier, New Zealand: UNITEC Institute of Technology and Creative New Zealand.
Douglas Lloyd-Jenkins. 2001, No. 61. "Closing the Gap - Avis Higgs." *Textile Fibre Forum* 12-13, 52.
Douglas Lloyd-Jenkins. 2002. "Joie de Vivre: Avis Higgs at Silk and Textile Printers." In *Designing Australia: Readings in the History of Design*, by Michael Bogle, 201-13. Sydney: Pluto Press.

[13] Andrew Montana. 2013. *Fantasy Modern: Loudon Sainthill's Theatre of Art and Life.* Sydney: New South Publishing.

[14] James Gleeson. 1964. *William Dobell.* London: Thames & Hudson.

[15] Anne McDonald. 2001. *Douglas Annand: The Art of Life.* Canberra: National Gallery of Australia.

[16] Donald Friend. 2003. *The Diaries of Donald Friend, Volume 2.* Canberra: National Library of Australia.

[17] *Art in Australia.* 1916-1942. National Library of Australia. http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-325167134.

[18] Kjetil Fallan. 2010. *Design History: Understanding Theory and Method.* Oxford, New York: Berg.

[19] Daniel Huppatz. 2014. "Introduction: Reframing Australian Design History." *Journal of Design History.* Vol. 27, No. 2. Accessed March 1, 2015. DOI:10.1093/jdh/ept044.

[20] Michael Bogle. 1998. *Design in Australia 1880-1970.* Sydney: Craftsmen House.

[21] Tony Fry. 1988. *Design History Australia.* Sydney: Hale and Iremonger.

were somehow superior. Studies consulted of the history of pre- and post-war modernist design in Australia include *The Australian Dream: Design of the Fifties*, edited by Judith O'Callaghan[22]; Ann Stephen, Philip Goad and Andrew McNamara's *Modern Times: The Untold Story of Modernism in Australia*[23] and Deborah Edwards and Denise Mimmocchi's *Sydney Moderns: Art for a New World*[24].

Biographical facts about individual artist and designers were obtained from the *Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB)*[25] and the *Design and Art Australia Online (DAAO)*[26] websites. Details about the materiality and technical realisation of individual works of art and design were obtained from art history texts, monographs on artists and from curatorial notes available and from the websites of major collections in Australia.

2.2.2 Texts by or about Claudio Alcorso

A new biography, *Colour and Movement: The Life of Claudio Alcorso* was released by Stephenie Cahalan in September 2019.[27] This biography, written with the support of the Minister for the Arts in Tasmania, recounts the life of Claudio Alcorso drawing from newspaper archives, new and recorded interviews and personal papers lodged in the Tasmanian State Archives. Cahalan's biography does not focus on Alcorso's career in textiles, apart from some discussion of Modernage. There is no mention of the Leroy-Alcorso Signature Print competition and the account of the relationship between STP and Sekers in the 1960s focuses mainly on John Kaldor. The founding of Sheridan and media

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[22] Judith O'Callaghan. 1993. *The Australian Dream: Design of the Fifties.* Sydney: Powerhouse Publishing.

[23] Ann Stephen, Andrew McNamara and Philip Goad. 2008. *Modern Times: The Untold Story of Modernism in Australia.* Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press.

[24] Deborah Edwards and Denise Mimmocchi. 2013. *Sydney Moderns: Art for a New World.* Sydney: Art Gallery of NSW.

[25] *Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB).* http://adb.anu.edu.au.

[26] *Design and Art Australia Online (DAAO).* https://www.daao.org.au

[27] Stephenie Cahalan. 2019. *Colour and Movement: The life of Claudio Alcorso.* Hobart: Forty South Publishing Pty Ltd.

controversy concerning Mrs Andrew Peacock's endorsement in paid advertising are dealt with in some detail. Whilst this book assisted with verifying some data, it was not a major source.

Alcorso's memoir *The Wind You Say* is a short, nostalgic memoir of less than two hundred pages focusing on highlights of his life. It provided snapshots of different parts of Alcorso's life, such as the family's Jewish heritage and Italian business activities, which were expanded through archival research. It provided most of the information about STP's business activities in China, of which there is little trace elsewhere. Together with statements from interviews recorded before his death, incorporation of quotations from this memoir enabled Alcorso's voice to be heard in this study.

Several papers have been written on Claudio Alcorso's experiences whilst interned as an enemy alien. The Australian Government's wartime dossier on Alcorso, now part of the National Archives of Australia, provided nearly five hundred digitised pages of written information, including surveillance information, transcripts of interviews with Alcorso, his family and friends compiled between 1939 to 1954.[28] The dossier also provided information about the family's business and social connections in Italy and Australia, exposing the institutionalised bigotry faced by migrants from Axis countries when they came to Australia to escape from Fascism.

Notable amongst published articles about Alcorso is Joseph Talia's *Claudio Alcorso: an adventurers' life*[29] and *The Alcorso Story*[30], both of which were written shortly after Claudio's death as a celebration of his life and achievements, from the perspective of a fellow Italian-Australian. Insights into

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[28] National Archives of Australia. 1940. "Claudio Alcorso." *SP1714/1, N33832.* 30 July. Accessed December 30, 2017.
https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=447243.

[29] Joseph Talia. 2000. "Claudio Alcorso: an adventurers' life." *In Search of the Italian Australian into the New Millennium: Conference Proceedings, 2000.* Accessed July 4, 2017.
https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/52138995.

[30] Joseph Talia. 2000/01. "The Alcorso Story." *Italy Down Under,* Summer: 34-41.

Alcorso's social, cultural and political attitudes were obtained from biographies of contemporaries moving in the same social circles. These include Underhill's aforementioned biography of Sydney Ure Smith and Sue Ebery's *The Many Lives of Ken Myer*[31], which discusses the close friendship between Alcorso, Myer and Herbert 'Nugget' Coombs'. Coombs' own biography *Trial Balance*[32] provided insights into the workings of the Australian Government after World War II, adding context to STP's decision to relocate their factory to Hobart in 1947.

2.2.3   The Piperno Alcorsos and Italian textile culture

There are few archival sources on the Amilcare Piperno Alcorso department stores in Rome and a strategy was needed to fill gaps in information. Professor Regina Lee Blaszczyk's text *Fashionability: Abraham Moon and the Creation of British Cloth for the Global Market*[33] provided an exemplar for reconstructing the history of a textile business. Blaszczyk's technique of investigating the broader industry landscape and competitors of historic businesses was instructive in building the profile of the stores in Chapter 4.

Visits to antiquarian bookshops in Rome and Milan and online searches led to reproductions of store catalogues and information that the Piperno Alcorso store at Piazza Fiume was designed in 1937 by Italian modernist architect Melcchiore Bega, also the editor of *Domus* magazine at that time. Further research into Bega led to the acquisition of photographs of the store. Antiquarian websites also provided images of philatelic ephemera from the early days of "Amilcare Piperno Alcorso", including the reproductions of postcards, invoices and publicity stamps discussed in Chapter 4.

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[31] Sue Ebury. 2008. *The Many Lives of Kenneth Myer*. Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press.
[32] Herbert Cole Coombs. 1981. *Trial Balance*. Melbourne and Sydney: MacMillan
[33] Regina Lee Blaszczyk. 2017. *Fashionability: Abraham Moon and the Creation of British Cloth for the Global Market.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Material about 'Grandi Magazzini' (Italian departments stores) was obtained from the websites of Italian libraries, notably the Alessandrina University Library[34], whose collection includes digitised versions of fashion magazines including 'Eleganze Femminili'. This magazine provided information about the operation and products of the Coen departments stores in Milan. Francesca Polese's paper *Department Stores, Mail Order Catalogues and the Fashion Market: Italy in the late 19th century*[35] provided further information on the operation of department stores in Italy and the importance of catalogues in their business.

Writings about the silk and rayon industries in Italy, including Sergio Tognetti's *Development of the Florentine Silk Industry*[36] provided context to the Alcorso's business decision to specialise in these fabrics. Brian A'Hearn's paper on the economic history of the Italian cotton industry[37] together with Elisabetta Merlo and Francesca Polese's *Italy*, from the Berg Encyclopaedia of World Fashion,[38] provided background information on the history of the Italian textile industry.

Several recent publications on Italian dress and culture, including Eugenia Paulicelli's *Fashion under Fascism: Beyond the Black Shirt*[39] and Mario Lupano and Allessandra Vaccari's *Fashion at the time of Fascism: Italian*

[34] Alessandrina University Library. *Eleganze Femminili.* Accessed May 7, 2018. http://www.alessandrina.librari.beniculturali.it/.

[35] Francesca Polese. n.d. "Department Stores, Mail Order catalogues and the Fashion Market: Italy in the late 19th Century." *Erasmus Research Institute for Management.* Accessed May 8, 2018. https://www.erim.eur.nl/fileadmin/erim_content/documents/Department_Stores__Mail_Order_Catalogues_and_the.pdf.

[36] Sergio Tognetti. 2005. "The Development of the Florentine Silk Industry: A Positive Response to the Crisis of the Fourteenth Century." *Journal of Medieval History, Volume 31, No. 1*, 55-69.

[37] Brian A'Hearn. 1998. "Institutions, externalities and economic growth in southern Italy: evidence from the cotton textile industry, 1861-1914." *Economic History Review, L. I, No. 4.* Accessed July 5, 2017. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2599570, 734.

[38] Elisabetta Merlo and Francesca Polese. n.d. "Italy." *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion: West Europe.* Accessed August 18, 2017. DOI: 10.2752/BEWDF/EDch8043a.

[39] Eugenia Paulicelli. n.d. "Fashion under Fascism: Beyond the Black Shirt." *Berg Fashion Library,* Accessed July 3, 2017. https://www.bloomsburyfashioncentral.com/products/berg-fashion-library/book/fashion-under-fascism-beyond-the-black-shirt.

Modernist Lifestyle 1922-1943[40] provided information about the impact of Mussolini's fascist government on fashion and textile production. Doretta Davanzo Poli's *Twentieth-century Fabrics: European and American Designers and Manufacturers* and Sue Kerry's *Twentieth Century Textiles: Part II: Neo-Classicism to Pop*[41] provided information about European printed textiles of the 1920s and 1930s.

Information about the Alcorso's Jewish ancestry came from a visit to the Museo Ebraicia di Roma in 2013, where many of the textile and silver treasures donated to the Rome Synagogue over a five hundred year period by the Piperno and Sonnino families were examined.[42] Information was contextualised by histories of the Jews in Italy from a variety of Judaic sources and a paper by Joseph Gentilli published in the Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal which also examined the Jewish heritage of Paolo Sonnino.[43]

Studies undertaken by Italian government agencies provided the most detailed accounts about the expropriation of Jewish businesses by the Fascists. Information about the denouncement of Amilcare Piperno Alcorso by an employee, the seizing of the businesses and their subsequent sale to a consortium of employees came from the archives of the Rome Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Crafts & Agriculture[44] and the Italian Government

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[40] Mario Lupano and Allessandra Vaccari. 2009. *Fashion at the time of Fascism: Italian Modernist Lifestyle 1922-1943.* Bologna: Damiani Editore.

[41] Sue Kerry. 2007. *Twentieth Century Textiles: Part II, Neo-Classicism to Pop.* London: Galloway/Antique Collector's Club.

[42] Daniela di Castro. 2010. *Treasures of the Jewish Museum of Rome.* Rome: Museo Ebraicia di Roma.

[43] Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say*.

[44] Rome Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Crafts & Agriculture. 2004. "The effects of the racial laws on the economic activities of the Jews in the city of Rome - Chapter 3: Anonymous Societies 1938-1943." *Union of Jewish Communities.* Accessed May 3, 2018. http://presidenza.governo.it/DICA/7_ARCHIVIO_STORICO/beni_ebraici/english_version/493_522_js.pdf.

President's Council Jewish Goods Commission[45], together with the previously mentioned Australian Government's wartime dossier on Claudio Alcorso[46].

2.2.4   Artist-designed textiles in Europe and America

Information about artist-designed textiles in Britain, Europe and America came from Geoffrey Rayner, Richard Chamberlain and Annemarie Stapleton's *Textile Design: Artists Textiles 1940-1976*[47] and the previously mentioned texts by Poli[48] and Kerry.[49] The principal reference on Ascher was Valerie Mendes and Frances Hinchcliffe's *Zika and Lida Ascher: Fabric, Art, Fashion* – the catalogue of an exhibition previously held at the Victoria and Albert Museum[50].

Post-war treatises that helped to explain contemporary ideas of textile design included Nicolaus Pevsner's critique *Can Painters Design Textiles?*[51] and James De Holden Stone's article *The Designer and the Print Dress.*[52] Though it does not exclusively deal with art and textile design, Herbert Read's iconic *Art and Industry* was a major reference.[53] Read's work is quoted media campaigns for STP's wartime and early post-war collections including Modernage,

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[45] Italian Government – Presidents Council - Jewish Goods Commission. 2001.
      "Commercial Businesses & Industrial Concerns in Rome 1938-1945." *General Report.* April. Accessed June 11, 2018.
      http://presidenza.governo.it/DICA/7_ARCHIVIO_STORICO/beni_ebraici/english_version/493_522_js.pdf, 493-522; and
      "Industrial and Commercial Assets." *General Report.* April. Accessed June 11, 2018.
      http://presidenza.governo.it/DICA/7_ARCHIVIO_STORICO/beni_ebraici/english_version/321_338_dg.pdf, 321-338.
[46] National Archives of Australia. 1940.
[47] Geoffrey Rayner, Richard Chamberlain and Annemarie Stapleton. 2012. *Textile Design: Artists Textiles 1940-1976.* Woodbridge: The Antique Collectors Club,
[48] Poli, 2007.
[49] Kerry, 2007.
[50] Valerie D Mendes and Frances M Hinchcliffe. 1987. *Zika and Lida Ascher: Fabric, Art, Fashion.* London: Victoria and Albert Museum.
[51] Nicolaus Pevsner. 1946. "Can painters design fabrics?" *Art in Industry*, December: 11-17.
[52] James De Holden Stone. 1946. "The Designer and the Print Dress." *Art and Industry,* Volume 40 (London : Studio, 1936-1958), Canberra, National Library of Australia: 98-111.
[53] Herbert Read. 1966. *Art and Industry, 5th ed.* London: Shenvale Press Limited.

reflecting intelligence obtained from international journals including 'Art in Industry' and 'Art and Industry', publishers of the aforementioned articles by Pevsner and De Holden Stone.

Australia's textile and fashion industry journals of the post-war era, including the Draper of Australasia[54] and the Textile Journal of Australia[55] were additional sources of information on international textile trends from technical and design perspectives. Whilst these journals primarily reported on British trends mentioning producers of artist-designed textiles including Ascher and Sekers, they also reported on commercial textile design trends in the United States, Paris and Italy for Australian readers.

2.2.5 Australian Artist-designed textiles and Modernage

A key impetus for investigating Alcorso was that previous scholarly writings concentrated on the Modernage collection of 1946-47, with little mention of subsequent initiatives including the Leroy-Alcorso Signature Print competitions of 1954-55 and the founding of Sheridan. Writers including Alice Blackwood[56], Grace Cochrane[57], Christina Sumner[58] and Christopher Menz[59] all mention Alcorso and Modernage alongside other producers of screen printed fabrics, including Annan Textiles, Marion Best Fabrics and France Burke, which were mostly smaller business concerns primarily working in production of exclusive and limited edition furnishing fabrics for architects

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[54] The Draper of Australasia. VIC : 1901-1966. Sydney, State Library of NSW; Canberra, National Library of Australia.

[55] The Textile Journal of Australia. VIC : Wilkes & Co Pty Ltd, 1926-1970. Sydney, State Library of NSW; Canberra, National Library of Australia.

[56] Alice Blackwood. 2005. "Claudio Alcorso - Art and the Everyday." *Textile Fibre Forum*, No. 4: 24-25.

[57] Grace Cochrane. 1992. *The Crafts Movement in Australia: A History.* Kensington, NSW: New South Wales University Press, 174-176.

[58] Christina Sumner. 1990. "Early Australian Silkscreen Printing." *Textile Fibre Forum*, No. 27: 22-23.

[59] Christopher Menz. Summer 1987, No. 4. "1946. Modernage Fabrics." *Craft Australia* 77.

and interior design. More recently, Liz Williamson[60] retold the Modernage story in much the same way.

Though links between Modernage and the Leroy-Alcorso Signature Print competition have been identified in some curatorial writing on Alcorso[61], Australian scholars have made no connection between Modernage and the use of artist-designed prints by Sheridan. Similarly, there are few academic mentions of Alcorso's business affiliation with the Kaldor family, whose businesses Sekers and later John Kaldor Fabricmaker were leaders and tastemakers in the upper echelons of the Australian wholesale and retail textiles market in the 1970s and 1980s. Grace Cochrane's *The Crafts Movement in Australia: A History*[62] is one of the few surveys that mentions all three businesses, however, they are positioned within a history of craft (limited edition, handmade textile production) rather than a history of commercial textile manufacturing.

Many of the scholars who have previously investigated Alcorso's achievements, including Margaret Maynard[63], Michael Bogle[64] and John McPhee[65] are art or design historians, or curators of collections in libraries and museums who may have little experience working in the fashion and textile industries. They propose that the so-called failure of Modernage was due to a lack of consumer acceptance without any consideration of materiality, cost, or

[60] Liz Williamson. 2010. "Interlaced - Textiles for Fashion." In *Australian Fashion Unstitched: The Last 60 Years*, by B English and L Pomazan. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
Williamson, Liz. 2010. "Capturing the Landscape : Textiles for the Australian Fashion Industry." *Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings. 61 - Textiles and Settlement : From Plains Space to Cyber Space.* Accessed April 24, 2018. http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/tsaconf/61.

[61] Anne-Marie Van de Ven. 2015. "Shirley Martin: Australian industrial designer." *Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences.* 29 July. Accessed July 15, 2019. https://maas.museum/inside-the-collection/2015/07/29/shirley-martin-australian-industrial-designer/.

[62] Grace Cochrane, 1992, 174-176.

[63] Margaret Maynard. 2001. *Out of Line: Australian Women and Style.* Sydney: University of NSW Press Ltd, 166.

[64] Michael Bogle. 1998. *Design in Australia 1880-1970.* Sydney: Craftsmen House, 86-89.

[65] John McPhee. 1997. "Sanctuaries: Three Textile Artists in Australia." In *Europeans: Emigre artists in Australia 1930-1960*, by Roger Butler. Canberra: National Gallery of Australia

any recognition of its demonstration of STP's capability as a textile printer. Whilst the work of these scholars provided invaluable guidance and some insights that would not have been otherwise obvious, this study attempts to positions Modernage and the operations of STP and UTA within the Australian textile manufacturing industry, rather than within a history of craft, artisanal or limited-edition production.

It must be acknowledged that this study does not examine the textile designs of every artist that contributed to Modernage. This is not because of any bias or preference on the part of the writer, but a recognition that it is virtually impossible to do justice to the work of each artist who contributed to Modernage, given that examination of the collection comprises only part of this narrative on Alcorso, rather than the whole of it.

2.2.6 Migration and Multiculturalism in Australia

The history of migrants and migration permeate throughout this thesis. Many of Alcorso's close business associates and business competitors originally came from Europe – some before the war and some after the war as refugees. Alcorso speaks extensively in his memoirs, correspondence and interviews about the Australia of 1939 being an extension of Britain and the number of times he was called 'wog' and 'dago' by British Australians, particularly whilst interned as an enemy alien. He also spoke with pride about the twenty-six different nationalities of workers he employed at STP[66] and the display of national flags proudly hung in the design room. Alcorso rejoiced in the new policies for a multicultural Australia introduced by the Whitlam government in the 1970s, believing that diversity would make Australia greater.

Chapter 5 contains some material dealing with the impact of post-war migration on STP. Much of the general information about migration is based

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[66] STP Holdings Ltd. 1964. *Annual Report 1964.* National Library of Australia.

on Ann-Mari Jordens' book *Redefining Australians: Immigration, Citizenship and National Identity*[67]; Andrew C Theophanous' *Understanding Multiculturalism and Australian Identity*[68] and *The Multicultural Experiment: Immigrants, Refugees and national Identity*, a compilation of scholarly essays edited by Dame Leonie Kramer.[69]

Roger Butler's collation of writings on the experiences of émigré European artists and designers provided specific information on the migrant experiences of creative producers including Alcorso.[70] Other historians who have documented the experiences of migrant artists and designers include Philip Goad, Ann Stephen, Andrew McNamara, Harriet Edquist and Isabel Wünsche, whose *Bauhaus Diaspora and Beyond* provides a reminder that modernist art and design in Australia owes a great debt to Bauhaus-trained designers arriving in Australia from 1930 onwards.[71]

Rex Butler and ADS Donaldson's paper *Stay, Go, or Come*[72] provided information on the many Australian expatriate artists and designers including Margaret Preston, who brought modernist art and design sensibilities back to Australia. In the decade prior to World War II Australian artists associated with Alcorso that were working and travelling abroad included Modernage alumnus Douglas Annand, who brought back new ideas in graphic design from his visit to the New York World's Fair in 1939. Dahl Collings, who submitted several designs to the Leroy-Alcorso Signature Print Textile

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[67] Ann-Mari Jordens. 1995. *Redefining Australians: Immigration, Citizenship and National Identity.* Sydney: Hale & Iremonger Pty Limited, Chapter 4.

[68] Andrew C Theophanous. 1995. *Understanding Multiculturalism and Australian Identity.* Melbourne: Elikia Books.

[69] Leonie Kramer. 2003. *The Multicultural Experiment: Immigrants, Refugees and National Identity.* Sydney: Macleay Press.

[70] Roger Butler (Ed.). 1997. *The Europeans: Emigre Artists in Australia 1930-1960.* Canberra: National Gallery of Australia.

[71] Philip Goad, Ann Stephen, Andrew McNamara, Harriet Edquist and Isabel Wünsche. 2019. *Bauhaus Diaspora and Beyond: transforming Education through Art, Design and Architecture.* Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 1.

[72] Rex Butler and ADS Donaldson. 2008. "Stay, Go, or Come." *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art.* 9:1-2. Accessed August 8, 2016. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14434318.2008.11432798.

competitions in the 1950s worked in the studio of Lazlo Moholy-Nagy in London, adopting aspects of the studio's practices which drew heavily from Bauhaus ideology in her own work on her return to Australia.

2.2.7 Industrial, economic and technological histories

The primary source consulted on the history of technologies used in Australia for primary fibre production and harvesting, as well as textile spinning, weaving, dyeing and printing is the comprehensive *Technology in Australia 1788-1988*.[73] The main technical reference on screen printing in the post-war era is Biegeleisen's *The Complete Book of Silkscreen Printing Production*[74], which clearly explains manual and machine augmented forms of screen printing used by STP and their competitors throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Further information on sources of economic history and geography are included in section 2.5.3 Place and globalisation.

2.2.7.1 International fashion and textile industries

The Handbook of Textile Culture, edited by Jeffries, Conroy and Clark[75] is an important reference on traditional, artisanal and industrially produced textiles. Regina Blaszczyk's *Producing Fashion: Commerce, Culture and Consumers*[76] provided context to the role of fashion industry intermediaries in haute couture, the 'fashion house' and fashion diffusion; fashion journalism; branding, licensing and other marketing practices. This text also informed discussion of Alcorso's leverage of professional and personal networks to support his business and cultural activities.

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[73] University of Melbourne. 2001. "Technology in Australia 1788-1988." *Australian Science & Technology Heritage Centre.* Accessed April 21, 2012. http://www.austehc.unimelb.edu.au/tia/299.html.

[74] JI Biegeleisen. 1963. *The Complete Book of Silkscreen Printing Production.* New York: Dover Publications.

[75] Janis Jeffries, Diana Wood Conroy and Hazel Clark. 2016. *The Handbook of Textile Culture.* London: Bloomsbury.

[76] Regina Lee Blaszczyk. 2017. *Fashionability: Abraham Moon and the Creation of British Cloth for the Global Market.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Christine Boydell's *Free-Lance Textile Design in the 1930s: An Improving Prospect?*[77] informed discussion about the process of print commissioning, whilst Underhill's book on Sydney Ure Smith[78] allowed for contextualisation of Boydell's research to the Australian setting. Australian trade journals including the Textile Journal of Australia, The Draper of Australasia, Clothing News/Thomson's Clothing News and Ragtrader together with previously mentioned texts on European and American artist designed textiles contributed substantial information on the workings of the international textile industry.

2.2.7.2 Australian textile and fashion industries

Major sources of information on the Australian textile industry include Sally Wellers 2007 paper *Retailing, Clothing and Textiles Production in Australia*[79] and Barry Pestana's historical overview *Textiles and Apparel of Australia*.[80] These were supplemented by articles on the history of the industry in trade journals including *The Textile Journal of Australia*[81], *The Draper of Australasia*[82], *Clothing News* and *Thomson's Clothing News*[83] and *Ragtrader*.[84]

Michael Lech's important article *The Gilkes Family, Marion Best Fabrics and Early Fabric Printing*[85], was the principle source on early screen printing

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[77] Christine Boydell. 1995. "Free-Lance Textile Design in the 1930s: An Improving Prospect?" *Journal of Design History, Vol. 8, No. 1.* Accessed June 12, 2019. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1315908.

[78] Underhill 1991.

[79] Sally Weller. 2007. "Retailing, Clothing and Textiles Production in Australia." *Centre for Strategic Economic Studies - Victoria University.* Working Paper No. 29 October. Accessed November 12, 2018. http://www.cfses.com/documents/wp29.pdf.

[80] Barry Pestana. *1996. Textiles and Apparel of Australia. East Hawthorn, Victoria: Morescope Publishing Pty Ltd.*

[81] The Textile Journal of Australia. VIC : Wilkes & Co Pty Ltd, 1926-1970. Sydney, State Library of NSW and Canberra, National Library of Australia.

[82] The Draper of Australasia. VIC : 1901-1966. Sydney, State Library of NSW and Canberra, National Library of Australia.

[83] Clothing News and Thomson's Clothing News. VIC : Thomson Publications, 1947-1968. Sydney, State Library of NSW.

[84] Ragtrader. NSW : 1972-1994. Sydney, State Library of NSW.

[85] Michael Lech. 2005. "The Gilkes Family, Marion Best Fabrics and Early Fabric Printing in Australia." *Australiana*, August: 6-11.

companies in Australia, together with curatorial material also by Lech on the Sydney Living Museums website.[86] Texts on individual businesses operating in the Australian textile and fashion industries such as Phil Jarratt's The *Charles Parsons Story 1915-1990*[87]; Laurence Deushane's *Chest to Chest: Bonds Industries 1915-1990*[88]; Stella Barber's *Myer: The story of Australia's leading department store*[89] and Helen O'Neill's *David Jones: 175 Years*[90] , which provided information about fashion and textiles from the perspectives of wholesalers, manufacturers and department stores.

Historical surveys of Australian fashion include (but are not limited to) *Parade* by Alexandra Joel[91]; Margaret Maynard's *Out of Line: Australian Women and Style*[92] and English and Pomazan's collation of essays *Australian Fashion Unstitched: The Last 60 Years*.[93] Further background was obtained from the *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion; Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands*[94], edited by Margaret Maynard. These were supplemented by a number of scholarly papers on Australian fashion, notably Jennifer Craik's *Is Australian Fashion and Dress Distinctively Australian?*[95] and Margaret Maynard's '*The*

[86] Michael Lech. n.d. "Marion Best Fabrics: Artist Designed Textiles." *Sydney Living Museums.* Accessed April 24, 2018. https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/stories/marion-best-fabrics-artist-designed-textiles.

[87] Phil Jarratt. 1990. *The Charles Parsons Story 1915-1990.* Sydney: Charles Parsons & Company.

[88] Lawrence Deushane. 1991. *Chest to Chest: Bonds Industries 1915-1990.* Wentworthville: Bonds Industries Ltd.

[89] Stella M Barber. 2008. *Myer: The story of Australia's leading department store.* Woolloomooloo: Focus.

[90] Helen O'Neill. 2013. *David Jones: 175 Years.* Sydney: New South Publishing.

[91] Alexandra Joel. 1984. *Parade: The story of fashion in Australia.* Sydney: Harper Collins Publishers.

[92] Margaret Maynard. 2001. *Out of Line: Australian Women and Style.* Sydney: University of NSW Press Ltd.

[93] Bonnie English and Liliana Pomazan. 2010. *Australian Fashion Unstitched: The Last 60 Years.* Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

[94] Margaret Maynard (Ed.). 2010. *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress & Fashion - Volume 7: Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[95] Jennifer Craik. 2009. "Is Australian Fashion and Dress Distinctively Australian?" *Fashion Theory.* 13:4. Accessed March 9, 2017. http://dx.doi.org/10.2752/175174109X467468.

Wishful Feeling about Curves': Fashion, Femininity and the 'New Look' in Australia.[96]

Editorial and images of Australian fashion garments and textiles were obtained from fashion magazines including *Vogue Australia*[97] and *Flair*[98] and women's magazines including the *Australian Women's Weekly*[99]. However, it is acknowledged that information from these sources was often biased - mediated by editorial staff paid to write 'advertorial' and PR companies and advertising agencies who are paid by advertisers to promote their products.

2.2.7.3   Women in the Australian textile industry

The textile industry is a highly gendered territory and the role of women within this sphere is discussed extensively in Chapters 4 and 5. There are extensive archival sources and literature on Australian women working in the manufacturing sector before, during and after World War II, drawn from both industrial relations and design history. These include (but are not limited to) *Stepping Out of History: Documents of Women at Work in Australia*, edited by Marian Aveling and Joy Damousi.[100]

Alistair Whyte-Grieg and Bradon Ellem, amongst others, have written extensively about women working in the clothing manufacturing sector in Australia. However, Louise Johnson's work on John Foster Valley in Geelong is one of the few studies of gender and patriarchy in the Australian textile industry. Her paper *New Patriarchal Economies in the Australian Textile*

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[96]   Margaret Maynard. 1995. "'The Wishful Feeling about Curves': Fashion, Femininity and the 'New Look' in Australia." *Journal of Design History.* Vol. 8, No. 1. Accessed May 11, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1315909.

[97]   Vogue Australia. 1957-. Sydney, State Library of NSW.

[98]   Flair. Sydney : 1956-1973. Sydney, State Library of NSW.

[99]   The Australian Women's Weekly. Sydney : 1933-1982. National Library of Australia. http://trove.nla.gov.au/aww.

[100]   Marian Aveling and Joy Damousi. 1991. *Stepping Out of History: Documents of Women at Work in Australia.* Sydney: Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd.

Industry[101] provided information on the gender divide in work allocated to men and women in textile mills and aspects of racism and other forms of bigotry encountered in these workplaces.

Cheryl Buckley's classic *Made in Patriarchy: Towards a Feminist Analysis of Women in Design*[102] informed the discussion of the role of women designers and helped to explain why development of the Modernage collection was previously attributed directly to Claudio Alcorso, often without acknowledging the agency of the women designers who built relationships with the Australian artists involved in the collection whilst Alcorso was interned.

2.2.8   Success and failure

A central focus of this study is that the perceived failure of Modernage was a precursor to a proliferation of commercially successful artist-designed textiles, culminating with the release of Sheridan printed bed-linen designed by prominent Australian artists in the 1980s. Henry Petroski's *Success through Failure - the paradox of design*[103] helped to explain how failure in one venture can contribute to the success of subsequent initiatives. It has informed the notion that commercial failure of Modernage may have contributed to the ongoing success of artist-designed bed-linen collections by Sheridan and partially explains the imitation of Alcorso's strategies by other producers and manufacturers.

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[101] Louise C Johnson. 1990. "New Patriarchal Economies in the Australian Textile Industry." *Antipode*, 22:1: 1-32.

[102] Cheryl Buckley. 1989. "Made in Patriarchy: Towards a Feminist Analysis of Women in Design." In *Design Discourse: History, Theory, Criticism*, by Victor (Ed.) Margolin, 251-262. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

[103] Henry Petroski. 2006. *Success through Failure - the paradox of design.* Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

2.3 Sources of primary data

2.3.1 Archival sources

Primary evidence of Alcorso's impact on Australian textile culture was drawn from archival holdings in the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences and Art Gallery of NSW in Sydney; the National Gallery of Australia and National Library of Australia in Canberra; the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne; the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston, the Tasmanian State Archives and the Morris Miller Library of the University of Tasmania in Hobart.

In 1995 Angus & Robertson in Sydney published Claudio Alcorso's memoir *The Wind You Say*,[104] and whilst this is an important source, the published version has been obviously redacted through the editing and publication process. The original manuscript housed in the State Archives of Tasmania provides Alcorso's original account. It provides a framework for investigating the broad range and scope of Claudio Alcorso's textile activities, using his own voice.

The five boxes of Claudio Alcorso's personal papers housed in the State Archives of Tasmania includes personal and business correspondence, marketing plans and drafts of speeches that have provided insights into the production strategies that eventually resulted in the development of STP's domestic textiles division which evolved into Sheridan.

The Morris Miller Library holds the minutes of STP's director's and annual general meetings of the 1940s and early 1950s; draft management

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[104] According to statements made in his 1995 interview with Roger Penny, the title of Alcorso's memoir was chosen as a metaphor for *the winds of change,* which brought both good and bad experiences. Without the destructive wind of Fascism that drove him to Australia, Alcorso would not have had the privilege to live and work in Australia, which, as he stated many times, was one of the greatest benefits that the wind brought to him.

reports, production information, papers and correspondence. These revealed many of the decision-making processes used within STP during those periods.

During the 1950s and 1960s, companies produced high-quality annual reports illustrated with black and white and colour illustrations of production facilities, products and the merchandise produced by their affiliates and customers. They include infographics illustrating production and sales statistics for their shareholders. Of themselves, these annual reports provided a great deal of visual information on how these businesses saw and differentiated themselves from their competitors. A close reading of the business reports has also assisted with interpreting the corporate culture of Alcorso's businesses. Much of this material has never been cited in any previous analysis of Alcorso's business activities. Annual reports of Leroy and Tennyson textiles, together with those of STP and UTA from this period are held in the National Library of Australia

Though not strictly primary sources, the collection of papers made available in Michael Bogle's *Designing Australia: Readings in the History of Design*[105] and *Modernism and Australia: Documents on Art, Design and Architecture 1917-1967*[106] edited by Stephen, McNamara and Goad were important sources of writings by artists and designers in Australia on a range of topics central to this study, that would have otherwise been challenging to access.

2.3.2   Textile materials

Lou Taylor's important treatise *De-coding the hierarchy of fashion textiles*[107] was the principal reference on the status of fabrics according to their fibre content and   method   of   construction   and   how   they   add   'distinction'   and

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[105] Michael Bogle. 2002. *Designing Australia: Readings in the History of Design.* Sydney: Pluto Press.

[106] Stephen, McNamara and Goad. 2006.

[107] Lou Taylor. 2012. "De-Coding the Hierarchy of Fashion Textiles." In *The Textile Reader*, by Jessica Hemmings, 418-429. London, New York: Berg.

'fashionability' to fashion garments that are constructed from them. Taylor's position was particularly useful in discussing the stature of silk fabrics and how the Alcorsos used this as a corporate weapon, as described in section 6.3.2.

Every effort has been made to visit repositories to engage with physical material. The analysis of material culture (where available) was a central research method for this study. Textile samples produced for the Modernage collection were viewed and photographed at the National Gallery of Victoria, Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery and the Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences Powerhouse Museum, resulting in the collation of a digital archive.

Analysis of physical textile samples based on technical textile and garment construction knowledge gained from working as a designer in the fashion and textiles industry informed propositions that Modernage textiles, despite their amazing graphic qualities, had adverse characteristics that limited sales. Limited types of substrates, narrow widths and the difficulty of styling of large checks and graphic prints were not obvious from viewing reproductions of textiles. These physical factors, together with knowledge of premium pricing of the products and limitations imposed by government on the re-export of imported textiles, helped to formulate my position that there were many factors behind the limited sales of Modernage products.

Industry experience enabled the collation of a personal archive of fabric samples and technical references, photographs and documents related to Australian post-war textile culture. These materials include records of family businesses including Sidney Sernack Pty Ltd and Rain'N'Shine Pty Ltd, consisting of photographs, media clippings, scrapbooks, manufacturing documentation, fabric samples and garments, some of which are made from fabric produced by Alcorso companies.

2.3.3 Images

Online research and visits to national and state-based collections enabled the documentation of artworks, textiles, documents and related ephemera to support arguments in this thesis. I am also grateful to members of the Alcorso family and a number of scholars and who provided me with access to their own photographic collections.

Caroline Alcorso and her family provided digitised photographs of Claudio, other family members and business associates from the collection of the Alcorso Foundation. Dr Cassie Plate, daughter of artist Carl and niece of Margo Lewers, provided photographs of Modernage textiles from a number of repositories taken for the exhibition *Sydney 6: Hinders, Lewers, Plates: Abstract artists, friends, partners, siblings, 1940s-1970s,* held in 2015. She also showed me original Ascher scarves owned by her mother. I also wish to acknowledge Stephenie Cahalan for generously providing me with photographs she had taken of STP textile swatches in collections in Tasmania.

Digitised and physical versions of Australian industry and women's publications (previously cited in section 2.2.7.2) were a significant source of advertising images. Other images were sourced from the collections of previously cited galleries and museums, monographs, exhibition catalogues and illustrated histories of design and painting in Australia.

Images assisted in showing the visual relationship between an artist's painting or graphic design work and their subsequent textile designs for Alcorso. Advertisements for products manufactured by STP and UTA and their clients were invaluable sources of information about print typologies, substrates and their end use. They enabled comparison of STP's products with those of their competitors and provided indications of pricing and target markets.

2.3.4 Interviews and research conversations

As Claudio Alcorso died in 2000 it was not possible to personally interview him. Consequently, my research depended on previously recorded interviews in the collections of the Tasmanian State Archives, Hobart and the National Library of Australia, Canberra. Caroline Alcorso also provided copies of video footage from the archives of the Alcorso Foundation.

Claudio Alcorso was interviewed for the University of Tasmania Oral History Project 1978 – 1983. This short interview recorded in 1979 provided some material about STP and UTA, cultural and biographical aspects.[108] The six hours of interviews conducted by Roger Penny in the collection of the National Library of Australia in Canberra ensured that Claudio Alcorso's voice is present throughout the narrative, though it is acknowledged that this is the voice of the elderly Claudio Alcorso in 1994, reminiscing on events that took place many years before. Memory had cast a particularly rosy glow over Alcorso's early life and there were many omissions of information that surfaced from other sources. The interviews also took place before his financial issues of 1995, that led to the traumatic foreclosure on the Moorilla property and winery by Alcorso's former wife, ultimately leading to the purchase of the property by David Walsh.

An interview was conducted with Caroline Alcorso, daughter of Claudio and wife Lesley, who shared many of her childhood memories of living at Moorilla and her father's life after leaving the textile industry. However, she knew little about the textile industry and was more interested in her father's work with migrants and in his interests in social justice. Caroline did provide observations about her father whilst he was working at STP and UTA and about the visits from his international business associates to

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[108] Claudio Alcorso. 1979. "Claudio Alcorso interviewed for the University of Tasmania Oral History Project 1978 - 1983." *University of Tasmania.* 23 June. Accessed May 28, 2014. http://eprints.utas.edu.au/16629/1/alcorso-UT388-2-1.mp3.

Moorilla. Information from this interview was invaluable in interpreting the photographs provided by the Alcorso Foundation.

An interview was also conducted with Louise Sonnino, daughter of Paolo Sonnino, who had worked with Vera Kaldor at Sekers, which was amalgamated with STP in 1965. Louise's stories provided much information about her father - the pragmatic, risk-averse Paolo – who kept the Alcorso's businesses financially viable despite the Alcorso's innovative, risk-taking behaviour.

Mrs Joy Jobbins, who knew both Claudio and Amilcare Alcorso from working for advertising executive Ralph Blunden in the 1950s and from working at the Australian Wool Board in the 1960s was also interviewed. She worked on the second campaign for the Leroy-Alcorso Signature Print textile design competition and was present on the aircraft during the in-flight judging.

John Kaldor never responded to my invitation to participate in an interview. Consequently, much of the material and direct quotations from Mr Kaldor are drawn from an interview conducted by Christine Edwards in 2015-16 and from a biographical clipping file housed in the collection of the National Library of Australia.

Others who were approached declined invitations to participate in a formal, recorded interview, or were unable to be interviewed face to face due to time or travel constraints. Anecdotal information has been gleaned from these individuals in informal "research conversations". These include a discussion with Pat Cleveland, a close friend of Claudio and Lesley Alcorso's, together with her husband Bill Howroyd, the supervising architect on the construction of the second of the Alcorso's Roy Grounds designed homes at Moorilla. Informal conversations also took place with Elizabeth Lada, artist and former STP design assistant at Hobart; Jasper Foggo, former designer at John Kaldor Fabricmaker and Dr Prudence Black. Dr Cassie Plate also told me

several stories about the Notanda Gallery and of her father and aunt's life as artists. However, this material is not formally cited and in many case duplicates information already acquired from other primary sources.

Interviews were conducted with other fashion business identities active in the industry at the same time as Claudio Alcorso, including my late father Sidney Sernack, who began his career in the Australian fashion industry around the same time that the Alcorsos arrived in Australia. My father's stories provided background information about wartime and post-war material shortages and his own responses to the fourteen windows devoted by David Jones to the Modernage collection in 1947. He also provided stories about working as a stylist for John J Hilton and RH Taffs in the 1960s and our family business's dealings with Tennyson from the 1950s through to the 1980s. he also shared reminiscences of his interactions with Jack Shaw, Managing Director of the House of Leroy and President of the Garment Industries of Australia Ltd (GIA) during the 1960s.

2.4   Analysis of material and visual culture

2.4.1   Text and audio analysis

Dependency on information from magazines and newspapers has been expressly avoided, except where it provides the only information available and where information can be corroborated by primary sources. It is acknowledged that factual errors occur in media publications due to the use of hearsay and opinion and the manipulation of facts to support the editorial policies of media owners and external influencers. Media interpretations are also coloured by journalist's knowledge (or lack of knowledge) on a subject, superficial research practices and popular conceptions and misconceptions of the time in which an article was written.

A great deal of information was obtained from the papers of Claudio Alcorso in the Tasmanian State Archives. It is clear that Alcorso knew that his papers would be housed in a repository after his death. Speculating on his reasoning for keeping some records - but not others – was the first step in analysing these documents. For example, correspondence between Orlando Alcorso and the board of STP in the early 1960s proposing that they stop printing fabrics and instead open supermarkets was consciously retained. Alcorso wanted it known that he fought to ensure that the textile business he founded would remain viable by producing different kinds of textile products.

The analysis of textual and recorded audio helped to verify reminiscences from Alcorso's memoir *The Wind You Say* and to determine what could be regarded as fiction, opinion and conjecture, shaped by the politics of memory.[109] The dates of items in the archive have helped to construct a timeline of Alcorso's business and personal activities, which in turn assisted with understanding the sequence and overlap of activities and the locations in which they occurred. The variety and volume of textual resources in the archive also assisted with establishing connections between Alcorso and other actors and intermediaries. Any gaps in the timeline were filled by research into issues and activities within greater Australian textile and fashion industries, or the activities and interests of business associated with Alcorso – including Carrington & Dewhurst, Courtaulds, Toyo and Teijin; and Alcorso's wholesale and manufacturer customers including Sekers and Martin & Savage, the House of Leroy and Cole of California.

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[109] Joan Tumblety. 2013. "Introduction: Working with memory as a source and subject." *Memory and History: Working with memory as a source and subject.* Accessed March 16, 2018. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uts/detail.action?docID=1170329.

2.4.2 Semiotics and visual analysis

Analysis of images in this study was broadly informed by semiotic analysis techniques originally proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and Charles Sanders Pierce (1839-1914). Semiotic analysis of patterns, motifs and symbols used by artists and designers reveal specific philosophical meanings that indicate that a design is an integral part of a creator's conceptual framework. However, it is important to recognise that when commercial patterns are copied indiscriminately and altered only to avoid copyright issues, conceptual meanings are changed or lost. Prints from European and American sources that were reproduced in Australia by different textile converters and wholesalers were varied so many times that any semiotic meaning became irrelevant and subservient to the purpose of making money. These considerations led to further research into theories of reproduction and appropriation, which are further discussed in section 2.5.2.

The techniques used in image analysis were based on Van Leeuwen and Jewitt's *Handbook of Visual Analysis*[110] and Berger's *Media Analysis Techniques*.[111] As many of the images analysed were hand drawn illustrations, Clive Ashwin's *Drawing, Design and Semiotics* was a useful reference.[112] Image analysis began with a consideration of the typology and formal aspects of the image – whether it was a photograph or hand drawn illustration and design elements including colour, composition and typography. Next, the purpose of the image was considered. For example, advertising images were evaluated in terms of their intent to promote intangible aspects of a brand such as sophistication and status (as in advertisements for Martin & Savage in Chapter

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[110] Theo Van Leeuwen and Carey Jewitt. 2014. *Handbook of Visual Analysis,* Sage, Los Angeles.

[111] Arthur Asa Berger. 2005. "Chapter 1: Semiotic Analysis." In *Media Analysis Techniques (3rd edition)*, by AA Berger, 3-41. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

[112] Clive Ashwin. 1989. "Drawing, Design and Semiotics." In *Design Discourse - History | Theory | Criticism*, by Victor Margolin (Ed.), 199-209. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.

5), or to create consumer desire (as in advertisements for Cole of California and the House of Leroy in Chapter 6).

Consideration was given to the original location of images - whether they came from a newspaper, fashion magazine, trade journal or annual report – or several types of publications. Cultural aspects of the image – whether it promoted any association of products with the visual arts, music or broader artistic abilities, promoted significant events (such as the Melbourne Olympics in 1956) or reflected particular shared beliefs of society at the time of its publication (gendered positions about the place of women in the home, social class or bigotry) were also deliberated. The consideration of whether images represented mainstream ideologies, or ideas challenging the mainstream were also taken into consideration.

Visual research revealed some recurring images appearing in advertising for Alcorso products. For example, a black and white drawing of a woman walking her dog appears in advertisements for the Piperno Alcorso stores in Rome (see Chapter 3) and again in advertisements for Martin & Savage's Fifth Avenue Handprints collections (see Chapter 6). This implies that the Alcorsos intentionally re-uses visual devices that had proved successful in their Italian business in advertising for their Australian businesses.

2.5   Theoretical frameworks informing data analysis

2.5.1   Modernity and modernism

As Virginia Spate observes in the preface to Stephen, Goad and McNamara's *Modern Times*, the modern movement was complex, multi-faceted and sometimes contradictory and not easy to sum up in a few paragraphs.[113] This

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[113] Virginia Spate. 2008. "Preface." In *Modern Times: The Untold Story of Modernism in Australia*, by Ann Stephen, Andrew McNamara and Philip Goad, xvi-xvii. Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press.

study differentiates between the concepts of modernity and modernism, rather than using the terms interchangeably. Notions of modernism and modernity in Australian art and design from the latter twentieth century were informed by texts previously cited in section 2.2.1 Art and Design History and Historiography.

In the context of this study, 'modernity' is a term used to describe inventions or innovations from the last hundred years or so that have changed the way humans interact with the world. For example, technological advancements such as the development of underground mass transport; architectural techniques such as reinforced concrete and the glass wall; labour saving devices that make cleaning the work of minutes rather than hours, or information and communications technologies such as the internet or smartphone.

Conversely, 'modernism' is understood as the domain of iconoclasts - artists, designers and tastemakers who break the rules of established tradition to create a new visual culture, or new utopian ways of life. Modern art and design of the twentieth century represents a departure from the academic canons of the nineteenth century and the creation of a new and innovative aesthetic specifically associated with the first sixty years or so of the twentieth century.

In 1930s Melbourne, the pastoral painted idylls of the Heidelberg School were replaced by the bohemian artists' colony at Heide, where artists such as Sidney Nolan and Sam Atyeo experimented with colour and abstraction and Joy Hester and Albert Tucker documented the darkness and emotion of modern life. Modernism was used to express "…. a forward looking vision of Australia as a nation no longer defined by the ties to

Empire… ".[114] Modernism, for its Australian exponents, was "an avant-garde practice….. (and) …. a whole world view".[115]

2.5.2 Reproduction and appropriation

Concepts of reproduction were informed by Walter Benjamin's The *Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility*[116]. Benjamin's thesis is that the original work of art is always superior to any reproduction. However, this proposition must be reconsidered in the context of screen printing, which produces "editions" of original works. Artist-designed prints on textile substrates can also be considered as editions of artist's work. This logic underpins the notion of Modernage as a strategy for making visual art accessible for Australians to wear and use to furnish their homes.

Consideration of the appropriation of pattern for application to textile printing was important to the analysis of textile works. Two main aspects of appropriation were considered. The first is appropriation of textile prints originating in overseas markets and their transformation for audiences in Australia. The second is the appropriation and manipulation of artworks by Australia's First Nation peoples as a strategy for the development of a nationally identifiable Australian style.

David Evans' *Appropriation: Documents of Contemporary Art*[117] developed understandings of the origins of artistic appropriation within the historic studio apprenticeship system. It also explained the integration of appropriation within systems of colonisation and the major theme in post-

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[114] Ibid, 3.

[115] Ann Stephen, Andrew McNamara and Philip Goad. 2006. *Modernism & Australia: Documents on Art, Design and Architecture 1917-1967*. Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2.

[116] Walter Benjamin. 2008. *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

[117] David Evans. 2008. *Appropriation: Documents of Contemporary Art, Whitechapel Gallery*. London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

colonisation of "……. the retaking of that which was possessed without authority."[118]

Vicki Karaminas' *Imagining the Orient: Cultural Appropriation in the Florence Broadhurst Collection* provided a case study of cross cultural appropriation and "….the ways that designers address the politics and ideologies that inform their design processes and practices."[119] Emig Rainer's *Adaptation in Theory* explained the notion of identifying an overseas fashion trend and reinterpreting it using local colours and designs themes as 'translation' or 'adaptation', with the resulting work being fiercely protected by their developer from being copied in Australia by another producers situated in lower levels of the market.[120]

Veronique Pouillard and Tereza Kuldova's *Interrogating Intellectual Property Rights in Post-war Fashion and Design* provided further insights through case studies of the great haute couture fashion houses of Paris and how they dealt with both "close copying" as opposed to "fashion diffusion" and the use of "artification" as a marketing tool to elevate the status of fashion.[121]

Writings by artist Margaret Preston were reviewed in order to better understand her desire to create an Australian national design identity through the appropriation and adaptation of Aboriginal artworks. These include her 1940 essay *Paintings in Arnhem Land*[122] and selected writings collated by

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[118] Ibid, 19.

[119] Vicki Karaminas. 2007. "Imagining the Orient: Cultural Appropriation in the Florence Broadhurst Collection." *International Journal of Design*. Vol. 2, No.2. Accessed August 14, 2009. http://www.ijdesign.org/ojs/indes.php/IJDesign/article/view/15/25.

[120] Rainer Emig. 2012. "Adaptation in Theory." In *Adaptation and Cultural Appropriation: Literature, Film and the Arts*, by Pascal Nicklas and Oliver Lindner, 17. Berlin, Boston: Walter de Gruyter.

[121] Veronique Pouillard and Tereza Kuldova. 2017. "Interrogating Intellectual Property Rights in Post-war Fashion and Design." *Journal of Design History, Vol. 30, No. 4.* 9 May. Accessed July 25, 2019. doi:10.1093/jdh/epx014.

[122] Margaret Preston. 1940. "Paintings in Arnhem Land." In *Modernism & Australia: Documents on Art, Design & Architecture 1917-1967*, by Ann Stephen, Andrew McNamara and Philip Goad, 396-399. Carlton, Victoria: The Miegunyah Press.

Elizabeth Butel in 2015.[123] Interpretation of Preston's ideas was further informed by Humphrey McQueen's analysis "From Eggs to Electrolux" in *The Black Swan of Trespass*.[124]

Thomas Heyd's *Rock Art Aesthetics and Cultural Appropriation* informed views on the appropriation of indigenous mark making traditions from various parts of the globe.[125] More recent writings consulted specifically on appropriation of Aboriginal artworks included Rex Butler's *A Secret History of Australian Art*[126] and Ian McLean's "Aboriginal art and the artworld" from *How Aborigines invented the idea of contemporary art.*[127] Nicola St John's *Australian Communication Design History: An Indigenous Retelling* provided an admirable re-evaluation of indigenous contributions to the history of design in Australia.[128]

2.5.3 Place and globalisation

Doreen Massey's *A Global Sense of Place*[129] and *Geographies of Responsibility*[130] were the primary sources consulted on notions of 'place'. Place was considered as part of the analysis of Italian versus Australian culture and textile culture, including aspects of both similarity and difference. Massey's writings also informed discussion of the effects of globalisation on Alcorso's Australian businesses.

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[123] —. 2015. *Selected Writings: Margaret Preston, compiled by Elizabeth Butal.* Exile Bay, NSW: ETT Imprint.

[124] Humphrey McQueen. 1979. *The Black Swan of Trespass.* Sydney: Alternative Publishing Cooperative Limited.

[125] Thomas Heyd. 2003, 61:1, Winter. "Rock Art Aesthetics and Cultural Appropriation." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37-46.

[126] Rex Butler. 2002. *A Secret History of Australian Art.* St Leonards, Sydney: Craftsman House, Fine Art Publishing Pty Ltd.

[127] Ian McLean. 2011. "Aboriginal art and the artworld." In *How Aborigines invented the idea of contemporary art*, by Ian McLean, 17-60. Sydney: Power Publications.

[128] Nicola St John. 2018. "Australian Communication Design History: An Indigenous Retelling." *Journal of Design History.* Accessed March 13, 2019. doi:10.1093/jdh/epy014.

[129] Doreen Massey. 1991. "A Global Sense of Place." *Marxism Today.* June. Accessed October 22, 2018. http://www.amielandmelburn.org.uk/collections/mt/index_frame.htm.

[130] Doreen Massey. 2004. "Geographies of Responsibility." *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography.* 86(1). Accessed October 22, 2018. http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1111/j.0435-3684.2004.00150.x.

Two anthologies provided underpinning knowledge for the discussion of globalisation. The first of these was Andrew Jones' *Globalization: Key Thinkers*, which provided a survey of theoreticians and their positions.[131]The second was Saskia Sassen's collation *Deciphering the global*, which provided additional commentary on the "….. transnational processes …..(of) economic, political and cultural globalisation".[132]

Jan Nederveen Pieterse's *Periodizing Globalization: Histories of Globalization* provided an historical overview of globalisation, confirming that it is not only a recent phenomenon.[133] Anna Calvera's paper *Local, Regional, National, Global and Feedback: Several Issues To Be Faced With Constructing Regional Narratives*, explores the issues of histories of design constructed from a single, regional viewpoint, helping to position Alcorso's business strategies and products within the broader framework of the international fashion and textile industries.[134]

Margaret Maynard's *Dress and globalisation* provided views on the impact of globalisation on fashion and clothing across the globe[135], whilst Michael Webber and Sally Weller's *Refashioning the Ragtrade: Internationalising Australia's Textiles, Clothing and Footwear Industries*[136] was an important reference on historic government protection strategies and the impact of the removal of tariffs on the Australian fashion and textile industry.

Finally, restrictions on the word count of this thesis have made it impossible to list and discuss every reference consulted in this chapter. Please

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[131] Andrew Jones. 2010. *Globalization: Key Thinkers.* Cambridge, Malden: Polity.

[132] Saskia Sassen. 2007. *Deciphering the global*. New York: Routledge.

[133] Jan Nederveen Pieterse. 2012. "Periodizing Globalization: Histories of Globalization." *Global Studies.* Vol. 6, Issue 2, Article 1. Accessed March 2, 2017. doi:10.1515/1940-0004.1174.

[134] Anna Calvera. 2005. "Local, Regional, National, Global and Feedback: Several Issues To Be Faces With Constructing Regional Narratives." *Journal of Design History.* Vol. 18, No. 4. Accessed August 1, 2018. doi:10.1093/jdh/epi054.

[135] Margaret Maynard (Ed.). 2010. *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress & Fashion - Volume 7: Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[136] Webber, Michael and Sally Weller. 2001. *Refashioning the Ragtrade: Internationalising Australia's Textiles, Clothing and Footwear Industries.* Sydney: University of NSW Press Ltd.

refer to the bibliography at the end of this document for a complete list of research sources.

3 CLAUDIO ALCORSO & ITALIAN TEXTILE CULTURE

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing the image was available at:

http://www.abc.net.au/reslib/201408/r1321756_18304427.jpg
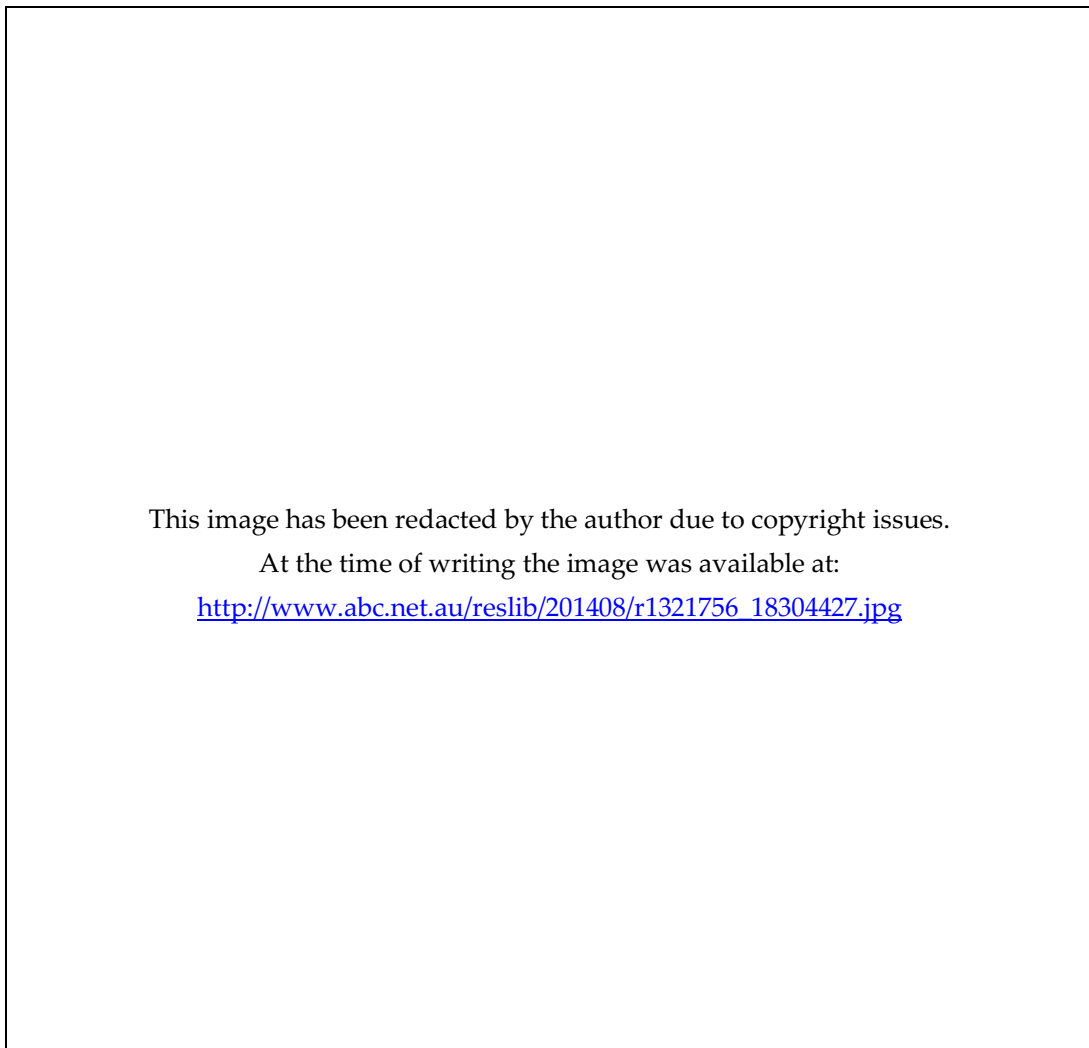
Figure 3.1 Photograph of Claudio Alcorso by Paul County, n.d.[1]

The elderly Claudio Alcorso gazes at us with anticipation, waiting to say something important. He is surrounded by the symbols of his cultural and commercial capital – the glass and bottle of wine on his desk – a symbol of his work as a Tasmanian vigneron, whilst the piles of books he is reading, the computer that he writes on and the certificates and photographs that surround him evidence of his personal achievements and cultural interests. Behind him are three pictures – symbolic of his family's heritage in textile culture. They

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[1] Museum of Old and New Art (MONA). 2014. "Moorilla Winery." Accessed July 6, 2014. http://www.mona.net.au/mona/winery.

depict the spinning of yarn, the weaving of cloth and printing of pattern onto fabric using inked blocks. Designs are being printed on silk, the luxury fabric that meant so much to the Alcorso's businesses in Italy. These pictures take up a significant part of this image of Claudio Alcorso, just as textile culture has taken up a significant part of his life.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
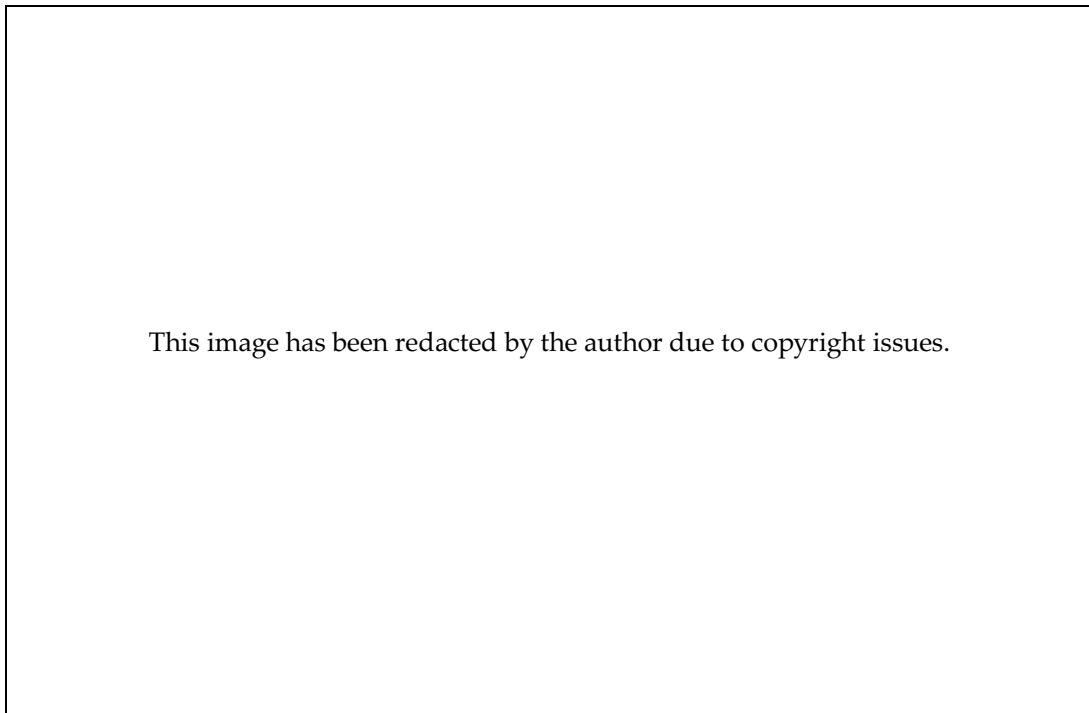
Figure 3.2 Claudio Alcorso in his office at Silk & Textile Printers in Hobart n.d. [2]

The middle-aged Claudio Alcorso, captain of industry, is seated in his office at Silk & Textile Printers in Hobart. He doesn't have much time – he has many papers to read and sign. His cup of coffee is already growing cold and his out-tray is waiting to be filled. He only has a moment to look up at the photographer before he returns to his work. Behind him are the same three images of textile culture that his future self displays nostalgically on the walls of his study. Here, they inform his suppliers and clients that this man knows what he is doing – his family have worked in the textile industry for generations.

[2]   Joseph Talia. 2000/01. "The Alcorso Story." *Italy Down Under*, Summer: 39.

This chapter investigates the heritage and business interests of the Piperno Alcorso family in Italy, from the arrival of their Jewish antecedents during the sixteenth century to the operation of the Amilcare Piperno Alcorso textile stores and workshops in Rome during the 1930s, providing an insight into factors that shaped Claudio Alcorso into the Australian textile industrialist seen in figure 3.2.

3.1   The Piperno Alcorso family in Italian textile culture

Claudio Alcorso, the second son of Amilcare Piperno Alcorso and his wife Niny Piperno Alcorso (nee Coen), was born in Rome in 1913. The Alcorso's family name was originally "Piperno", a Sephardic Jewish family name that can be traced back to the fourteenth century in Rome.[3] However, by the early twentieth century their branch of the family had lost connection with their Jewish roots and were baptised as Catholics. They were known by their adopted name "Alcorso", from the Italian phrase Al Corso – literally meaning "at the course", but colloquially meaning "on the street". It came from the name of their first retail store Amilcare Piperno Al Corso, at 72 Corso Umberto I (now the Via del Corso), in Rome.

The Piperno name was first seen in Italy in the Jewish community of Livorno, a Tuscan port city founded in 1577 on the Ligurian Sea. Many of the Jews of Livorno were Marranos and Levantines who were expelled from Spain during the inquisition of 1492, attracted by the freedom to own houses and study at the local university and exemption from wearing an identification badge. By 1765, Jews owned more than a third of the largest commercial houses in the town, though many had migrated to other trade centres[4] in the

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[3]   Jewish Genealogy in Italy. 2017. "Livorno (Leghorn)." Accessed August 18, 2017.
      http://www.italian-family-history.com/jewish/Livorno.html.
[4]   Ibid.

lead up to the Risorgimento.[5] By the time of Italian unification, the Pipernos and affiliated Jewish families, including members of Claudio Alcorso's mother's family the Coens were all residents of Rome.[6, 7]

The exact number of generations that the Piperno and Coen families were commercially engaged with Italian textile culture is unknown. However, it is known is that trading in rags and used clothing was one of the few professions available to European Jews during periods of persecution, suggesting that their commercial involvement in the sale of textiles may extend further back than the 1800s.[8]

By the time of Claudio Alcorso's birth in 1913, the Piperno family were fully assimilated members of an educated, bourgeoise upper-middle class. According to Claudio Alcorso's memoir, he was not circumcised and he and his family did not attend church regularly. There were still some members of his mother's family, the Coens, who nominally practised Judaism, though they were 'secular' or non-observant Jews. The family revered their great-grandfather Nonno Alessandro Vitale, who had fought with Garibaldi during the struggles of the Risorgemento.[9]

Amilcare and Niny Piperno Alcorso and their three children Sylvana, Claudio and Orlando lived in Rome in a fourth-floor apartment with outlooks

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[5] The *Risorgimento* or 'resurgence' refers to the unification of individual city states into the nation of Italy under Garibaldi in 1859, culminating in the crowning of Victor Emmanuel as King of Italy in 1861. Claudio Alcorso proudly included a photographic family tree in his 1993 memoir *The Wind You Say*, illustrating his connection to Nonno Alessandro Vitale, a merchant navy captain and 'Garabaldino'. Vitale was Claudio's maternal great-grandfather, the grandfather of his Nonna Amalia.

[6] Jewish Genealogy in Italy. 2017. "Livorno (Leghorn)." Accessed August 18, 2017. http://www.italian-family-history.com/jewish/Livorno.html; and
—. 2017. "Roma (Rome)." Accessed August 18, 2017. http://www.italian-family-history.com/jewish/Roma.html.

[7] Elizabeth D Mailissa. 2000. "Timeline of Jewish History in Italy." *Jewish Virtual Library.* Accessed October 8, 2017. https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/timeline-of-jewish-history-in-italy.

[8] According to the *Jewish Genealogy in Italy: Roma (Rome)* website, Jews were physically segregated by Pope Paul IV in 1555 and were only permitted to leave their ghetto during daylight hours. The only professions allowed to Jews during that period were moneylending and trading in used clothing.

[9] Claudio Alcorso. 1993. *The Wind You Say.* Pymble, NSW Australia: Angus and Robertson, 34-57.

on the Via Sardegna on one side and the Via Campania on the other. The apartment was joined by an internal corridor to the apartment of their maternal Nonna Amalia, Niny's mother, who was most influential on young Claudio's upbringing. The household also included cooks and maids – family retainers who had lived with the families for years – and Mademoiselle Lupi, a governess from Grenoble who assisted with the care and education of the young Pipernos and their youngest aunt and uncle, children of Nonna Amalia's that were like siblings.

Whilst the children attended the local state-run elementary school and learned French and German from their governess, the Coen-Piperno elders ensured that the younger generation had specialist tutors who added English, the visual arts, literature and music to their liberal education. In his memoir Alcorso remarked that French culture was dominant in his early life and that the French language came more naturally to him than his native tongue. Under Mademoiselle Lupi's care he read Victor Hugo, Emile Zola, Valery, Baudelaire and others in the original French. He took his lessons in English, the language of international business, from an old English woman who came to the apartment. At the age of 14 he spent a summer vacation in England to perfect his English vocabulary and fluency, in preparation for his future career in business. When his mother engaged Professore Cervelli from the university to take him to churches and art galleries to learn about Italian art and culture, he protested, but eventually had to obey. He stated in his memoir:

> Much of what he said went in and out of my head leaving no trace, but something stuck. When we went to Orvieto on a Sunday outing, he made me see the anguish in the eyes of the naked woman riding a demon, in Luca Signorelli's frescoes in the Duomo. He made me wonder at the omniscient state of Michelangelo's Cumaean Sibyl. He made me understand that

one stroke of the brush, when applied by a creative artists,

gives life to matter.[10]

These formative influences contributed to the development of cultural dispositions that were later to influence Claudio's approach to the integration of commerce and culture throughout his professional life. But his education was not entirely focused on culture – Claudio was also being prepared to work in his father's business Amilcare Piperno Alcorso.

After school activities included running messages to local businesses for Nonna Amalia, experimenting with new colourways for his father's textile prints,[11] and spending some spare time working for a textile wholesaler who had leased the old Roman Palazzo 'Astalli', where he saw "……. strange glimpses of frescoed walls through the rolls of fabrics."[12]

3.1.1   Grandi Magazzini S. di P. Coen

During the early part of the twentieth century, S. & P. Coen operated a Grandi Magazzini or multi-level retail fabric department store at 36 Via Tritone in Rome. It is not known whether this branch of the Coen family was affiliated with Claudio's Nonna Amalia and her husband Angelo. It is possible that they may have been relatives, as it is known that Claudio's grandfather Angelo Coen was employed as an executive in a paper-making business that had a factory outside Rome and not in the textile or retail industries.[13]

Whether this branch of the Coen family moved in the same social circles as Niny's mother Amalia is also unknown, but nevertheless the business was prominent enough to be known by the Pipernos, even if only as competitors.

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[10] Claudio also stated that Professore Cervelli "….was probably in his forties but he was bald and he looked old to me." Alcorso, *The Wind You Say*, 40-41.

[11] Claudio Alcorso. 1994. *"Session 1 - Claudio Alcorso interviewed by Roger Penny."* National Library of Australia. 21-28 April. Accessed April 1, 2018. https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/37485220.

[12] Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say*, 38.

[13] Ibid. 40.

Both businesses used similar promotional tools – 'publicity stamps' and promotional postcards printed with the names of the businesses under an arrangement with the Italian Postal Service in the early 1920s. Whether use of this device by both the Coens and later by Amilcare Piperno Alcorso was coincidence, competitive imitation, or the result of a joint family initiative is unknown.[14]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing a similar image was available at:
https://colnect.com/fy/stamps/stamp/514331-Piperno-Stamps_with_appendix_advertising-Itaalje
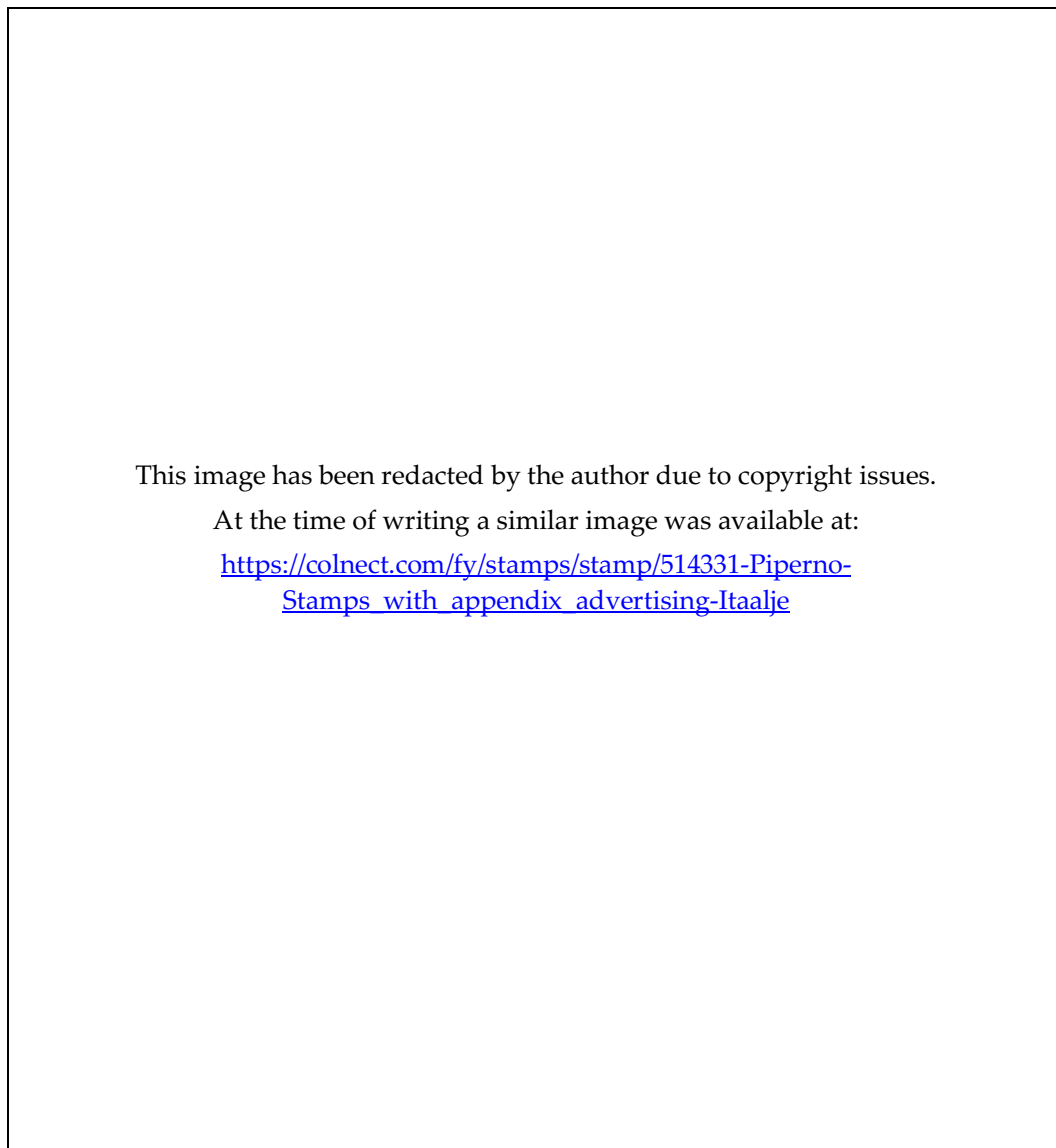
Figure 3.3 50 centesimi Coen and 25 centesimi Amilcare Piperno Alcorso promotional stamps.[15]

[14] Filatelica Nazionale e di Qualificazione Bologna 2016 Esposizione. 2016. *La pubblicita e la Posta.* Accessed May 28, 2018. http://expo.fsfi.it/bologna2016/exhibits/50Palumbo.pdf, 57.
[15] Filatelia. 2017. "Francobolli Pubblicitari, Regno D'Italia." Accessed August 28, 2017. http://www.mercatofilatelico.com/regno-ditalia/25-centesimi-piperno/.

These publicity stamps featured the name of a business together with the head of Garibaldi, the hero of the Risorgemento. They were in use between 1923 until about 1925 when new laws forbade any form of advertising through postal services.[16] Other brands using this promotional device included Campari, Columbia Phonographs, Singer sewing machines and Baci chocolates.[17] After 1925, branding on business stationery took a more traditional form – fancy headings and trade mottos on printed invoices, letterheads and envelopes.

Given that there is relatively little information on the early operation of the Amilcare Piperno Alcorso in Corso Umberto I, an analysis of the Coen department stores has been used to provide insights into the merchandising and operation of fashion and textile retailers in Rome during the first quarter of the twentieth century. In addition to advertising their business via publicity stamps, the retailing branch of the Coen family also advertised their store and product range in fashion magazines. Issues of Eleganze Femminili (Women's Elegance) magazine from 1911 carry several advertisements for the store indicating that it appears to have operated along similar lines to the Grand Magasin or department stores of Paris and Milan, selling products also sold by large drapery and department stores of the era in England, Australia and the United States of America.[18] S & P Coen had a number of specialty departments – for example, the woollen department, which was stocked with military suiting, cashmeres and fancy cloth for costumes and tailoring, with shoes to match. The silk department stocked damask, velvets, failles, taffettas, foulards and duchess satins. The cotton and linings department carried

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[16] Filatelica Nazionale e di Qualificazione Bologna 2016 Esposizione 2016, 57.

[17] Ibid. Publicity stamps from these companies are now collectables and are regularly traded online.

[18] Francesca Polese. n.d. "Department Stores, Mail Order catalogues and the Fashion Market: Italy in the late 19th Century." *Erasmus Research Institute for Management.* Accessed May 8, 2018. https://www.erim.eur.nl/fileadmin/erim_content/documents/Department_Stores__Mail_Order_Cata logues_and_the.pdf.

shantungs, moiré linings and specialist fancy cotton shirtings, whilst the linen department sold table linens, Manchester and furnishing fabrics.

The store stocked merchandise suitable for both women and men and possibly also for children. Figure 3.5 emphasises their specialised range of 'articoli neri' or mourning clothes and their exclusive 'in-house' designs, indicating that they provided ready-made clothing, or at least provided tailoring and dressmaking services. S & P Coen provided these services at fixed prices, not necessarily the norm in business at the time.[19]

Coen's also stocked paper patterns as well as accessories and trimmings such as buttons, buckles, ribbons and lace edgings, all the necessities required for women to sew garments. At the time, clients who had their clothes made by dressmakers were required to purchase all necessary fabrics and trimmings for their garments.[20] Some of the larger bourgeoisie households like the Coen-Piperno families had maids or housekeepers, some of whom were capable of retrimming hats and repairing, remodelling or making garments from scratch for family members. Women from the privileged classes who had leisure time to make 'special' garments such babies christening robes or garters and lingerie items for wedding trousseaus would have found all of the materials they required at stores like S & P Coen.

Given the interest in French fashion in Italy and the market for specialised types of textiles produced in centres of excellence all over Europe at the time, it is reasonable to assume that some of the merchandise in Coen's store would have been sourced from French and other speciality European producers. It is likely that they also stocked more affordably priced Italian merchandise targeted at aspirational bourgeoisie – middle and upper-middle

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[19] Alessandrina University Library. 1911. "Grandi Magazzini S di P Coen & C." *Eleganze Femminili.* 1 January. Accessed May 7, 2018. http://www.alessandrina.librari.beniculturali.it/. The illustrations on the following page are from other issues of Eleganze Femminili as indicated in the captions, also sourced from the same site.

[20] Polese n.d., 16.

class Italians including public servants, white collar workers and qualified technicians who could not afford Paris couture or British tailoring, but could still afford to have their clothing made-to-measure or altered to fit by in-store tailors and dressmakers.

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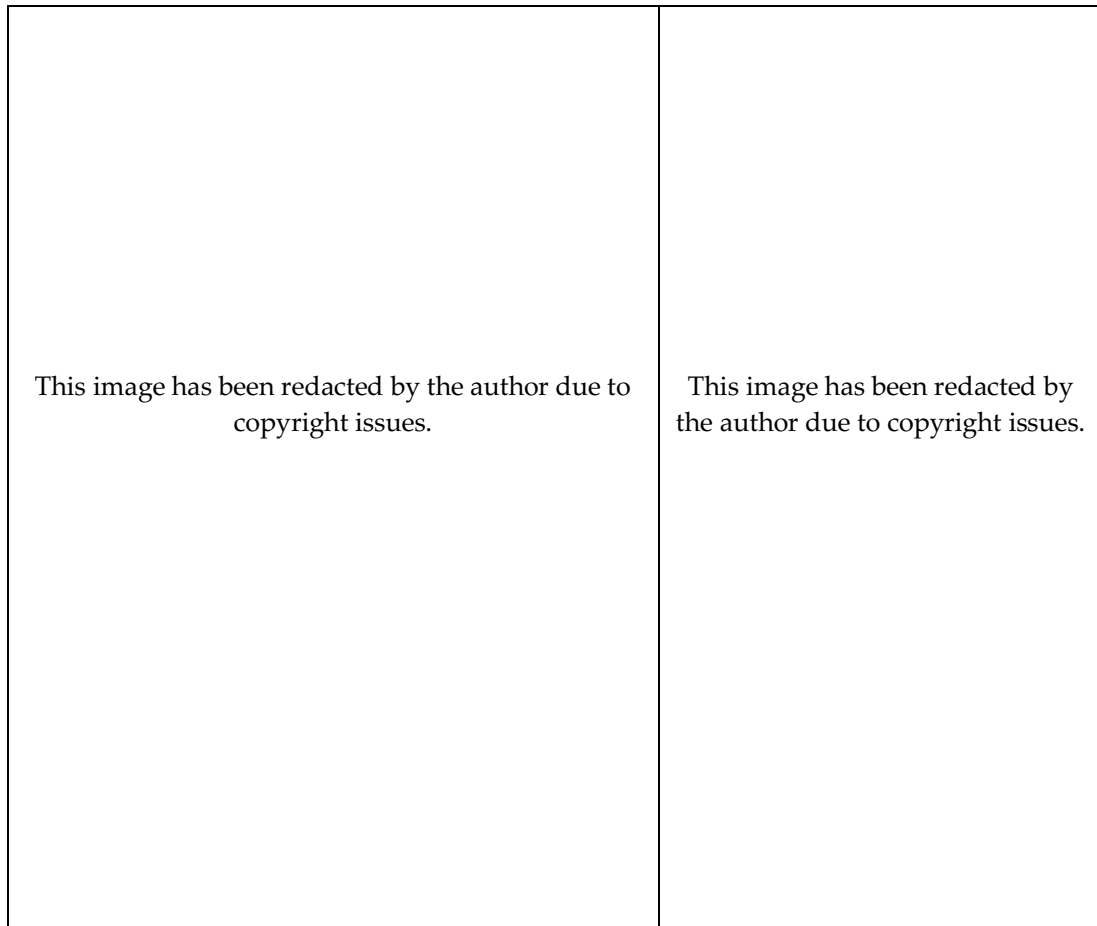
Figure 3.4 Cover of Eleganze Femminili (Women's Elegance) magazine, January 1, 1911.[21]
Figure 3.5 Advertising for Grandi Magazzini S. di P. Coen & C., 36 Via Tritone Rome, Jan. 16, 1911.[22]

Figure 3.4 shows the cover illustration from Eleganze Femminili magazine of January 1911. It illustrates a costume by Beer, a prominent German Jewish manufacturer based in Paris, typical of the aspirational styling most in demand amongst the aspirational bourgeoisie. Eleganze Femminili contained articles of interest to fashionable Italian women, as well home hints,

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[21] Alessandrina University Library. *Eleganze Femminili* magazine, 1 January 1911.
[22] Ibid, 16.

fiction, fashion and dressmaking information. It also included discreet advertising like that seen in Figure 3.5, an advertisement for S & P Coen from the January 16, 1911 issue. Advertisements for S & P Coen continued to appear in Eleganze Femminili throughout 1911, thought they decreased in size as time went on. In the 25 May, 1911 edition, a tasteful mention of Coen's appears on the lower right-hand side of a page dedicated to providing practical hints for women (Figure 3.6).
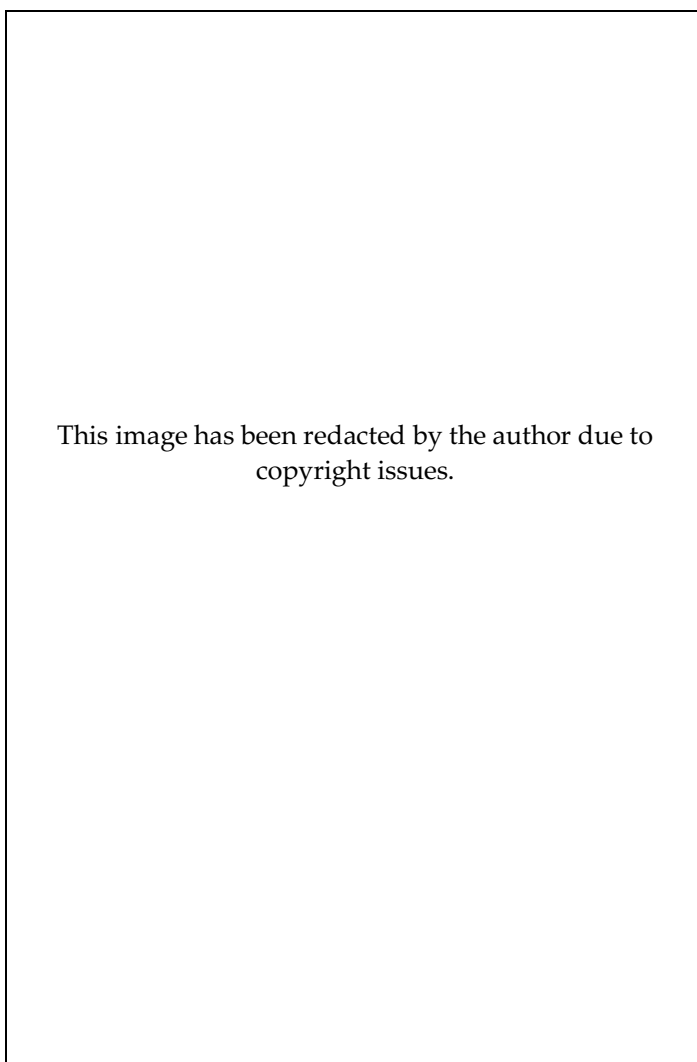
Figure 3.6 "Practical hints for women" in Eleganze Femminili, 25 May 1911, with a discreet advertisement for S & P Coen.[23]

The page title 'Femminismo Practico' literally translates as "practical feminism" however, the intent was to offer handy hints and household tips

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[23] Alessandrina University Library. 1911. "Femminismo Practico." *Eleganze Femminili.* 25 May. Accessed May 7, 2018. http://www.alessandrina.librari.beniculturali.it/, 14.

for women, presumably to pass on to their cooks, maids and seamstresses. Figure 3.6 contains advice on updating a suit to the latest style with a new lace trim on the waist and collar. Women were advised on how to keep themselves well-groomed and hygienic, with advice on how best to clean combs and fingernails. Recipes were also provided for potato gnocchi, chicken in a pan, veal chops and asparagus soup, though there is little guidance on ingredient quantities, as these things were expected to be second nature to competent cooks at the time.

There was also clearly a political and suffrage element to these magazines. The main story 'La prima elettrice portoghese' expressed feminist outrage about a Portuguese woman who had qualified as an Electrical Engineer, but was denied the right to vote in her own country.

3.1.2 Domestic textile culture in Italy

Coen's and other department stores also supplied sewing equipment such as scissors, tape measures and a full range of needles and threads for household repairs, embroidery and other women's fancy work. Figures 3.7 to 3.9 show covers from Italian women's magazines of the 1920s and 1930s, providing evidence of domestic engagement with textiles in alignment with Fascist views of the role of women in the home.

Embroidery and tapestry were a sanctioned form of recreation for the woman illustrated with messy hair on the cover of 'Ricarme d'Arte' (Art Recovery), whilst the woman mending the national flag on the cover of 'Almanacco della Donna Italiana' (Almanac of the Italian Woman) is symbolic of women helping to build and support the nation of Italy through their domestic labour. A stylish woman with marcel-waved hair, wearing a modestly fashionable high-necked sweater industriously knits a sweater for her child on the cover of 'La Donna, La Casa, il Bambino' (The Woman, The House, the Children).

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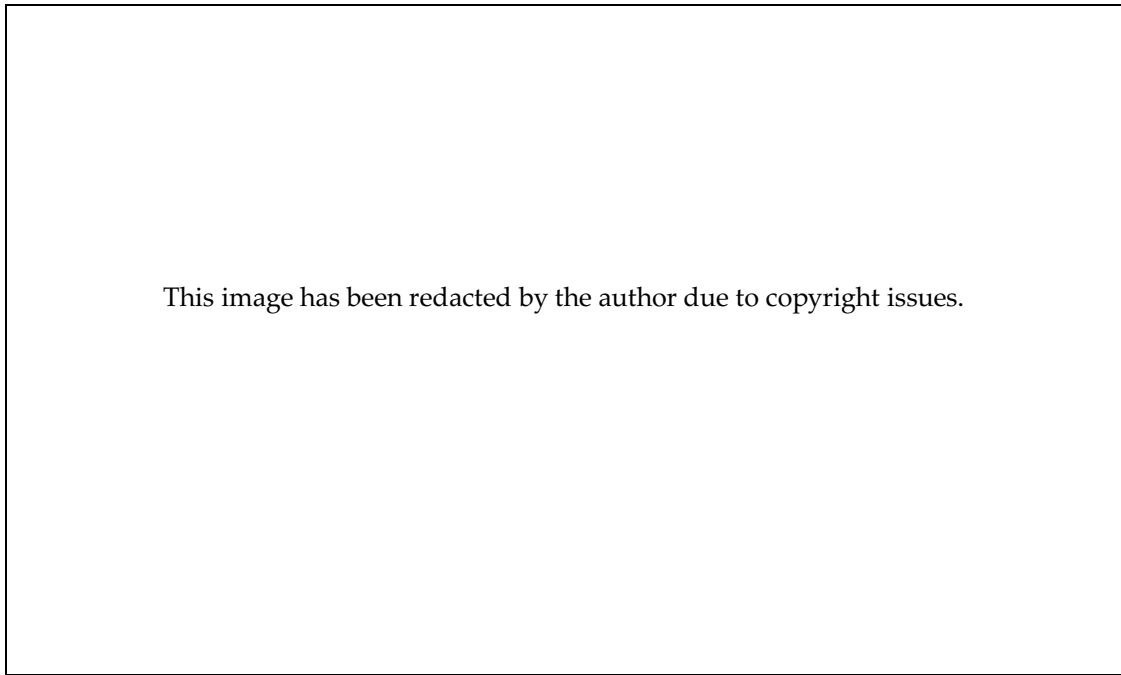
Figure 3.7 Cover of Ricarme d'Arte, c1925.[24]

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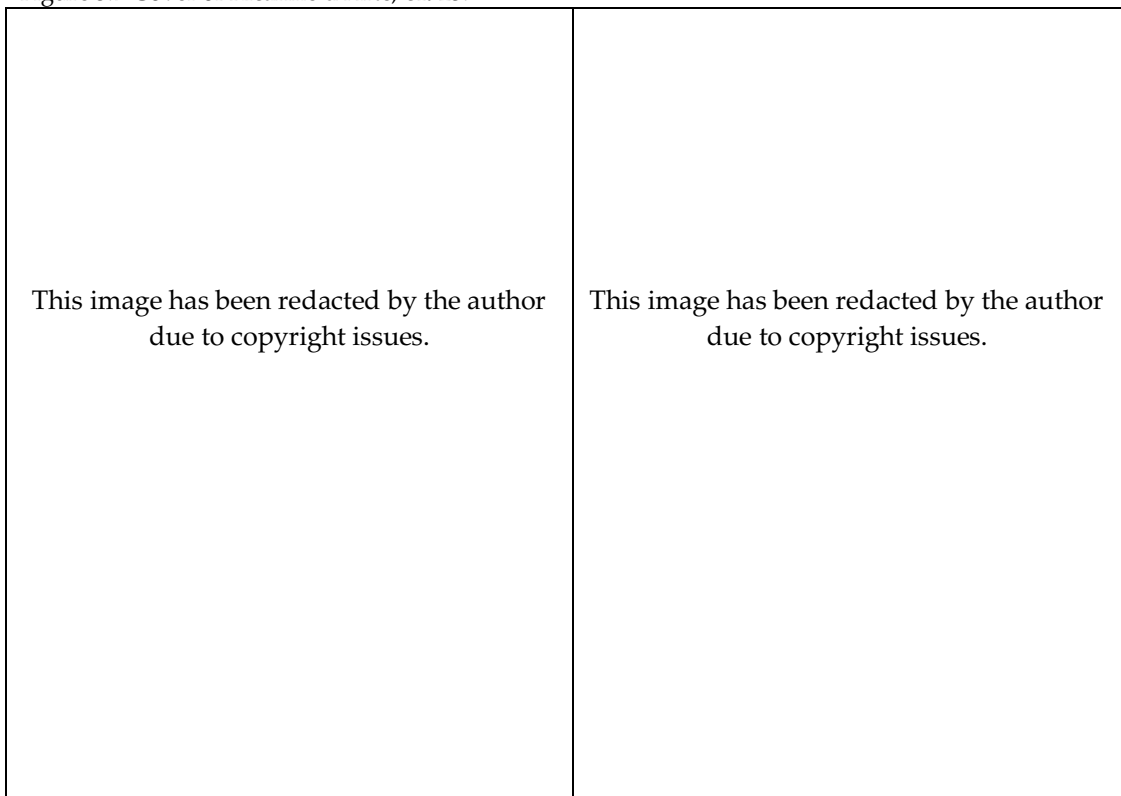
Figure 3.8 Almanacco della Donna Italiana, 1922.[25]   Figure 3.9 La Donna, la Casa, il Bambino, n.d.[26]

[24] Alessandrina University Library. *2009. "Pink! Magazines: Objects of Feminine Dreams (Exhibition October 2009 - 15 January 2010)."* Accessed May 8, 2018. http://www.alessandrina.librari.beniculturali.it/index.php?it/171/rosa-riviste-oggetti-sogni-al-femminile.

According to Eugenia Paulicelli "Domestic traditions …. were recruited with the aim of boosting patriotism and national pride."[27] Mussolini's Fascist regime encouraged women to wear national dress and historic costumes, as "…..signs of their sense of belonging to strong local traditions of fine artisan craftsmanship… ."[28] The images on the magazine covers could be interpreted as a means of purposefully constructing a desire for politically sanctioned forms of fashion and domestic textile culture in line with a fascist ideologies about women.[29]

3.2   Industrial design and textile culture in Italy to 1939

Prior to unification, Italy consisted of several independent city states that were often in commercial and political conflict. Each state had its own specialty products, including specialist textile products. After the secret Chinese process for producing silk became known in Europe, the silk industry developed in late Medieval and early Renaissance Florence, Venice, Genoa, Bologna and Milan, at a time when labour shortages and upper-class demand for luxury goods supported textile production from this high value fibre. The Florentine specialty was production of expensive silks such as brocades enriched with silver and gold thread. Florence became one of the most prosperous centres of European textile production by the end of the fifteenth century. [30] Woollen textile production also flourished in Florence, employing domestic textile

[25] Alessandrina University Library. 2009. "A Fashionable Library - Dresses, Hats, Handbags: Images from 1900-1940 (Exhibition April 20-24, 2009)." Accessed May 8, 2018.
http://www.alessandrina.librari.beniculturali.it/index.php?it/170/una-bibilioteca-alla-moda.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Eugenia Paulicelli. n.d. "Fashion, Gender and Power in Interwar Italy." *Berg Fashion Library, Fashion under Fascism: Beyond the Black Shirt.* Accessed July 3, 2017.
https://www.bloomsburyfashioncentral.com/products/berg-fashion-library/book/fashion-under-fascism-beyond-the-black-shirt.

[28] Ibid, 17-56.

[29] Roland Barthes. 1985. *The Fashion System, Translated from the French by Matthew Ward and Richard Howard.* London: Johnathan Cape, 3-18.

[30] Sergio Tognetti. 2005. "The Development of the Florentine Silk Industry: A Positive Response to the Crisis of the Fourteenth Century." *Journal of Medieval History, Volume 31, No. 1,* 55-69.

workers from adjacent rural villages. However, Italy failed to keep pace with new wool processing technologies emerging elsewhere in Europe.[31]

By 1861, unification enabled regions to concentrate on industrialisation and trade rather than on conflict with each other. This resulted in investment in mechanisation, enabling manufacturing volume to increase profitably. The northwest region of Italy became home to half of the country's industrial workers in textiles, metallurgy and engineering.[32] Cotton production expanded into Piedmont, Lombardy and Campania ('the industrial triangle') during the first half of the nineteenth century and the cotton industry became fully mechanised by the beginning of the twentieth century.[33] Growth in textile production was marked in the Veneto, with small groups of mills flourishing in Venice, Vicenza and Verona as well as in the Tuscan provinces of Massa-Carrara, Lucca and Pisa.[34]

By the late 1870s, in line with similar movements in Britain and Germany[35], emphasis was placed on the development of high quality, nationally identifiable manufactured products. The development of commercially-focused design and craft skills was fostered amongst the Italian working classes through a review of the vocational and professional education system. In 1884 the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce (MAIC) established the 'Commissione centrale per l'insegnamento artistico industriale' (Central Commission for Industrial Arts Education, active until 1908) to manage and control the application of art to industry and establish a

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[31] Elisabetta Merlo and Francesca Polese. n.d. "Italy." *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion: West Europe.* Accessed August 18, 2017. DOI: 10.2752/BEWDF/EDch8043a, 247-258.

[32] Brian A'Hearn. 1998. "Institutions, externalities and economic growth in southern Italy: evidence from the cotton textile industry, 1861-1914." *Economic History Review, L. I, No. 4.* Accessed July 5, 2017. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2599570, 734.

[33] Merlo & Polese, 247-258.

[34] A'Hearn 1998, 737.

[35] Grand Exhibitions showing the industrial and commercial output of a number of countries were held in Britain, France, the Unites States and Australia. Collections like the one established in *The Victoria and Albert* Museum in London were established to provide exemplars of excellence to decorative artists and craftspeople.

nationalist, historicist visual language applicable to architecture, art, object design and decorative arts made by craftspeople and other skilled workers.[36] 'Schools of Arts and Crafts' operated with a scientific and technically oriented curricula, whilst 'Schools of Applied Art' trained workers for industries thought necessary to rebuild the national economy "through a renewed artistic consciousness". [37]

Five Schools of Applied Arts were established between 1876 and 1882. Two were opened in Venice, whilst others were located in Milan, Palermo and Florence. By royal decree, art academies were required to contribute to the development of the applied arts, including textile design, from 8 November 1878. The Commissione financed publication of the 'L'Arte Italiana Decorativa e Industriale' (1890–1911), a journal devoted to providing sanctioned models of Italian design for artists, industrialists and trade educators and sponsoring the development of exemplary collections in a range of materials. Plaster casts of artworks from classical Rome and the Renaissance supported teaching in art and design schools and four didactic exhibitions of work including laces and textiles were arranged in The Palace of Fine Arts in Rome, on behalf of The Museum Industrial Art between 1885 and 1889. The Commissione ended its intervention into art and design education in Italy in 1907 when the new Minister of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce reorganized the schools, reorganising them into industrial, industrial art, business and professional schools for women.[38]

By 1911, employment in textile production accounted for 32% of total industrial employment, of which 6.5% consisted of cotton spinning, weaving

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[36] Annalisa Pesando and Daniela N Prina. 2012. "To Educate Taste with the Hand and the Mind. Design Reform in Post-Unification Italy (1884–1908)." *Journal of Design History, Vol. 25, No. 1.* Accessed April 24, 2013. doi:10.1093/jdh/epr051, 32.

[37] Ibid, 33.

[38] Ibid, 38-45.

and finishing alone, demonstrating the importance of textile manufacturing to the entire economy of the newly unified Italy. Brian A'Hearn suggests that:

> Though lacking important linkages to up- or downstream industries in Italy, textiles are credited with an important role in the development of financial and commercial institutions, the fostering of entrepreneurial and managerial skills, the accumulation of capital and political influence by a group favouring industrialisation and the creation of an industrial labour force.[39]

According to A'Hearn, there were no large textile agents appointed to sell the output of individual textile mills as elsewhere in Europe – generally each mill sold their outputs directly to retailers or through networks of travelling salesmen. There was also an export market for piece-goods, mostly in Latin America where there were a number of Italian immigrants. Modern machinery used in Italy to card fibre, spin yarn and to weave, print and finish cotton textiles was mostly imported from British firms.[40]

Silk production declined during the early part of the nineteenth century, however, exports of raw silk fibre from Italy remained consistent. Raw silk fibre could now be obtained in volume from the Far East at a lower cost than from Italy, resulting in an overall decline in mulberry cultivation and sericulture.[41] By the end of the nineteenth century the silk industry, like the cotton sector, had undergone mechanisation to keep up with demand. In this competitive environment, the Italian silk industry became a large employer of women who could be paid a lower wage and it became somewhat notorious

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[39] A'Hearn 1998, 736.
[40] Ibid, 736-739. A'Hearn also commented that British textile machinery was exported to India, China, Russia, Mexico and Brazil, as there was little local capability in these nations at the time to experiment with technology. Italian textile mills employed English, Swiss or Belgian overseers and mechanics and arranged apprenticeships for their sons via networks of textile mills overseas.
[41] Merlo and Polese n.d., 247-258.

for its use of female child labour. Journalist Giuseppe Leoni reported that in 1902 the Milanese-based Association of Industry and Commerce of Silks in Italy began investigating the role of women and female children in the silk industry. Figure 3.10 is a photograph taken in the workroom of the Rusconi di Malvaglio spinning mill in the early nineteen twenties, showing women workers ranging in age from their early teens into to middle age.[42] They work under the continuing gaze of Il Duce, whose photograph can be seen at the extreme right.

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At the time of writing the image was available at:
http://www.corrierealtomilanese.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Filanda.jpg
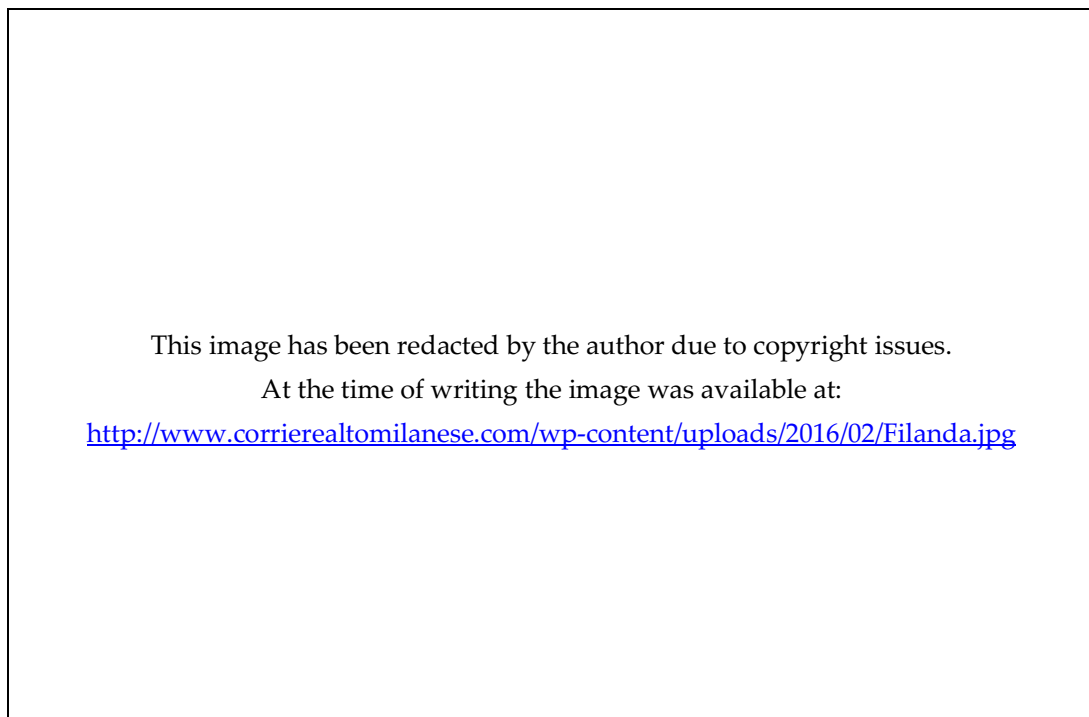
Figure 3.10 Interior of the Rusconi di Malvaglio spinning mill in the early 1920s.[43]

One woman, to the left of the window on the right-hand side appears to be very young. This is not a mechanised factory and as such it would have been dependent on young women whose manual dexterity would ensure that no

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[42] Giuseppe Leoni. 2016. "'Nelle filande, allora, si cominciava a lavorare a nove anni… Adesso, se va bene, si inizia a trent'anni! ("In the spinning mills, then, we started working at the age of nine…now if all goes well, we start at thirty!")." *Corriere Alto Milanese.* 18 February. Accessed May 30, 2018. http://www.corrierealtomilanese.com/2016/02/18/nelle-filande-allora-si-cominciava-a-lavorare-a-nove-anni-adesso-se-va-bene-si-inizia-a-trentanni/.

[43] Leoni 2016.

silk fibres were lost during production. The women's hair is neatly tied back so as not interfere with their work or cause an unfortunate accident during the skeining process. They are surrounded by lustrous hanks of silk that they are twisting into skeins and packaging into bales – presumably to be shipped off to undergo some other process – dyeing or weaving into cloth. The man seated on the left is perhaps the factory owner – he clearly has an interest in the activity of these women, though he plays no active physical part in production. His stance and demeanour differ greatly from that of the women in the picture.

Wool production, important to the domestic Italian market, was not as well developed as in other European countries at the beginning of the twentieth century, though there was a centre of excellence in Biella, Piedmont, where Ermenegildo Zegna was founded in 1912.[44] Italy had not yet begun the massive output of new and regenerated woollen fabrics that would come characterize the Prato region. As in other countries the Italian textile industry expanded their production base during the Great War of 1914 – 1918 and wool production surged during this period to meet the requirements of the defence forces.[45] According to Claudio Alcorso, his father Amilcare played an important part in this development as the government-appointed comptroller of woollen fabric production in Prato during World War I.[46]

Despite a surge in mechanised volume manufacturing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Italy retained artisanal traditions for creating luxury textiles for specialised markets. In 1907 Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo, a Spanish painter and stage designer moved to Venice with his mother and sister and began producing opulent art textiles recalling the

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[44] Merlo and Polese n.d., 247-258.

[45] Fabio Degli Espositi. 2015. "Post-war Economies (Italy)." *1914-1918 International Encyclopedia of the First World War.* 22 June. Accessed June 30, 2015. https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/pdf/1914-1918-Online-postwar_economies_italy-2015-06-22.pdf.

[46] Claudio Alcorso. 1994. "Session 1 - Claudio Alcorso interviewed by Roger Penny." *National Library of Australia.* 21-28 April. Accessed April 1, 2018. https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/37485220.

vibrancy of Italian Renaissance brocaded silks and Florentine velvets. Though best known for his pleated 'Delphos' gowns, he also designed linen scarves known as 'Knossos' cloths which were block printed and stencilled. He developed an innovative process for applying metals to fabrics in combination with pigment, using this technique for both stagecraft and couture. Fortuny's techniques were much imitated by some of the older Italian textile houses.[47]

New ideas in fashion and textiles also emerged from philosophies aligned to modernity. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti published the first manifesto of Futurism in Le Figaro on 20 November 1909. By 1914 Marinetti's associates Giacomo Balla (1871-1958) and Fortunato Depero (1892-1960) had developed a number of innovative textile and fashion designs. However, only the artwork and a small number of garments remain, indicating that these were not designs intended for mass manufacture.

Fashion creativity also came from constraints imposed from trade sanctions. Balla and Depero, amongst others, produced modernist textiles and jackets, trousers, waistcoats, ties, hats, bags, shoes, scarves, blouses and dresses with simple lines exploiting new materials and technologies, featuring clashing colours, asymmetrical designs and motifs (Figures 3.11 to 3.13). These challenged existing conventions of fabric and clothing at the time and were acknowledged as early examples of artists using their oeuvre to drive innovation in the Italian fashion and textile industry.[48] Art textiles made by the Futurists and luxury fabrics like those produced by Fortuny appealed only to a very limited target market who could afford such expensive items. By 1920, fabrics made from cotton and wool and newly developed synthetic fibres met the majority of textile and clothing needs in the Italian domestic market.

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[47] Doretta Davanzo Poli. 2007. *Twentieth-century Fabrics: European and American Designers and Manufacturers.* Milan: Skira, 23-24.

[48] Ibid, 26-27.

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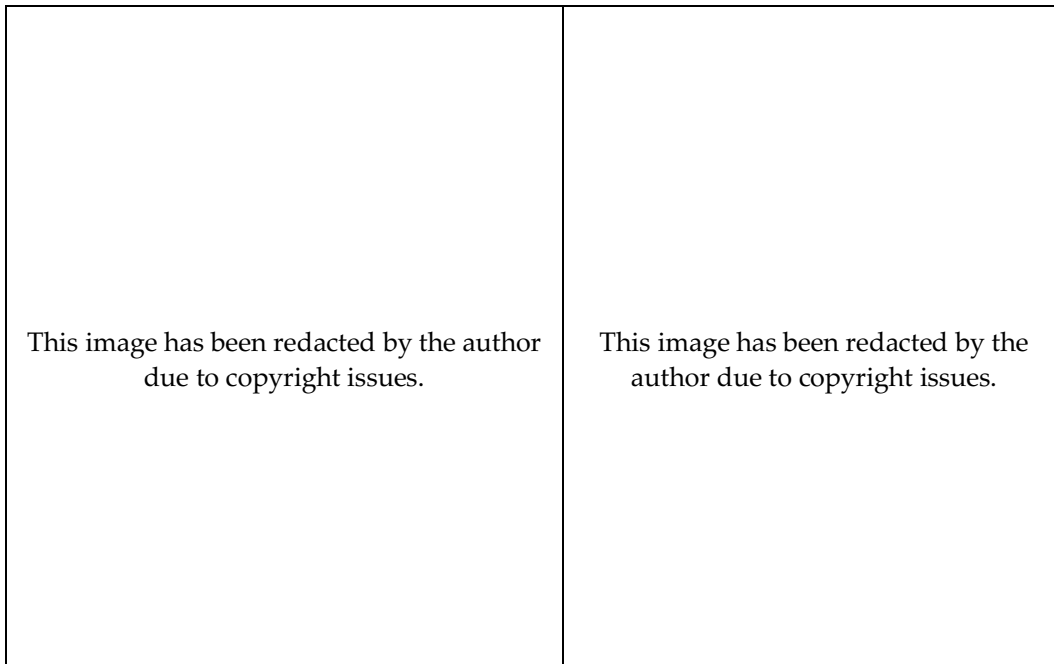
Figure 3.11 Giacomo Balla,
Sketch for a man's evening suit, 1914.[49]

Figure 3.12 Giacomo Balla, Woollen dress worn by daughter Luce in 1928-29.[50]

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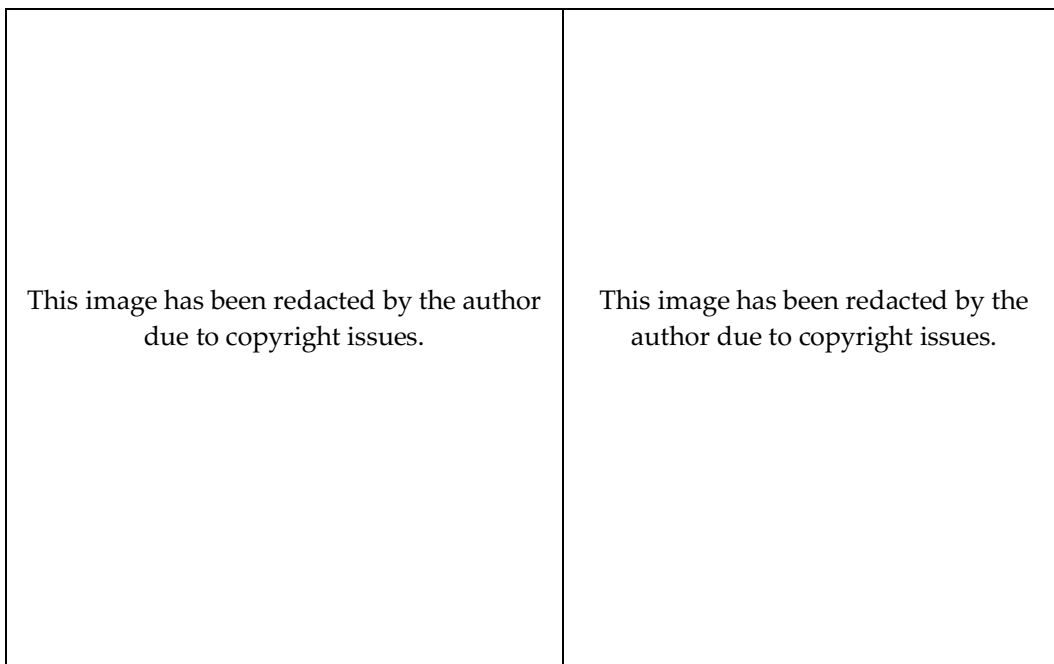
Figure 3.13 Fortunato Depero, Waistcoat, 1924.[51]

Figure 3.14 Salvatore Ferragamo, Braided cellophane shoes, 1942.[52]

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[49] Ibid, 189.

[50] Ibid, 191.

[51] Ibid, 198.

[52] Mario Lupano and Allessandra Vaccari. 2009. *Fashion at the time of Fascism: Italian Modernist Lifestyle 1922-1943.* Bologna: Damiani Editore, 255.

Initiatives began in the mid-nineteenth century to develop synthetic fabrics that would perform like silk. Georges Audemars developed the first artificial silk – rayon – around 1855, however the process was not commercially viable and the product was highly flammable. Later, a spun rayon fibre was developed, but it was not until 1894 that English chemists Charles Frederick Cross, John Bevan and Clayton Beadle developed and patented an artificial silk under the trade name 'Viscose'. Courtaulds Fibres in Britain produced the first commercial viscose rayon in 1905, whilst Avtex Fibers Incorporated produced their version for the American market in 1910.[53]

In Italy, Montecani became one of the world's largest producers of viscose rayon. Rayon and viscose became important 'bread and butter' fabrics for manufacturing shirts and dresses in Italy and for export. From January to September 1935 the United Kingdom imported 1,742,677 square yards of plain and printed Italian rayon fabrics.[54] Printed rayon also became a staple in retail stores like those operated by the Coens and the Pipernos during the 1920s and 1930s, enabling them to expand their product ranges and customer base.

Meanwhile, political change in Italy would soon exert an influence on the textile and clothing manufacturing industry. The Fascist Party, formed in 1919 by Benito Mussolini became the official government at the invitation of King Victor Emmanuel in 1922 – a time when Italy was in political chaos.[55] The regime quickly realised the importance of an Italian fashion and textile industry in building national pride and creating new employment. They fostered the introduction of modern manufacturing technologies, which they

[53] Trevor J Murphy. 2010. "Key Figures in the Development of Rayon." 20 June. Accessed May 1, 2018. http://specialtycellulose.com/key-figures-in-the-development-of-rayon.htm.

[54] Textile Journal of Australia, 1936. "Italy - What of her Textiles? Points for the British Trader." 15 January (VIC : Wilkes & Co Pty Ltd, 1926-1970) Canberra, National Library of Australia: 510-511. ----. 1938. "The Production and Export of Italian Artificial Textile Fibres and Their Products." 15 January (VIC : Wilkes & Co Pty Ltd) Canberra, National Library of Australia: 515-516.

[55] BBC. 2014. "Benito Mussolini (1883-1945)." *BBC History.* Accessed June 11, 2018. http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/mussolini_benito.shtml.

believed had not yet reached their full potential in comparison to other European nations. The Fascists valued modernity and during their regime Italy's textile sector reached new levels of innovation. These innovations came about as a result of Mussolini's territorial aggression, which triggered new technological solutions to replace materials that were no longer obtainable due to trade sanctions.

Italy invaded Abyssinia (Ethiopia) in October 1935 and as a result sanctions were imposed by other nations, limiting Italy's access to manufacturing supplies and severely threatened textile export markets.[56] Constraints imposed by sanctions forced Italian industry to seek new ways of producing fibres for fabrics and by 1938 synthetics were an important substitute for natural fibre. The Textile Journal of Australia reported that "Italy occupies a foremost place in the artificial fibre industry, being Europe's largest producer and the world's largest exporter "…….of rayon and staple yarn, exceeded only by Japan and the United States. The journal also reported that new Italian mixed yarn fabrics – wool, cotton and other fibres mixed with synthetics "………have attained a high grade of proficiency."[57]

One of these innovative new fibres was 'Lanital', made from milk by-products by Snia Viscosa as a substitute for wool, which had become scarce due to sanctions.[58] In footwear, Salvatore Ferragamo (1898–1960) developed his famous cork-heeled sandals with uppers made from cellophane, raffia, rubber, fish skins, felt and hemp in response to the scarcity of leather in the late 1930s and early 1940s (refer Figure 3.14). [59]

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[56] The Textile Journal of Australia. 1936. "Italy—What of her Textiles? Points for the British Trader."
[57] The Textile Journal of Australia. 1938. "The Production and Export of Italian Artificial Textile Fibres and Their Products".
[58] Merlo and Polese n.d., 247-258.
[59] Poli 2007, 188-198.

3.3 Development of an Italian fashion identity

In the early twentieth century, fashionable Italians had looked to Paris for the latest fashion trends. Advertisements for fashion products in women's magazines such as Eleganze Femminili were in French rather than Italian, indicating that retailers were trying to link their businesses to Parisian rather than Italian fashion.[60] Alcorso's observations on the importance of French literature and culture in Italy during his childhood support the notion that French fashion and culture were superior to that of Italy's at the time.[61]

Merlo & Polese suggest that Rosa Genoni (1867-1954) was one of the first designers to assert an Italian identity in fashion and the first to attempt an historical account of Italian costume to inform her design practice. Genoni studied Italian Renaissance paintings, historic fashion plates and sketches to find inspiration for her designs, as she believed that "....the French style of elaborate decoration...." was not suitable for Italian women. Genoni taught the history of dress at the Professional Women's School of Milan's Societa Umanitaria, becoming director of the Dressmaking Department in 1905. This ensured that an entire generation of Italian dress designers gained an awareness of the wealth of inspiration available in their own national history. However, according to Merlo & Polese, Italian consumers retained their loyalty to French fashion despite Genoni's attempts. Later critical of the Fascist regime, Genoni was forced to abandon her teaching position by 1928.[62]

The Fascists had also realised the potential wealth that fashion exports like those distributed from Paris each year could bring into Italy. In 1932 Mussolini founded the Ente Autonomo per la Mostra Permanente Nazionale della Moda (Autonomous body for the Permanent National Fashion

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[60] Alessandrina University Library, 1911. "Femminismo Practico." *Eleganze Femminili.* 25 May. Accessed May 7, 2018. http://www.alessandrina.librari.beniculturali.it/.

[61] Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say,* 40-41.

[62] Merlo and Polese n.d., 247-258.

Exhibition or EAMPNM)[63]. Around the same time another body 'Ente Nazionale Artigianato e Piccole Industrie' (the National Body for Crafts and Small Industries) was established to promote and direct handicrafts such as embroidery and lacemaking and the use of coral and straw for fashion trims and accessories. In 1936 ENM published 'Commentario Dizionario Italiano della Moda' (the Italian Dictionary and Commentary of Fashion) created by Cesare Meano. The regime used the document to recommend colours, fashions and accessories inspired by Italy's historic and regional dress.[64]

Women's magazines also promoted modern lifestyles for a new Italian woman. Whilst the roles of wife and mother remained important to Fascist nation building, it was soon realized that these women would not buy high fashion Italian garments. A younger type of woman – curvaceous, healthy and good at sports like skiing and swimming – began appearing in new fashion magazines such as 'Lidel' and 'Cordelia'. The women on the covers of Lidel (Figure 3.15) look like movie stars, Venetian royalty and ancient Roman goddesses – they are engaged in dressing up to attract potential husbands and to take part in a variety of outdoor activities like driving motor cars, swimming, skiing and mountain climbing. Their image is that of the cosmopolitan rather than the domestic woman.

These images not only portrayed new lifestyles; they also provided direction on garment purchase. Consumption of sportswear that women would not previously have purchased increased accordingly.[65] The production of specialised textiles – for example, waterproofed woollens for skiing clothing and quick drying fabrics for the production of swimsuits also increased. It was an ideal time to be in the business of retailing fashion textiles in Italy.

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[63] This title was later shorted to later shortened to 'Ente Nazionale della Moda' (ENM).

[64] Paulicelli n.d., 17-56.

[65] Ibid, 75-98.

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At the time of writing similar images could be accessed at:

http://www.blissfrombygonedays.com/home/2017/1/4/fashion-and-lifestyle-magazines-in-the-1920s-lidel-magazine
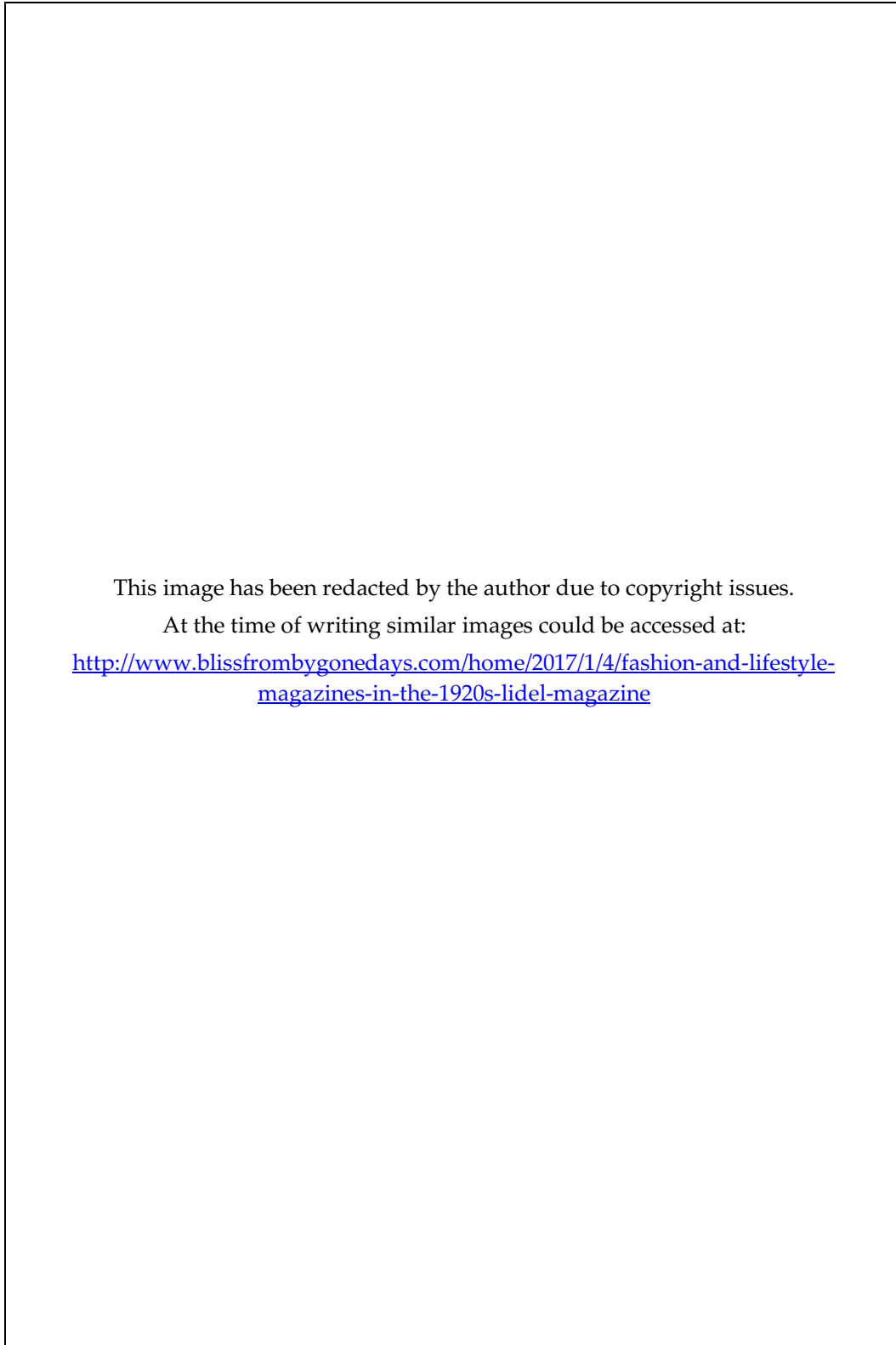
Figure 3.15 Covers produced by Lidel magazine during the 1930s.[66]

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[66] Bliss from Bygone Days. 2017. "A Pioneer Fashion and Lifestyle Magazine." 4 January. Accessed May 8, 2018. http://www.blissfrombygonedays.com/home/2017/1/4/fashion-and-lifestyle-magazines-in-the-1920s-lidel-magazine.

3.3.1 Amilcare Piperno Alcorso

Amilcare Piperno Alcorso, the son of Giacomo Piperno[67] established his textile business in Milan in 1910.[68] He was born in Germany, [69] was an accomplished businessman with confidence in his own expertise and open to any new opportunities that would further his business interests. According to Fascist government records, Amilcare Piperno Alcorso's Italian business holdings in 1938 consisted of his retail store at 172 Corso Umberto I with 58 employees; a Grandi Magazzini (department store) at 53 Piazza Fiume with 76 employees and a retail outlet and factory at 24 Via de Campio Marzio, with 145 employees.[70] An article in the Australian newspaper The Sun in 1940 quoted Amilcare saying that he also had a factory in Paris.[71] This correlates with information provided by Claudio in interviews about his parents travelling to France and of meeting and dining with them in a restaurant in Paris after a summer holiday he spent in Britain learning English.

Claudio described his father as an honest man, but not a puritan like his mother. He was generous, enlightened and flexible and he made compromises, particularly after the Fascists came to power. Documentary evidence that survives about Amilcare indicates that he was a confident and experienced businessman who was not above exaggerating his own abilities for profit. Apart from the evidence of Amilcare's business activities kept by

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[67] Italian Government - Presidents Council - Jewish Goods Commission. 2001. "Commercial Businesses & Industrial Concerns in Rome 1938-1945." *General Report.* April. Accessed June 11, 2018. http://presidenza.governo.it/DICA/7_ARCHIVIO_STORICO/beni_ebraici/english_version/493_522_js.pdf, 493-522.

[68] Valerie Ley. 1940. "Famous Italian Will Design Here for Australian Women." *The Sun.* 7 April. Accessed June 1, 2018. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news.article232032348.

[69] National Archives of Australia. 1938. "ALCORSO Amilcare P b. 17 March 1886, nationality German; ALCORSO (aka PIPERNO) Niny, age 48; Orlando age 23; Claudio age 26." *A997, 1938/10.* Accessed December 30, 2017. https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ListingReports/ItemsListing.aspx.

[70] Italian Government – Presidents Council - Jewish Goods Commission. 2001. "Industrial and Commercial Assets." *General Report.* April. Accessed June 11, 2018. http://presidenza.governo.it/DICA/7_ARCHIVIO_STORICO/beni_ebraici/english_version/321_338_dg.pdf, 321-338.

[71] Ley, 1940.

the Fascists, documentation about the Piperno Alcorso's Italian business activities is minimal and has come from unexpected sources. The first documentary evidence that could be obtained of an active business is a stamped publicity postcard from 1921, when Claudio would have been nine years of age. It promotes Amilcare Piperno Alcorso as a supplier of 'stoffe novita – seterie – velluti' – new silk and velvet fabrics, with premises at 172 Corso Umberto I.[72]

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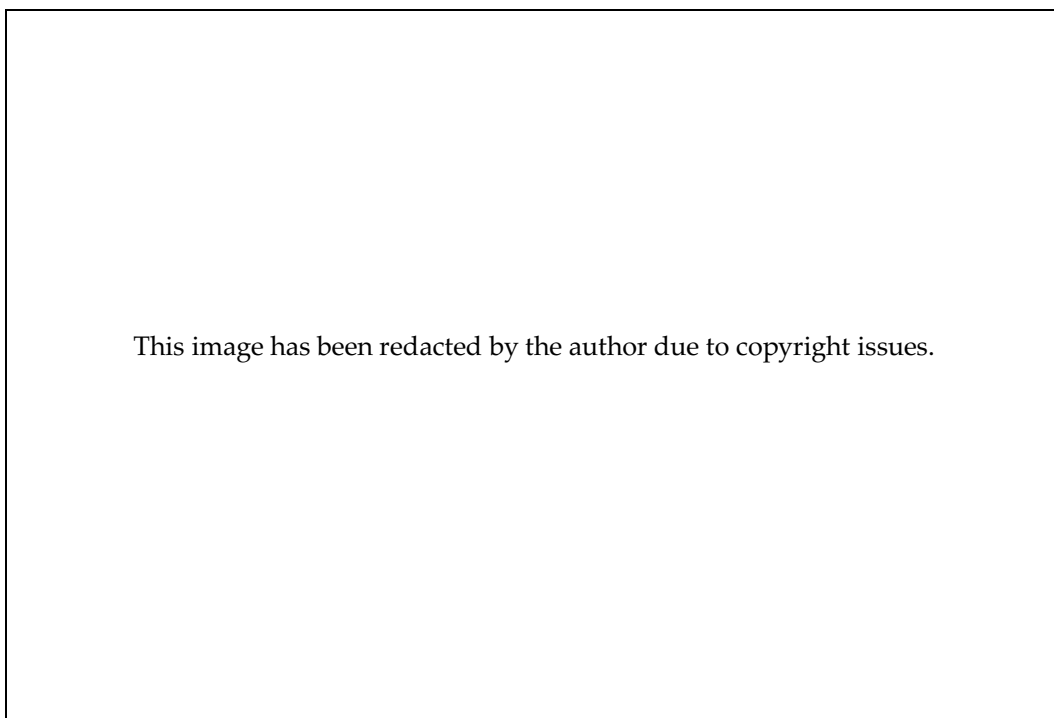
Figure 3.16 Amilcare Piperno al Corso postcard, stamped July 25, 1921.[73]

Published in an online document associated with the 2016 Expo of the Italian Federation of Philatelic Societies, this item survives due to the collectability of vintage postcards and stamps, rather than any interest in the Italian textile industry or the business activities of the Piperno Alcorsos. An invoice from Amilcare Piperno Alcorso addressed to Signore Biagio Gallicchio in 1924 was found from the same philatelic source.

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[72] Corso Umberto I was later renamed 'Via Del Corso'.
[73] Filatelica Nazionale e di Qualificazione Bologna Esposizione 2016, 35.

Signore Gallicchio was a man of noble extraction, whose ancestor and namesake don Biagio Gallicchio was profiled in an historical treatise on power and politics in medieval Italy, written in 1946.[74]

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At the time of writing the image was available at:
https://www.iperteca.it/download.php?id=1946
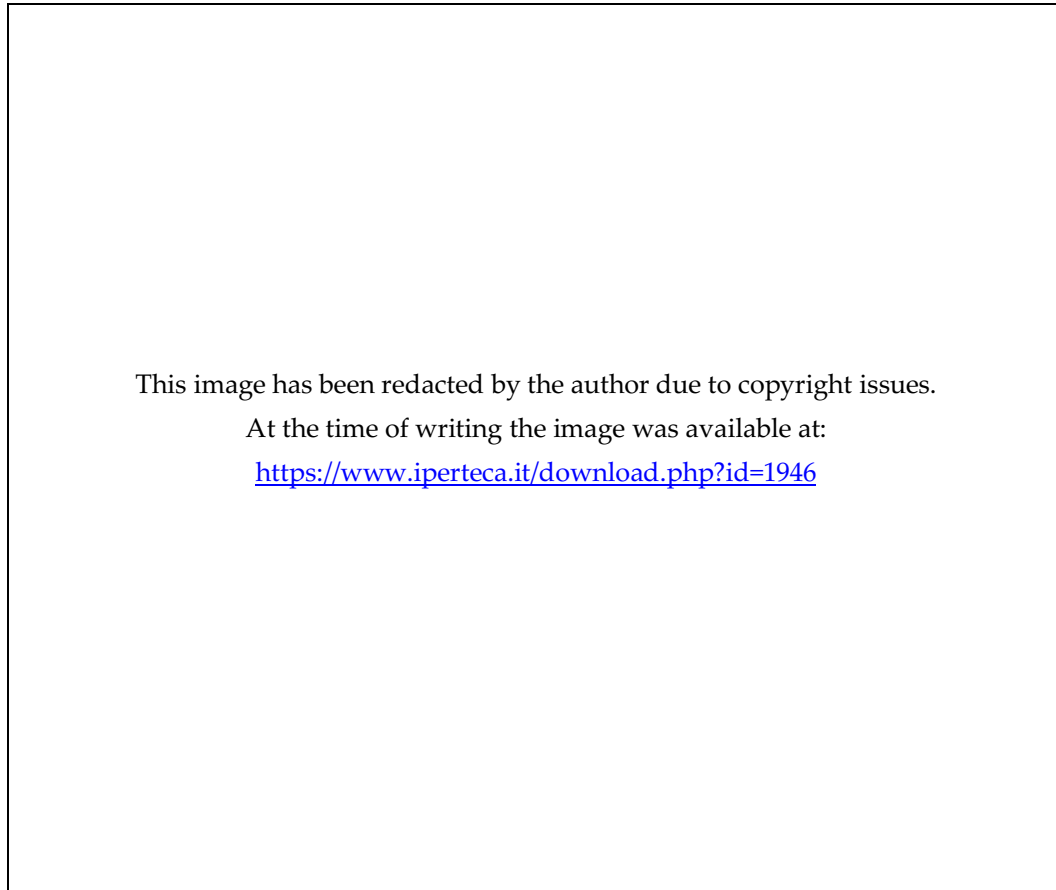
Figure 3.17 Invoice from Amilcare Piperno Alcorso addressed to Sig. Biagio Gallicchio, 1924.[75]

As well as providing an insight into the status of Amilcare's customers, the invoice shows that his turnover was large enough to use pre-printed rather than hand-written invoices. The pre-printed service items 'bollo' (postage); 'imballo' (packaging) and 'spese di porto e di assegno' (port charges) show that items were imported into Italy on a regular basis, with shipping costs passed on to the client. The listing of a business telephone and a dedicated

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[74] Ferdinand di Dato. 1946. "The Power, Politics, Economy and Culture in the Middle of Italy between the Eighth and Twentieth Centuries." *Province of Naples Library System.* Accessed June 1, 2018. https://www.iperteca.it/download.php?id=1946.

[75] Ibid, 65.

telegraphic address indicate that the business used the latest business communication tools of the era.

More evidence of Amilcare's business activities comes from Claudio's interviews with Roger Penny in 1994, conducted when Claudio was 81 years of age. He mentioned that Amilcare had very little to do with his children, leaving their upbringing to Niny and Nonna Amalia. According to Claudio, Amilcare's "mentality was one of business". The Genoese side – the maternal Coen side of the family – was the dominant side of the family and his mother Niny was brought up in the "Puritan Ideal". To her, Rome was "a bit of a whore". The north – Genoa and Milano – represented diligence and work. Niny's father was an executive in the paper industry and had a factory outside Rome, so she was used to the men in the family being absent.[76]

Amilcare had business connections with mills and converters in many textile production and trading centres across Europe. According to evidence provided by son Orlando to the Australian Military authorities, he held shares in the De Angeli Frua plants based in Milan and also had financial connections to Abraham, Brauchbar et Cie, a Swiss textile business that owned a textile printing factory in Lyon.[77] Without these connections, it is unlikely that Claudio, Orlando and Paolo Sonnino would later have been able to secure the representation of textile manufacturers from France, Italy and Switzerland for their initial Australia business 'FISMA', set up as an agency for European print

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[76] Claudio Alcorso. *Alcorso interviewed by Roger Penny*, Session 1, 1994.

[77] National Archives of Australia, 1940. "Claudio Alcorso." *SP1714/1, N33832.* 30 July. Accessed December 30, 2017.
https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=447243.
De Angeli Frua comprised of cotton mills and textile printing works located in Milan, Legnano and Aglie, that had also moved into artificial fibre production in the 1930s (Storia E Cultura Dell' Industria. n.d. "De Angeli Frua History." Accessed November 30, 2019.
http://www.corsi.storiaindustria.it/settoriindustriali/tessile/006/storia/).
Abraham, Brauchbar et Cie (also known simply as 'Abraham') were a high-end producer of silk fabrics based in Zurich, Switzerland. They produced fabrics for couture designers including Cristobal Balenciaga and Yves St Laurent (Zurcherische Seidenindustrie Gesellschaft. 2019. "Abraham, Zurich." Accessed November 30, 2019. https://zsig.ch/Projekte/Archivprojekte/Zuercher-Seidenarchive/Abraham).

producers (see Chapter 4).[78] The operation of two retail stores would have required an extensive network of European suppliers and trade intermediaries, including direct relationships with mills in Prato for woollens and a network of producers of silk and artificial silk (rayon) fabrics. Given the high levels of production of rayon yarn and fabrics in Italy during the 1930s, these would have been an important secondary product range for Amilcare Piperno Alcorso, catering to the requirements of aspirational middle-class customers that were unable to afford more expensive silk and woollen fibres.[79]

In order to build and sustain a loyal retail customer base, the stores also stocked fancy trimmings – embroideries, laces, ribbons, threads, sewing equipment and other notions sourced from the many Italian trim producers that have specialised in these goods for generations. These products required speculative investments in expensive inventory that would not have generated maximum profit. In order to generate profits, Amilcare needed to make money on fabrics - buying grey cloth in bulk, adding value through dyeing and printing and adding an additional profit margin on top of the cost of each stage of the value-adding process.

This vertically integrated retail business structure was commonly employed in wholesale and retail textile and fashion companies internationally. Amilcare strategically chose to add variety and value to his retail product range by purchasing a limited range of popular base-cloths in bulk, commission dyeing them in seasonal fashion colours and printing his

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[78] Claudio spoke of the establishment of this business in Chapter 2 of his memoir *The Wind You Say*, (56). "FISMA" was an acronym for 'French, Italian, Swiss Manufacturers, Australia'. The agency was established so that the Alcorsos *"would get to know the customers and understand the market"* in Australia. At that time there were few textile printers in Australia and the majority of printed fabrics were imported into Australia either from Britain or Japan.

[79] The family's extensive knowledge and experience working with rayon base-cloths is evident from the submission made by Claudio Alcorso to *The Australian Tariff Board* in 1939, requesting that duty arrangements be changed to allow *STP* and other industry stakeholders (Gilkes & Company, David Jones, Poullars) access to a continuous supply of rayon cloth under favourable import conditions – refer Chapter 4, section 4.7: The Alcorsos arrive in Australia.

own exclusive designs, enabling fast turnaround repeats of the best sellers according to demand.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
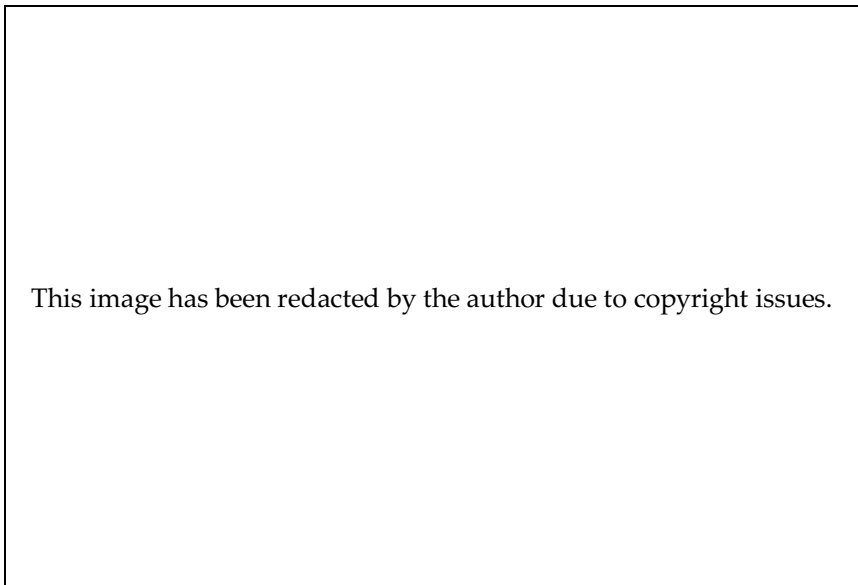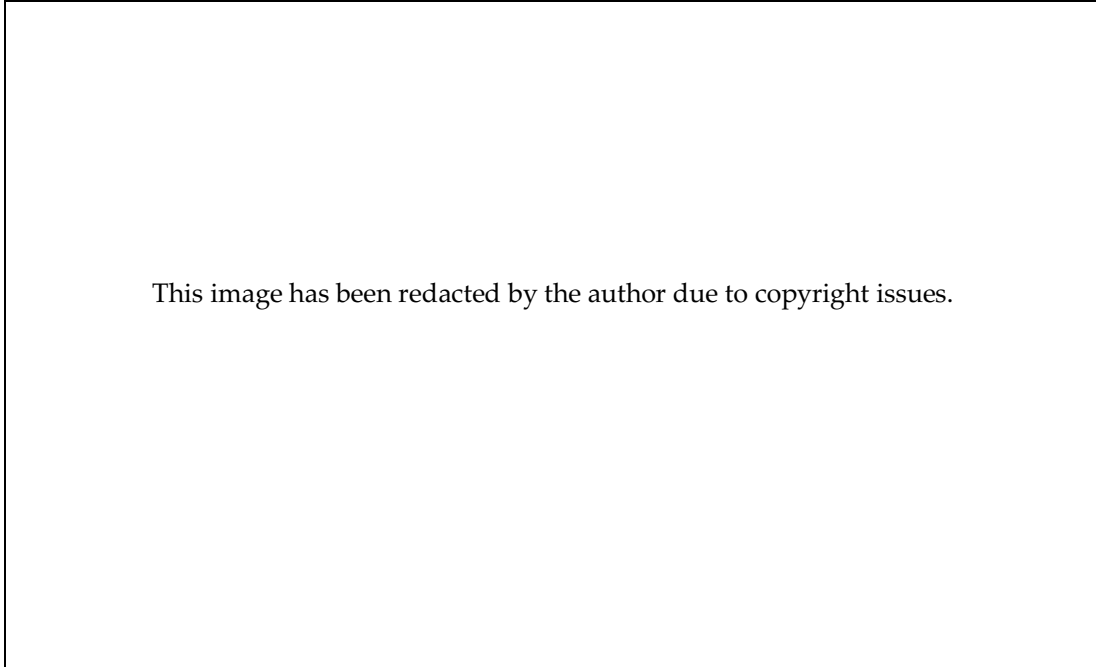
Figure 3.18 172 Via del Corso, Accessed online on 3 May, 2018.[80]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

Figure 3.19 Postcard of Amilcare Piperno Alcorso in Via Umberto I. [81]

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[80] Google Maps. n.d. "Roma, Via del Corso 172." Accessed May 3, 2018. https://www.google.com.au/maps/place/Via+del+Corso,+172,+00186+Roma+RM,+Italy/@41.9028176,12.479615,3a,60y,28.23h,85.72t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1sTyjt2K4rjmMnlDSSViPHnQ!2e0!7i13312!8i6656!4m13!1m7!3m6!1s0x132f605392b13473:0x545dbc7796904e33!2sVia+del+Corso,+17.

[81] Amilcare Piperno Alcorso. n.d. "Postcard." *EBAY.* Accessed June 6, 2013. http://www.ebay.it/sch/sis.html?_nkw=1924+PUBBLICITARI+Amilcare+Piperno+al+corso+50+c+o+&_itemId=320690888370

It was a low risk model for business success. Greige (grey cloth) is purchased directly from the mill at the best possible price and delivered to the dye-house ready for processing. Dyeing and finishing cloth is a dirty business - it requires a great deal of infrastructure and a constant supply of heat and water. Given the number of specialists in this field and the infrastructure needed, it is unlikely that Amilcare would have had owned a dye-house, though he may have had financial interests in such businesses. It is more likely that he, like many mills and textile converters would have contracted commission dyers to do this work on his behalf.

Minimum quantities of greige – say, 500 yards per colour, would be dyed in the season's best-selling colours – which could be repeated if they sold well. Coloured cloth could be over-printed or discharge-printed with a monotone design, or multi-coloured designs. Two or more plain and printed fabrics with a common base-colour then provide a coordinating "fabric story", that could also be taken up by clothing manufacturers for their seasonal ranges. Greige could also be bleached back to 'natural' or to 'optical white' and rolled full width onto tubes in preparation for printing.

Though it cannot be confirmed, it is likely that Amilcare had his own silkscreen printing works in Rome. His business location at 24 Campio Marzio was described in Fascist documents as a 'labratorio', which in some contexts can mean a factory as well as a laboratory. In some sources that have been translated into English the location has been interpreted as a clothing factory, whilst in others as a workshop and laboratory for testing fabrics. With a staff of 145, this location is likely to have carried out all of these activities. As the site was a vacant block when visually documented by Google in 2017, there are no physical traces of a structure that can provide clues.

The fact that the Alcorsos knew enough about the production aspects of fabric printing to establish Silk & Textile Printers in Sydney, suggests that there must have been at least some family interests in a printing factory, or

alternatively that a sub-contractor close to the family business conducted all of the printing on their behalf. Fascist documentation also shows Amilcare as an unlisted director or partner in several "anonymous societies" – similar to limited liability companies with offshore assets, a type of business structure common in Italy at the time that did not require registration of owner's details.[82] One of these was the anonymous company 'Tagliacozzo', located in via dei Prefetti, of which Amilcare was the only administrator. The activity of this business is unknown. It may have simply been a shelf company set up to hide his assets from the Fascists, however it could also have been a company set up to manage printing activities.

In an interview in The Sun published in 1940, Amilcare stated that "I personally create all my designs…"[83] and that whilst he may have considered this to be true, the more likely scenario is that he would have employed in-house designers to realise the technical print design work based on sketches or storyboards, or verbal direction. He would have personally approved each design and colourway before screens were made and sample strike-offs were printed. Having a constant internal supply of product created to meet his own high standards of quality, Amilcare could reduce his financial commitment to external suppliers and invest more into his own supply chain, taking a profit margin at each stage of internal production. Nevertheless, Amilcare would have maintained close relationships with external suppliers of specialised textile piece-goods – yarn dyed wovens, woollens, damasks, jacquards, velvets, laces, embroideries and other 'fancy' cloths – and findings and

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[82] Rome Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Crafts & Agriculture. 2004. "The effects of the racial laws on the economic activities of the Jews in the city of Rome - Chapter 3: Anonymous Societies 1938-1943." *Union of Jewish Communities.* Accessed May 3, 2018.

[83] Ley 1940. This comment may have been influenced by the fact that both his sons Claudio and Orlando and his assistant Paolo Sonnino had already been interned by the Australian Government as enemy aliens and he wanted to associate his own reputation, rather than that of his sons, with this new family business (refer also to section 3.3.2.).

accessories, that would continue to be an important part of the product mix of each of his retail stores.

Use of the relatively new technology of screen printing was a cheap, quick response strategy for creating endless textile variety. Investment in printing tables, a darkroom for creating photo stencils, screens and printing chemicals was cheaper than building a plant for engraving textile printing rollers or employing highly skills artisans to carve wooden printing blocks. Screens can be stored easily and best-selling prints and colour ways can be repeated as stocks diminish. Artwork for designs that do not sell so well can be scrapped and the screens easily re-used for new season's designs. Screen printing provided the happy medium – a way to print fabrics in multiple colours without the skill base and expense of block printing, or the costs and infrastructure associated with roller printing.

Purchasing printed fabrics allowed Italian women of all classes to express their own status, taste and personality in clothing. Their purchasing practices also help to shape the perceptions of others about members of their families that they were responsible for clothing. Pattern is a cultural phenomenon – identifies the wearer with different social groups, historical and cultural traditions – and reflect feelings of nationalism through selection of motifs and colours that align to national flags. By introducing printed fabrics to his stores, Amilcare was not only expanding his business, but also helping to build the reputation of the Italian fashion print sector that was so evident after World War II.

As well as being an indicator of how the wearer sees themselves and their body, pattern selection can be either flattering or unflattering to the wearer. For example, plump women 'of a certain age' wearing the latest loud photo-prints may feel that their clothes reflect the current fashion trends and therefore portray them as youthful and modern, whilst onlookers may perceive them as dressing inappropriately for their age. Staff working in retail

stores assess potential clients by what they are wearing and use print as an indicator of their taste and a hint of what merchandise they should be shown.

Claudio learned from an early age which colours would flatter women with different colourings and figure types.[84] He was also aware that selection of printed garments on any given day provided information to people that interact with the wearer on their mood and disposition.[85] Thus a person who is interested in fashion would perceive the need for many prints in their wardrobe to reflect their daily disposition, as well as being fashionable and seasonally appropriate.

Images from the 1937 Piperno Alcorso catalogue (Figure 3.20) illustrate how these principles were applied to products sold in the stores, together with advice to help women look their best. On the extreme left readers are informed about optical illusions created by geometric patterns. Both rectangles are the same size but are made to look longer or wider due to the horizontal or vertical lines. On the top right hand side, tall, slim women are advised to wear bright colours and checks, whilst women with plumper figures are advised to use vertical lines and solid dark colours to make them appear slimmer.

The increased variety and choice in fabric offered by Amilcare Piperno Alcorso drove consumption and therefore sales, as "Fashion is fuelled by the desire for change… ."[86] Print both responds to and drives fashion – a screen printing facility enabled the Alcorsos to quickly respond to fashion trends far faster than they could by ordering yarn dyes from mills, that take weeks to set up and weave, or embroideries that take time to set up and produce.

Clothing manufacturers, dressmakers and home sewers were more likely to buy a new print (or even several new prints each season) on a trusted

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[84] Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say*, 80.

[85] Campion Interactive Publishing. n.d. *Geographical*. Accessed September 12, 2014. http://www.geographical.co.uk.

[86] Marnie Fogg. 2006. *Print in Fashion: Design and Development in Fashion Textiles.* London: Batsford, 9.

base-cloth that performed well for them in the past. It was a modern means by which merchants like Amilcare could contribute to the development of a unique Italian textile and fashion identity that would drive future sales and exports overseas.

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At the time of writing this image was available at:
http://www.arengario.it/opera/piperno-alcorso
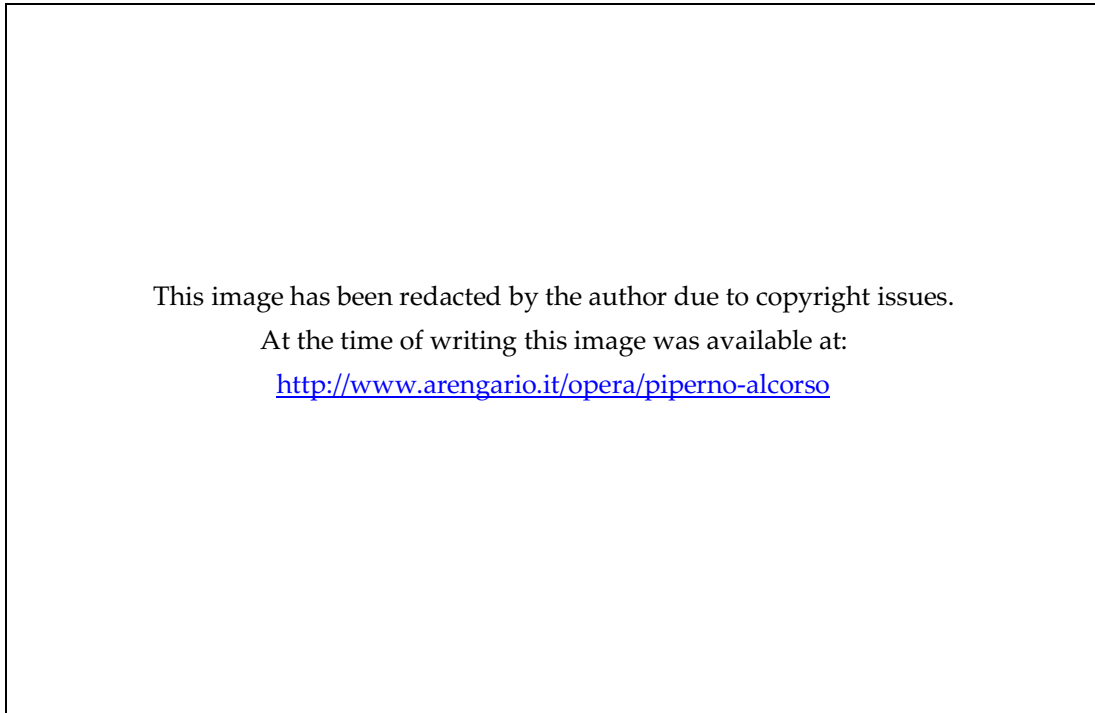
Figure 3.20 Images from the Piperno Alcorso catalogue, 1937.[87]

The following statement penned in England shortly after World War II applies equally to the Italian market that the Alcorsos operated in before World War II, when both government and industry recognised the importance of an Italian design identity to future trade performance:

> Turning a shoulder, defining a waist, swimming in the
> warm astringency of a chosen scent, the motif printed on
> cotton, silk or rayon has yet its duty to perform. Not only
> has it to break up the cloth into something sweeter,
> smarter and more amusing than it would be in its plain

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[87] Piperno Alcorso. 1937. "Piperno Alcorso catalogue." *Rome: Novissima*. Accessed May 22, 2018. http://www.arengario.it/opera/piperno-alcorso/.

state; but nowadays, sweeter, smarter and more amusing than the equivalent product abroad. A trade duel is being fought out over the whole industrial field, not least in fashion and or aim and object these few years may well be to deck out the pretty foreigner though the ladies of England go drab and threadbare. The rewards of such sacrifice will depend not only on the quality of our cloth but on the colours, shapes and sizes we throw down on it.[88]

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https://www.google.com.au/maps/@41.9110497,12.4980589,3a,75y,31.96h,108.45t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1s-TnSVyL_SwX..3ksskKWSMA!2e0!7i13312!8i6656?hl=en
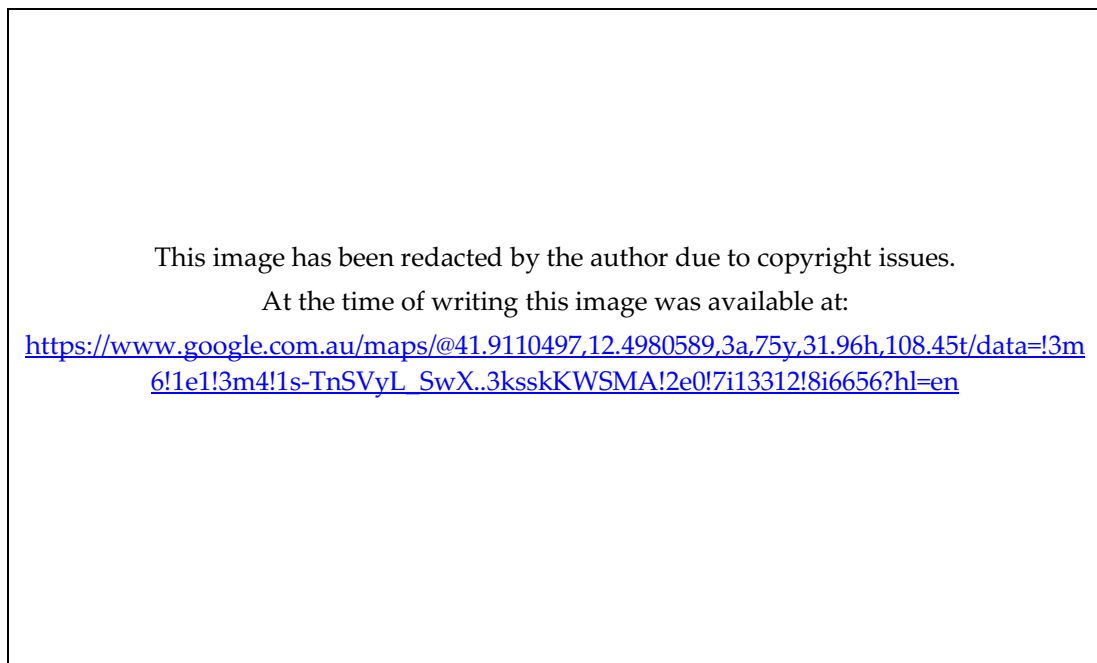
Figure 3.21 53 Piazza Fiume Rome (left hand side) the site of the Grandi Magazzini Piperno Alcorso, viewed online in June 2018.[89]

In 1937 the Alcorsos opened a store at 53 Piazza Fiume which differed greatly to the traditional Italian drapery store in Corso Umberto I. The building was six storeys high and free standing, fronting the Piazza, with large display

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[88] James De Holden Stone. 1946. "The Designer and the Print Dress." *Art and Industry,* Volume 40 (London : Studio, 1936-1958) Canberra, National Library of Australia: 99.

[89] Google Maps. 2017. "Roma, Lazio, Piazza Fiume 53." July. Accessed June 1, 2018. https://www.google.com.au/maps/@41.9110497,12.4980589,3a,75y,31.96h,108.45t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1s-TnSVyL_SwX..3ksskKWSMA!2e0!7i13312!8i6656?hl=en.

windows available on all sides. Today this building could be any nineteenth century grand Italian palazzo that has been converted to commercial business premises (see Figure 3.21). It bears little resemblance to its former identity as Grandi Magazzini Piperno Alcorso, when it had a modernist new shopfront designed by one of Italy's leading architects. The shopfront has since been restored to its heritage appearance, looking as it would have before its renovation for the Alcorsos.

Architect Melchiorre Bega (1898-1976) was retained by the Alcorsos to design a streamlined new shopfront and interior for the building, reflecting the modernist aesthetic prevalent in Italy and supported by the Fascists. Photographic evidence shows that the upper storeys were not renovated, though in later illustrations the building was depicted as a box-like, modernist multi-storied building. The previous use of this building is not known and it is also unclear whether Amilcare purchased or leased the property. Given the extensive investment that would have been required in remodelling and documentary evidence of Amilcare being the procurator of a real estate holding company Societá Anonima Proprietá Romana,[90] it is likely that he would have either purchased the building or negotiated an extremely long lease from the owner.

Bega served as editor of Domus between 1941 and 1944 and completed many significant commissions up to his death in 1976.[91] During the 1930s he had specialised in the renovation and refurbishment of old buildings - his grand modernist works such as the Galfa Tower in Milan (1959) and the Palazzo dei Congressi in Bologna (1975) were still decades away.[92] Figure 3.22

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[90] Rome Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Crafts & Agriculture 2004.

[91] Behance Gallery. n.d. "The Style of Bega: Works, projects, ideas of a protagonist of Milanese professionalism." Accessed June 1, 2018. https://www.behance.net/gallery/4527103/MELCHIORRE-BEGA_elaborato-sullarchitettomilanese.

[92] Stefano Zironi. 1983. "Melchiorre Bega, architetto." *Milano Domus.* Accessed June 1, 2018. https://www.behance.net/gallery/4527103/MELCHIORRE-BEGA_elaborato-sullarchitettomilanese.

illustrates a ground floor entrance to Piperno Alcorso at Piazza Fiume, together with a ground-plan of the store as featured in Issue XI of Domus Magazine in 1938.

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At the time of writing this image was available at:
http://croma.uniroma3.it/db/docs/scopus/CeS%202017-1.pdf
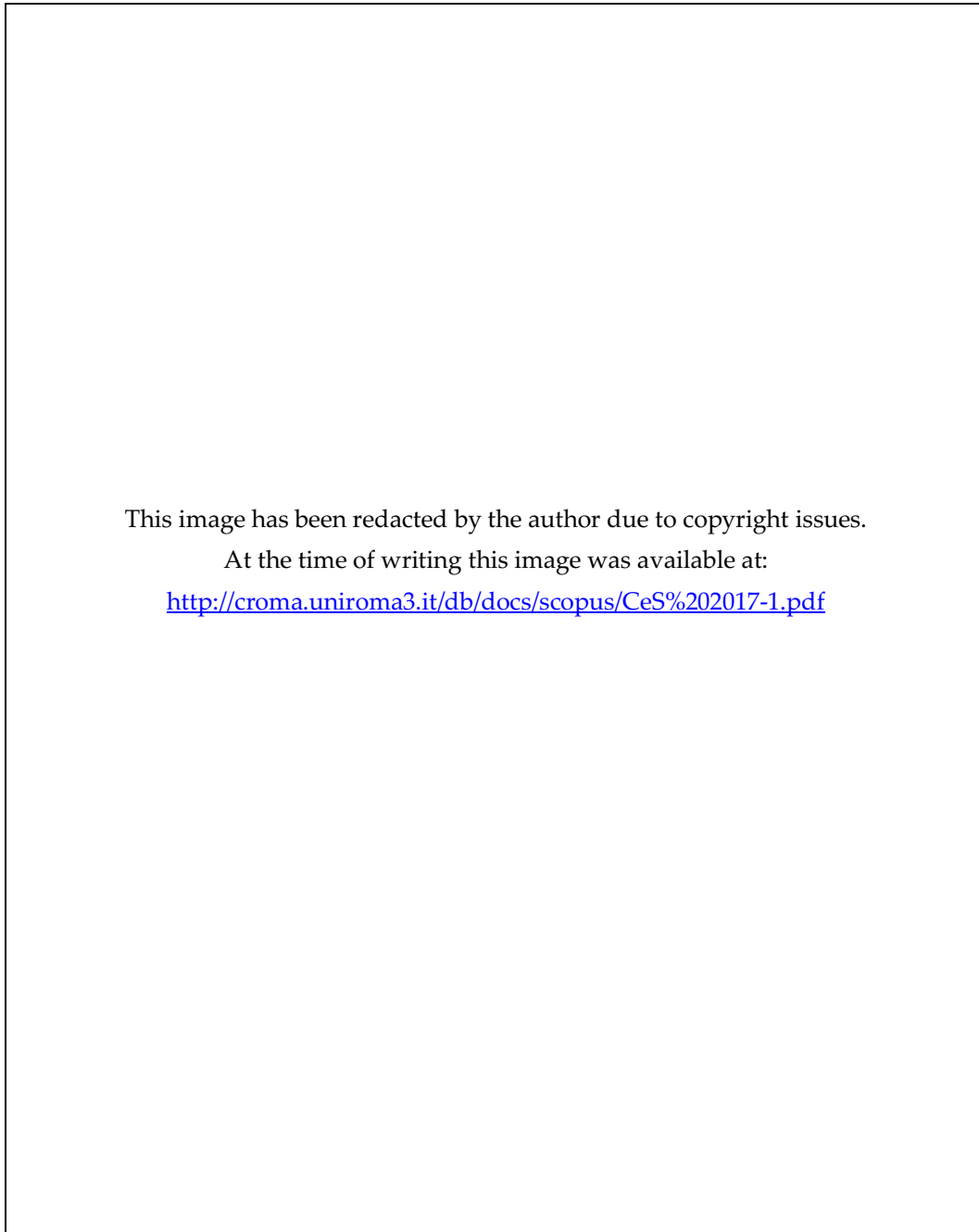
Figure 3.22 Ground plan and façade of Piperno Alcorso at Piazza Fiume designed by architect Melchiorre Bega.[93]

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[93] Università Roma. 2017. "Università degli Studi Roma Tre-Croma con l'Associazione Italiana di Storia Urbana (AISU)." *Citta & Storia* . January. Accessed June 10, 2018. http://croma.uniroma3.it/db/docs/scopus/CeS%202017-1.pdf.

Figure 3.23 A. Villani, Façade of Piperno Alcorso, Piazza Fiume, 1938. [94]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing this image was available at:

https://www.art.com/products/p15280424-sa-i3641401/a-villani-shop-windows-in-the-piperno-alcorso-store-rome.htm?upi=Q10T6IN0&PODConfigID=14258388

The photograph is by A. Villani, whose body of work includes many commercial and industrial images for Italian manufacturers.[95] From the ground plan and other photographic evidence, it appears that the department store occupied only the first two levels. As this site became the headquarters of the business from 1937, it is probable the upper four levels may have been used as offices, showrooms and product storage spaces.

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[94] A Villani. c1938. "Shop windows in the Piperno Alcorso Store, Rome - Product ID: 15280424A." *Art.com.* Accessed October 22, 2019. https://www.art.com/products/p15280424-sa-i3641401/a-villani-shop-windows-in-the-piperno-alcorso-store-rome.htm?upi=Q10T6IN0&PODConfigID=14258388.

[95] 499 photographic works by A. Villani can be viewed on *Art.com.* Accessed October 22, 2019. https://www.art.com/asp/search_do.asp/_/posters.htm?pathNumber=0&txtSearch=Villani&Search=Villani&CategoryID=b0.

The curvilinear, copperplate font used in documentation for the Corso Umberto store has been replaced with a modern, art deco inspired sans serif typeface. Amilcare's name has disappeared from the signage – perhaps as an indication that a younger generation of the family would soon be taking over the running of the business. Displays of draped fabrics can just be discerned in the front windows, an emphatic statement that the main business of this establishment was textiles.

Figure 3.23 provides an alternative view of the facade, highlighting a modern, reflective surface on the underside of the awning. It reflects the light from the windows back onto the merchandise, adding a sense of drama to the display. Swathes of fabric displays in the windows are barely visible in this image, which is not necessarily about the merchandise, but all about creating an image of Piperno Alcorso as a modern department store.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing this image was available at:
https://www.art.com/products/p15283975-sa-i3641402/a-villani-shop-windows-in-the-piperno-alcorso-store-rome.htm?upi=Q10T6G50&PODConfigID=14258388
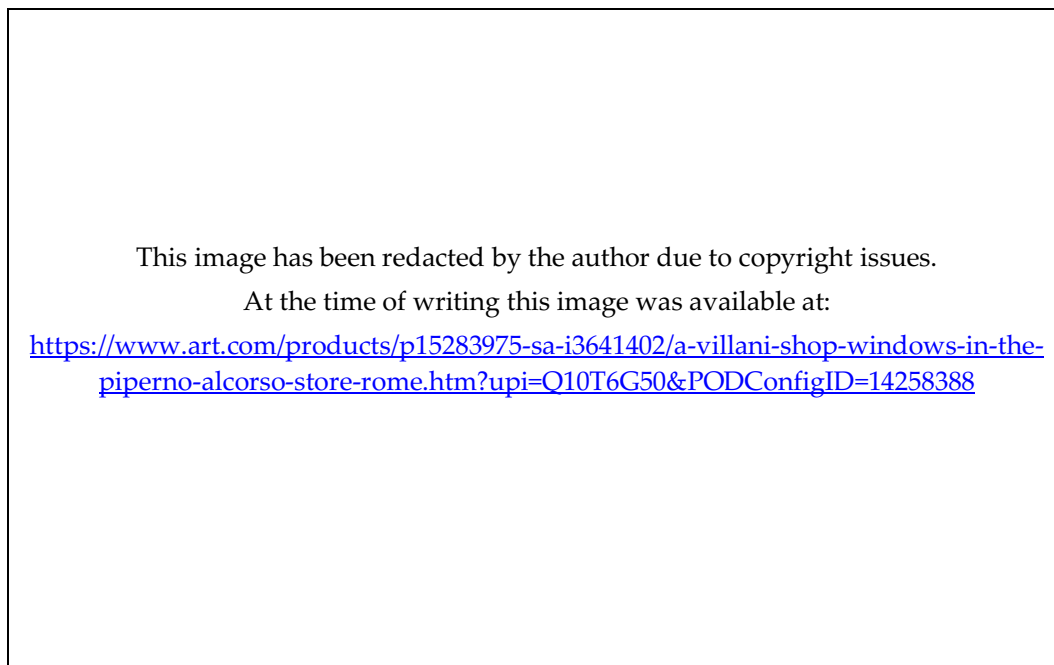
Figure 3.24 A. Villani, Ground floor interior of Piperno Alcorso, Piazza Fiume, 1938. [96]

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[96] A Villani. c1938. "Shop Windows in the Piperno Alcorso Store, Rome - Product ID: 15283975A." *Art.com.* Accessed October 22, 2019. https://www.art.com/products/p15283975-sa-i3641402/a-villani-shop-windows-in-the-piperno-alcorso-store-rome.htm?upi=Q10T6G50&PODConfigID=14258388.

Figure 3.24 provides a view of a retail space on the ground floor, near one of the grand entrances. The items displayed in the shelves are not neatly folded garments, but knitted or worsted fabrics that have been rolled half-width into cards. Presumably this is an area where fabrics could be purchased or selected by the customer along with garment patterns they could make themselves, or have made up by dressmakers or tailors employed by the store. This area could also have been used as a showroom for wholesale customers – smaller textiles stores from regional areas who may have purchased entire bolts at discounted prices. The items in the glass cases on the left-hand-side appear to be swatches of fabrics and accessories.

Clients who did not buy ready-made clothing and had garments made-to-measure by private dressmakers and tailors rather than those employed in stores, had to provide everything that was required to make their garments – including patterns (if available), shell fabrics, linings, buttons and other trims, so it is conceivable that Piperno Alcorso in Piazza Fiume would have stocked these items.[97]

One of Melchiorre Bega's design signatures was the twisting timber staircase, like the one designed for Piperno Alcorso (Figure 3.25) which winds sinuously from one level to another, echoing the swathes of fabric displayed in the stores' windows. He had originally trained as a cabinetmaker and timber clad staircases like this could also be seen in Bar Motta in Milan, completed in 1933.[98] He also designed furniture, so it is likely that he designed the display cabinets and other joinery seen in Figures 3.25 and 3.26. Bega also specified furniture from other Italian modernist makers for the stores' interiors, including a lectern produced by Cova.[99]

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[97] Polese n.d.
[98] Behance Gallery n.d.
[99] Coenobium Librerea Antiqueria. n.d. "Piperno Alcorso." Accessed May 22, 2018.
    http://libreriaantiquariacoenobium.it/catalogo/piperno-al-corso/.

Despite absence of his name and the youthful modernity of the Piazza Fiume store, Amilcare was still very much in charge of Piperno Alcorso, though he no doubt sought insights from his two sons, being closer in age to the younger clientele that he sought to attract. By the time the Piazza Fiume store had opened in 1937, Claudio had gained a doctorate in Economics at Rome University and his younger brother Orlando had qualified as a Chemist, both of which were useful career choices for working in a retail department store with affiliated print-works and factories.
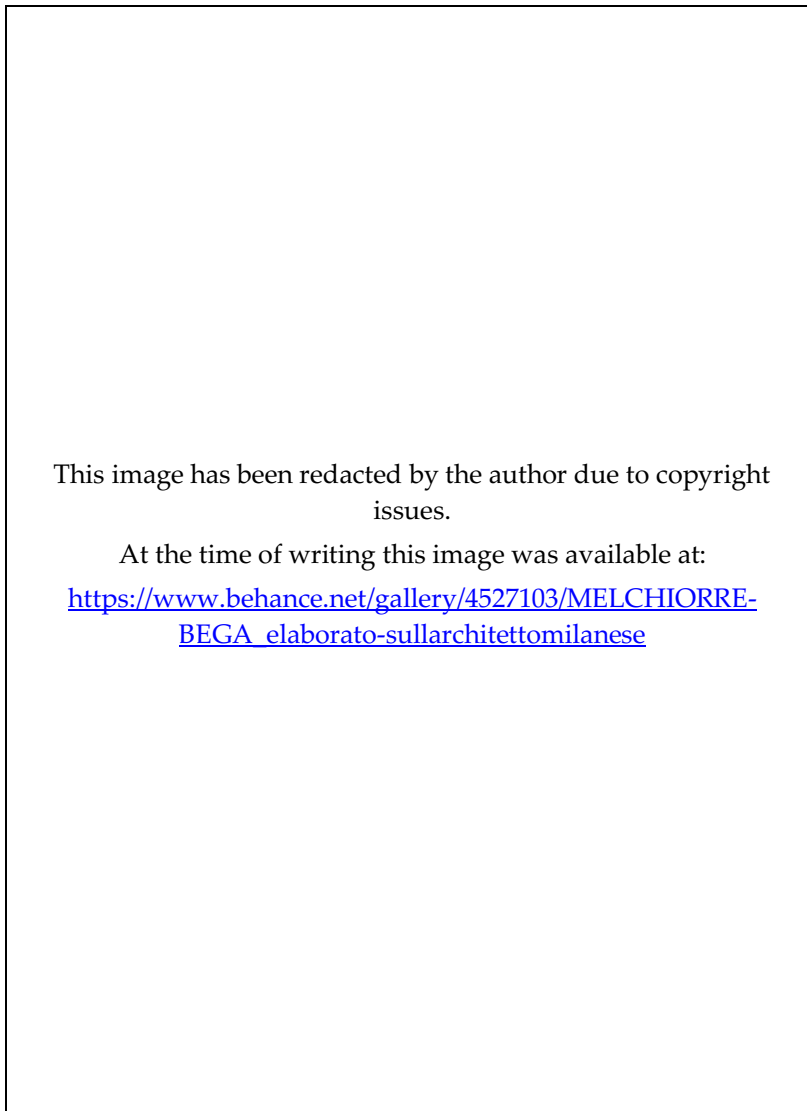
Figure 3.25 Melchiorre Bega, Staircase in Piperno Alcorso, 53 Piazza Fiume, Rome, 1938.[100]

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At the time of writing this image was available at:

https://www.behance.net/gallery/4527103/MELCHIORRE-BEGA_elaborato-sullarchitettomilanese

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[100] Behance Gallery n.d.
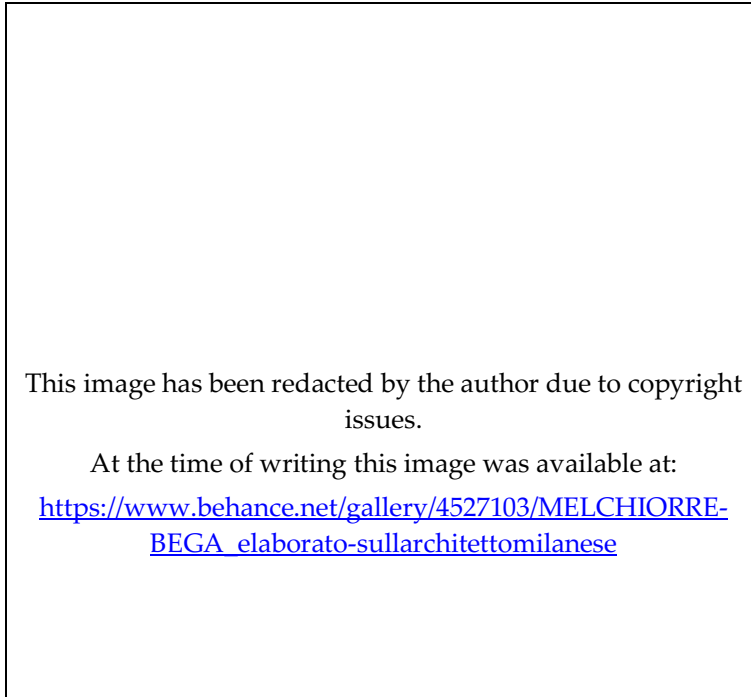
Figure 3.26 Melchiorre Bega, Cabinets and joinery in Piperno Alcorso, 53 Piazza Fiume, Rome, 1938.[101]

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At the time of writing this image was available at:
https://www.behance.net/gallery/4527103/MELCHIORRE-BEGA_elaborato-sullarchitettomilanese

Claudio, with his creative ideas, persuasive reasoning and willingness to take on risk was the perfect 'front man', whilst Orlando's interest in chemistry and machinery made him the perfect potential manager of production operations. As a recent university graduate that was up to date with the latest business and financial techniques, it is conceivable that Claudio may have been asked for advice on the latest modern means for promoting the new store. The promotional collateral that was developed for the Piazza Fiume store was nothing like that used for the Corso Umberto I a decade earlier. Amilcare might have sought advice from both of his sons and his assistant Paolo Sonnino, however, after seeking their insights, he would no doubt have made up his own mind about what type of campaign he would endorse and pay for.

A forty-page catalogue illustrated with photographs and drawings was produced to commemorate and promote the opening of the Piazza Fiume store. It not only featured merchandise from the store, but also advertising from Alcorso's suppliers. There was a double-page advertisement for Filanda

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[101] Ibid.

Rossi, a silk mill that supplied the business, with photographs by DM Ferrario.[102]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing this image was available at:

http://libreriaantiquariacoenobium.it/catalogo/piperno-al-corso/

Figure 3.27 Cover of the Piperno Alcorso catalogue, by Barbera (Olga Biglieri Scurto), 1937.[103]

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[102] Coenobium Librerea Antiqueria n.d.

[103] Piperno Alcorso. 1937.

Francesco Rossi had founded the mill at the beginning of the nineteenth century in Schio and his son Alessandro had commissioned architect Antonio Caregaro Negrin to build the Alta Fabbrica, the first modern, multi-storey Italian factory completed in 1849. The architect also built the 'Jacquard Garden' with an adjoining theatre nearby, for the entertainment of workers. The complex was illustrated at the London International Exposition of 1851 as an exemplar of industrial modernity. Though currently inactive, the Alta Fabbrica in Schio remains a significant tourist attraction, like the remaining cotton mills of Lancashire in England.[104]

The cover of the catalogue (Figure 3.27) shows an illustration of Rome as seen from the air, showing major landmarks including the river Tiber, the Colosseum, the Vatican, Hadrian's Column and the Victor Emmanuel Memorial, with two red squares indicating the locations of the Piperno Alcorso retail stores. The images in the catalogue were drawn by Futurist painter and illustrator Barbera (Olga Biglieri Scurto), a colleague of Marinetti's who was also an airplane pilot.[105] These modern views of Rome combined with art deco typography reflect the modernist aesthetic favoured by the Fascist regime, but the textual content shows the strong influence of Amilcare's eloquent promotional style.

Figure 3.28 shows two pages from inside the 1937 promotional catalogue. It is designed to entice women of the professional and upper classes into the Alcorso's new "department store of modern elegance". On the right-hand side is another aerial view of Rome, possibly based on a photograph taken by Barbera from her airplane. It is overlaid with graphics showing the convenient locations of the Alcorso's stores.

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[104] Lanificio Rossi Schio. n.d. Accessed May 30, 2018. https://circuitodeilanifici.com/circuito-schio-santorso-torrebelvicino/.

[105] Paolo Balmas. 2011. "Barbera (Olga Biglieri) 1913-2002." *Ministero Per I Beni E Le Attivita Culturali - 150 year Anniversary of Unification.* Accessed June 23, 2018. http://www.150anni.it/webi/stampa.php?wid=2046&stampa=1.

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At the time of writing this image was available at:
http://libreriaantiquariacoenobium.it/catalogo/piperno-al-corso/
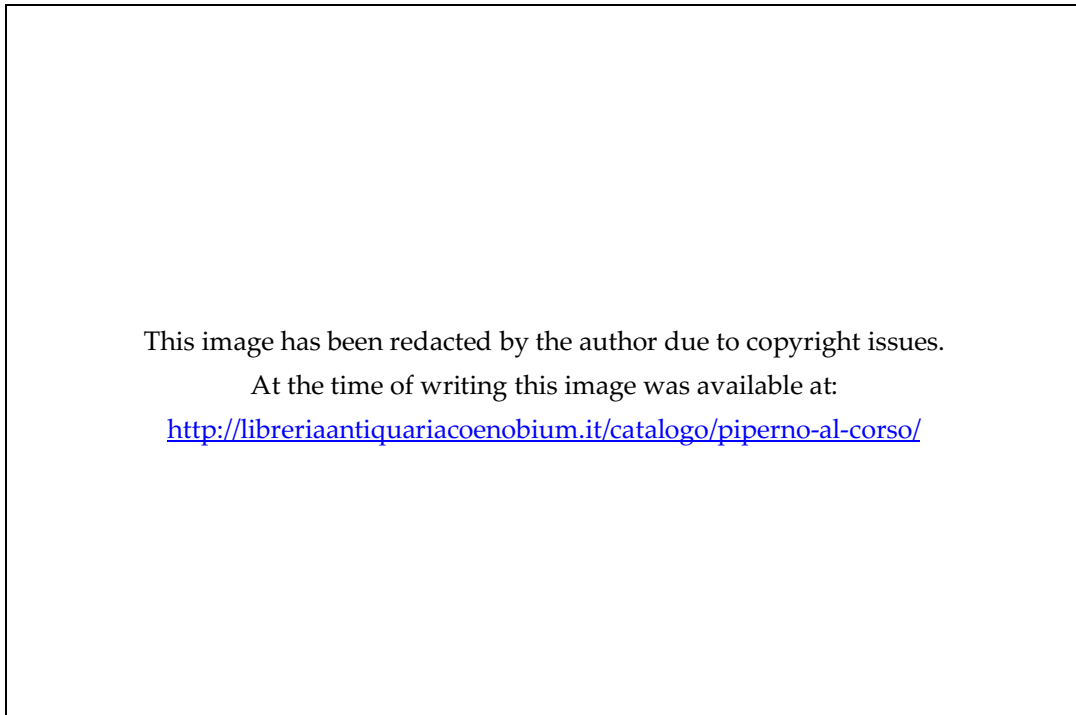
Figure 3.28 Inside the Piperno Alcorso catalogue by Barbera (Olga Biglieri Scurto), c1937.[106]

Below the text on the left-hand side is a line drawing representing the store's target customer – an obviously   wealthy and graceful woman wearing a fur, walking her dog Al Corso (on the street). She spots Piperno Alcorso and is drawn to its obvious modernity. She walks gracefully towards the store – even her dog looks excited to be able to visit the exciting new store to browse for the latest fashion fabrics and accessories. The figure of the aristocratic woman walking her dog would later reappear in advertisements for exclusive Alcorso *Fifth Avenue Handprints* produced for wholesaler Martin and Savage in Australia twenty years later (see Chapter 6, Figures 6.41 to 6.43).

Barbera was not the only well-known Italian artist and designer retained by Amilcare. Mario Vigolo,"…one of the key journalistic figures in Italian fashion which he interpreted through a wide ranging blend of drawing and texts", drew fashion plates showing the potential of fabrics offered at Piperno Alcorso. These illustrations were displayed in the windows of the

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[106] Piperno Alcorso. 1937.

store next to the fabrics, giving the buyer some ideas of what type of garments could be made. The women that he illustrated aligned to the Fascist ideal – slim and muscular, with broad shoulders. Vigolo attended fashion shows in Paris as an illustrator and journalist and worked "….as a consultant for noted Italian fashion houses, selecting garments suitable for a snobbish clientele inclined to an exhibition of luxury". After the war Vigolo worked as costume designer at 'Cinecitta', the movie production studio situated near Rome.[107]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
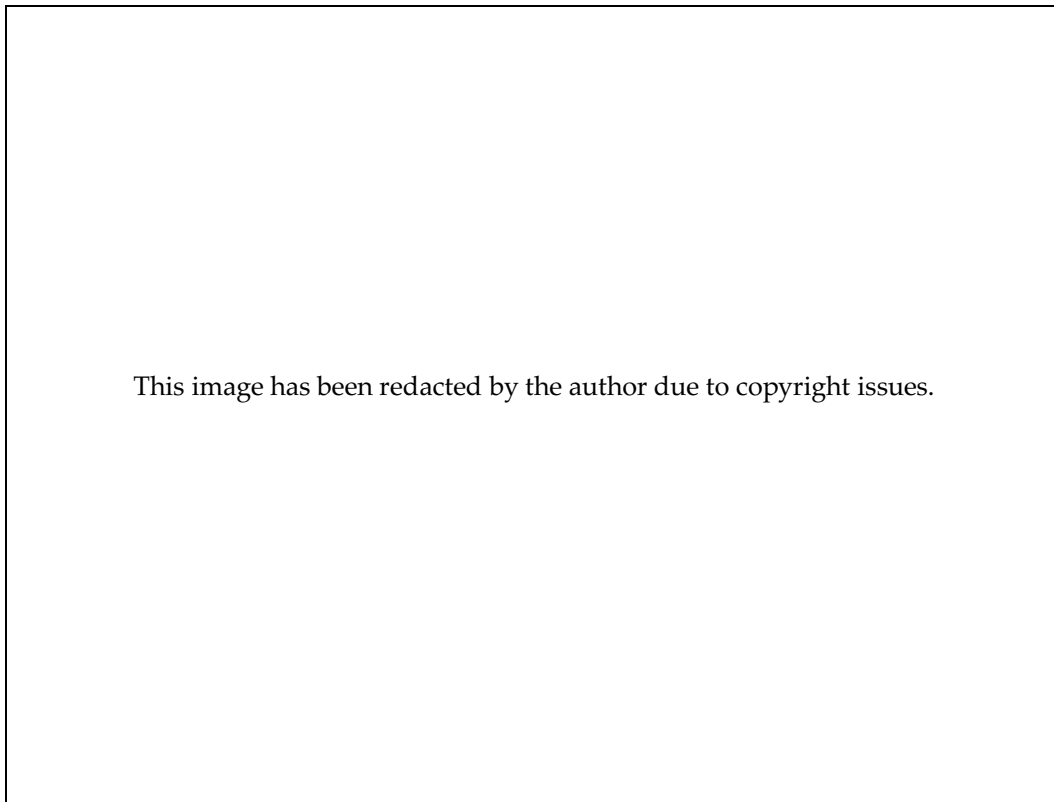
Figure 3.29 Mario Vigolo illustrations for Piperno Alcorso.[108]

[107] Lupano and Vaccari 2009, 114.
[108] Ibid.

3.3.2   The Alcorsos leave Italy

Though Claudio and his younger brother Orlando were both being groomed by their father Amilcare to take over the operation of Piperno Alcorso, entering the family business was not their main priority. Despite his university qualifications, his father's careful grooming and being provided with his father's power of attorney, Claudio continued to enjoy the social life of a cosmopolitan young Roman.[109] In his memoir and in interviews he said that he was more interested in playing tennis, going out with young ladies and having a good time that running his father's business. This may have prompted Amilcare to take on Paolo Sonnino, a smart young accountant as his assistant, hoping that he may be able to help his oldest son transition into the role.

Claudio often attended art shows, the theatre and the opera. He socialised in intellectual circles, often attending Sunday night open-house gatherings at the home of a prominent lawyer. Each week there was a speaker on literary, theatrical or historical themes, or new philosophies, such as Freud's Psychoanalysis or Einstein's Theory of Relativity. Claudio implies that he was a fairly reckless youth, spending money from his generous allowance on flying lessons without his father's knowledge or permission, later completing his national service as a pilot in the Italian Air Force. Both Claudio and Orlando qualified as pilots and served their national service with Bruno Mussolini, the son of the dictator.

Bruno's brother Vittorio had also gone to school with Orlando and they had continued their friendship as young men However, this connection is played down in Claudio's memoir and interviews. The Mussolini are described as his brother's friends. Clearly the politics of memory has erased

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[109] Alcorso. *Claudio Alcorso interviewed by Roger Penny.* Session 1, 1994.

the fact that Claudio held sufficient social ties with the Mussolini's to attend Vittorio's wedding and pose for a photo with Bruno Mussolini (Figure 3.30).[110]

Figure 3.30 Claudio Alcorso (leaning) and Bruno Mussolini (right-hand side) during their national service in the Italian Air Force, n.d.[111]

However, knowing someone and subscribing to their political beliefs are two different things. The family held critical discussions at home about Mussolini's Fascist regime, but kept their views to themselves in public. According to Claudio, OVRA (the Fascist secret police) did not see young intellectuals from well to do families as a threat and were happy to use words rather than fists to demonstrate their power over these harmless bourgeoisie. Their violence was kept in reserve for communists and other subversives in the working class.[112]

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[110] National Archives of Australia. 1940. "Claudio Alcorso, Box 22, Page 168 of 494." *SP1714/1, N33832.* 30 July. Accessed December 30, 2017.
https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=447243.
[111] Photograph courtesy of Caroline Alcorso. Used with permission.
[112] Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say*, 45-46.

Amilcare's Fascist dossier, cited in a 2004 study by the Rome Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Crafts and Agriculture stated that he did not profess a religion and no religious affiliation had been officially recorded. Piperno Alcorso was not initially included in Fascist lists of Jewish-owned textile businesses and his investigation had come about due to a denouncement.[113]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing this image was available at:
https://www.britannica.com/biography/Benito-Mussolini/images-videos
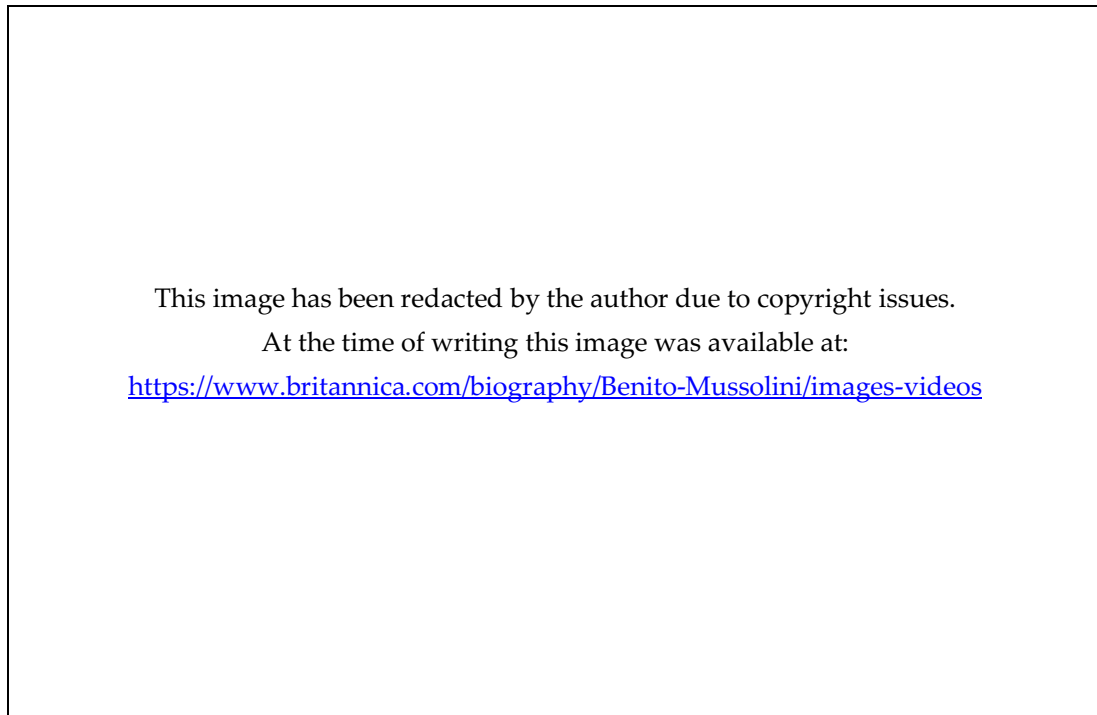
Figure 3.31 Benito Mussolini and his sons Bruno (left) and Vittorio n.d.[114]

Given that the Piperno name had been associated with the Synagogue in Rome since at least the seventeenth century, it would have been easy to prove the family's Jewish ancestry.[115] According to Claudio's daughter Caroline, Amilcare Alcorso was advised directly by Benito Mussolini that he was about to be denounced and that his businesses were likely to be expropriated and

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[113] Rome Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Crafts & Agriculture 2004.

[114] Encyclopedia Britannica. 1935. "Benito Mussolini with two of his sons, Bruno (left) and Vittorio, 1935." *Mussolini, Benito.* Accessed April 1, 2012. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Benito-Mussolini/images-videos.

[115] In the seventeenth century, Benvenuta Piperno, widow of Shemuel, donated silver *Rimonim* (decorative finials to adorn *Torah* cases) to the Rome Synagogue in memory of their son. In 1826 the Piperno's donated a crown, as well as precious textiles and a pointer used to read the *Torah.*
di Castro, Daniela. 2010. *Treasures of the Jewish Museum of Rome.* Rome: Museo Ebraicia di Roma, 38.

aryanised.[116] Apparently, corrupt officers in the Fascist regime were also aware of the Alcorso's ancestry. Amilcare had been paying them off for some time, but they could no longer turn a blind eye when official publications began listing the businesses as Jewish-owned in 1938.[117]

The Italian census of 1938 reveals that 38.3% of all Jews in Italy were directly employed in the textile industry, whilst the remainder worked in other areas of commerce, industry, transport, farming, insurance and banking. Of the 43.3% working in commercial enterprises, 22.9% of were described as 'simple street traders'. 51.7% - like Amilcare - had retail outlets, whilst 15.9% were described as wholesalers.[118] Decrees made in November 1938 and February 1939 announced that Jewish-owned shares and holdings in companies would to be taken over by a designated bank, who would value the property using "conservative criteria", paying no more than 50% of the agreed value to the former Jewish owners in fixed-income securities. Jews were forbidden to sell, trade or transfer these securities. Commercial shares and holdings would eventually be sold by the bank.

In 1939 the Italian government cancelled any contracts with Jewish suppliers and from that time suppliers were required to show certificates showing that persons employed in the company did not belong to the Jewish race. Mussolini's government clearly had expectations of receiving shareholdings of Jewish-owned commercial assets. The new laws also prevented moving Jewish capital overseas, as it was felt that this would lead to repercussions for the entire national economy. Jews that wanted to send

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[116] Caroline Alcorso 2016.

[117] Alcorso. *Claudio Alcorso interviewed by Roger Penny*. Session 1, 1994.

[118] Italian Government - Presidents Council - Jewish Goods Commission 2001, "Industrial and Commercial Assets", 322.

funds overseas had to ask for personal authorisation from the Ministry of Trade and Foreign Affairs.[119]

By this time Claudio Alcorso and Amilcare's assistant Paolo Sonnino had left Italy in 1937 to drive to London, ostensibly so Claudio could complete post-graduate studies at the London School of Economics. This attracted little interest from the Fascist regime, as the young men departed well before the decree and study overseas would have seemed a natural course of action. Unbeknownst to the regime, Claudio and Paolo were actually on a mission to find a new location to re-establish the family's textile business as far away from Europe as possible.

Claudio recalled in his interviews with Roger Penny that everyone knew that war was coming and his national service had convinced him that he did not really wish to serve in the Italian armed forces. Amilcare had secured the equivalent of £100,000 by selling some of his business interests. One of his business contacts, a manager at Abraham, Brauchbar et Cie in Zurich introduced him to Alfred Gugenheim of St Gall, a provedore who, after taking a 40% cut, smuggled the equivalent of £60,000 across the border into Switzerland in his fruit trucks. This method of extricating money was apparently an open secret and simple to organise as there were no restrictions on travel and apparently little interest from Italian border control, who had presumably had been paid off. The money was deposited in the Union Bank in Switzerland.[120]

Whilst Claudio and Paolo were in London the threat to the family's business was realised and Amilcare Piperno Alcorso was expropriated. The assets included the factory at 24 Via di Campo Marzio, the store at 172 Corso Umberto I store and the recently opened Piperno Alcorso department store at

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[119] Italian Government - Presidents Council - Jewish Goods Commission 2001, "Industrial and Commercial Assets", 326-328.

[120] Alcorso. *Claudio Alcorso interviewed by Roger Penny.* Session 2, 1994.

Piazza Fiume. As the stores collectively employed 279 staff, they were classified by the Fascists as 'Type B' companies (companies with a staff of more than 100 people). There was also Amilcare's holdings in 'anonymous societies' – Societá Anonima Tagliacozzi with a newly appointed Aryan board and premises in Via de Prefetti, of which Amilcare was the sole administrator; and Societá Anonima Proprietá Romana, a company that owned real estate.[121]

Jewish business owners like Amilcare had made a great show to the Fascists of 'selling' their companies to Aryans, but the authorities were not fooled.[122] They had received information in September 1938 that Alcorso intended selling his business to the Aryan Luciano Zingone, the owner of a competing department store, but police investigations could prove nothing. By May 1939 it appeared that Amilcare had in fact had sold his textile, fashion and retail businesses as a block to Zingone. Despite this, in October 1939 the Alcorso's businesses were placed under supervisory commissioner Michele Tanzini, National Councillor of Corporations and offered for sale the next year.

The successful bid of L.2,000,000 was from 177 of Alcorso's (presumably Aryan) employees, who had formed a limited company the called the Societá Anonima Tessuti e Confezioni Eleganti or TECOEL, which took possession in January 1941. There is evidence that this anonymous society may have been somehow remained affiliated with the Alcorsos. Testimony provided to the Australian military authorities by both Orlando and Claudio indicate that a Mr Storoni, who may have been associated with TECOEL, continued to

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[121] Italian Government - Presidents Council - Jewish Goods Commission 2001, "Industrial and Commercial Assets", 331.
Italian Government - Presidents Council - Jewish Goods Commission 2001, "Commercial Businesses and Industrial Concerns in Rome 1938-1945", 507.
Rome Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Crafts & Agriculture 2004, 30-31.
[122] Italian Government - Presidents Council - Jewish Goods Commission 2001, "Commercial Businesses and Industrial Concerns in Rome 1938-1945", 494.

manage the Alcorso's Italian business interests in their absence and was also instrumental in the restoration of the firm to the family in 1945.[123]

By the time the business was taken over by TECOEL, Amilcare and Niny were long gone - they had left Italy in March 1939, first joining Orlando who was studying in Switzerland and then travelling on to meet Claudio and Paolo in London. After Rome's liberation in 1943 Amilcare took immediate steps to have the expropriated businesses restored to him under property restitution laws.[124] There are few details about the operation of the stores after the war, although there is evidence that the business at 53 Piazza Fiume was trading under the name Piperno Alcorso during the Autumn/Winter season of 1949 -1950.[125] It is likely that Amilcare continued his association with the business that he had founded in some form or other up until 1952, when, according to The Mercury (Hobart) he left business interests in Europe and America to join his family in Tasmania.[126]

Business restitution was a complicated and bureaucratic process. An additional outrage suffered by Italian Jews whose businesses were confiscated was undertaken by L'istituzione dell 'Ente di Gestione e di Liquidazione Immobiliare' (EGELI) – the Italian authority responsible for the seized assets. EGELI charged management fees to the rightful owners of seized businesses that were payable at the time of their restitution. Some Jewish business owners evidently waited years for restitution or compensation, whilst paying these outrageous fees.[127]

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[123] National Archives of Australia, 1940-1954. This archive also contains a telegram addressed to the Alcorsos on May 31, 1945 advising that the Italian businesses had been restored to the family (314).

[124] Italian Government - Presidents Council - Jewish Goods Commission 2001, "Industrial and Commercial Assets", 335.

[125] A *Piperno Alcorso* postcard dated 1949-50 became available on EBay during August 2019.

[126] The Mercury, Hobart. 1952. "Italian Plans New Housing Centre." 26 September. Accessed January 21, 2011. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article27112094.

[127] Annamaria Columbo. n.d. "Capitolo 3: L'ENTE DI GESTIONE E LIQUIDAZIONE IMMOBILIARE (Chapter 3: The Management and Settlement Agency"), La spoliazione dei beni degli ebrei in Italia in seguito alle leggi razziali del 1938 e le relative restituzioni." *Morasha Portal*. Accessed June 23, 2018. http://www.morasha.it/tesi/clmb/clmb03.html.

Whilst in England, research undertaken by Claudio and Paolo revealed that Australia had the highest per capita consumption of printed dress fabrics, evidently because "…….it was summer all the time there!" Claudio was puzzled at the lack of an extensive printing industry in Australia and he made enquiries at the economic section of Australia House in London, where, he said, he "…. received no rational answer." Further research into Australian textile import statistics revealed that the cheaper end of the market was covered by the Japanese, whilst the better-quality prints were supplied by England and Europe ….

> …thus confirming the information I had gathered in Italy
> from industrialist friends. It was not possible to repeat
> successful designs: shipping time was too long. There would
> be considerable advantages for a local enterprise giving
> prompt service. Merchants and garment manufacturers
> would purchase initial small quantities and repeat the
> winners, just as they did in Europe and so minimise the risk
> of being left with unwanted stock. The more I worked on the
> project, the more it made sense.[128]

An added incentive for the family to come to Australia was the family that were already living in Melbourne. Claudio's maternal uncle Albert Coen, a businessman, moved to Melbourne on the eve of World War II to work for the subsidiary of the Argentinian agricultural company that had employed him in Italy. Fearing persecution as a Jew, he and his wife Flavia and their two sons had converted to Catholicism and changed their surname by deed poll to

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[128] Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say*, 55-56.

'Ceen', a name that would attract less attention that the obviously Jewish Coen.[129]

All of the members of the Alcorso family had an opportunity to reinvent themselves when they came to Australia. Trade sanctions imposed on Italy and the impending war meant that there was little chance that anyone would check the authenticity of any claims that they made about themselves when they arrived. Articles began appearing the press in Sydney about the new textile printing factory that was to be established. According to the interview that Amilcare gave to The Sun in 1940, he was a "famous Italian material designer" who had established his business in a small room in Milan in about 1910, growing it to a business empire.[130]

> He is regarded as an uncanny prophet concerning designs that which will have the greatest attraction for women.
>
> In fact, because of his remarkable predictions of "best sellers," the famous frock designers, Chanel, Molyneux, Schiaparelli, Patou, Lelong and others, christened him "The Wizard of Fashion."
>
> Italy has honored him for his artistry, bestowing on him the title of "Commendateur"— an award of the Italian Crown.[131]

According to the article, Amilcare saw Silk & Textile Printers - the new family business established in 1939 in Sydney - as his business - not a venture for Claudio and Orlando. It was Amilcare's intention to live in Australia for nine months each year and spend three months abroad. He went on to speak of his

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[129] State Library of NSW. 1923-1998. "MLMSS 6735, Ceen Family Papers 1923-1998."
  Administrative/Biographical History. Accessed December 30, 2017. http://archival.sl.nsw.gov.au.
[130] Ley 1940.
[131] Ibid.

great friendship with Greta Garbo, whom he knew well after making her acquaintance at the Ritz café in Paris. Amilcare was clearly in his element with the Australian press, positioning himself as the cosmopolitan European industrialist doing Australia a favour with his presence. However, his presence in Australia became short-lived due to the outbreak of World War II.

As the result of their close association with the Mussolinis, Claudio, Orlando and Paolo were arrested on 4 July 1940 by the Australian authorities as fifth columnists and interned as enemy aliens. By this date, Amilcare and Niny had already boarded a ship bound for New York, luckily escaping the ignominy of internship. Judaism was far more mainstream in America and there was an awareness of refugees leaving Europe amongst the majority of the educated classes, even though this was not mentioned in the popular press. So there was no threat of internment for Amilcare and Niny, even after the bombing of Pearl Harbour in 1941 and the entry of the United States into the war.

Whilst in New York, Amilcare set himself up as a textile consultant, with an impressive office in the Rockefeller Centre, where samples of STP's Modernage artist-designed textile collection would later be displayed at the Australian Trade Commission's Display Centre in 1948. Whilst in New York, Amilcare actively corresponded with Eric Hearnshaw, an accountant hired by the Alcorsos, who managed STP throughout the war years (see Chapter 4). He continued acting on Amilcare's instructions when Claudio, after his release from detention, took an extended leave of absence to recover his well-being.

Though Claudio held the position of managing director of STP, Amilcare continued to take an active interest as chairman of the board. He was instrumental in the building of the Alcorso Village, subsidised housing for British migrants who relocated to Hobart from the affiliated Carrington & Dewhurst mills in Lancashire. The father and son certainly admired each other and worked well as a team, as can be seen in Figure 3.32, where Amilcare's

confidence and exuberance is evident in his bow tie, smiling face and confident stance, whilst his son looks happy and comfortable about taking the family's textile business into the future.

Figure 3.32 Claudio Alcorso and his father Amilcare at Moorilla, n.d.[132]

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[132] Courtesy of Caroline Alcorso, used with permission.

4 THE ALCORSOS IN AUSTRALIA

4.1 Australian printed textiles of the 1930s

Michael Lech, curator at Sydney Living Museums contends that there was no commercial screen-printing of textiles undertaken in Australia before the 1930s.[1] According to Lech, any textile surface decoration that did occur prior to this period was undertaken by studio-based artists and designers by hand or using stencils, wood and lino blocks.

In some cases, artists would work on commissions for specified patterns for wrapping paper, wallpaper and textiles received directly from retailers, clothing manufacturers, interior designers and architects within their business or social networks. In other cases, pattern designs were self-initiated and sold to commercial clients such as textile converters and wholesalers like Charles Parsons, who had fabrics printed in Japan.[2] Otherwise they were sold through design agencies or other intermediaries to factories specialising in stencil and block printing, such as Gilkes in Sydney (refer section 4.1.3).[3]

The following is a brief overview of artists and designers working in textile print and pattern design in the 1930s in Australia. The intent of this inclusion is to provide background into the ecology of printed textile culture encountered by the Alcorsos on their arrival in Australia in 1939 and to inform subsequent discussion of Australian artists and designers involved in the

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[1] Michael Lech. 2005. "The Gilkes Family, Marion Best Fabrics and Early Fabric Printing in Australia." *Australiana*, August: 6-11.

[2] Phil Jarratt. 1990. *The Charles Parsons Story 1915-1990.* Sydney: Charles Parsons & Company, 38-41.

[3] Sydney Ure Smith, Sydney-based artist, publisher and president of *The Society of Artists* played an important role as an intermediary between clients and artists by recommending specific artists for advertising and illustration work. It was Ure Smith who referred Claudio Alcorso to the artists who eventually worked on the *Modernage* collection of 1946-47, as discussed in Chapter 5. Nancy Underhill's biography *Making Australian Art 1916-49: Sydney Ure Smith Patron & Publisher* (Oxford University Press Australia, 1991) is the primary source of information on his agency as a champion of Australian artists.

development of STP's pivotal Modernage collection in 1946-1947 (discussed further in Chapter 5: Rethinking Modernage).

4.1.1   Michael O'Connell

English textile print designer Michael O'Connell (1898-1976) moved to Melbourne in 1920 with Ella Moody, whom he married in 1931. O'Connell began producing lino-printed textiles in 1929, whilst he taught at Melbourne Technical College (now RMIT). His work influenced a number of textile designers including Frances Durham and Frances Burke.[4] At the time of O'Connell's arrival, screen-printing had not yet been introduced in Australia for either commercial or artisanal textile printing. O'Connell's earliest printed textiles from this period are block-printed.

In O'Connell's 1931 print design 'Pan with Pots' (Figure 4.1), the viewer observes fashionable flappers interspersed with silhouettes of classic Graeco-Roman vases and birds in flight. In between there are repeated motifs of simplified flowers and foliage branches, interspersed with fleur-de-lis. This design involved printing at least four colours using a range of carved blocks, a difficult task for even the most skilled block printer.

From around 1930 O'Connell produced lino-blocked fabric friezes that could be hung directly on walls as artworks, used as furnishings or joined together to make curtains. Given the intensive labour that would be required to hand block a multi-coloured design similar to 'Pan with Pots', it is unsurprising that O'Connell's textile prints were, in the words of John McPhee "not inexpensive".[5]   O'Connell's work was sold in department stores, in

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[4]   Harriet Edquist. 2011. "Michael O'Connell (1898-1976) Pioneer of Australian Printed Textile Design." *World of Antiques and Art*, Issue 81: 94-97.
O'Connell, Michael. 2006. "Some Observations on Fabric Design 1932." In *Modernism and Australia: Documents on Art, Design and Architecture*, by Ann Stephen, Andrew McNamara and Philip Goad, 170-172. Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 172.

[5]   John McPhee. 1982. *Australian Decorative Arts in the Australian National Gallery*. Canberra: Australian National Gallery, 70.

Cynthia Reed's design shop and in the Primrose Pottery Shop in Little Collins Street in Melbourne.

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http://www.weekendnotes.com/images/panwithpotsngaweb1.jpg
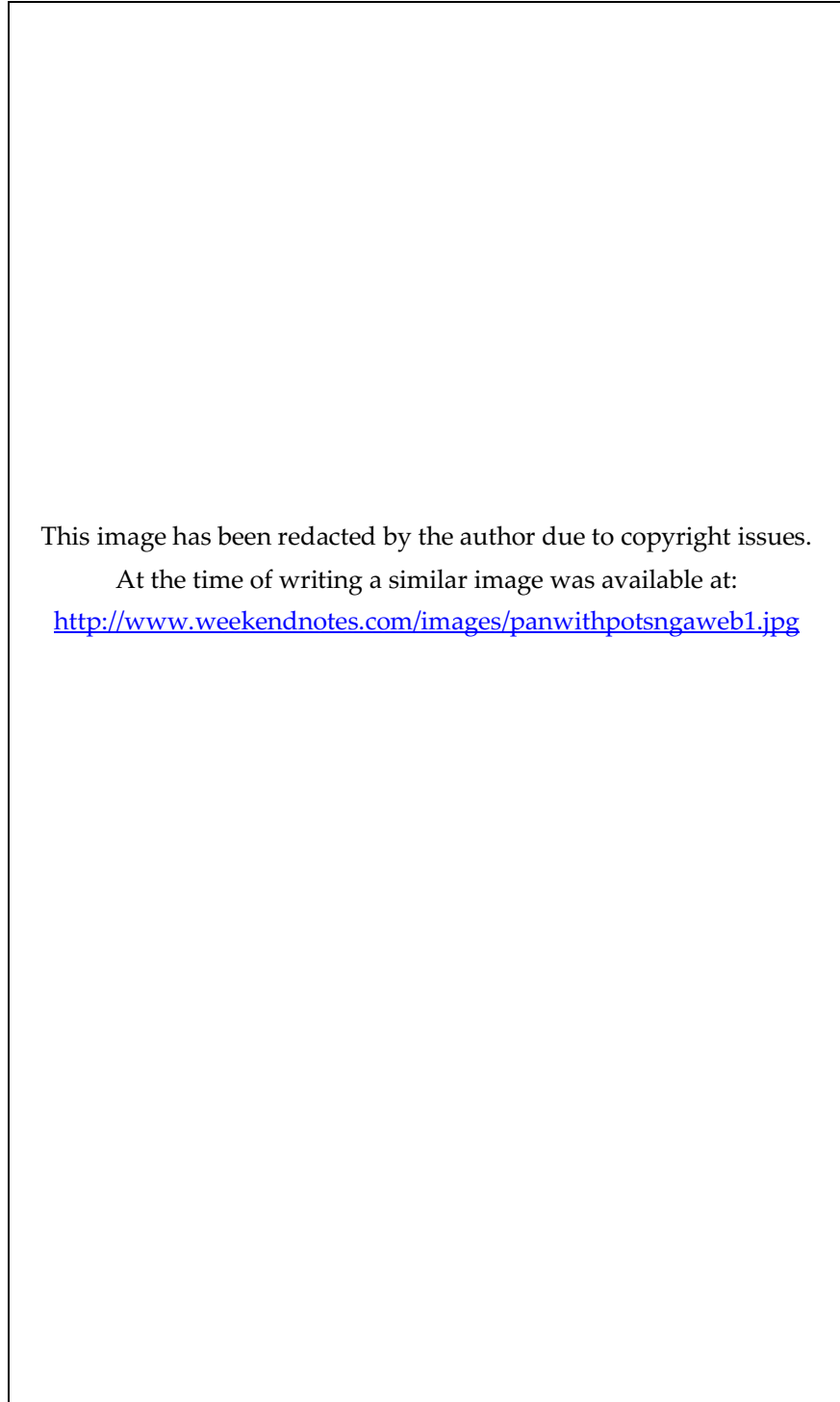
Figure 4.1 Michael O'Connell 'Pan with Pots', 1931, lino-printed linen.[6]

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[6] Edquist 2011, 94.

By 1934, he was creating stylised print motifs based on Australian fauna and flora as well as patterns derived from Aboriginal and Maori cultures, using colour palettes drawn from nature. Michael O'Connell and his wife returned to England in 1937 where he continued to hand-block print art textiles, also designing commercial prints for Harrods and Edinburgh Weavers in 1938 and for Heals during the 1940s and 1950s. His later practice mostly used batik and other methods of resist dyeing to create surface interest and pattern diversity.[7] In 1951 he contributed several highly regarded wall hangings for the Country Pavilion of the Festival of Britain. O'Connell continued to produce art textiles using silkscreen printing and wax resist techniques until his death in 1976.[8] Michael O'Connell was clearly passionate about all aspects of textile design, believing that it was more suited to expressing modernity than visual art, saying:

> Textile decoration is the most important art apart from the movies, in the world today. Other arts, such as painting and ceramics, have had their golden age in the past. Now it is the turn of textiles.[9]

4.1.2   Margo Lewers

Margo Lewers (1908-1978) and her brother Carl Plate (1909-1977) established (and at different periods individually managed and operated) the Notanda Gallery & Bookshop in Rowe Street Sydney, selling art books and high-quality colour art reproductions from Australia, Europe and America. Carl Plate had an ongoing practice as an abstract painter and collage artist and was instrumental in sourcing reproductions and the work of local artists for

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[7]   Grace Cochrane. 1992. *The Crafts Movement in Australia: A History.* Kensington, NSW: New South Wales University Press, 50.
[8]   Edquist 2011, 97.
[9]   Ibid, 96.

exhibition during the periods that he managed Notanda.[10] Notanda exhibited the work of Australian modernist artists and it was here that textile designers Avis Higgs and Mary Curtis would encounter Desiderius Orban and enquire about the possibility of him providing art lessons to them and other staff at the STP factory, setting in place a chain of events that ultimately led to production of the Modernage collection of 1946-47 (see also section 4.3).[11]

Notanda also sold textiles designed and hand block-printed by Margo Lewers.[12] She had learned block printing at the Central School of Art in London in the early 1930s, where she met Barbara Hepworth, Ben Nicholson and Herbert Read and was also exposed to German textile design of the 1920s and 1930s.[13] Printed linen textiles and painted pottery by Lewers were exhibited at the Argosy Gallery in Sydney in June 1935, the opening of which was reported by the Sydney Morning Herald. The paper reported that Lewers'…"Designs varied from conventionalised elephants, armadillos, turtles, totem-poles, pigs, cactus and geometrical figures, to one very striking example of modern decoration."[14]

Lewers' work 'Elephant Form' (Figure 4.2) exhibited at the Argosy, is a monotone print where the form of the elephant has been reduced to its simplest and most graphic form, surrounded by scythe shaped arcs and parallel curved lines. Though somewhat charming in its naiveté, the print lacks the sophistication and technical proficiency of Michael O'Connell's block-prints, with the variation in motif spacing indication that the printing registration may have been undertaken 'by eye' rather than by measurement.

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[10] Patricia Anderson. 2005. *Art + Australia: Debates, Dollars & Delusions* . Sydney: Pandora Press, 164.

[11] Desiderius Orban. 1947. "How it happened." In *A New Approach to Textile Designing*, by Claudio Alcorso, 34-36. Sydney: Ure Smith Publications, 34–36.

[12] Lech 2005.

[13] Cochrane 1992, 176.

[14] The Sydney Morning Herald. 1935. "Handprinted. Exhibition of Textiles: Margot Lewers' Work." 13 June. Accessed May 18, 2014. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article17202318.

Lewers continued to work in textiles throughout her career, though not always in print design. Later in her career she produced tapestries and a number of stunning large hand dyed and painted silk wall hangings. Both Margot Lewers and her brother Carl Plate would later contribute designs for Claudio Alcorso's Modernage textile collection of 1946-47.

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At the time of writing the image was available at:
http://artquill.blogspot.com/2011/04/margo-lewers-artcloth-works-art-review.html.
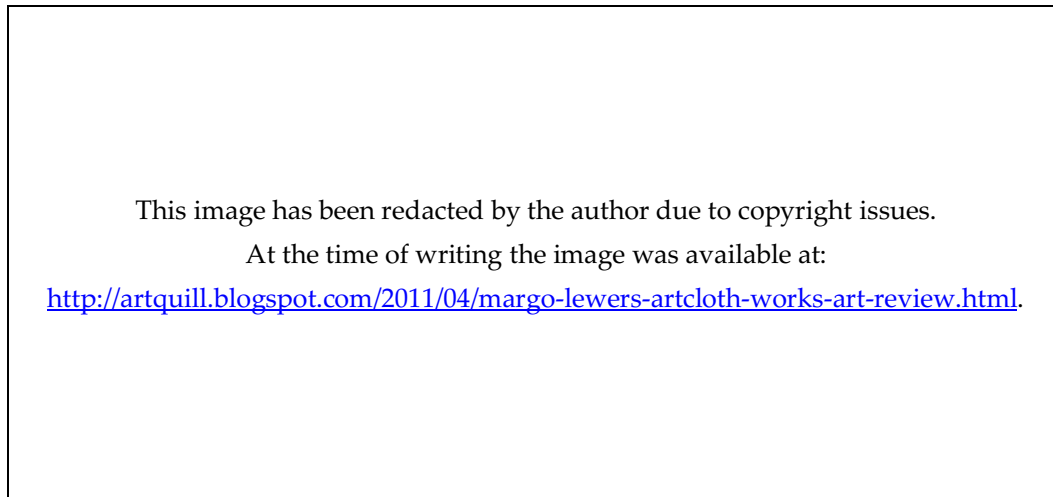
Figure 4.2 Margo Lewers lino-block printed design 'Elephant Form', 1935.[15]

4.1.3 Gilkes Bros, RM Hoskins and Impression Textiles

Gilkes Brothers and the affiliated business RM Hoskins Pty Ltd were the only silkscreen printers in Sydney when the Alcorso family arrived in 1939. Arthur Gilkes had previously used stencils and wood-blocks to print fabrics and wallpapers until well into the 1930s, when his sons Harry and Alan tried unsuccessfully to convince their father to adopt the new screen-printing technology being used overseas. Reluctantly, the two sons left the family business to begin their own screen-printing company Gilkes Bros in 1933 based in Newtown, with Alan as chemist and Harry as manager. Richard Malcolm Hopkins was invited to invest capital into the new firm, which then traded as Gilkes Bros & RM Hoskins from 1934 until 1937, when the company went into liquidation. Despite the liquidation, the business traded on,

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[15] Marie-Therese Wisniowski. 2011. "Margo Lewers' Art Cloth Works." *Artquill.* April. Accessed June 29, 2018. http://artquill.blogspot.com/2011/04/margo-lewers-artcloth-works-art-review.html.

presumably due to its uniqueness and a possible backlog of printing orders that could not be placed elsewhere. The partnership with Hoskins was ultimately severed and Alan and Harry Gilkes re-joined their father Arthur's business, which then traded as Gilkes & Company Pty Ltd in Missenden Road, Camperdown. RM Hoskins continued printing from the former joint-business' location in Newtown.[16]

Gilkes & Company Pty Ltd printed textiles for clothing and accessories, later branching out into furnishing fabrics. Their in-house designs, based on best-sellers from overseas, were developed by Alan and Harry's sister Edith and sold directly to retailers including Myer Emporium and Foy & Gibson in Melbourne, McDonnell & East and Finney Isles & Company in Brisbane and Anthony Hordern & Sons in Sydney. Gilkes & Company Pty Ltd also undertook commission printing during the early 1940s for clients who produced their own designs.[17] Figure 4.3, taken in about 1940, shows two women hand-printing fabric, with a series of framed textile artwork hanging behind them. By this time many male workers had left factory jobs to enlist in the army, therefore women became more involved in printing production. One of Gilkes clients at the time was interior designer Marion Hall Best, who commissioned Australian artists to develop designs for her business Marion Best Fabrics (see section 4.1.5).[18]

Both Gilkes & Co. Pty Ltd and RM Hoskins Pty Ltd would later become founding members of The Textile Printer's Association of NSW, formed in 1948 with Harry Gilkes as president. Other members of the association included the Alcorso's Silk & Textile Printers; Tennyson Textile Mills Pty Ltd (founded by ex-STP adviser Emery John Yass and later to become its greatest

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[16] Lech 2005, 6-11.
[17] Ibid, 10.
[18] Ibid, 6-11.

rival)[19]; Ideal Fabrics, Annan Fabrics Ltd, Impression Textiles Pty Ltd and Colorset Printed Fabrics (established by Avis Higgs and Ed Malone after they left STP in 1947).[20]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing the image was available at:
https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/stories/marion-best-fabrics-artist-designed-textiles.
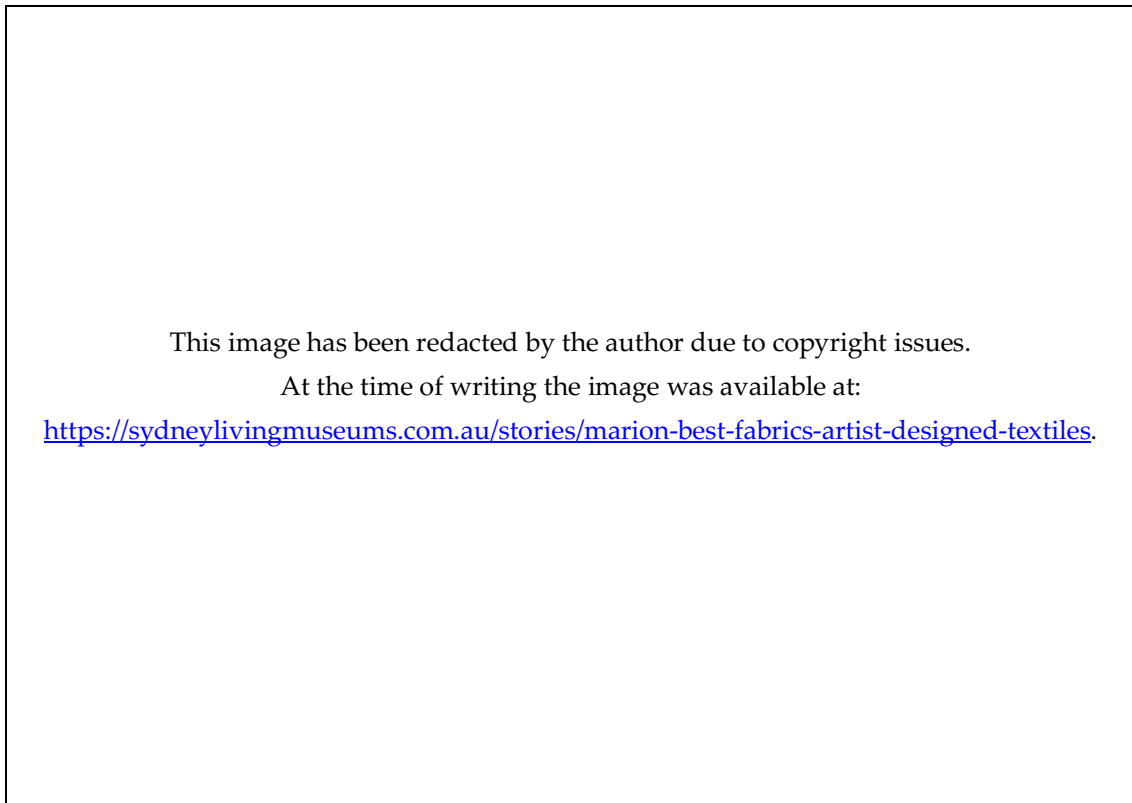
Figure 4.3 Women screen-printers at Gilkes & Company Pty Ltd, c1940.[21]

After the factory burnt to the ground in the late 1940s, Gilkes amalgamated with Impression Textiles Ltd (Figure 4.4), which used both screen and roller printing technologies at their modern factory at St Marys. After World war II, competition from re-established printing factories in Japan and new Australian businesses like STP eventually made Impression Textiles unviable. Their assets were later purchased by Prestige Ltd, who relocated the plant and

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[19] Smith's Weekly. 1949. "Artists Make Gay Colored Prints." 31 December. Accessed October 18, 2018. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page25458033.

[20] Textile Journal of Australia. 1948. "Textile Printers' Association of N.S.W." 20 April (VIC : Wilkes & Co Pty Ltd, 1926-1970) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 132.

[21] Sydney Living Museums. c1940. "Women screen-printing at Gilkes & Co." Accessed April 24, 2018. https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/stories/marion-best-fabrics-artist-designed-textiles.

equipment to their Melbourne factory, closing the St Mary's operation in 1949.[22]

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At the time of writing the image was available at:
http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/stories/max-dupains-images-penrith-1948.
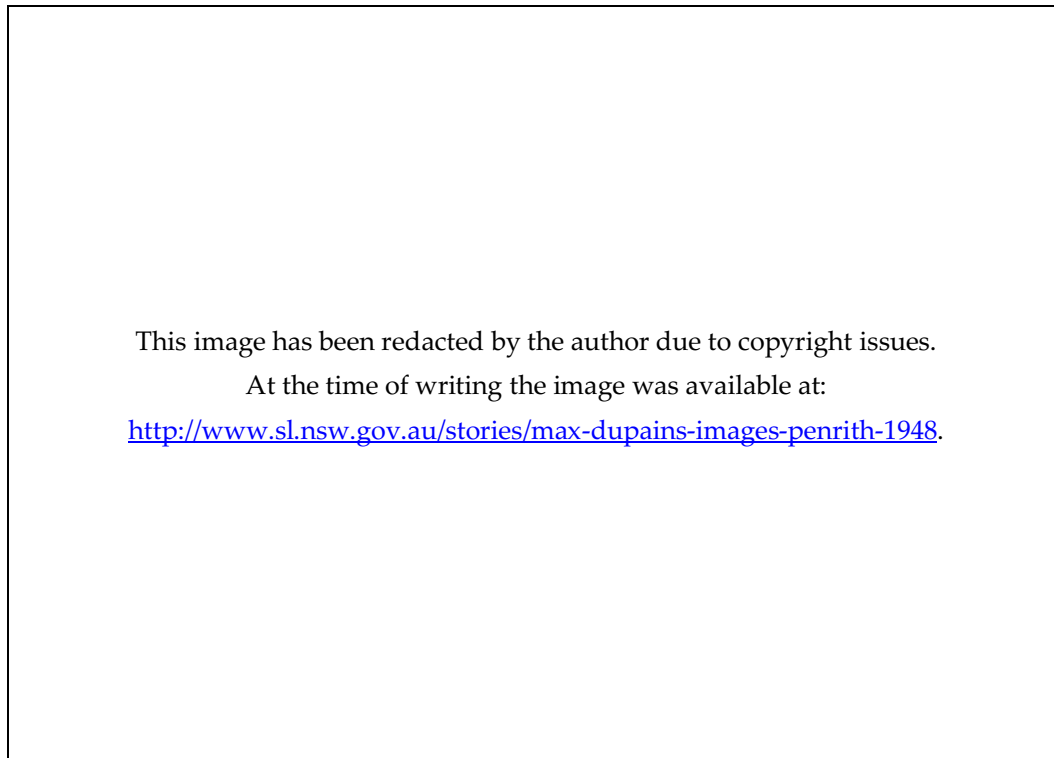
Figure 4.4 Max Dupain photograph of printing at Impression Textiles, St Marys, 1948.[23]

4.1.4   Frances Burke

Burway Prints was established in Melbourne in 1937 by Frances Burke (1907-1994) and Maurice Holloway, using silkscreen printing technologies.[24] Burke is considered the foremost designer of screen-printed textiles in Melbourne during the 1930s. She had attended The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, The National Gallery School and The George Bell School and had met Morris Holloway during her training. In 1942 Holloway established Textile Converters which continued to print Burke's designs (presumably undertaking commission printing for others as well), allowing Burke to

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[22] Lech 2005, 10.

[23] State Library of NSW. 1948. "Printing fabric at Impression Textiles, St Marys." *Max Dupain's Images of Penrith*. Accessed April 12, 2018. http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/stories/max-dupains-images-penrith-1948.

[24] Lech 2005, 6-11.

concentrate solely on designing for her re-named business 'Frances Burke Fabrics'.[25]

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At the time of writing a similar image was available at:
https://content.ngv.vic.gov.au/col-images/api/Db103781/xxl
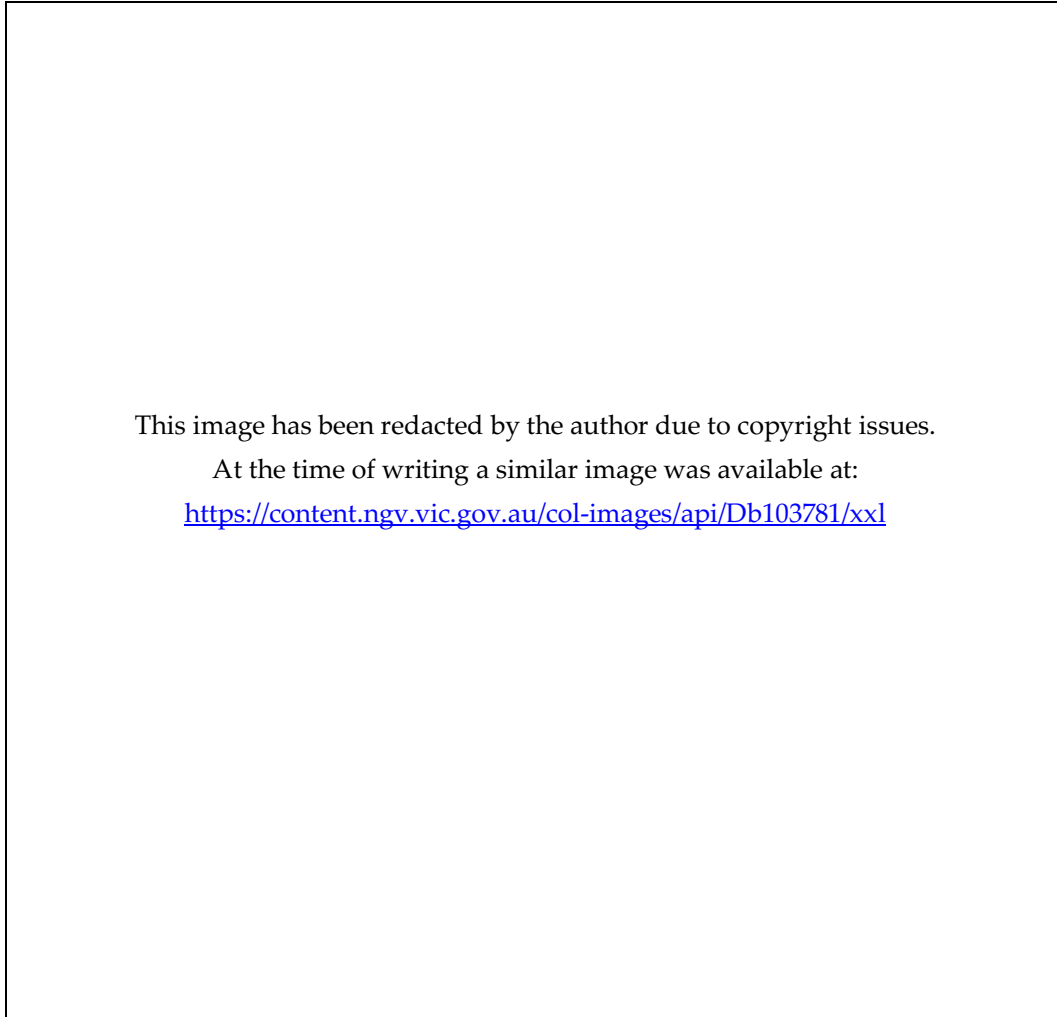
Figure 4.5 Frances Burke Fabrics 'Rangga', 1941, screen-printed cotton.[26]

According to an article in The Argus in 1945, Burke decided early that she wanted to:

> ……. use her talents in such a way that they could play a part
> in the every-day life of the community rather than in the
> limited sphere of the art world. She believed culture in

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[25] McPhee 1982, 86.

[26] Frances Burke. 1941, *Rangga.* 125cm wide, screen-printed cotton. Collection of the Australian National Gallery, Canberra. Cochrane 1992, Colour Plate 1.

>Australia was essentially European when this country should
>
>develop a culture of its own. Art, she thought, should be for
>
>all the people and it was an artist's duty to bring this about.[27]

At this time Burke had a staff of eight women working for her in her Little Bourke Street studio and had opened her own retail outlet called 'Good Design' in Hardware Street, Melbourne. [28] She was one of the founding members of the Society of Designers for Industry (now known as the Design Institute of Australia or DIA) in 1947, along with furniture designer Grant Featherstone and other iconic Australian designers.[29] Networks of intermediaries within the society facilitated professional interchanges between architects, artists, designers and patrons, supporting all kinds of creative commissions and commercial relationships between Burke and local manufacturers and retailers.

Burke's strongly modernist designs were used extensively in domestic, commercial and institutional interiors. Her design 'Rangga' seen in Figure 4.5 is a traditional half-drop repeat pattern constructed from stylised 'Aboriginal' motifs in combinations of red-brown, black and yellow ochre on a cream, cotton base-cloth. The design was commissioned by architect Roy Grounds in 1941 for a block of flats in Toorak, Melbourne. During the early war years visual statements of national Australian pride manifested in designs like these. Cultural appropriation of First Nation motifs is now rightly acknowledged as inappropriate, due to the dissection and re-arrangement of important iconography according to western aesthetic principles and the violation of copyright and intellectual property of Aboriginal peoples.

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[27] The Argus. 1945. "Woman Artist Prints Textiles By Hand." 17 January. Accessed September 25, 2014. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article1106262.

[28] Ibid.

[29] RMIT. "Design Archives Update (0109)." Accessed April 3, 2011. http://www.rmit.edu.au/ad/designarchives.

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https://d3ecqbn6etsqar.cloudfront.net/dMKlQt77ayLfAq76w0hqWPKuXAo=/372x0/566877.jpg
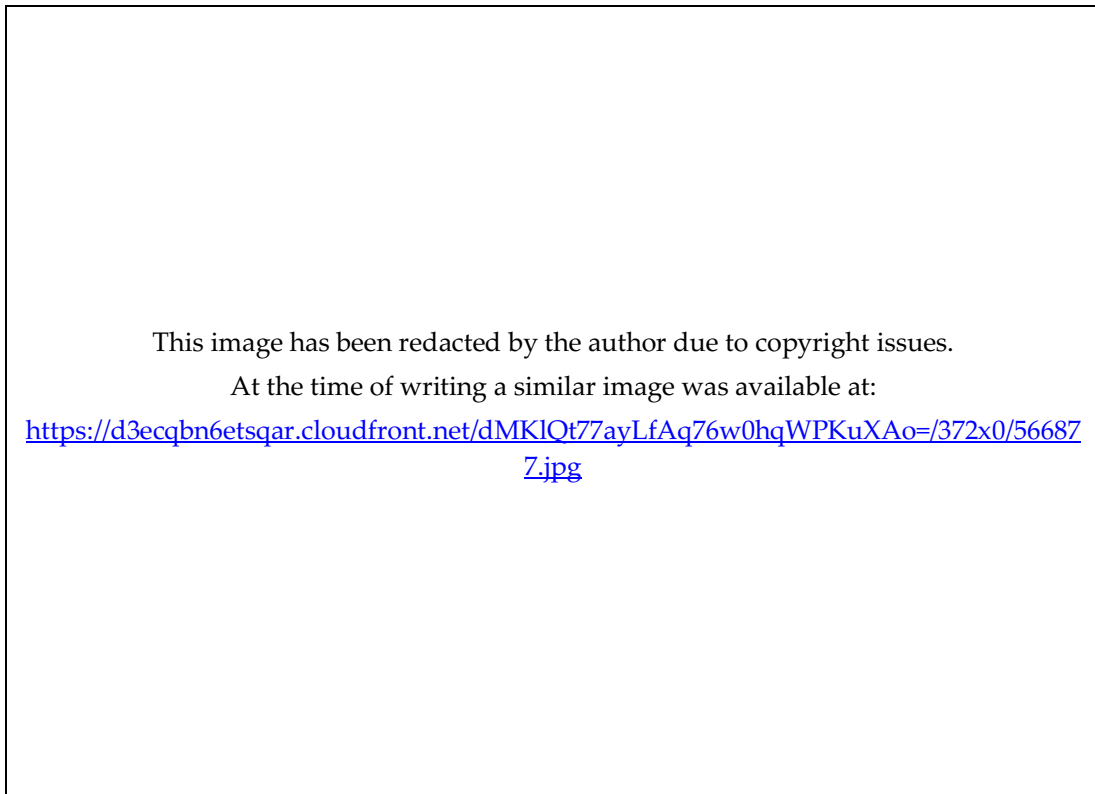
Figure 4.6 Frances Burke Fabrics 'Sea Piece', 1951, screen-printed cotton.[30]

Burke's designs of the 1950s are elegantly simple and are often printed in monochromatic colour. 'Sea Piece' (Figure 4.8) has a repeating pattern of floating white sponges, starfish and jellyfish against a solid royal blue background. This print would have been perfect for sunroom curtains, cushions and upholstery, evoking the feeling of summer holidays beside the sea. Burke re-used simple design motifs to create companion prints to coordinate with her more complex graphic images. The print seen on the curtain in Figure 4.7 using the single visual element of the wavy line in a constant repeat, creating an all-over rhythm and harmony, emulating ocean waves and enabling it to be used as a coordinating pattern with Sea Piece. The bold green and white contrasts with the red of the chaise longue and ceiling.

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[30] Frances Burke. 1951. *Sea Piece*. 121.5cm wide, screen-printed cotton. Collection of the National Gallery of Australia. Judith O'Callaghan. 1993. *The Australian Dream: Design of the Fifties.* Sydney: Powerhouse Publishing, 176.

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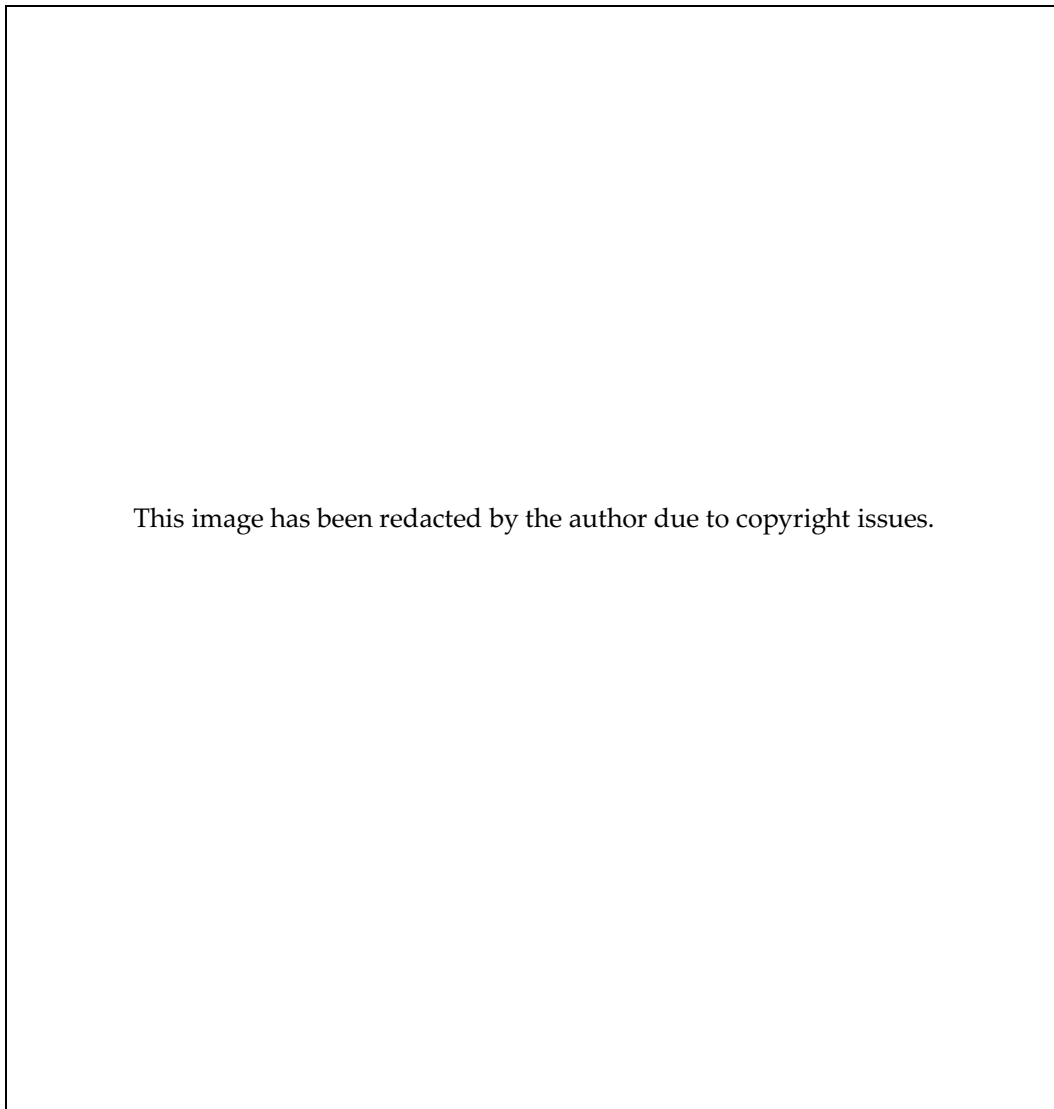
Figure 4.7 An interior design scheme incorporating Frances Burke Fabrics, 1950.[31]

4.1.5 Marion Hall Best

Marion Hall Best (1905-1988) is widely regarded as one of the pioneers of modernist interior design in Australia and according to Michael Lech, was the first designer to commission textile designs from Australian artists. She had studied art under Phyllis Shillito at the National Art School and then established a highly successful interior design practice in Sydney during the

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[31] The Australian Home Beautiful. 1950. "Draw curtains of blue and white heavy cotton." December, Sydney, *Caroline Simpson Library*, Sydney Living Museums: 43.

1930s, commissioning artists and designers to provide prints and objects that augmented her spatial and decoration design schemes.

World War II severely restricted the importation of furnishing textiles. During this period Best used the best quality Australian-made fabrics she could obtain, commissioning artists to design exclusive patterns that were printed by Gilkes & Company Pty Ltd.[32] In 1940 she designed the interiors of 54 low-cost studio flats for architect Emil Sodersten at 7 Elizabeth Street Sydney, using screen-printed fabrics from Frances Burke, together with designs that she had commissioned.

One of the artists designing for Best was her sister Dora Sweetapple, whose design 'Hibiscus' (Figure 4.8) was used for curtains and upholstery. This design illustrates how artists applied knowledge of colour and composition to create pattern repeats. The design is based on a classic still life arrangement of hibiscus in an elaborate vase, sitting on a chequered tablecloth. Through a blue venetian blind, we see a yacht speeding across water, emulating a bird in flight. Sweetapple has reduced the elements of the still life to their cleanest and most simplified forms, using the background to add variety and interest to what could otherwise be a traditional floral print. She uses five muted bright colours on a cream linen base-cloth to provide a strong graphic print eminently suitable for use curtains and soft furnishings.

Best commissioned Ernest and Mollie Quick, members of The Society of Arts and Crafts of NSW, to screen-print nursery designs for The Lady Gowrie Kindergarten in Erskineville in 1940. She also commissioned further designs from Dora Sweetapple, Thea Proctor and Ailsa Allen for a Red Cross fundraising exhibition titled 'An Englishman's Home 1700-1941', held at David Jones Gallery in May 1941.

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[32] Lech 2005, 7.

Figure 4.8 Dora Sweetapple for Marion Best Fabrics 'Hibiscus', c1941, screen-printed linen.[33]

In 1942 designs by Elaine Haxton, Isabel Anderson Stuart, Anne Gillmore Rees and Amie Kingston for Marion Best Fabrics were featured in the October issue of British journal 'The Studio', which was wholly dedicated to Australia in Art (Figure 4.9). The fabrics selected had been used in the Rachel Forster Hospital

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[33] Dora Sweetapple. c1941. *Hibiscus.* The Museum of Sydney, Sydney Living Museums, Sydney, Author's photograph, 17 September 2017.

in Redfern, Sydney and the Berrida Convalescent Home in Bowral.[34] The Amy Kingston design 'Leaves' (Figure 4.10) is a large-scale botanical print that is far more dramatic in scale than it appears in the black and white image from The Studio below.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
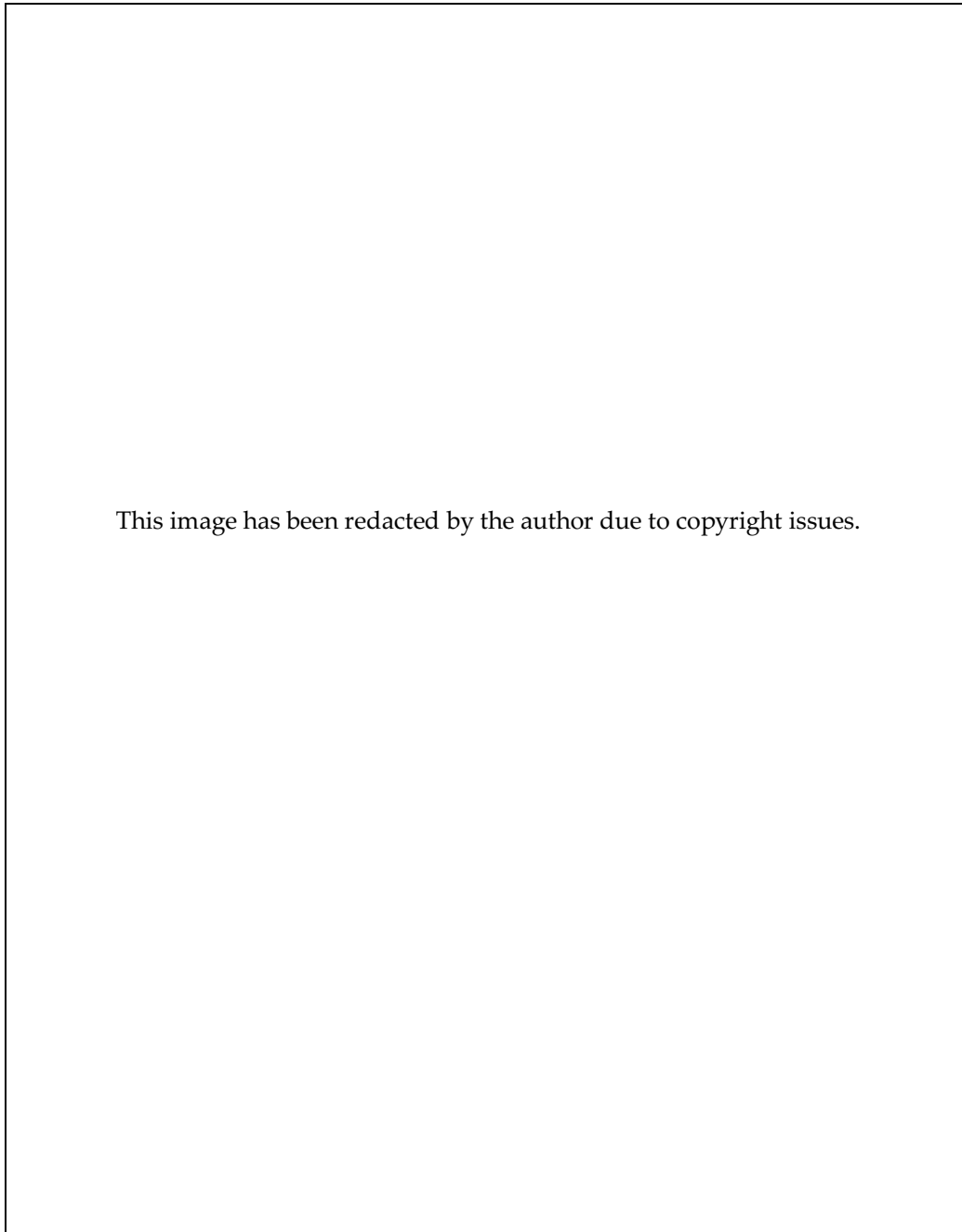
Figure 4.9 Editorial on Marion Hall Best and Frances Burke in 'The Studio', October 1942.[35]

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[34] Lech 2005, 8.
[35] G Holme. 1942. "Australian Fabrics." *The Studio*, October, Vol 124, no. 595: 140.

The design works cleverly within wartime constraints, utilising only three colours and widely spacing individual motifs to minimise ink usage - a by-product of chemical rationing that makes good use of positive and negative space. Large elongated yellow monsterio leaves are placed in an irregular diagonal pattern, with fronds of red cross-hatched branches and leaves mirrored in an opposing diagonal pattern, balancing the composition. The diagonal rhythms are interrupted by strategically placed black loops that add an effective contrast.

Figure 4.10 Amy Kingston for Marion Best Fabrics 'Leaves', c1942, screen-printed cotton. [36]

The editorial in The Studio went some way toward addressing the cultural cringe prevalent in Australia at the time. This refers to a perception held by some Australians that local ideas, music, art, design and other cultural products are inferior or second-rate, when compared to those imported from Britain, Europe or the United States of America. However, when an Australian concept or product becomes popular in overseas markets, it becomes validated – becoming an exemplar of Australian innovation and a source of national

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[36] Amy Kingston. c1942. *Leaves.* Museum of Sydney, Sydney Living Museums, Sydney, Author's photograph, 17 September 2017.

pride. The validation provided by The Studio contributed to both Marion Hall Best and Frances Burke's stature in modern Australian textile design.

Marion Best Fabrics continued to produce textiles for her own interior design schemes and for sale in her retail store in Queen St, Woollahra during the 1940s. In July 1946, around the time that Claudio Alcorso launched the trial Modernage collection, Best's latest textile collection featuring designs by Douglas Annand, Elaine Haxton, Amie Kingston and Alice Danciger were advertised in Sydney Ure Smith's publication 'Australia: National Journal'.[37]

Figure 4.11 Douglas Annand for Marion Best Fabrics 'Sea Maidens', c1945, screen-printed cotton.[38]

The advertisement featured Douglas Annand's 'Sea Maidens' (Figure 4.11), a complex design of three colours with a balanced composition of small and

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[37] Michael Lech. n.d. "Marion Best Fabrics: Artist Designed Textiles." *Sydney Living Museums.* Accessed April 24, 2018. https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/stories/marion-best-fabrics-artist-designed-textiles.

[38] Douglas Annand. c1945. *Sea Maidens.* The Museum of Sydney, Sydney, Author's photograph, 17 September 2017.

large sea nymphs arranged in repeating curvilinear arcs. The addition of red lines over solid, light grey bodies emphasises the maiden's legs as they swim, their hands held gracefully above their heads. The smaller red figures mimic trapeze artists caught mid-air, surrounded by textured seaweed and sponges. His commercial training and knowledge of pattern repeat is evident in this design. By 1946 Douglas Annand was an accomplished commercial artist and designer, having produced a number of covers for Sydney Ure Smith's 'The Home' and posters for major events such as the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Annand designed textiles for a number of producers, including Claudio Alcorso's initial Modernage collection in 1946. He would later win first prize in the inaugural Leroy-Alcorso Signature Prints competition in 1954 (refer Chapter 6: STP in the Post-War Boom).

Marion Best Fabrics ended abruptly when Gilkes & Company's factory in Missenden Road burnt to the ground, resulting in a loss of all of her artwork and screens.[39] Presumably the premises were under-insured, as neither the Gilkes nor Best had the finances to start again.[40] Best continued to purchase from Frances Burke Textiles and also bought designs from Alcorso's Modernage collection. She also began importing textiles from Europe from around 1949 and was one of the first to introduce prints by Marimekko of Finland into Australia, using their designs extensively in interior design schemes and retailing them in her store in Woollahra, Sydney.

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[39] Lech, *Marion Best Fabrics: Artist Designed Textiles* n.d.

[40] As previously mentioned, this fire prompted Gilkes to merge their business with Impression Textiles at St Marys.

4.1.6 Annan Fabrics

Annan Fabrics was established in Sydney in 1941 by Alexandra 'Nance' Mackenzie (1912-) and Anne Outlaw (n.d.).[41] They established their print-works in a garage at Mosman and produced mainly furnishing textiles based on themes from Aboriginal iconography and nature. Mackenzie had studied art at East Sydney Technical College, whilst Outlaw had acquired organisational abilities as secretary to David Lloyd George, British Chancellor of the Exchequer during World War I. They initially ran their business as a two-person operation under wartime rationing conditions.

Images taken by 'Pix Magazine' in 1940 (Figures 4.14 and 4.15) show the operation to be very hands-on and it is unsurprising that the two-person business had capacity to print only 36 metres or one piece of fabric per day. The top image shows Nance Mackenzie and Anne Outlaw 'printing', a shot clearly set up for the camera as no ink can be seen under the squeegee. Neither are there any registration stops on the printing table, indicating again that the image was set up. The second image showing the manual finishing processes used by the pair indicate that they were 'making do' with what equipment they could obtain and afford, working valiantly to provide much needed variety in furnishing prints through the war years. Despite evidence of a certain naiveté in production practices, the prints produced by Mackenzie and Outlaw were well designed and printed, with excellent composition and use of colour and their work was quickly taken up by interior designers and architects who were starved of variety.

Whilst their business was not of a sufficient size to be regarded as serious competitor to large printing firms like Gilkes or STP, they achieved a measure of commercial success with their beautiful interpretations of banana leaves, strelitzia and other native flora.

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[41] Lech 2005, 7–8.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing this image was available at:

http://mosmanartgallery.org.au/blog/the-annan-fabrics-story-continues-to-unfold
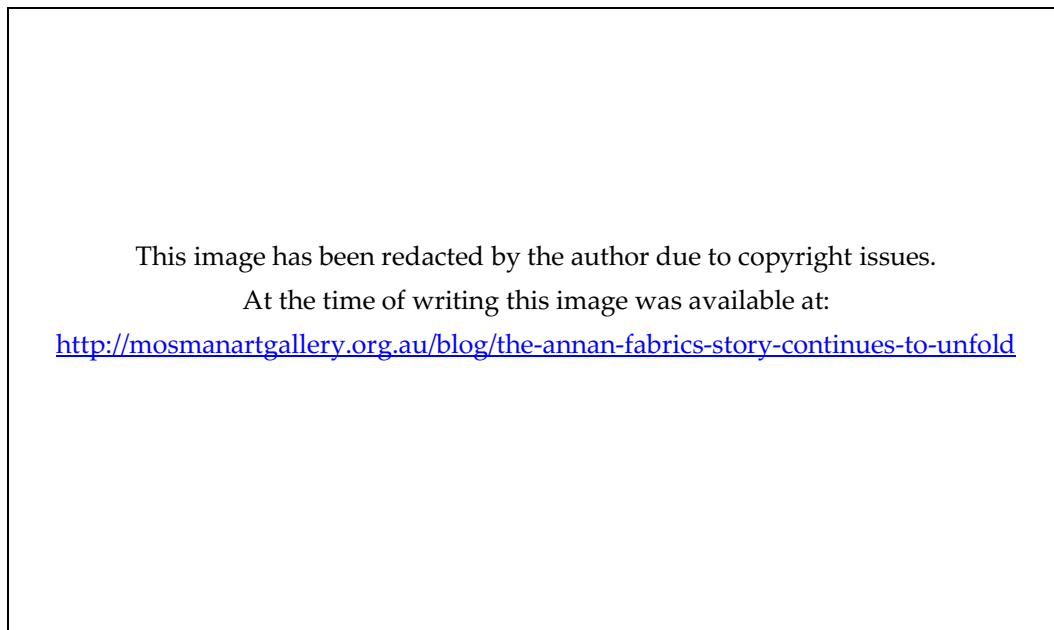
Figure 4.12 Nance Mackenzie and Anne Outlaw of Annan Fabrics pretending to print fabric, c1940.[42]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing this image was available at:

http://mosmanartgallery.org.au/blog/the-annan-fabrics-story-continues-to-unfold
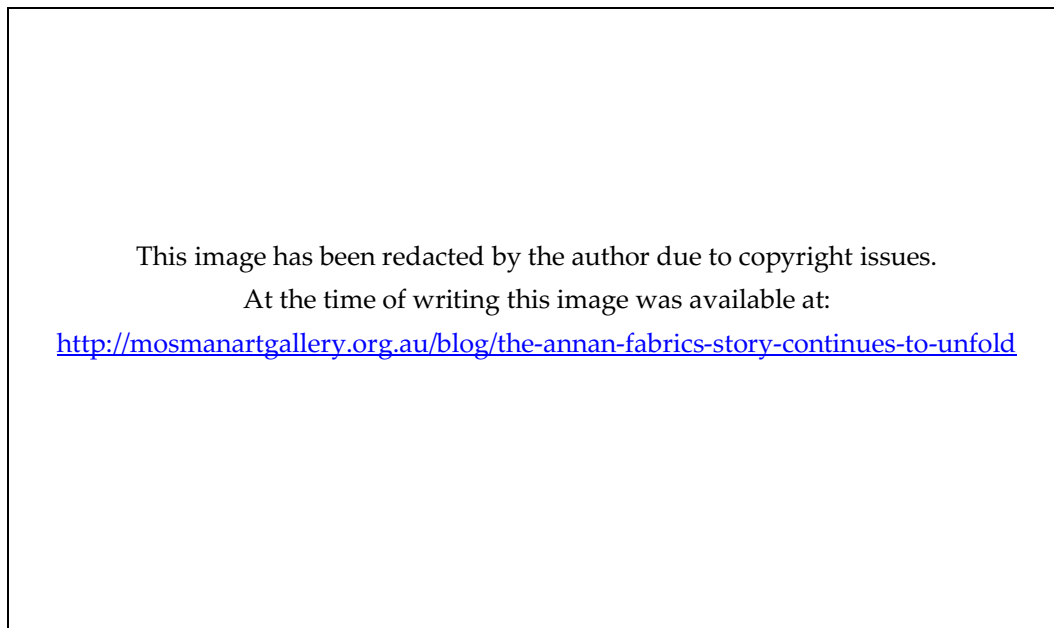
Figure 4.13 Nance Mackenzie and Anne Outlaw washing and hanging fabric to dry, c1940.[43]

Figure 4.16 illustrates the use of Annan's bold 'Strelitzia' design used in Mr and Mrs Basil Carr's 'Edenberry Cottage' in Surfer's Paradise, Queensland, as featured in the June 1945 issue of the Australian Home Beautiful.

[42] Mosman Art Gallery. c1940. "Annan Fabrics and Vande Pottery: A Photo Gallery." Accessed September 24, 2014. http://mosmanartgallery.org.au/blog/the-annan-fabrics-story-continues-to-unfold.

[43] Ibid.

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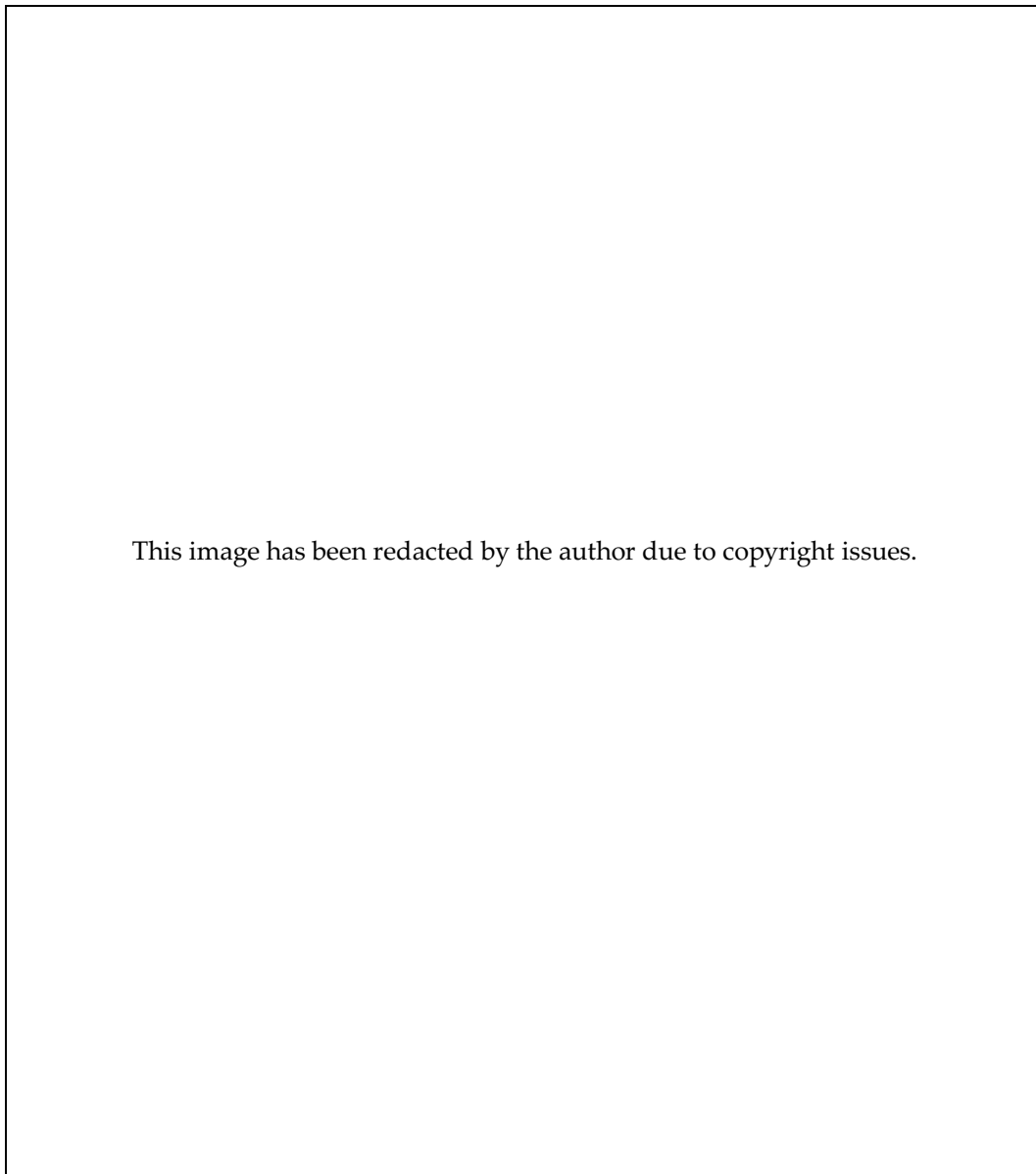
Figure 4.14 Annan Fabrics, 'Strelizia' (Bird of Paradise), screen-printed cotton, c1945.[44]

The vibrant print adds colour to the modern beach house interior, which includes several contemporary ceramics, a colourful printed lampshade and informal seating comprising of a divan with a bright red cover, strewn with contrasting print cushions. The overall design scheme is light, bright and airy, as befits the glamourous location of the beach house in sunny Surfer's Paradise.

[44] Mary Jane Seymour 1950. "Edenberry Cottage." *The Australian Home Beautiful*, June, Sydney : Caroline Simpson Library, Sydney Living Museums: 21.

After World War II Annan Textiles continued to work collaboratively with architects and interior designers, creating individual designs for each commission.[45] They created unique design schemes for several cruise ships, the Odeon Theatre in Adelaide, the Rex Hotel in Canberra, the Wentworth Hotel in Sydney and Qantas offices in Australia and overseas. The business continued to operate until the mid-1950s, when a bad debt meant that the business could no longer operate and it was sadly closed down.[46]

4.1.7   Gert Sellheim and the Arunta collection

Along with Douglas Annand, émigré architect and graphic designer Gert Sellheim (1901-1970) was one of Australia's most innovative modernist graphic designers of the 1930s to the 1960s. His posters for Qantas, the Australian Travel Bureau and posters for the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games have become icons of Australian visual culture. In 1940 David Jones & Company released a series of printed fabrics and associated merchandise using Aboriginalia patterns by Sellheim under the title 'Arunta'.

Consultation with curators at The Australian Institute of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) have revealed that Sellheim's designs do not actually bear any relationship to the artwork produced by the Arente peoples and that the name may simply have been selected as it 'sounded Aboriginal'.[47] Merchandise utilising the designs was marketed by David Jones as: "As new as to-morrow and as old as mankind – Arunta – Australia's own Aboriginal designs translated into fashion successes!"[48]

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[45] Cochrane 1992, 174-180.

[46] Mosman Art Gallery.

[47] Meeting with Dr Charlotte Craw, Curator, *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)*, Tuesday 13 December 2016.

[48] David Jones Ltd. c1940. *Arunta : Australia's own Aboriginal designs translated into fashion successes!* Sydney: The Australian Institute of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), 1. Used with permission.

Very little is known about how the collection came about and there is scant archival evidence other than the six-page catalogue in the collection of AIATSIS. It is not known whether Gert Sellheim developed the designs speculatively, selling them to David Jones through a graphics agent, or whether they were produced in response to brief from David Jones. Given the absence of imported goods and the prevalence of national pride during the early years of World War II, it is most likely that buyers from David Jones commissioned the designs to provide a cohesive retail story based on an unmistakeably Australian theme – the art of Australia's First Peoples.

Figure 4.15 *Arunta* prints sold by David Jones, c1940.[49]

The Arunta designs included repeated linear motifs of 'Aboriginalised' kangaroos, emus, anteaters, ducks, fish and platypus, together with boomerangs, shields and spears in colour schemes ranging from monotones up to three colours. The collection provides yet another example of appropriation of Aboriginal visual culture for commercial purposes, though no doubt David Jones would have seen the collection as an investment in

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[49] Ibid 2, 5. Used with permission.

patriotism and national pride. The designs were printed on silk, rayon and cotton fabrics used for women's underwear, scarves, play clothes, dresses and coats, men's mercery products, sports shirts and beach towels. The Arunta designs were also applied to glassware, buttons and art jewellery.[50]

It is unclear which company printed the Arunta fabrics. Sydney-based printers with the capability of doing so included RM Hoskins, Gilkes & Company or Silk & Textile Printers. The only other viable local contender would have been Burway Prints, Frances Burke and Maurice Holloway's business in Melbourne. The other possibility is that the fabrics were printed offshore in Britain or Japan. Whilst David Jones & Company had maintained its own factory in Marlborough Street Surry Hills to produce clothing and other exclusive sewn product lines for their stores, it is unlikely that they would have invested in large scale in-house printing. It is more feasible that the fabrics, together with the glassware and jewellery were commissioned from specialist external providers.

Whilst it may never be known which company printed the Arunta fabrics, the close relationship between the Alcorsos and David Jones, one of the first potential customers they approached on their arrival to Sydney, suggest that these fabrics may have been one of the first major orders printed in their new Sydney factory. In his memoir Alcorso speaks of discussions with 'old Mr Hunt', the piece goods buyer at David Jones, who suggested that STP produce a collection based on Australian wildflower designs, which he subsequently produced for his own collection.[51] Mr Hunt could have commissioned STP to print the Arunta designs onto base-cloths that David Jones had imported for this purpose, however, this is mere speculation and cannot be proven.

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[50] Ibid.
[51] Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say*, 62-63.

4.2 The Alcorsos establish STP in Sydney

Claudio and Orlando Alcorso arrived in Sydney from England in early March 1939 on the 'Strathallan', together with Paolo Sonnino.[52] As business migrants, they had transferred funds and made arrangements through Australian House in London in advance of their travel. When the 'Strathallan' had docked in Melbourne, they were met by representatives of the Economic Department from the Bank of New South Wales, who provided written advice on the legalities of business establishment. They also rented both office and living accommodation for the family in Sydney and had provided letters of introduction to potential suppliers and customers.[53]

Claudio, Orlando and Paolo had brought samples of printed textiles from the best print houses in Europe to test the market for suitable patterns that could be reinterpreted by their proposed textile printing business. They initially established an agency which they called FISMA – an acronym of French, Italian, Swiss Manufacturers Australia – representing European suppliers of the Piperno Alcorso stores in Rome.[54] Their offices were located in 'Asbestos House' in York Street Sydney (Figure 4.16), the heart of what was then the rag-trade district of Sydney, near major textile and clothing wholesalers including Robert Reid Pty Ltd, Paterson Laing & Bruce and Charles Parsons Ltd.

Using the latest collections of European prints to open doors, they called on potential clients to establish their bona fides and build Australian business networks. The family's connections with European textile firms added to their credibility and prestige and customers were responsive to these new sources of fashion textiles. It is likely that they would have used their

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[52] Joseph Gentilli. 1989, No. 10, Part 5. "Italian Jewish Refugees in Australia." *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal,* 425.

[53] Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say,* 59.

[54] Lech 2005, 56.

initial meetings with major clients to gauge interest in their proposed printing works and find out about their Australian competitors, Gilkes & Company and RM Hoskins Pty Ltd in Sydney and Burway Prints in Melbourne.

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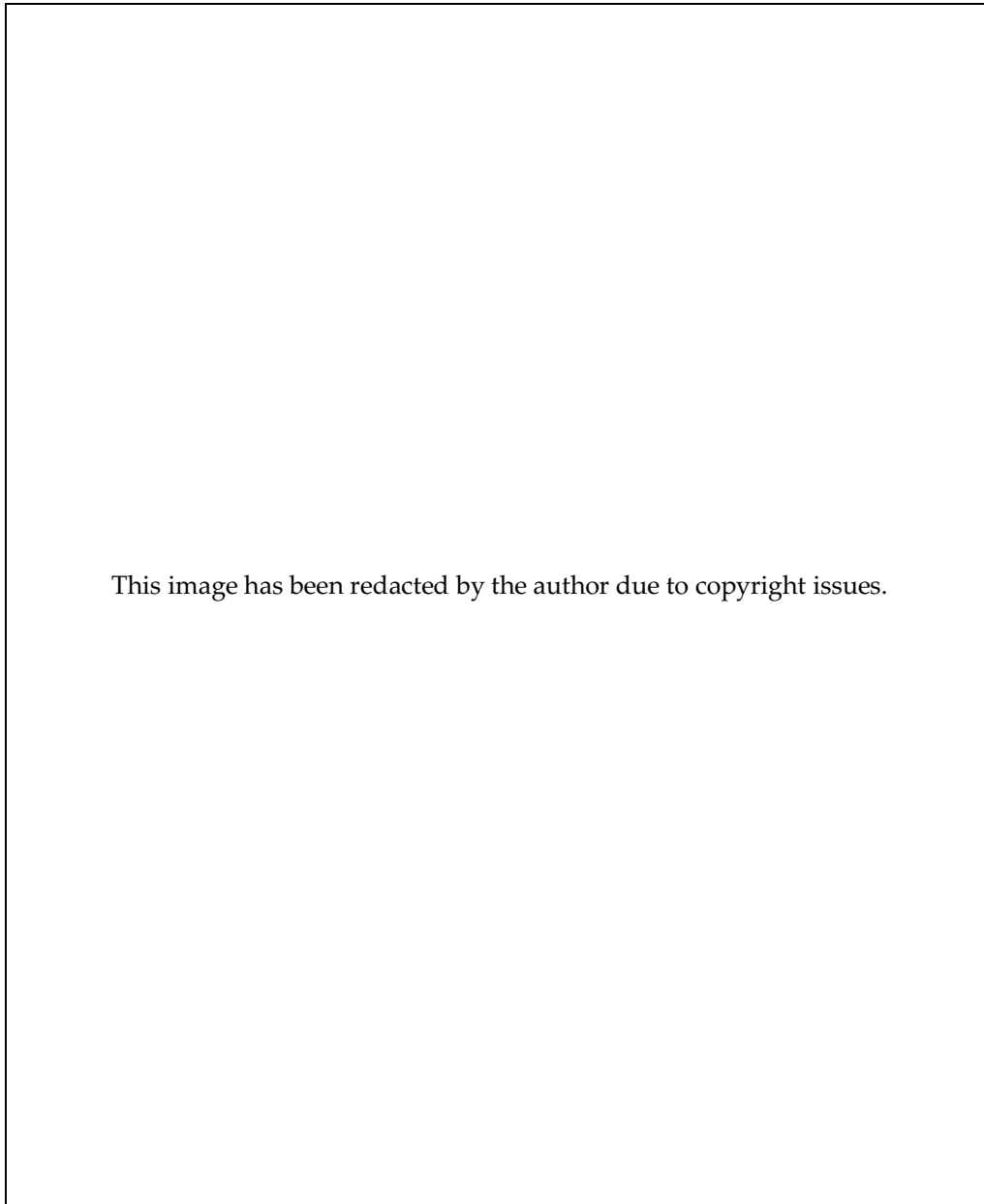
Figure 4.16 Harold Cazneaux, 'York Street Sydney', with Asbestos House on the right, 1938.[55]

According to a deposition made by Richard Malcolm Hoskins on 30 July, 1940 the Alcorsos and Sonnino had approached him about buying his business

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[55] Harold Cazneaux. 2013. "York St Sydney." In *Sydney Moderns: Art for a New World*, by Deborah Edwards and Denise Mimmocchi, 10. Sydney: Art Gallery of NSW.

outright, but he 'did not feel disposed' to sell the business at that time.[56] The Alcorsos subsequently made an arrangement with Poullars Pty Ltd, a firm of dyers, bleachers and finishers located in McLaughlin Avenue Rushcutters Bay, to build their factory on an adjacent vacant block at 30 Barcom Avenue, also gaining access to Poullar's boiler, necessary for preparing and finishing fabrics. They registered the business name 'Silk & Textile Printers Pty Ltd', which in time came to be known in the Australian textile industry as STP.

Alcorso addressed the matter of technical staffing by visiting East Sydney Technical College, located nearby in the old Darlinghurst Gaol. There he met Miss Phyllis Shillito and asked her to recommend students and recent graduates to work in the factory. Alcorso hired a number of graduates including Mary Curtis, who was employed in the screen room and Betty Skowronski who was employed as a designer. In the early stages of STP, the design staff reinterpreted the best-selling European print designs from the sample collections of FISMA.[57] This enabled STP's products to be differentiated from the cheaper high-volume fabrics being imported from the Far East where there was little investment in innovative design and also ensured that every fabric design would be a winner in the local market.

By early 1940 Claudio and Orlando's parents Niny and Amilcare had arrived in Sydney and became directly involved with establishing the new factory and training staff. Whilst textiles suitable for printing were readily available through local mills and wholesalers, there was insufficient local production of the favoured silk and rayon cloths like those they had sold at Piperno Alcorso. They became aware of a tariff issue limiting the potential

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[56] Richard Malcolm Hoskins. 1938. "Deposition made to Corporal George H Hawkes, Intelligence Section, Eastern Command." *Alcorso, Claudio NAA: SP1714/1, N33832.* Accessed December 30, 2017. https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Gallery151/dist/JGalleryViewer.aspx?B=447243&S =168&N=494&R=0#/SearchNRetrieve/NAAMedia/ShowImage.aspx?B=447243&T=P&S=168.

[57] The fact that early designs were essentially derived from the European collections brought by the Alcorso's is mentioned by Douglas Lloyd-Jenkins in *Avis Higgs Joie de Vivre* and by Claudio Alcorso in his memoir *The Wind You Say.*

profitability of importing of silk and imitation silk grey-goods suitable for printing. Knowing that their printing business could easily meet the minimum quantities required for bulk purchase of silk and rayon grey-cloth from high-quality mills overseas, they began lobbying relevant Australian Government departments for more favourable importation tariffs.[58]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing this image was available at:
http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/learn/sydneys-history/people-and-places/park-histories/barcom-avenue-reserve
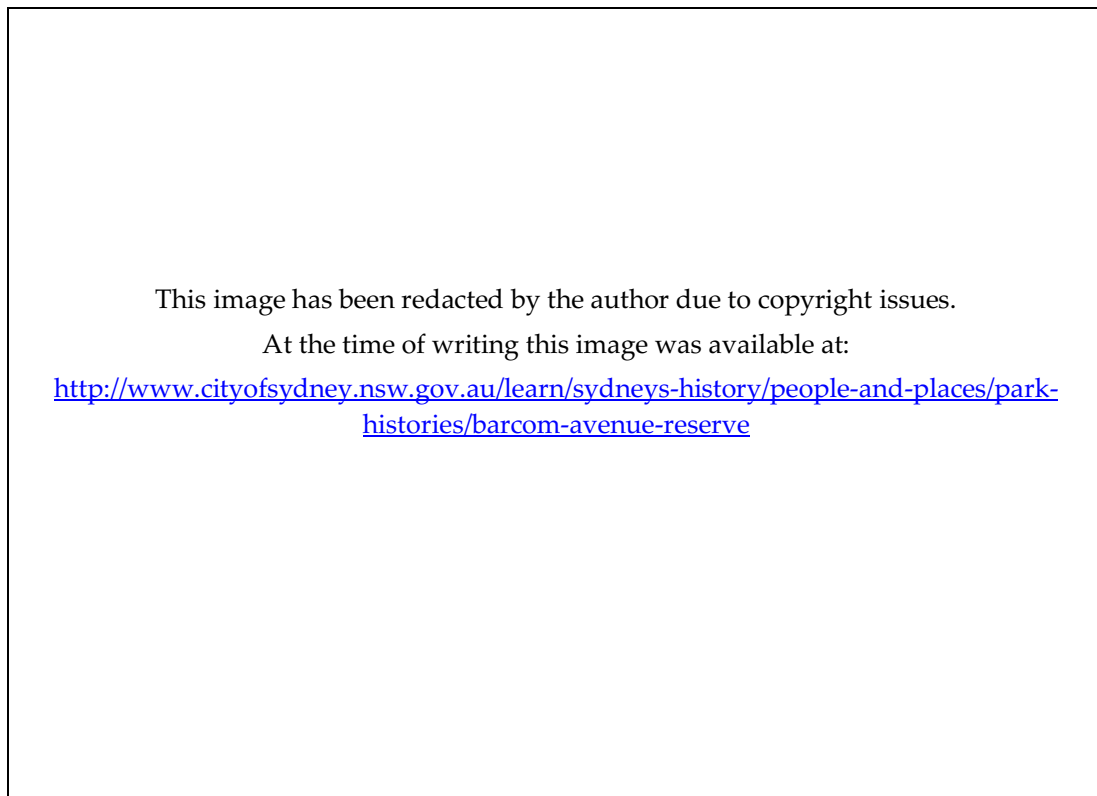
Figure 4.17 Barcom Avenue Reserve, photographed sometime during the 1930s.[59]

Alcorso spent an extensive number of hours in the Mitchell Library researching data on previous and current fabric imports into Australia. He prepared submissions to the Australian Tariff Board on behalf of his father (now known as 'Hamilcar' – the English version of his name), outlining business plans for their proposed textile printing facility and providing a

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[58] Commonwealth of Australia. 1939. "Memorandum." *Department of Trade and Customs.* Canberra: National Archive of Australia, 28 August.

[59] City of Sydney. 1930s. "History of Barcom Avenue Reserve." *Sydney's History.* Accessed November 24, 2017. http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/learn/sydneys-history/people-and-places/park-histories/barcom-avenue-reserve.

compelling rationale for the Government to support their importation of silks and imitation silks under lower tariffs, reducing the landed price. The submissions explained the principles of the 'cutting-edge' technology of screen-printing to be used in the factory, the estimated number of skilled workers to be trained and employed and the family's plans to print 50,000 yards in their first year of operation, increasing to between 300,000 and 400,000 yards per annum. It emphasised the benefits that their business would bring to local retailers and clothing manufacturers and the potential for exporting printed fabrics from Australia. [60]

The business case was enhanced by letters of support from other interested parties including the Alcorso's neighbour Poullars, Gilkes & Company and David Jones, all of whom individually imported rayon fabrics and were clearly interested in continuing to do so at a more favourable price.[61] The Alcorsos submissions were successful. The written decision of the Australian Trade and Tariff Board reproduced all of the data submitted verbatim as the rationale for their decision.[62]

With access to a ready market of buyers, a secure and well-priced supply of materials and the latest facilities for printing and finishing, the supply chain for STP was secure. The Alcorsos and Sonnino all had specific roles to be fulfilled within STP. Amilcare, the patriarch, was the Managing Director, providing the wisdom and experience gained managing Piperno

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[60] Claudio Alcorso. 1939. "No. 184 Silk Piece Goods 11/3/26." *SILK & ARTIFICIAL SILK PIECE GOODS.* Canberra: National Archives of Australia, 5 May.
— . 1939. "No. 627: Woven artificial silk piece goods in the grey 10/8/34." *SILK & ARTIFICIAL SILK PIECE GOODS.* Canberra: National Archives of Australia, 5 May.

[61] Textile converters in Australia at the time included both retailers and wholesale drapery suppliers such as *Charles Parsons*. Fabric converters usually purchase bulk grey-fabrics locally or overseas and have them bleached, dyed or printed and finished to their own specifications. This was cheaper that purchasing a design outright and enabled companies like *David Jones* to offer their own exclusive designs without any investment in plant and equipment required for fabric processing.

[62] Silk & Textile Printers Ltd. 1939. "Application for Tariff Revision on behalf of Silk & Textile Printers Pty Ltd, 65 York Street, Sydney, NSW." *Commonwealth Tariff Board: Enquiry into Import of Silk and Artificial Silk Piecegoods.* Canberra: National Archives of Australia.

Alcorso in Italy. Paul Sonnino was financial controller, calculating viable production levels, staffing ratios and budgets. Orlando was the technical expert, using his knowledge of chemistry and interest in machinery to set up plant and equipment. The Alcorsos also hired an accountant, Eric Hearnshaw, to assist with financial management and operations.

Claudio was to be the 'front man', recruiting potential investors and clients and, together with Amilcare, speaking to the media about the new business. Like his father, he anglicised his name becoming 'Claude'. In some press releases he is described as 'Doctor' Alcorso, an honorific traditionally used in Italy by anyone who had a university degree and no doubt used to make STP sound modern and scientific. Flattering articles appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald and the Sun newspapers promoting Amilcare's genius as a designer, the modernity of STP's factory and the promise that the business would employ 100 Australians in its new premises at Rushcutters Bay.[63] Figure 4.17 shows Barcom Avenue Reserve, near the site of the Alcorso's new factory sometime during the 1930s. The photograph shows terrace houses and flats that would have been occupied at the time by working class Australians and possibly some pre-war migrants. No doubt the Alcorsos anticipated that these houses would provide some of the labour needed to operate their new factory.

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[63] The Mail. 1940. "New Rayon Firm To Start In Sydney." 27 January. Accessed March 23, 2011. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article55776840.
Valerie Ley. 1940.

4.2.1 The Alcorso brothers and Paul Sonnino are interned

The initial successes of the Alcorso's new business were unfortunately short-lived. Despite leaving Italy and Claudio's and Orlando's failed attempts to join the Royal Australian Air Force at the onset of World War II, they ran afoul of politics and together with Paolo Sonnino were soon identified as potential fifth columnists and interned as enemy aliens soon after Italy entered the war.

In the early twentieth century, Australia's predominantly white Anglo population had a natural suspicion of anyone who was different. This suspicion was enshrined in the Immigration Restriction Act (1901), commonly known as the 'White Australian Policy'.[64] But Australian prejudice was not only limited to those who appeared to be physically different – it also extended to those who spoke with accents and came to Australia with 'big ideas' that were seen to challenge the status quo of the Australian way of life. The Australian public misunderstood the intent of many pre-war European migrants who had fled to Australia to escape Fascist regimes emerging in Europe. Bigotry against Jews was endemic and was even pronounced between Protestants and Catholics. Many pre-war migrants – particularly Jewish migrants from places like Germany, Austria and Italy – were regarded as infiltrators and spies and many ended up escaping to Australia only to be interned with Fascists who mercilessly terrorised them.

The main issue that the Australian Government had with the Alcorso brothers was their previous friendship with Vittorio and Bruno Mussolini. Ironically, this friendship that provided the Alcorsos with enough lead time to plan their escape from Italy had caused their incarceration in the country meant to provide them with political freedom. According to Claudio's memoir, the authorities found copies of books portraying the Fascist regime in

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[64] Migration Heritage NSW. 1901. "Immigration Restriction Act." Accessed December 5, 2019. http://migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibition/objectsthroughtime/immigration-restriction-act/index.html.

a positive light amongst possessions that had been recently shipped from Italy when searching their apartment. He and his brother Orlando were arrested as potential spies on 4 July 1940.

The Alcorso brother's incriminating book collection was later displayed in a National Security ('Fifth Column') Exhibition staged by Police & Military Intelligence at the Sydney Royal Easter Show, together with other incriminating evidence.[65] The cover of Smith's Weekly on Saturday April 19 1941 carried editorial titled 'Two Dangerous Wops – Musso's Friends', describing the brothers as elitists who had come "….to Australia in 1939 with a fortune and started a textile industry".

According to the article…" they were proud to announce that Vittorio Mussolini had been a fellow flying officer of theirs and so close a friend that they attended his wedding. The wedding invitation was on show in (the Fifth Column) exhibition." The article went on to say that the brothers had regularly attended the home of Benito Mussolini, who had personally autographed one of the books owned by them. Smith's felt that Sydney society had wrongly lionised these young men, who were generally thought to be charming gentlemen in society, but were in reality dangerous fifth columnists, full of "…dago callousness….".[66]

Military intelligence interviewed friends, employees and business associates of the Alcorsos and Sonnino in an effort to gather further evidence against them. One of the designers working at STP – Suzanne Rogers – told the authorities that she had overheard Claudio say that he wanted to join the Italian Air Force. Pierre, the head waiter at Princes, a popular Sydney

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[65] Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say*, 8.

[66] Smith's Weekly. 1941. "Two Dangerous Wops - Musso's Friends." 19 April. Accessed June 26, 2018. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page25339368.

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At the time of writing this image was available at:

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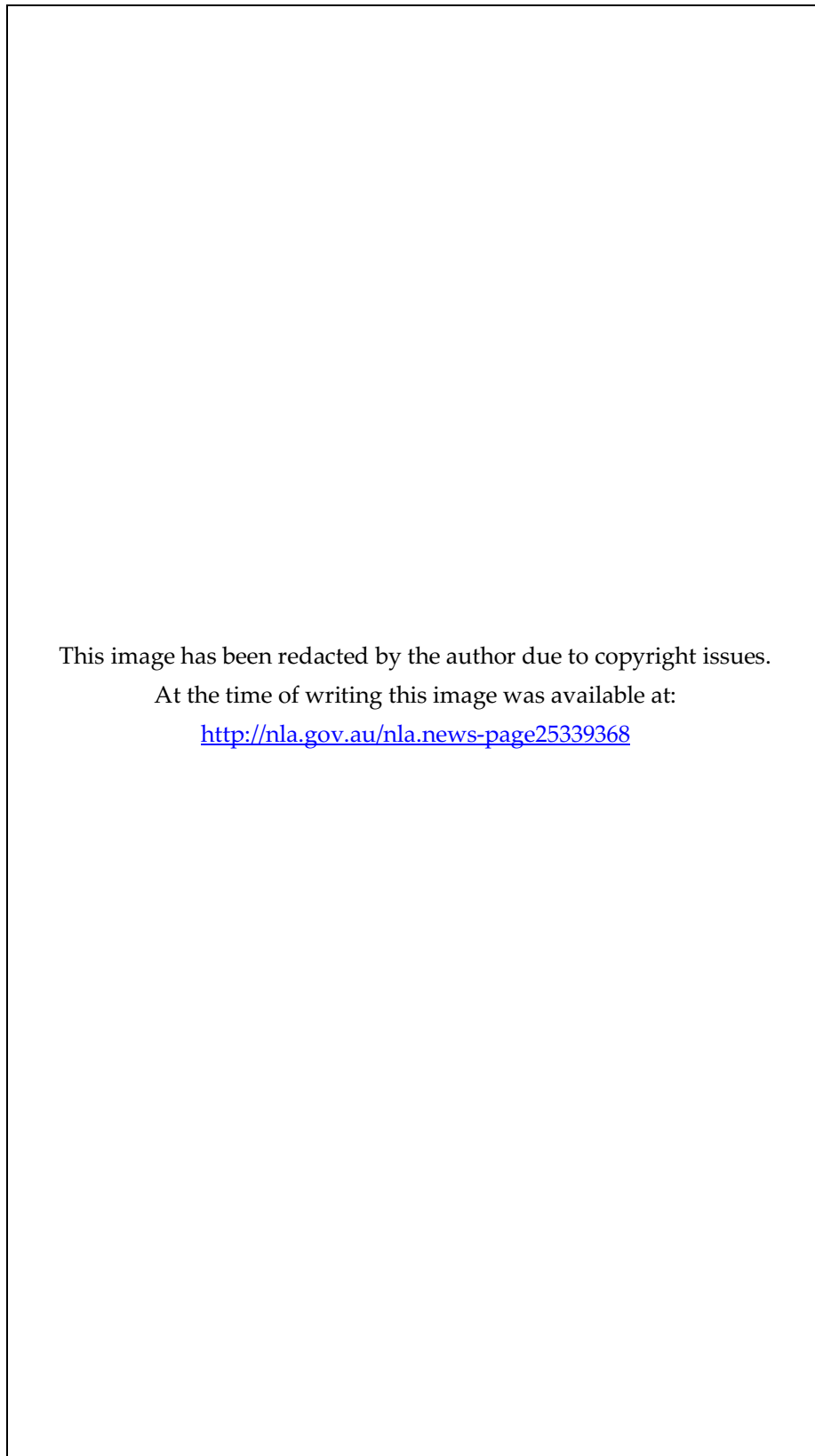
Figure 4.18 Article from Smith's Weekly about the Alcorso brothers, 1941.[67]

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[67] Smith's Weekly 1941.

nightclub of the time, described Claudio as a man full of his own self-importance, who had continually boasted about his sexual prowess.[68] By the time Smith's Weekly's incriminating article was published, Claudio, Orlando and Paolo were already interned. Claudio's parents had already sailed to America to visit other members of their family and they spent the war years in New York whilst their sons suffered the indignity of imprisonment. Whilst the brother's internment is not within the remit of this study, it has been extensively researched by other scholars in Australia, who revealed that the young migrants suffered from the persecution of Italian Fascist and German Nazi internees and from some Australian Government representatives. [69]

However, some of the guards were friendly and treated them well and they made new friends amongst the other internees in similar positions. They experienced living in regional areas of Australia that they would not have otherwise visited. Whilst working as part of a timber cutting unit during part of his internment in South Australia, Claudio discovered the peace and tranquillity of the Australian bush, which was later to become a significant factor influencing his involvement in the Tasmanian conservation movement forty years later.[70]

Whilst the Alcorso brothers and Sonnino were interned, STP was managed by accountant Eric Hearnshaw who had been given official power of attorney to represent the family in all business activities during their incarceration. Hearnshaw corresponded regularly with Amilcare Alcorso, who had set himself up as a textile consultant in The Rockefeller Centre in

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[68] National Archives of Australia. 1940-1954. "Claudio Alcorso." *SP1714/1, N33832.* 30 July. Accessed December 30, 2017.
https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=447243.

[69] Amongst the writers documenting the experiences of the internees are Claudio Alcorso himself, who devoted the first chapter of his 1993 memoir *The Wind You Say,* to this subject. Joseph Talia mentions the experiences in his tribute "The Alcorso Story" in *Italy Down Under* (Summer 2000/01), 37-38. John Gatt-Rutter's 2008 paper *You're on the list!" Writing the Australian Italian Experience of Wartime Internment* provides further details.

[70] Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say*, Chapter 1.

New York, later becoming associated with the General Overseas Corporation (Textile Division). There is no doubt that Amilcare provided much of the business direction remotely for STP during the war years. Hearnshaw also acted as Amilcare's agent, brokering purchases from the General Overseas Corporation by Australian wholesalers.[71] During Amilcare's enforced residence in New York, many attempts were made by his American friends and business contacts to free his interned sons. The most notable of these was a letter of support and affidavit from Italian maestro Arturo Toscanini, vouching for the Alcorso's anti-Fascist position.[72]

4.3   Avis Higgs, Mary Curtis and Betty Skowronski at STP

The war had an almost immediate effect on STP, but despite adverse conditions the factory tried to maintain full production. Like many textile printers during World War II, the production capacity of STP was seconded by the Australian Government to supply camouflage fabrics and signal flags. Some of the male factory workers had already enlisted or were seconded to other essential services and dyes and chemicals produced in Japan and Germany could no longer be obtained. Cotton fabrics previously imported from Manchester were similarly unobtainable. Given the high demand for textiles, any materials that were available were used for production and the factory printed a number of fabrics that would previously have been rejected as sub-standard.[73]

Though textiles were regarded as an essential industry, design skills were not as essential for the production of camouflage as they were to maintain output of printed textiles for civilians. In the absence of a full

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[71] National Archives of Australia. 1940-1954. No traces of the General Overseas Corporation (Textile Division) have so far been located, apart from copies of telegrams concerning the purchase of textiles by Australian businesses whilst Amilcare resided in New York.

[72] Joseph Talia. 2000/01. "The Alcorso Story." *Italy Down Under*, Summer:37-38.

[73] Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say*, 71.

complement of design and production staff at STP, three young women played a significant role in keeping both design and production going during the war years, working cleverly within the constraints of limited resources, as all good designers do. Most of the information about the part they played in the Alcorso's business was documented by Douglas Lloyd-Jenkins, based on the reminiscences of Avis Higgs, who has emerged as a major figure in textile design and printing in both Australia and New Zealand.

Mary Curtis and Betty Skowronski were graduates of Phyllis Shillito's art course at East Sydney Technical College in Darlinghurst. Mary Curtis was working for Alcorso in 1939,[74] though it is not known when Betty Skowronski commenced work at STP. Avis Higgs, newly arrived from New Zealand, responded to an advertisement placed by Eric Hearnshaw for a designer that could create original textile designs and began work as a Senior Designer at STP in August 1941. Shortly after Higg's arrival Mary Curtis, then working in the screen room, was promoted to designer, along with Betty Skowronski who was elevated to the position of third designer. According to Lloyd-Jenkins, during this period:

> The design room had a staff of nine, all of whom had arts school training of some sort, occupying one large room and all responsible to Avis Higgs. At one end a door led to the offices and another to the showroom. Upstairs were the chemists and the print tables. The lower level was occupied in part by a screen room.[75]

Avis Higgs' designs for STP show that the designers used an arsenal of design skills to offer visual variety within the constraints imposed by wartime. Her

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[74] Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say*, 62-63.

[75] Douglas Lloyd-Jenkins. 2000. *Avis Higgs - Joie de Vivre.* Napier, New Zealand: UNITEC Institute of technology and Creative New Zealand, 10.

graphic monotone design printed on STP's lightweight woollen base cloth *Peau de Ange* or 'angel skin' (Figure 4.19) is sparsely printed – possibly as a border print, with large areas of the base-cloth visible. The resulting pattern is striking, with the few areas of solid pigment used to advantage in the design of the garment. Abstracted foliage patterns, linear work, spirals and the negative space of the base-cloth create the visual interest, emphasising the fashionable padded shoulders. Apart from the shoulder pads, the garment has no buttons or findings, simply tying at the front, possibly reflecting other wartime shortages.

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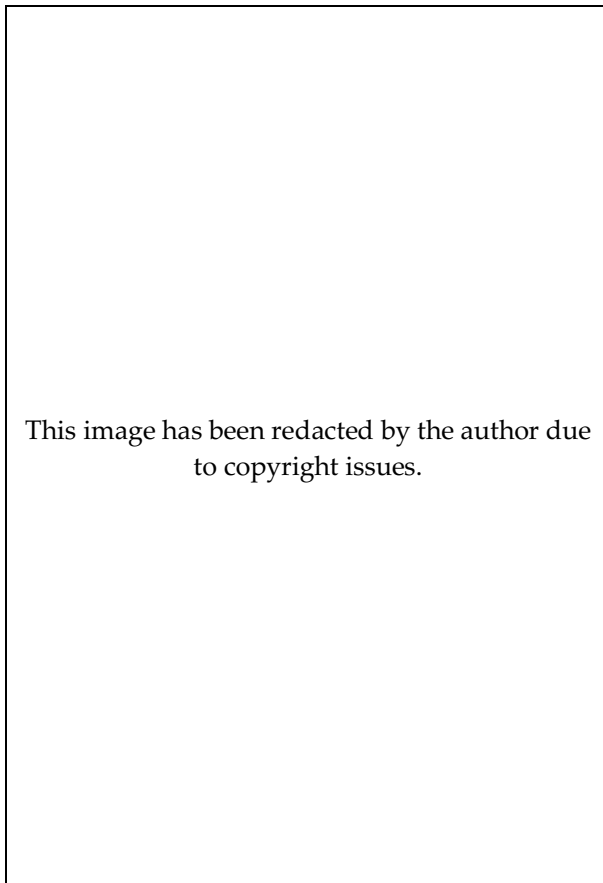
Figure 4.19 Avis Higgs, Blouse made from printed *Peau D'Ange*, screen-printed wool, c1944.[76]

According to Lloyd-Jenkins, it was Avis Higgs who first visited the Notanda Gallery in Rowe Street Sydney in 1943, meeting and befriending artist Margo Lewers. On a later visit to Notanda accompanied by Mary Curtis, she saw an

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[76] Ibid, 18.

exhibition by émigré artist Desiderius Orban, who discreetly advertised that he was giving art lessons.
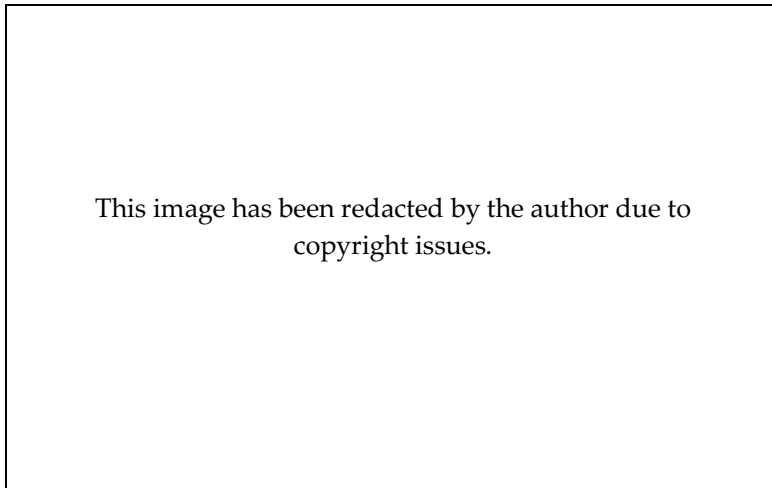
This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.	Figure 4.20 Avis Higgs for STP, 'Marine theme', c1942.[77]
This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.	Figure 4.21 Avis Higgs for STP, 'When the lights go on again', screen-printed linen, c1945.[78]
This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.	Figure 4.22 Avis Higgs for STP, 'Floral', c1942.[79]
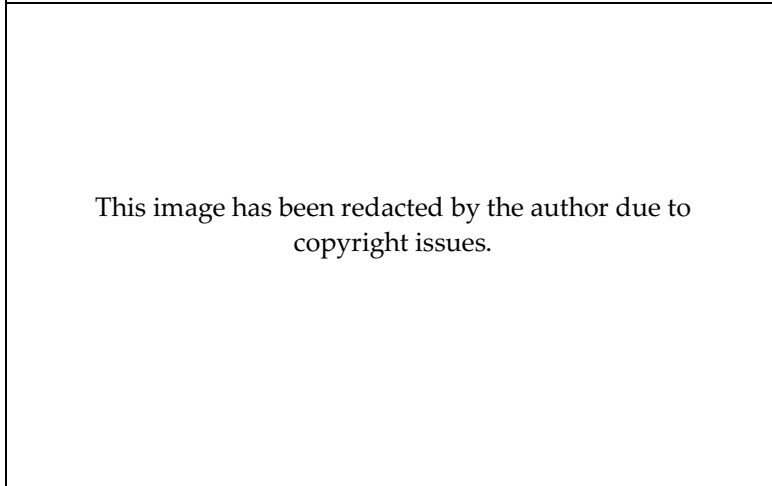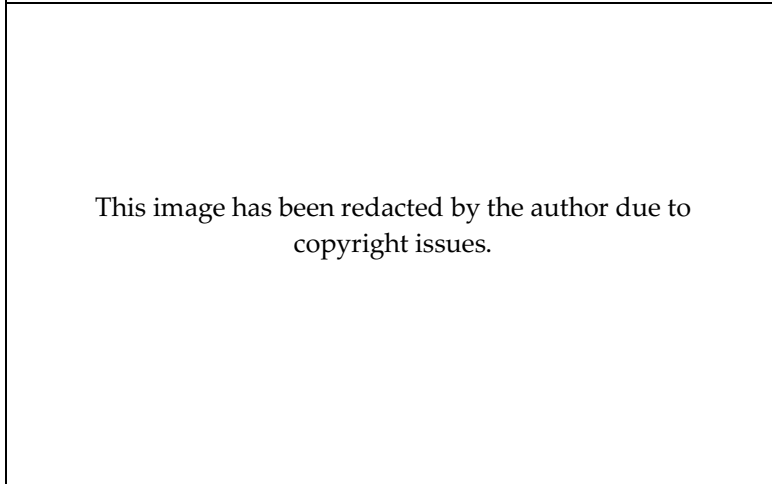
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[77] Lloyd-Jenkins, *Avis Higgs - Joie de Vivre* 2000, 11.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid, 35

Both Avis Higgs and Mary Curtis subsequently began lessons with Orban and later, with the support of both Eric Hearnshaw and Claudio Alcorso, Orban began giving lessons to designers at the STP factory in Barcom Avenue, becoming something like 'an artist in residence'.[80] Lewers and Orban later encouraged Avis Higgs to join the Contemporary Art Society and she exhibited two paintings in the sixth annual exhibition held in 1944.

Three print designs by Avis Higgs (Figures 4.20 – 4.22) show how she had used different art techniques to achieve diversity within the constraint of monotone print design between 1942 and 1945. 'Marine Theme' (Figure 4.20) is bold and graphic, making good use of positive and negative space. The images of coral, fish, jellyfish and seaweed are cartoon-like, indicating that this pattern has been designed for recreational garments, or possibly to furnish the sunroom of a beach house.

'When the lights go on again' (Figure 4.21) is like a quick sketch. It suggests impatience with the whole notion of the war and an eagerness for everyone to return to their former lives, when bright lights could once again be seen against the image of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. 'Floral' (Figure 4.22) is a linear, almost calligraphic design shown in the negative – a white, swirling floral and foliage pattern against a grey background. The design recalls the appearance of a floral wood-block print, providing a clever visual alternative to simply printing a linear floral design onto a plain background.

By 1943 Italy had changed sides in the war and as a result Claudio Alcorso was released from internment. Unfortunately, Claudio's brother Orlando was not released until sometime later. Paolo Sonnino was also released that year and immediately joined The Royal Australian Air Force,

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[80] Ibid, 11-12. The Modernage collection catalogue *A New Approach to Textile Design* published in 1947 provides an amusing re-telling of this story by Desiderius Orban under the heading *How it happened* (34-36). Eric Hearnshaw provided his perspectives on *The Social Functions of Fashion* (36-37) in the same publication, reflecting his interest and views on concepts associated with *Art and Industry* proposed by Herbert Read in Britain during the 1930s.

returning to STP after the war. Claudio spoke in his memoir and in interviews of his initial disinterest in returning to work, as a result of the trauma that he endured during internment. He spent time at the beach, involving himself in the 'Italy Libera' movement and editing the newspaper 'Il Risveglio', targeted at Australian Italians sympathetic to the liberal cause.[81] It is not known exactly when he officially returned to his duties at STP, though he was certainly back in charge by the time the Modernage collection was initiated in 1946.

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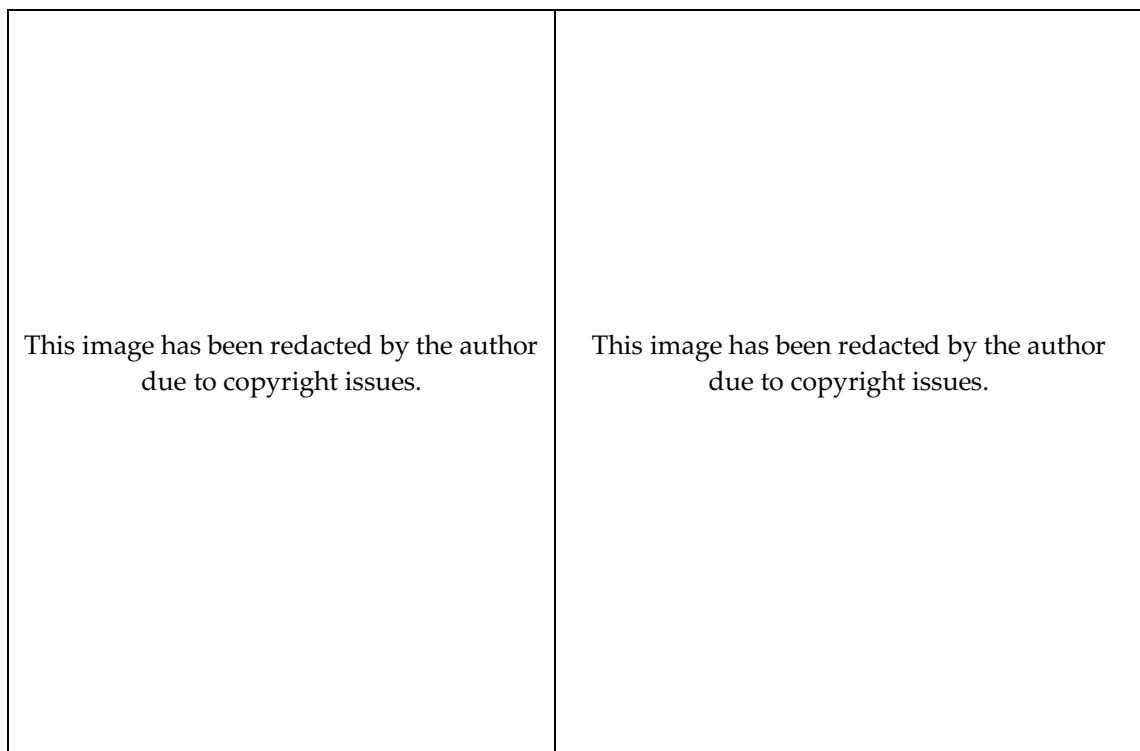
Figure 4.23 British Victory scarf, c1945.[82]
Figure 4.24 Dig for Victory print, c1941.[83]

Figure 4.25 Mary Curtis & Avis Higgs with STP Victory Loan fabrics of their own design, 1944.[84]

Meanwhile, the business direction of STP remained dependent on Amilcare and Hearnshaw, whilst Avis Higgs, Mary Curtis and Betty Skowronski oversaw design direction. As well as monotone fashion prints and poorly printed camouflage fabrics, STP produced several Victory Loan fabrics in the

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[81] Joseph Talia provides further perspectives on Claudio's involvement with the Italian Australian community in his article "The Alcorso Story" in *Italy Down Under* (Summer 2000/2001), 35 – 41.

[82] Kerry. 2007, 20.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Lloyd-Jenkins. *Avis Higgs: Joie de Vivre*, 2000, 21.

same vein as those produced in Britain and the United States during World War II.

Figure 4.23 shows a British Victory scarf from about 1945, picturing the flags of European allied nations Russia, Britain, the United States and France, with ticker tape ribbons showing the names of places where allies had won victories in the war. Underneath the scarf is an image of a dress fabric from Courtaulds in Britain (Figure 4.24), a pattern based on vegetable seed packets, used to promote the domestic growing of vegetables in the dig for victory campaign organised by the British government.[85] Mary Curtis and Avis Higgs were pictured in a 1944 edition of 'Pix Magazine' (Figure 4.25) wearing garments made from their Australian Victory fabrics printed by STP.[86]

By 1944, the public face of STP was increasingly represented by images of Avis Higgs, Betty Skowronski and Mary Curtis in the media, rather than the Alcorsos. That year STP launched their latest collection in an exhibition held at the Sedon Gallery in Melbourne to promote the notion of 'Art and Industry', made popular in Britain during the 1930s by Herbert Read. Read's position was that artists were well placed to provide integrated aesthetic design solutions for industrial products and purposes, rather than applying design as a decorative afterthought once a product had been developed to meet a specific utilitarian purpose.[87]

STP's 1944 exhibition followed an international trend set by companies including Courtaulds, who used Read's 'Art and Industry' concept in advertisements placed in trade journals and women's magazines, associating their products with historic and contemporary visual artists, cultural

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[85]   Sue Kerry. 2007. *Twentieth Century Textiles: Part II, Neo-Classicism to Pop.* London: Galloway/Antique Collector's Club, 126-127.

[86]   Lloyd-Jenkins. *Avis Higgs: Joie de Vivre*, 2000, 21.

[87]   Herbert Read. 1966. *Art and Industry, 5th ed.* London: Shenvale Press Limited.

institutions and monuments and feats of modern technology, in order to elevate the status and prestige of their products.[88]

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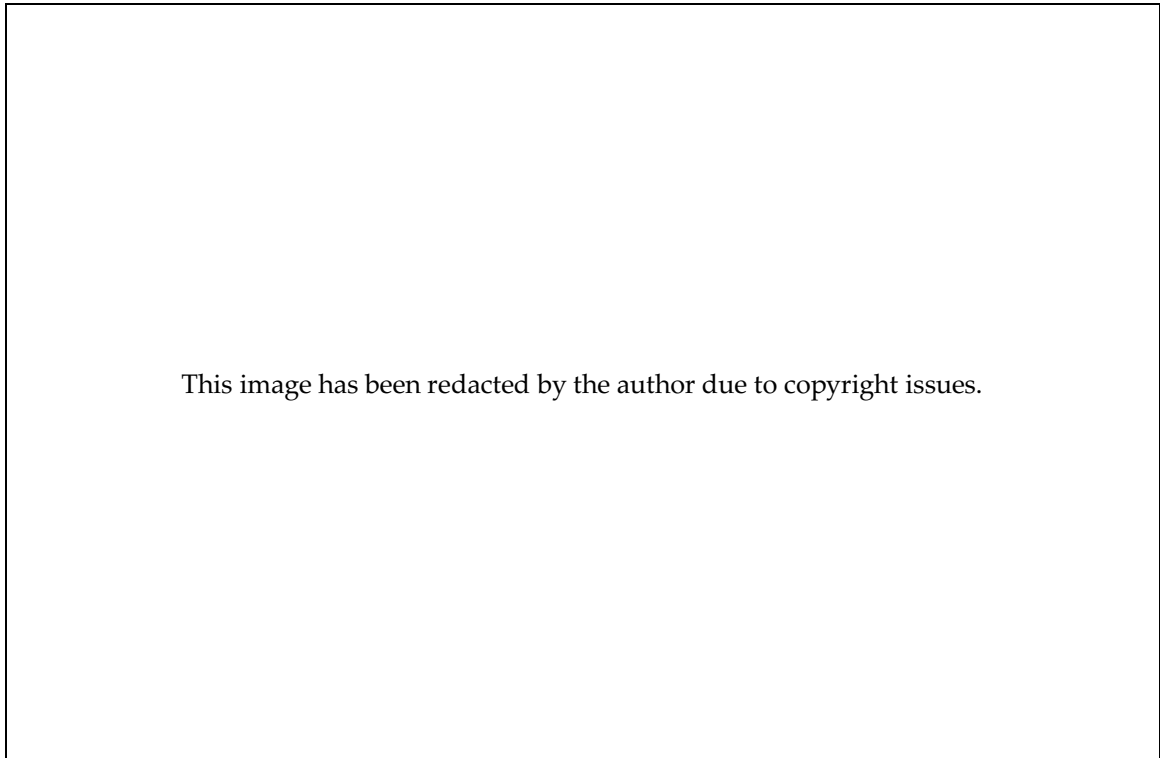
Figure 4.26 Mary Curtis and Avis Higgs at STP's 'Art in Industry' exhibition at the Sedon Gallery, 1944.[89]

STP's collection launch at the Sedon Gallery that same year provided a direct association between visual art and the textile collection, emulating display practices used in Britain at the time.[90] Mary Curtis and Avis Higgs were flown to Melbourne for the opening and appeared in a media image gazing at the exhibition of artworks positioned next to swathes of printed fabrics, both wearing frocks made from prints they had designed (Figure 4.26). Avis Higgs was now an exhibited artist. Betty Skowronski and Mary Curtis and other designers were taking instruction from artist Desiderius Orban, illustrating

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[88] The Textile Journal of Australia featured many of these advertisements on the covers of monthly issues during the 1940s. Courtaulds' advertisements also appeared in the Australian Women's Weekly.

[89] Lloyd-Jenkins. *Avis Higgs: Joie de Vivre*, 2000, 16.

[90] John Nicholas. 1946. "A Triumph of Showmanship: presentation and display at the Victoria and Albert Museum." *Art and Industry*, July-December: 162-171.

the total integration of the 'Art and Industry' concept in the design direction of STP. STP now depended on the original textile designs produced by their talented design team, rather than derivatives of popular European designs traditionally produced in Australia.

Figure 4.27 Avis Higgs, Betty Skowronski & Mary Curtis at STP's second 'Art in Industry' exhibition in Melbourne, 1945.[91]

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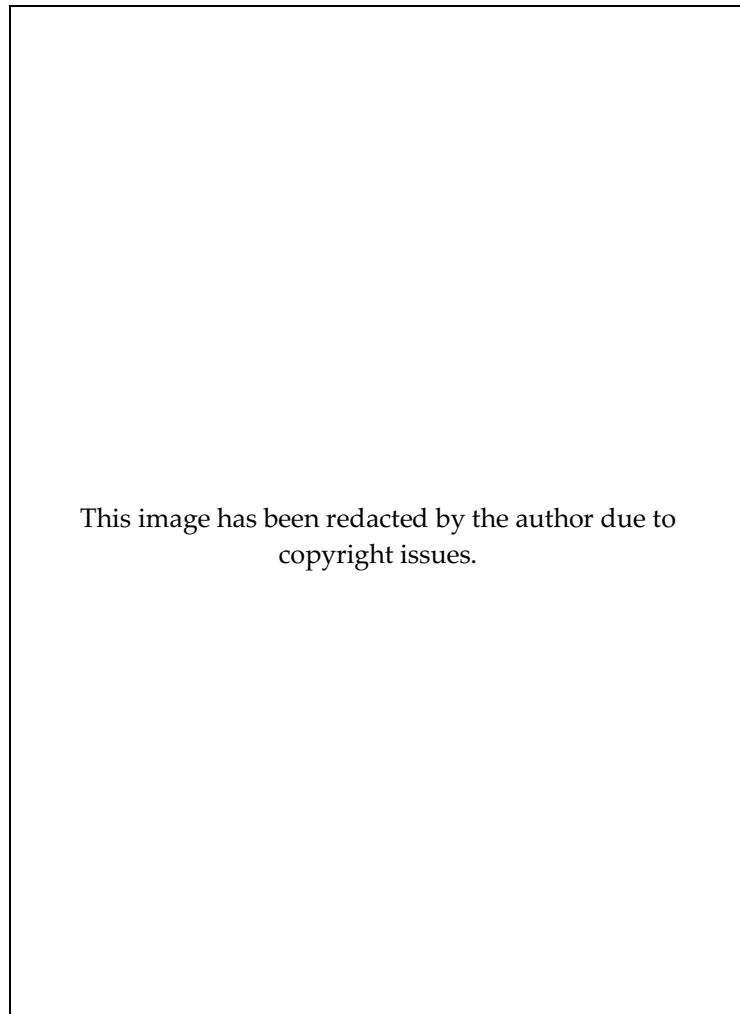
The 'Art and Industry' concept was once again used to launch STP's collection in 1945. In Figure 4.27 Avis Higgs, Betty Skowronski and Mary Curtis stand proudly in front of a decorative clock-face, where each hour is represented by one of the STP prints they have designed, suggesting that STP had fabrics to suit all times of the day and night. All three designers wore garments made

[91] Lloyd-Jenkins, *Avis Higgs: Joie de Vivre*, 2000, 19.

from their own textile print designs, as it is always expected in the fashion and textile industry that employees personally support the merchandise that they design.

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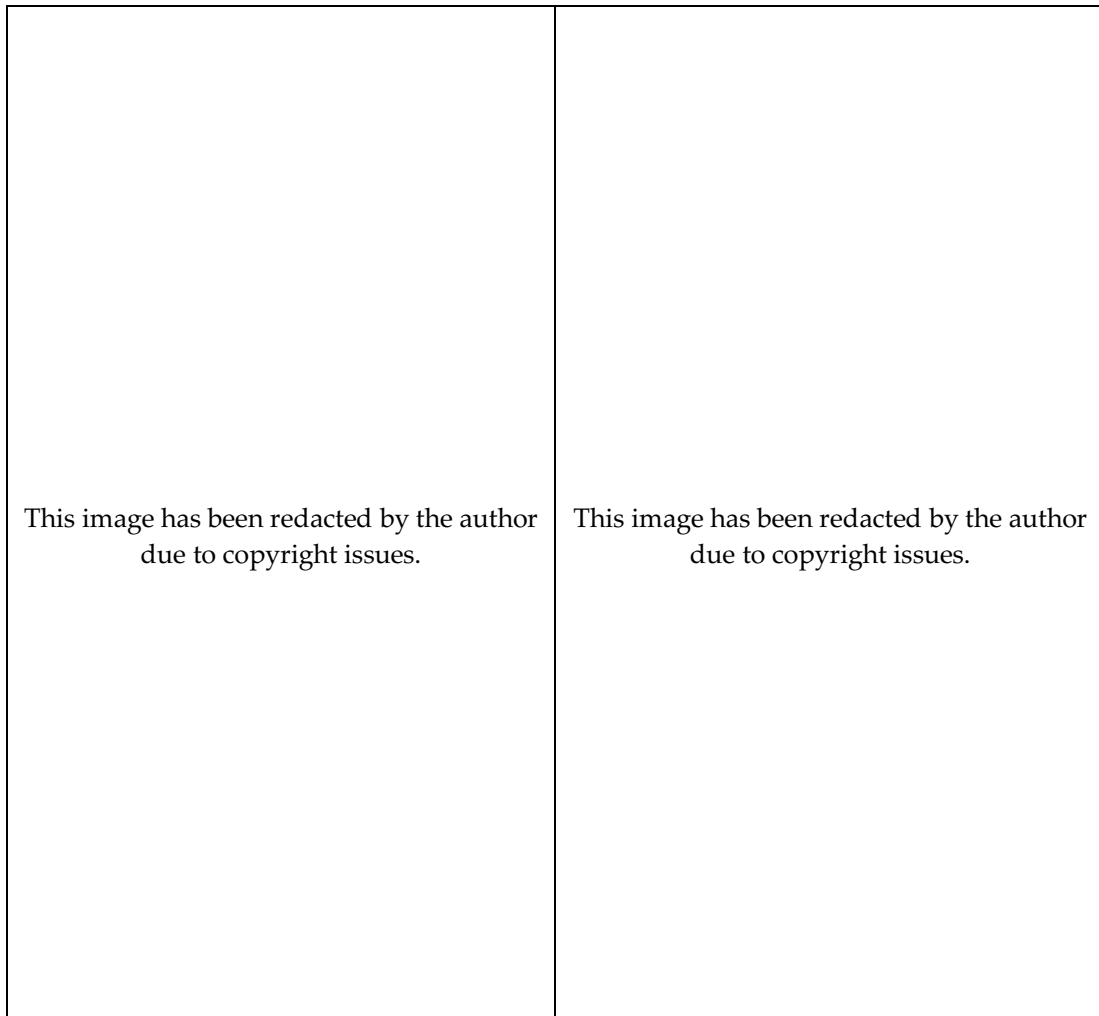
Figure 4.28 Dress in 'Head' screen-printed rayon by Avis Higgs for STP, c1944.
Figure 4.29 Evening dress in a screen-printed rayon designed by Avis Higgs for STP, c1945.[92]

Images from the exhibition, together with dresses from Avis Higgs' design archive (Figures 4.28 and 4.29), show that STP was able to secure rayon base-cloths for printing from 1944. That year stocks of rayon cloth from the cargoes of Axis ships impounded at the beginning of the war were released into the

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[92] Lloyd-Jenkins, *Avis Higgs: Joie de Vivre* 2000, 36.

market. The dress in Figure 4.28 is made up in Higgs' design 'Head'. At first it appears to be an abstract monotone pattern, until you look closely. This was particularly innovative and quite a departure from the usual florals, foliage, fauna and abstract prints being produced earlier in the war.

The blue and cream curlicue patterned dress (Figure 4.29) shows a more conventional approach to monotone pattern design of the 1940s, but nevertheless the large scale of the pattern makes it fresh and modern. Wartime shortages of dress fabrics ensured that STP's new printed rayons were well received and they sold well in Mark Foys, David Jones and Curzons, who, in an interesting variation on the cultural cringe, marketed the designs as *Folly Cove* prints.[93]

Over forty designer-craftspeople worked under the leadership of Virginia Lee Burton Demetrios in Folly Cove near Boston Massachusetts between 1938 and 1969, producing primarily lino block-printed fabrics. Demetrios provided training in fabric design and printing and encouraged the designers to "to look to their surroundings for inspiration, to draw what they knew". From 1941 to 1955 the designers held sixteen exhibitions and their products sold in American department stores including Lord & Taylor, F. Schumacher, Rich's of Atlanta and Skinner Silk.[94] Australian newspapers including the Kalgoorlie Miner, the Barrier Daily Truth, the (Adelaide) Chronicle and the (Bowral) Southern Mail published advertisements and articles on Folly Cove textile prints in 1946.[95] The positioning of STP's output

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[93] Ibid, 36.

[94] Cape Anne Museum. n.d. "Folly Cove Designers - A collection at the Cape Ann Museum: An American Art Museum just north of Boston." Accessed May 21, 2018. http://www.capeannmuseum.org/collections/folly-cove-designers.

[95] The Southern Mail. 1946. "Advertisement: RS Smith and Co. Pty Ltd - Folly Cove Prints." 13 September. Accessed May 18, 2014.
Kalgoorlie Miner. 1946. "American Women's newsletter: Folly Cove Designs - by air mail from New York." 21 February. Accessed May 18, 2014. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article95583374.
Barrier Daily Truth. 1946. "Folly Cove Designs." 25 March. Accessed May 18, 2014. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article141495580.

as 'famous American textiles' is a typical example of the cultural cringe, whereby the fabric buyer at Curzons clearly thought they would achieve better sales if they promoted their merchandise as foreign rather than locally produced designs.
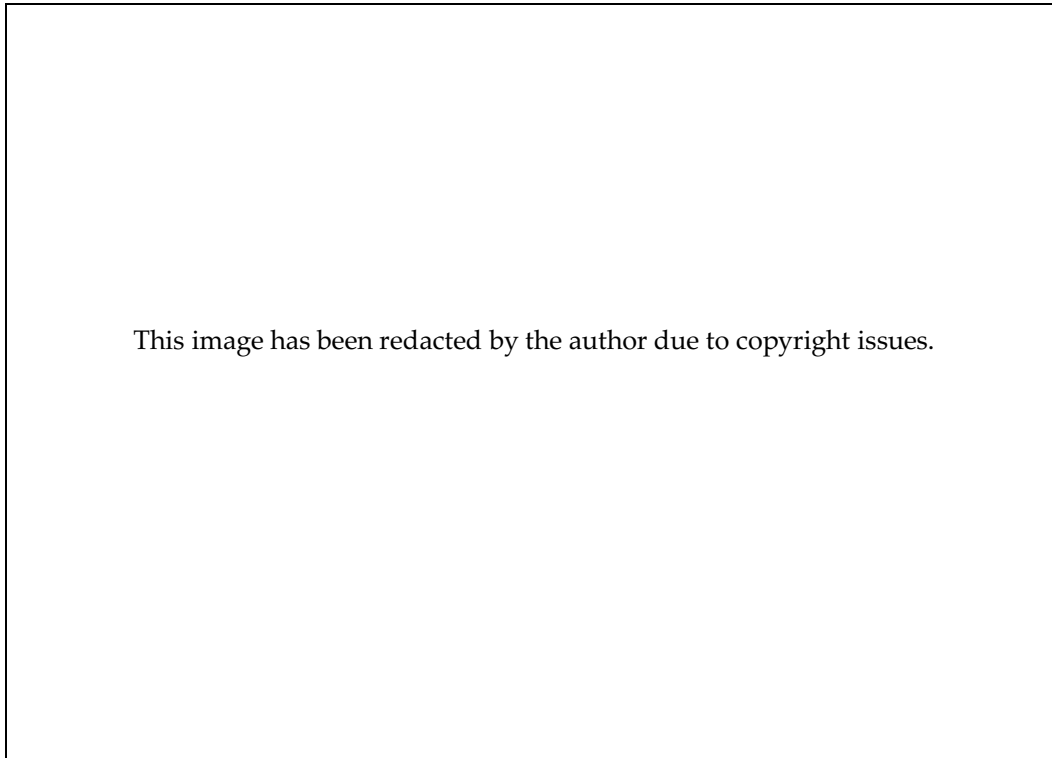
Figure 4.30 STP staff outside the factory on VJ Day, 1945.[96]

After the war, demand for textiles was so high that the factory in Barcom Avenue could not keep up with demand and so the Alcorsos began looking for larger premises, eventually deciding to relocate to a former munitions factory outside Hobart in Tasmania (refer Chapter 5: Rethinking Modernage). In 1946 the board of Silk & Textile Printers Pty Ltd recognized the contribution of Avis Higgs, Betty Skowronski and Mary Curtis to the operation of the business during the war years by awarding bonuses of £10 each to Avis Higgs and Mary Curtis and £5 to Betty Skowronski. Though this gesture would have

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The Chronicle. 1946. "Letter to Eleanor Barbour from 'Hand Blocker', 'Blocking Patterns on Materials by Hand." 11 July. Accessed May 14, 2014. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article93124851.

[96] Ibid, 22

been welcomed by the women at the time, with the benefit of hindsight it did not recognise the full extent of their contribution to STP.

Avis Higgs made the decision not to relocate to Tasmania and she left STP on January 10, 1946, "….discouraged, in no small part, by the lack of recognition that she and her fellow designers received….. ".[97] Higgs' name is not included in the list of artists contributing to Alcorso's Modernage collection of 1946–47 in the Ure Smith publication *A New Approach to Textile Designing*.[98]

4.3.1   Avis Higgs, Colorset and Joie de Vivre

Avis Higgs was not the only staff member at STP unwilling to relocate to Tasmania. Edward Malone, an industrial chemist who had worked with STP throughout the war years was also reluctant to move. Malone and Higgs took a lease on an old munitions factory in the Blue Mountains, setting up 'Colorset Printed Fabrics', which would become a member of The Textile Printer's Association of NSW in 1948.

Higgs became involved in every aspect of the new business including textile designing, making the screens, printing and sales and marketing. However, she decided that in order to broaden her expertise as a designer she needed to travel overseas and she returned home to New Zealand in February 1948 to prepare. She collated a portfolio, produced silk scarves for 'The Gallery of Helen Hitchings' in Wellington and designed cinema advertising to earn money to travel to England, eventually departing in July 1951.

In London, Higgs sold print designs to Tootal Broadhurst & Lee of Manchester. She was inducted into The Society of Industrial Artists in London, exhibited at The Colour Council and was offered a job at WE Currie & Co in Manchester on the basis of the work she exhibited. An international downturn

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[97] Lloyd-Jenkins, *Avis Higgs: Joie de Vivre*, 2000, 24.
[98] Claudio Alcorso. 1947. *A New Approach to Textile Designing*. Sydney: Ure Smith Publications, 2.

in the textile industry forced her return to London, where she worked as an agent to a French Designer F Williams Gobeaux.

After suffering serious injuries in a car accident, Avis Higgs reluctantly returned to New Zealand. In 1955 she entered a design in the second Leroy-Alcorso Design Competition (see Chapter 6), but her career as a commercial textile designer had effectively come to an end. Instead, she decided to focus on painting, joining the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts and exhibiting in exhibitions held by the Contemporary Art Society in Sydney and the Gallery of Helen Hitchings in Wellington.

The design work undertaken by Avis Higgs whilst working at STP is an important example of the interaction between designers in Australia and New Zealand during and after World War II. Higgs continued to visit Sydney throughout her later life, staying with her former STP colleague Mary Curtis, with whom she had kept in regular contact.

A large, retrospective exhibition of her work curated by Douglas Lloyd-Jenkins titled 'Avis Higgs: Joie de Vivre' was held at the Hawkes Bay Museum in Napier New Zealand in 2000. The first person listed in a vote of thanks given by Lloyd-Jenkins to those who had assisted with the exhibition and publication of the catalogue was Claudio Alcorso.[99]

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[99] Lloyd-Jenkins, *Avis Higgs: Joie de Vivre*, 2000, 24.

5 RETHINKING MODERNAGE

5.1 Social change after World War II

After the euphoria of war's end, the Australian people underwent a period of adjustment to peace. It was the Government's expectation that returning soldiers and working women would soon resume their pre-war lives, however, the reality was that the lives of people who had served in the military or supported the war effort at home had drastically changed. They had to build new civilian lives.

There was an immense impact on an entire generation of young Australian men who left its shores to defend British and Allied territories abroad. Many of the Australian soldiers who went to war were very young men who would otherwise have expected to start their working lives, marry and have families. The pressure on these men to fight for King and country was constant, with conscientious objectors subjected to ridicule and even violence, as they were during World War I.

Many were traumatised in the service of their country. Soldiers were ordered to do things that no human should be asked to do, including killing people who were just like them at close quarters and carrying out orders that meant that civilian safety was compromised. They had to live with their wartime experiences and the consequences of what they had been ordered to do for the rest of their lives.[1]

Pre-war European migrants like Claudio Alcorso, who had viewed Australia as a safe haven, were also traumatised from their experience of being

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[1] My father Sidney Sernack served during World War II in the Northern Territory, transporting bombs from Alice Springs and Darwin for the campaign against Japan in New Guinea. He suffered bombings many times in Darwin. This section is based on conversations with him and his remaining compatriots from the *2/110th Australian General Transport Company and* from his 2014 memoir *Crossroads*: *The memoirs of Sidney Sernack 'The Man For Your Wardrobe' as narrated to Linda Bermeister,* Canberra: Paragon Press, 55-84.

treated as enemy aliens and being interned with Nazis and Fascists that they had thought they had escaped from when they left Europe.

When British forces withdrew from the Pacific after the fall of Singapore, Australia had looked to the United States of America to help defend them from the encroaching threat of Japanese invasion. Led by General Douglas Macarthur, the US was seen as Australia's saviour, however, the influx of American soldiers was seen as both a scourge and a blessing. Whilst the allies were welcomed by government and the armed forces, American soldiers were simultaneously loathed for fraternising with both married and single women and loved by those women who were treated politely and given consumer goods that they could not hope to obtain anywhere in Australia.[2]

Nevertheless, the Americans brought new ideas, new music, new social practices and much needed money into the economy. They simultaneously consumed and created demand for black market goods. After the war there was an increasing reliance on the United States for new products and technologies, as factories in Britain and Europe took some time to rebuild. There were shortages of all kinds of commodities, including basic food, clothing and shelter. Despite shortages in Australia, Britain was even more affected and, it was common for English migrants to send over food and clothing parcels to relatives and friends in Great Britain who were suffering even greater hardships.[3]

Despite the casualties of war, Australia had experienced a significant population increase between 1939 and 1945. Solders who married quickly before leaving to fight overseas came home to children that they had never met. They had to provide homes for their new families. Wartime concentration on manufacturing meant that residential building in Australia had been

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[2] Brian McKinlay. 1985. *Australia 1942: End of Innocence.* Sydney: Collins, 65-75.
[3] My family regularly sent food and clothing back to our English relatives in Manchester and Liverpool after World War II.

severely constrained during the war, there was a significant shortage of rental accommodation and new homes at the end of the war. [4]

In Parliament, political differences that were set to one side when a cross-party war cabinet was established at the start of the war resurfaced. Throughout the war, Labor Party governments had successfully mobilised industry and the population to support the war effort. Agreements were reached with unions to ensure that production would not be hampered by industrial action. Wages were high, there was full employment and feelings of nationalism were strong. The end of the war created an influx of returned soldiers and migrants seeking jobs and women who expected to continue working careers they had established during the war were expected to return to domestic duties. After coming to terms with the fact that they were still alive and had their whole lives in front of them, the Australian people began to want more.

The newly formed Liberal Party of Australia capitalised on the shortages of housing and building materials to promote their political platforms of doing away with unfair taxes and red tape preventing families from owning their own homes. Returned servicemen and their families camped on their properties in tents and shacks until they could obtain the materials to build their houses on the weekends. Houses were taking years rather than months to complete. Transport and social infrastructure could not keep up with the development of new suburbs, as they sprawled out from every Australian city.[5] Figure 5.1 illustrates the Liberal's approach to creating political loyalties.

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[4] Ann-Mari Jordens. 1995. *Redefining Australians: Immigration, Citizenship and National Identity.* Sydney: Hale & Iremonger Pty Limited, Chapter 4.

[5] Judith O'Callaghan and Charles Pickett. 2012. *Designer Suburbs: Architects and Affordable Homes in Australia.* Sydney: New South Publishing, 16-23.

The Liberal Party led by Robert Menzies won state elections in Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria in 1947 and together with their partners the Country Party, were elected as the federal Government of Australia in 1949. Australia entered a 'boom' period of conservative optimism and strong industrial growth that greatly benefitted manufacturing industries, including the textiles and fashion industries. These industries would continue in strength until the early 1960s, when international competition would again begin to change the industrial landscape.[6] Liberal conservative governments would remain in power until Gough Whitlam's Labor Party won the federal election in 1972 with the iconic 'It's Time' campaign.

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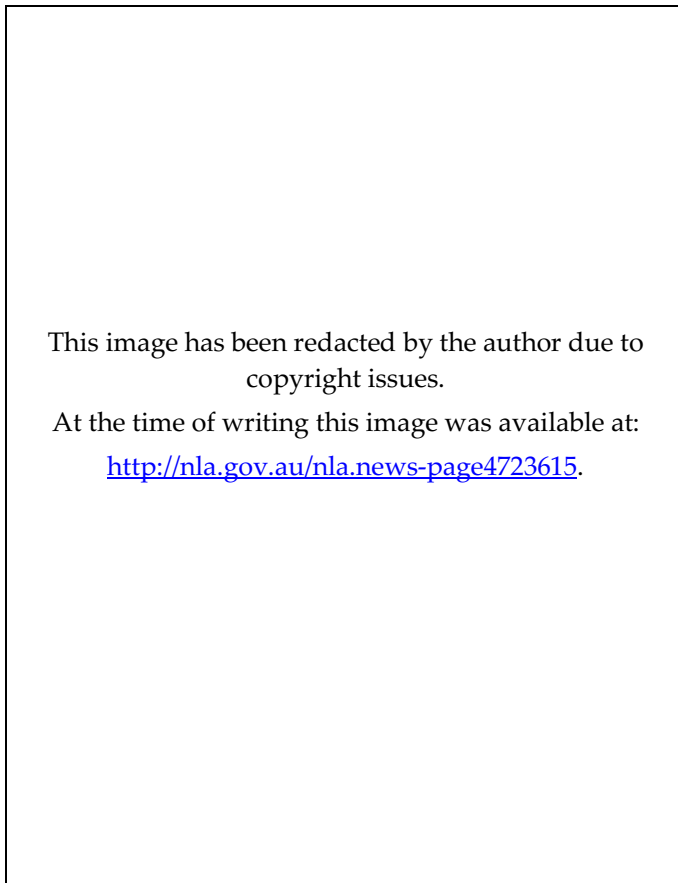
Figure 5.1 Advertisement for the Liberal Party of Australia, May 1946.[7]

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[6] Jock Collins. 2008. "Globalisation, Immigration and the Second Long Boom in Australia." *Journal of Australian Political Economy, No. 61* 244-266.

[7] Liberal Party of Australia. 1946. "We can't live in a House of Dreams…we want Bricks and Mortar NOW!" *The Australian Women's Weekly.* 11 May. Accessed May 6, 2019. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4723615.

However, the reality during this period was that not all Australians were living an idyllic lifestyle. Australia still had a high percentage of working poor whose struggles were revealed through popular literature. Ruth Park's *The Harp in the South* and *A Poor Man's Orange*[8] fictionalised the experiences of slum dwellers in Sydney's Surry Hills. They became best-sellers in Australia and overseas, revealing that Australian society was anything but equitable.

Australia's First Peoples also continued to be marginalised by racist government policies that prohibited them from voting in elections, working in white collar professions, or living side by side with white Australians in the expanding suburbs of metropolitan and regional areas. Government and religious authorities continued to separate light-skinned Aboriginal children from their parents, take them to orphanages to be assimilated and trained for a life of domestic servitude or heavy agricultural work, for which few were even paid for their labour.

Despite this reality, Australia still attracted thousands of displaced people in Europe who chose not to return to their former homelands after the declaration of peace. Following the carve-up of Europe and Asia by Allied forces after World War II, reconstruction of political, social and physical infrastructure in parts of Germany and Austria, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia were administered by Communist regimes under Soviet influence. Many former citizens of these nations who had barely escaped with their lives from the Nazis had no desire to live the rest of their days under another dictatorship.

Australia's conservative Liberal government saw Communism as an urgent an imminent threat to the Australian way of life, business and even to morality. The notion that Australia's sparsely distributed population made the

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[8] Ruth Park. 1977. *Poor Man's Orange.* Australia: Penguin Books.
      Ruth Park. 2013. *The Harp in the South.* Australia: Penguin Group.

country particularly vulnerable to Japanese invasion during the war years reasserted itself. To mitigate the future risk of a communist invasion, Australia's first post-war Minister for Immigration Arthur Calwell initiated a new scheme to bolster the population with 'the right kind of migrants', using the slogan "populate or perish" as his political mantra. Calwell looked to the displaced populations of Europe as potential new Australians.[9]

5.2   Rebuilding Australian industry

After World War II the Australian government initiated policies to replace imports with Australian production and protect new local industries through tariffs and imports licenses. The demand for consumer goods, accelerated by migration stimulated industry development.[10] Manufacturing production capacity previously dedicated to the war effort was progressively redirected to the development of consumer products. Australian industry took advantage of protectionist policies to re-tool. But it was difficult to keep pace with increased consumer demand. The black market for rationed items such as textiles, clothing, petrol and liquor continued some time beyond the end of World War II in Australia, as well as in Britain and Europe.

Small businesses established by returned servicemen were constrained by the ongoing use of coupons needed to secure materials for renovations to premises and for raw materials and components. In some areas of manufacturing, the lack of specialist machinery for new manufacturing processes led to a shortage of manufactured components until machinery could be obtained from overseas.[11]

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[9]   Jerzy Zubrzycki. 1995. "Arthur Calwell and the origin of post-war migration." *Multicultural Australia.* Accessed July 3, 2019. http://multiculturalaustralia.edu.au.

[10] University of Melbourne. 2001. "Technology in Australia 1788-1988." *Australian Science & Technology Heritage Centre.* Accessed April 21, 2012. http://www.austehc.unimelb.edu.au/tia/299.html.

[11] Michael J Baston. 1996. "Australia's Textiles, Clothing and Footwear Industries." In *Australasian Textiles and Fashion Index*, by Australian Textile Publishers, 5-27. Belmont, Victoria: Australian Textile Publishers.

Tariff protection ensured that imported foreign machinery was more expensive than locally produced products, but local producers were not producing the kinds of machinery that industry needed, or could not keep up with demand. In the late 1940s there were significant imports of machinery from the USA to support primary production in agriculture and mining, as well as the manufacture of secondary products. The US manufacturing sector had not been decimated to the same extent as British or European industry. Production was rapidly switched over to new product lines to service new export markets. During this period American manufacturing companies who had experienced high growth during the war years also began to set up local Australian franchises of their businesses to avoid tariff issues.[12]

Many women, particularly those who had lost family breadwinners, wanted to remain in the workforce. They embraced the newly available ready-made clothing and labour-saving domestic devices that would enable them to continue working, as well as maintain their homes. Some manufacturers began to manufacture local versions of new consumer products being made overseas, leading to an appropriation oriented[13] culture that persisted in Australian manufacturing until tariffs were progressively lowered from the 1970s, making original products more accessible than Australian imitations. This practice only reinforced notions of the cultural cringe, where Australian-made merchandise gained a reputation for being vastly inferior to imported goods.

People denied the opportunity to buy hard and soft-goods through the war years flocked to the large stores in cities and regional towns to buy new whitegoods and electrical products being manufactured in Australia. Buyers travelled the world looking for new and exclusive merchandise for those that

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12 University of Melbourne. 2001. "Technology in Australia 1788-1988." *Australian Science & Technology Heritage Centre.* Accessed April 21, 2012. http://www.austehc.unimelb.edu.au/tia/.html

13 Veronique Pouillard and Tereza Kuldova. 2017. "Interrogating Intellectual Property Rights in Post-war Fashion and Design." *Journal of Design History, Vol. 30, No. 4.* 9 May. Accessed July 25, 2019. doi:10.1093/jdh/epx014.

wanted and could afford imports. Department stores once again become destinations and their cafes, restaurants, ballrooms and art galleries became popular venues for social meetings and celebrations.

5.3 Post-war Australian Fashion & Textiles

Like other consumer products, textiles and clothing continued to be strictly rationed in Australia for several years after the war. STP enjoyed a boom period, as screen-printing was able to provide fast-turnaround on textile designs that could provide variety in furnishing and clothing fabrics on the limited base-cloths available. Suppliers to the apparel trade also imported virtually anything that they could get their hands on. Merv Langdon, a former employee of Sydney wholesaler Charles Parsons says of this period:

> Supplies were rationed and you had to have clothing coupons
>
> to buy fabric to make (men's) suits. Cuffs were not allowed on
>
> trousers and prices were fixed on every article we sold. With
>
> a constant battle to obtain supplies and an easy market to sell
>
> to, bribery was rampant. I knew of some wholesalers whose
>
> staff would get a pound a yard for themselves for sneaking in
>
> a few extra suit lengths to certain tailors, on top of the twelve
>
> and sixpence per yard that the top fabrics cost.[14]

Home dressmaking skills were important during this period, as rationing allowances of 112 coupons did not go far. A man's suit used up 38 coupons, whilst a women's blouse used 4, reflecting considerations of durability, but not of fashionability. The styling of manufactured clothing was still limited, with skirt lengths regulated and dolman, balloon and leg of mutton sleeves discouraged, along with petticoats and aprons. If women wanted these items,

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[14] Phil Jarrat. 1990. *The Charles Parsons Story 1915-1990.* Sydney: Charles Parsons & Company, **56-58.**

they needed to know how to make them.[15] Women who had continued to work after the war needed practical clothing for work and they still wanted to be fashionable. The ability to use coupons on fabric and make your own clothing provided an advantage for women who had dressmaking skills.

Working women who lacked dressmaking skills or had no time to sew due to work and family commitments bought their clothing from department and chain stores. Department stores continued to manufacture their own garments, also stocking clothing from prominent fashion manufacturers. Department stores and fashion houses with their own retail outlets were an important customer segment for textile printers like STP, as they were the buyers of multiple print designs, also commissioning entire print runs of their own versions of the latest fashion prints from overseas (see also Chapter 6).

European post-war migration had brought skilled textile workers, tailors and dressmakers to Australia, so finding staff to make patterns, cut and sew was no problem for fashion producers. As Alastair Whyte Greig has revealed, the clothing manufacturing sector remained labour intensive, dominated by small cut-make-and-trim (CMT) firms who made for smaller fashion labels and took subcontracted garment assembly from larger factories clustered around Clarence St in Sydney and Flinders Lane in Melbourne.[16] With increased demand for fashion clothing, the availability of skilled labour and local suppliers of printed fabrics, it was an excellent time to enter the fashion and textile industry in Australia, as many people did.[17]

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[15] Alexandra Joel. 1984. *Best Dressed: 200 years of Fashion in Australia.* Sydney: Collins, 110.

[16] Alastair Whyte Greig. 1991. "Sub-contracting, the seamy side of the clothing industry." *Australian National University Open Research.* Accessed June 14, 2019. DOI: 10.4225/13/590a516419cb8, 12.

[17] My father Sidney Sernack founded his eponymous suit and coat manufacturing business after World War II with three rolls of fabric imported from *Bruck Mills* in Canada. He set up his factory at *Nelson House*, 283 Clarence Street, Sydney in premises rented from Sir Adolph Basser.

5.4   Expansion of textile printing in Australia

When Silk & Textile Printers was established in 1939, Gilkes & Company and RM Hoskins were the only other silkscreen printers operating in Sydney. In the absence of imported furnishing fabrics, the screen-printing sector expanded slightly in Sydney when Annan Textiles opened in 1940, servicing architecture and interior design practices. In the early 1940s Marion Best Fabrics was also producing artist-designed textiles that were commission printed by Gilkes. Between them, STP, Gilkes and RM Hoskins owned much of the commercial screen-printed textile market in Sydney until the end of the war.

In 1945 a new printing company, Tennyson Textiles, opened its doors at Gladesville in Sydney in competition with all three companies. Tennyson was established by VN Vardas and Emery Yass, who had met when they had served four years together in the Australian Army. Yass had trained in screen-printing in Hungary and had migrated to Australia in 1939, where he advised the Alcorsos in setting up and operating STP. Though Yass maintained that he opened Tennyson in "friendly competition" to his former boss Amilcare Alcorso, Yass became a strong business adversary throughout the 1950s, securing business from the many small to medium fashion manufacturers in Sydney after STP relocated to Hobart.[18] Yass also employed some of the talented design staff from STP who chose not to move to Tasmania when the business relocated there in 1947.[19]

The expansion of screen-printing saw a number of companies in this sector come together to form The Federal Council of Textile Printers of NSW

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[18]   Smith's Weekly. 1949. "Artists Make Gay Colored Prints." *Smith's Weekly.* 31 December, 28. Accessed October 18, 2018. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page25458033.
The Bulletin. 1966. "Men and matters." 2 July, 44. Accessed May 29, 2019. https://nla.gov.au:443/tarkine/nla.obj-683054385.

[19]   One of these was Shirley Martin (later Shirley de Vocht), who worked at *Tennyson Textiles* from 1949-50.

& Victoria. Initial membership included Sydney-based firms STP, Tennyson Textiles, Annan, Gilkes & Company, RM Hoskins, Impression Textiles and Colorset (established by Avis Higgs and Edward Malone – see Chapter 4) and Ideal and Printex from Victoria.[20] The organisation represented the textile printing sector to Government on matters of common interest such as tariffs, promoted the benefits of Australia-made products and shared technical information.

By 1948 the NSW branch of the Council were regularly publishing articles disseminating information on chemical dyestuffs and industrial printing technologies in The Textile Journal of Australia. That year, the number of professional organisations concerned with textile printing had expanded, now including the Textile Association of Australia, The Textile Society of Australia and the Society of Dyers and Colourists of Australia.[21]

Though successful - particularly from a design perspective - many of these screen-printing companies had a smaller production capacity than STP. They were mostly owner operated and managed and had the flexibility to expand and contract production according to business need, unlike large businesses like STP. The Alcorsos were undertaking commission printing and were designing their own seasonal print collections. They were highly dependent on orders from major clients to maintain production viability. With a large factory to run, it was absolutely essential for STP to remain the printer of choice for the major fashion producers in Australia.

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[20] *The Textile Journal of Australia.* 1948. "The Federal Council of Textile Printers of NSW & Victoria." 20 April (VIC : Wilkes & Co Pty Ltd, 1926-1970) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 132.
Lech, Michael. 2005. "The Gilkes Family, Marion Best Fabrics and Early Fabric Printing in Australia." *Australiana*, August: 10.
[21] The Federal Council of Textile Printers of NSW & Victoria 1948: 132.

5.4.1 Innovation in British and American textile design

The expansion of textile printing in Australia was partly the result of a larger international post-war boom in textile production. Internationally, there was particular interest in artist-designed printed textiles as an antidote to the destruction of war and as an enabler of optimism for the future. In Britain and her dominions, manufacturers had worked with artists and designers to convert basic textiles into desirable consumer goods during the war years

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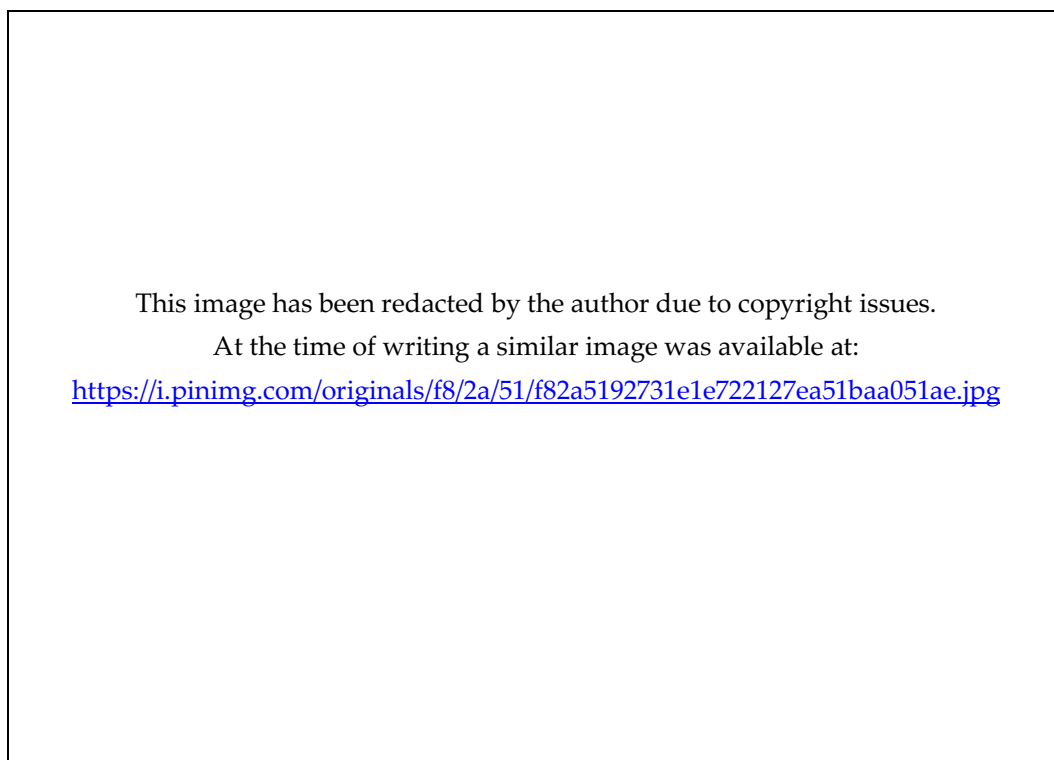
Figure 5.2 Henry Moore for Ascher Ltd, 'Piano', 1948, screen-printed rayon.[22]

Ascher was one of the companies in Britain who used famous artists to design textile prints. Zika and Lida Ascher had arrived in Britain from Czechoslovakia on their honeymoon in 1939 and were stranded when the war broke out. They brought European art and design sensibilities and used their knowledge of screen-printing printing to produce high quality textiles for the British couture market during the war. Despite shortages and rationing,

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[22] Linda Parry. 2010. *British Textiles 1700 to the Present.* London: V&A Publishing, 412.

couture fashion thrived in wartime London and also in America, as Paris had been cut off to allied nations at the time of Nazi occupation.[23]

As supplies of chemicals and dyes became available again after the war, printing remained the most cost-effective way of producing textile variety with minimum investment, particularly if screen-printing technologies were employed. Screen-printing was the perfect technique for reproducing artist's designs on fabric and the cheapest method of producing multi-coloured patterns. It had been used since the early twentieth century to produce artist's graphics and advertising posters and had since been adapted for printing wallpaper and textiles in the early 1930s. All over the world surface design was drawing extensively from modernist art. Internationally, many textile manufacturers drew upon the creative abilities of well-known artists and designers to create variety through pattern.

In 1943 Zika Ascher commissioned textile designs from sculptor Henry Moore and painter Feliks Topolski. Head-squares (scarves) also became part of their range, as did silk wall hangings, some of which were designed by Henri Matisse. In 1947 Ascher exhibited 37 head-squares by leading British and French artists at the Lefevre Gallery in London, aligning with Herbert Read's writings on 'Art and Industry'.[24]

Ascher were not the only British textile producer commissioning artist-designed textiles. Christine Boydell identified that Warner & Sons had produced artist-designed silkscreen prints as early as 1931. Other companies commissioning designs or purchasing them from artists in 1930's Britain included Edinburgh Weavers and Sandersons.[25] Rayner, Chamberlain and

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[23] Valerie D Mendes and Frances M Hinchcliffe. 1987. *Zika and Lida Ascher: Fabric, Art, Fashion.* London: Victoria and Albert Museum.

[24] Geoffrey Rayner, Richard Chamberlain and Annemarie Stapleton. 2012. *Textile Design: Artists Textiles 1940-1976.* Woodbridge: The Antique Collectors Club, 33-34.

[25] Christine Boydell. 1995. "Free-Lance Textile Design in the 1930s: An Improving Prospect?" *Journal of Design History, Vol. 8, No. 1,* 27-32 Accessed June 12, 2019. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1315908.

Stapleton have established that Duncan Grant, painter Cedric Morris and Constructivist artists HJ Bull and Thomas Bradley were all designing for Allan Walton Textiles, whilst Paul Nash had been commissioned to design by the Old Bleach Linen Company.[26]

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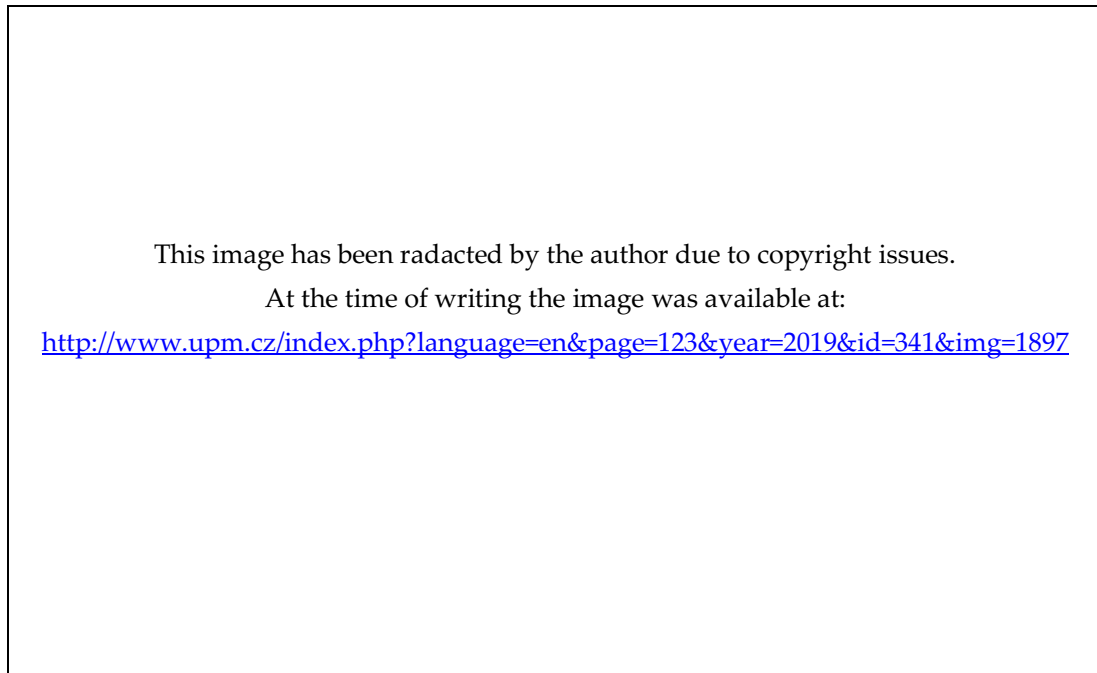
Figure 5.3 Exhibition of Ascher textiles at the Museum of Decorative Arts, Prague, 2019.[27]

In America, companies including the Onondaga Silk Company, Wesley Simpson Inc, Schiffer Prints, Marcel Vertes, Angelo Testa and Company; Ben Rose Inc. and Laverne Originals also commissioned artists to produce textile print designs. Salvador Dali, well known for his collaborations with Elsa Schiaparelli in the 1930s, designed prints for both Wesley Simpson and Schiffer Prints whilst living in America during World War II. In the late 1940s a project was initiated by artist's representative Stephan Lion, who commissioned Cecil Beaton, Eugene Berman, Jean Pages and Jean De Botton to create original textile designs that were subsequently produced as

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[26] Rayner, Chamberlain and Stapleton, 27-29.

[27] Museum of Decorative Arts, Prague. 2019. "The Mad Silkman, Zika & Lida Ascher: Textiles and Fashion." *Museum of Decorative Arts, Prague.* Accessed March 23, 2019.
http://www.upm.cz/index.php?language=en&page=123&year=2019&id=341&img=1897.

furnishing and dress fabrics by Stoffel under the collection title 'The Artist Paints in Print'.[28]

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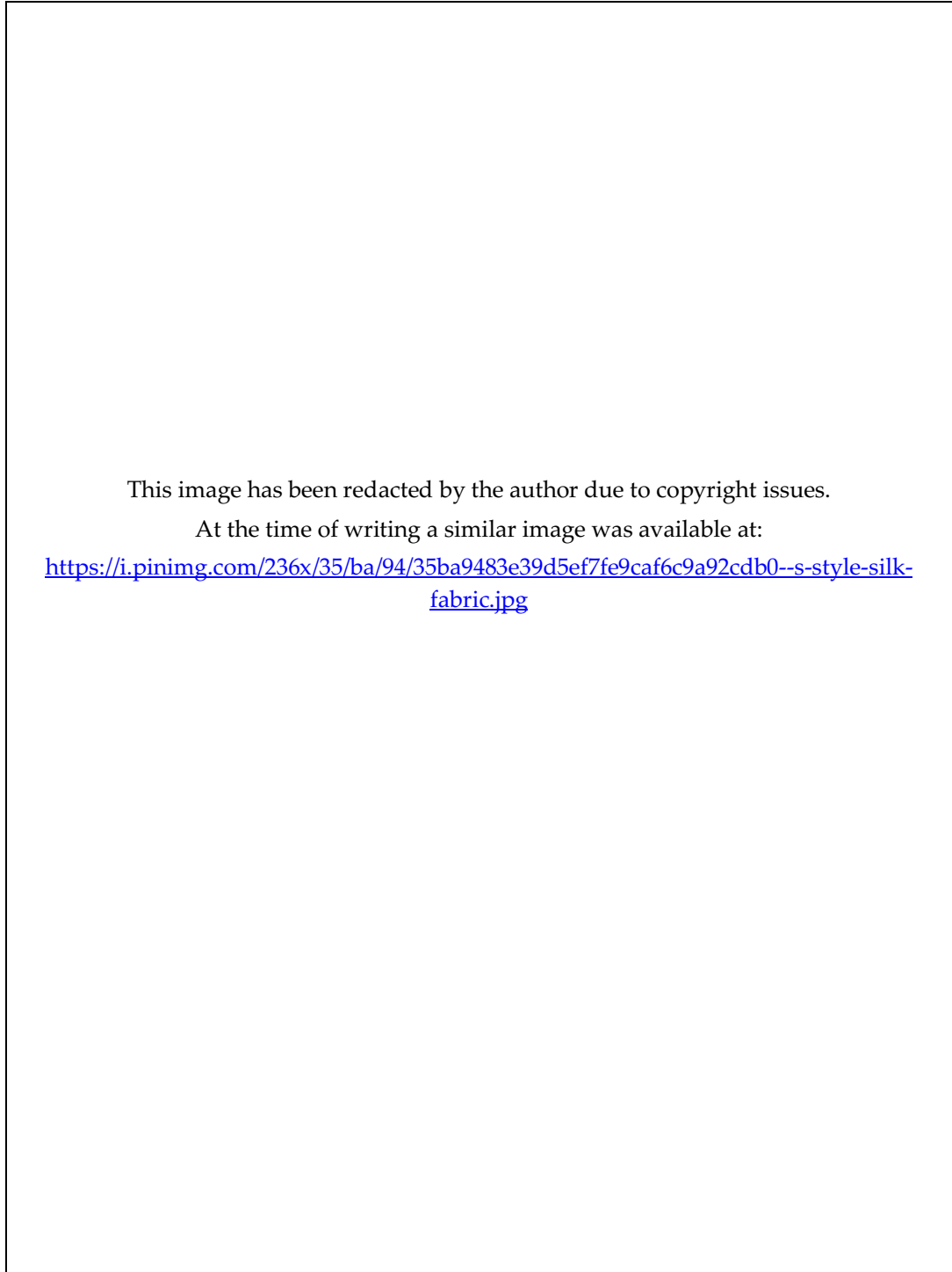
Figure 5.4 Onondaga Silk Company, Contemporary American Artist's Collection, 1947.[29]

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[28] Ibid, 59, 67.
[29] Rayner, Chamberlain and Stapleton, 58.

Figure 5.4 provides some insight into the positioning of artist-designed textile prints. A chic and elegant woman wearing a sophisticated, full length evening dress in an abstract floral print gazes admiringly at a painting standing on the easel in front of her. Does she stand amongst her own private art collection, or is she attending the opening of an important art exhibition at a respected art gallery? A hand wearing a glove made from fabric matching her impressive dress lightly touches the frame of the painting. Whether she owns the painting or not is irrelevant, because she is nevertheless an art collector. She wears a one of a kind dress made from an exclusive, American Artist print from the Onondaga Silk Company.[30]

5.4.2   Modernage

The late 1940s and early 1950s saw the continued practice of transforming fashion trends from Paris, London and New York for the Australian market. The appearance of artist-designed textiles in overseas markets would have been no surprise to the Alcorsos, who had resumed their international business travel. Claudio Alcorso's father Amilcare had been based in New York since the beginning of the war and had kept in touch with his Australian business interests, filtering through information about international textile industry trends gleaned from his contacts in the industry.

Like Ascher and other producers, STP referenced Herbert Read's theories by producing a series of 'Art in Industry' collections in the early 1940s, launching them in commercial art galleries and displaying framed artwork for the textiles as if they were paintings (see Chapter 4). With an experienced in-house team of designers and their own printing facilities, STP was well positioned to benefit from consumer interest in artist-designed textile prints. Their factory could quickly and easily produce any kind of printed textile in

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[30]   The dress was designed by Sophie Gimbel in 1947. Ibid.

response to the wants and needs of their clients. With a broad range of potential customers including drapery and textile retailers, department stores and an increasing number of clothing manufacturers, STP could cater for a diverse range of Australian textile markets. However, given the competition brought by a number of new entrants into textile printing in Australia, they chose to specialise in printing textiles for the top end of the fashion market – the silks and rayons that had made their Italian business so successful.

Despite an awareness of the artist-designed textiles being produced by firms including Ascher, Onondaga and Wesley Simpson overseas, Alcorso did not commission any textile designs from prominent Australian artists until after a collection of Ascher artist-designed textiles had travelled to Australia in January 1946, accompanied by British dress designer Matilda Etches. Perhaps this was the final impetus that inspired the commissioning of Alcorso's innovative textile collection that later became known as Modernage.

Matilda Etches brought popular Ascher print designs by Henry Moore, Feliks Topolski and Cecil Beaton to Australia and they were featured in editorials in metropolitan newspapers and women's magazines including the Australian Women's Weekly[31]. Whilst in Sydney, Matilda Etches socialised with artists and designers from the Sydney Group, some of whom were renting accommodation and studio space at Chica Lowe's bohemian boarding house 'Merioola' in Woollahra.

Donald Friend's diary mentions Etches attending a welcome cocktail party at Loudon Sainthill and Harry Tatlock Miller's rooms at 'Merioola' on 15 March 1946. Another party was held on 18 March at Chica Lowes' home 'Sailor's Dream' in Watsons Bay, where Melbourne textile designer Frances

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[31] The Australian Women's Weekly. 1946. "Lovely materials designed by famous artists." 9 February. Accessed March 17, 2015. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4722822.

Burke was also in attendance.[32] Etches had the opportunity to meet several Sydney-based artists, many of whom can be seen in Figure 5.5.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing a similar image was available at:
http://www.fleischmann.org.uk/images/MerioolaGroup.jpg
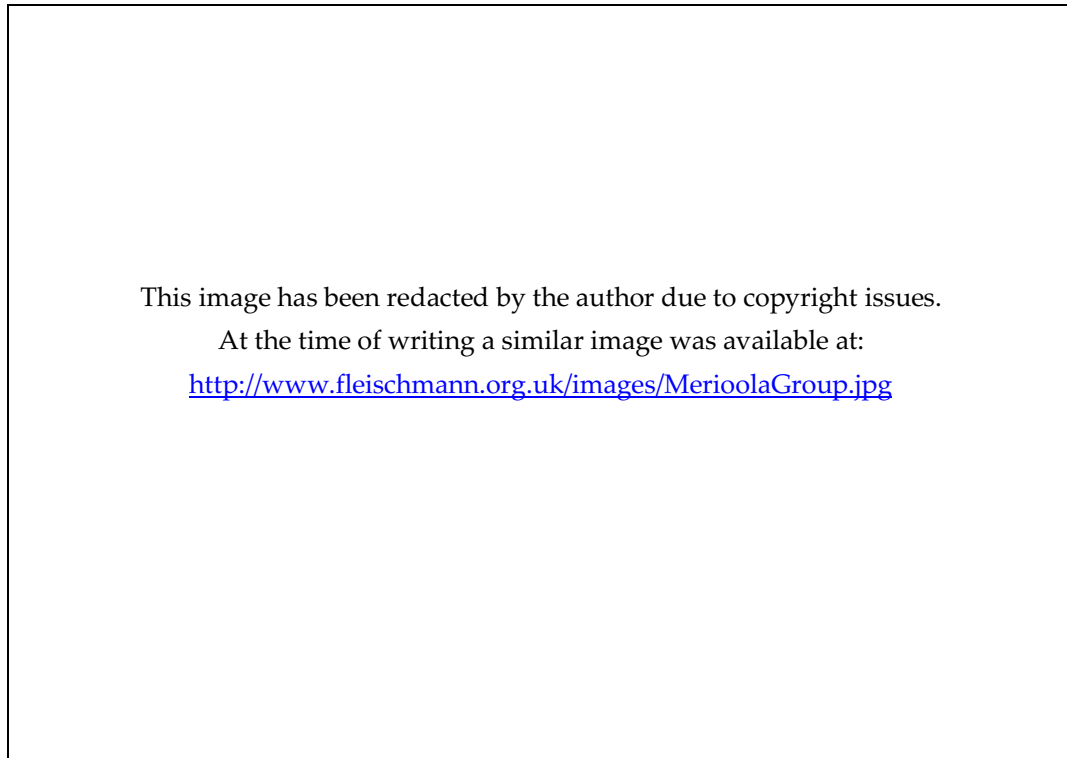
Figure 5.5 The Merioola Group, photographed by Alec Murray, 1947.[33]

At the time, STP staff designers Avis Higgs, Mary Curtis and Betty Skowronski had personal affiliations with artists from the Sydney Group. Artist Desiderius Orban was working as a designer in residence at STP, training studio staff in visual art. Although Claudio Alcorso has been credited by Australian design historians for instigating STP's collection of Australian artist-designed textiles, it was clearly an initiative drawn from international textile design and production trends of the time and business and personal connections with the Australian art world. In his memoir *The Wind You Say*, Alcorso states that he

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[32] Donald Friend. 2003. *The Diaries of Donald Friend, Volume 2.* Canberra: National Library of Australia, 358–359.

[33] Michaela Richards. 1993. *The Best Style: Marion Hall Best and Australian Interior Design* 1935-1975. Roseville: Art and Australia Books, 36. From left: Arthur Fleischmann, sculptor; Alison Lee, dancer, Borovansky Ballet; Justin O'Brien, artist; Donald Friend, artist; Loudon Sainthill, artist; Peter Kaiser (facing left, with guitar), artist; Harry Tatlock Miller, writer; Edgar Richard, artist; Jocelyn Rickards, artist; Chica Lowe, 'chatelaine of Merioola'; Alec Murray, photographer and Roland Strasser, artist.

believed that Australia was at the beginning of a naissance and that he felt he could contribute by using local talent in textile design and production. The timing was perfect for producing a collection that aligned Australian artists to his business and his desire to make a cultural contribution to his new homeland.[34]

Being risk averse, Alcorso began the initiative quietly, by commissioning several designs from well-known artists that could be integrated into STP's 1946 'Art in Industry' collection. He first approached publisher and artist Sydney Ure Smith, the founder of the Society of Artists, part owner of Smith & Julius and principal of Sydney Ure Smith Publications. Ure Smith's publications at the time included 'The Home', 'Art and Australia' and 'Australia, The Journal' – all of which had provided work opportunities for Australian artists in the first half of the twentieth century. The Home was known for the high standard of its illustrations by artists including Thea Proctor, Margaret Preston, Adrian Feint and Douglas Annand.[35]

Ure Smith introduced Alcorso to Hal Missingham, director of the National Gallery of NSW, who immediately alerted Sydney-based artists to the opportunity to design textiles for STP. A letter from Russell Drysdale to Donald Friend, reproduced in Friend's diaries, provides clues on how artists were recruited and how much money they made from their designs. It also mentions grand plans for promotion of the collection (and potentially the artists themselves) overseas:

> By the way Silk and Textiles are most anxious for you to do a
> design for them—l told them you were Trader Horning and
> didn't know when you will be back—they want if possible to

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[34] Claudio Alcorso. 1993. *The Wind You Say.* Pymble, NSW Australia: Angus and Robertson, 78.

[35] Nancy Underhill. 1991, *Making Australian Art 1916-49: Sydney Ure Smith, Patron and Publisher*, Oxford University Press Australia, Melbourne.

have a design or designs done within the next month or two.
They are going to have a big New York Exhibition sometime
late this year or beginning of next and are accordingly getting
everything set. Apparently the present designs went over big
with buyers there. Out here they're marketing them. They
have sold 400 yards of my stuff here - l get a royalty 2/- a yard
which means about £50 so far. They tell me they expect to sell
some thousands of yards in America. Seems pretty good. I
only hope you can get some done.[36]

Initially, Alcorso chose five designs by Hal Missingham, William Dobell, Margaret Preston, Douglas Annand and Donald Friend to be printed as part of a trial run. Alcorso had a pre-war business relationship with Charles Lloyd Jones, the head of David Jones, an art patron and an artist himself. David Jones bought 150 yards of each artist's design in every colour way and sold out quickly. By the time STP's 1946 Art in Industry collection was officially launched it included additional artist's designs by Desiderius Orban, Frank Hinder, Geoffrey Graham, Alice Danciger, James Gleeson and Roy Dalgarno.[37]

Alcorso's actions in commissioning these designs drew from both commerce and culture. He was consciously creating opportunities for artists to align their artistic goals to commercial gain. He exploited Herbert Read's notions of uniting art with industry to gain a strategic commercial advantage over his business competitors with a new and unique product – Australian, artist-designed textiles. Choosing Australian artists was strategic. Alcorso knew that they were relatively unknown in the United States and Europe, so prints designed by them would appear fresh and different – two key factors for success when entering established markets such as Europe – for Alcorso

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[36] Friend, *The Diaries of Donald Friend*, Volume 2, 505.

[37] The Sydney Morning Herald. 1946. "Art in Textile Designs." 4 September. Accessed December 15, 2018. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article17993125.

had designs on exporting his textiles overseas. The designs had the potential to provide fashion and interior designers and home sewers with an opportunity to introduce identifiable Australian art into their wardrobes, homes and offices.

Alcorso was not prescriptive in his brief to the artists, preferring them to draw from their own oeuvre, as design technicians at STP were more than capable of setting any motif into a repeat for printing. What he wanted from the artists was their creativity and originality – not a perfect pattern repeat. Alcorso also offered a royalty of two shillings per yard rather than purchasing each design outright, as was the industry practice at the time. The potential of a long-term income stream was most attractive for artists. Alcorso said:

> We agreed that the artists should receive a royalty on sales because it would be difficult to place a value on their sketches. There would be no restraint on them in terms of design other than those imposed by the limits of our technology at the time.[38]

The notion of offering a royalty rather than purchasing an artist's design outright had a business advantage for STP that went beyond a 'sense of fair play'. A commission paid on yards sold mitigated business risk. The only costs to STP were salary, consumable and administration costs of putting the pattern into repeat, printing sample lengths and showing them to customers. Multiple colour-ways for each design could be printed in short lengths to gauge their appeal before committing to bulk printing. If a design did not sell from the sample swatch, it needn't be printed in bulk and therefore risk was minimised. Designs and colour-ways that were popular could be re-printed and provided

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[38] Claudio Alcorso, *1989*. "Speech transcript - facsimile from Jane Gilmour." *NS3001/1/27 Writings and talks by Claudio Alcorso.* Hobart: State Archive of Tasmania.

indications for future designs along similar lines. It was an ideal, win-win situation for all parties concerned.

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At the time of writing the image was available at:
https://collection.maas.museum/object/11719.
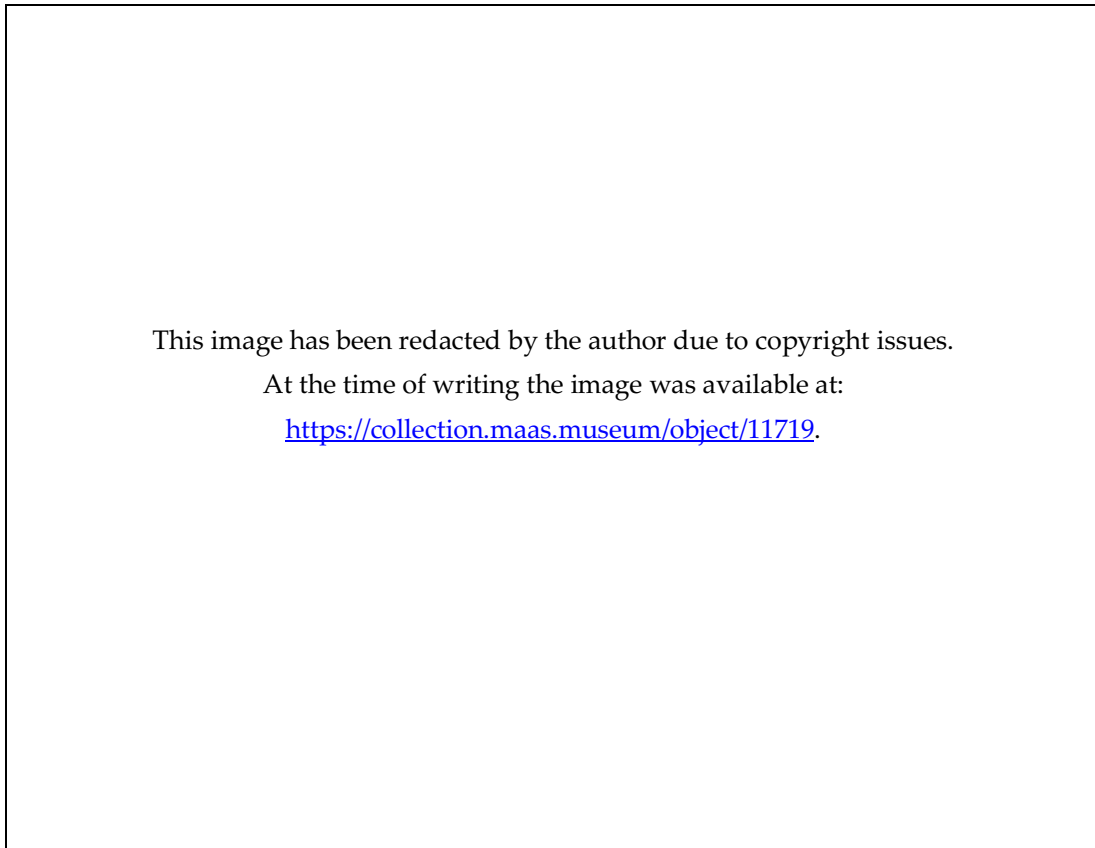
Figure 5.6 STP's 'Art in Industry' exhibition, September 1946, Hotel Australia, Sydney.[39]

Launched at the Hotel Australia in Sydney, STP's collection for 1946 was exhibited as draped swags cascading down walls and plinths designed to mimic the appearance of the textile on furniture or on the body. The usual curtains in the hotel were replaced with samples of STP's furnishing fabrics (Figure 5.6), so that people could imagine the fabrics furnishing their lounge rooms.

Hal Missingham (1906-1994) contributed two designs to the 1946 collection – 'Driftwood' and 'Seashells'. Apart from his role as director of the National Gallery of NSW, Missingham had a reputation as a photographer and

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[39] Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences. 1946. "STP Art in Industry exhibition, Hotel Australia." *Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences*. September. Accessed June 15, 2019. https://collection.maas.museum/object/11719.

a competent water-colourist, though he is not as highly regarded as artists like Russell Drysdale or William Dobell. Australian Critic Robert Hughes scathingly referred to him as one of the "…..various decorators and designers, whose work is generously regarded as painting."[40]
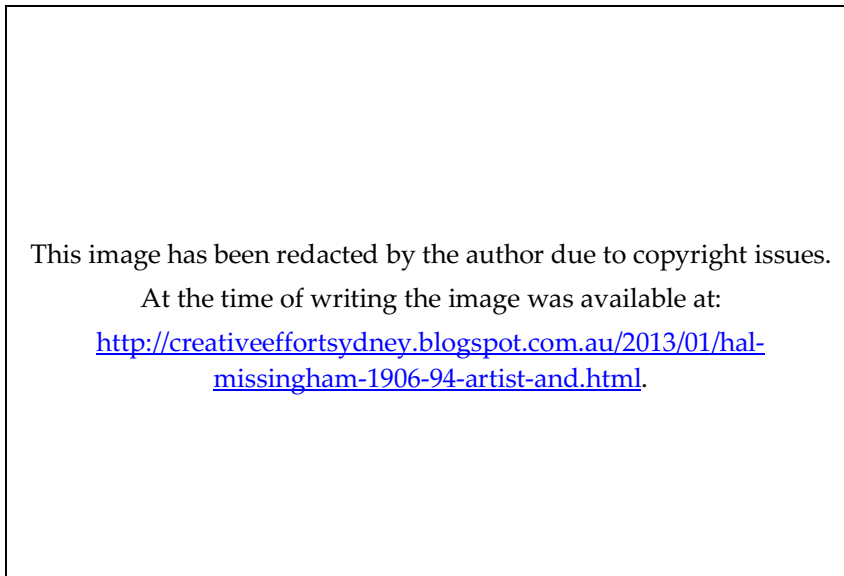
Figure 5.7 Hal Missingham, 'Erosion by the Creek', 1954.[41]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing the image was available at:
http://creativeeffortsydney.blogspot.com.au/2013/01/hal-missingham-1906-94-artist-and.html.
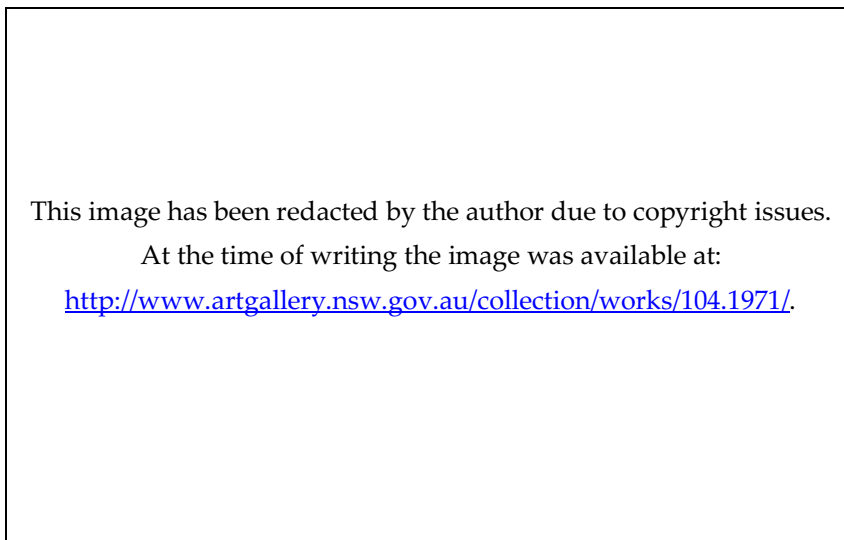
Figure 5.8 Hal Missingham 'Driftwood', 1947.[42]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing the image was available at:
http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/104.1971/.

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[40] Robert Hughes. 1970. *The Art of Australia,* revised edition. Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin, 180.

[41] Hal Missingham. 1954. "Erosion by the Creek." *Creative Efforts Sydney.* Accessed February 10, 2013. http://creativeeffortsydney.blogspot.com.au/2013/01/hal-missingham-1906-94-artist-and.html. Collection of the Art Gallery of NSW, Pencil, watercolour, 37.6 x 53.3 cm.

[42] Hal Missingham. 1947. "Driftwood." *Art Gallery of NSW.* Accessed November 11, 2012. http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/104.1971/. Screen-printed rayon crepe. 51 x 32.7 cm.

Missingham's watercolours capture the rugged Australian landscape – sand dunes, brush and the bush. His design 'Driftwood' (Figure 5.8) draws from the subjects of his watercolours. The pattern is composed of stylised black line drawings of a piece of eroded driftwood, interspersed with representations of smaller wood fragments. The design was intended for printing on silk and for eveningwear. Several colour ways have survived and it appears from the Modernage catalogue[43] that there was a black and white version as well. The colourway held in the Art Gallery of NSW has pieces of driftwood overprinted with blue, orange and pink. The overall effect is of a conventional pattern repeat, made of visual elements from nature.

Missingham's second design 'Seashells' was a monochromatic repeat of cone-shaped shells with irregular markings, interspersed with representations of pebbles and seaweed printed on Dutch-cloth for furnishing and on silk and rayon dress-weight fabrics. From a distance, the pattern almost disappears into smudges. Dresses were made up in the print for publicity and New Zealand architect Brian O'Rorke selected the design for the curtains, bedspreads and upholstery in the first-class flat on the RMS Orcades III in 1949 (refer also Figure 5.70).

Russell Drysdale (1912-1981) contributed two designs in 1946 – 'Tree Forms' and 'Stone and Wood'. Both designs were based on a series of drawings and paintings showing the effect of drought on outback New South Wales, commissioned by The Sydney Morning Herald in 1944.[44] Drysdale used images drawn from several well-known drought paintings, including 'The Walls of China – Gol Gol' (1945) and 'Tree Form' (1945) illustrated in Figure 5.9. The repeat motifs used in the textile design 'Tree Forms' clearly derive from the painting with a similar name.

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[43] Claudio Alcorso. 1947. *A New Approach to Textile Designing.* Sydney: Ure Smith Pty Ltd, 19.

[44] Australian Broadcasting Corporation. 1999. "Russell Drysdale 1912-1950." *Australian Broadcasting Corporation.* Accessed June 13, 2015. http://www.abc.net.au/arts/drysdale/themes/essay1.htm.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing the image was available at:

http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/collection/work/75862.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing the image was available at:

http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/col/work/46662.

Figure 5.9 Russell Drysdale, 'Tree Form', 1945.[45]

Figure 5.10 Russell Drysdale, 'Tree Forms', 1946-47, brown colourway.[46]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing the image was available at:

http://www.joseflebovicgallery.com/catalogue/CL_141_2010/Pages/pg12.
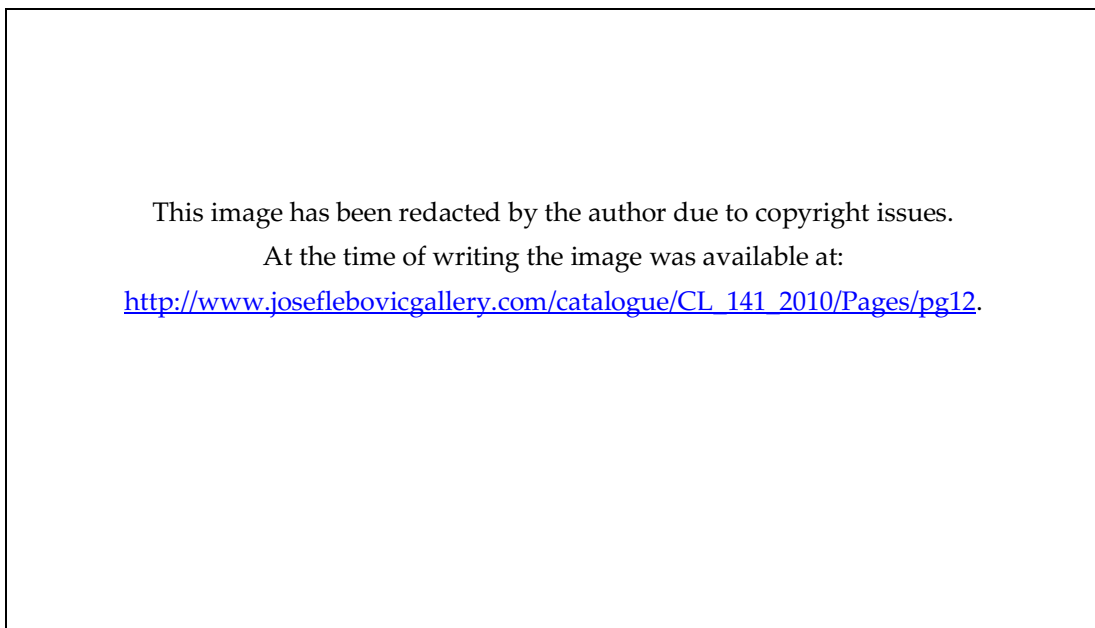
Figure 5.11 Russell Drysdale, 'Tree Forms', 1946-47, green and red colourway.[47]

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[45] Russell Drysdale. 1945. "Tree Form." *National Gallery of Victoria.* Accessed November 22, 2016. http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/collection/work/75862. Oil on canvas, 61.7 x 76.7 cm.

[46] Russell Drysdale. 1946-47. "Tree Forms." *National Gallery of Victoria.* Accessed March 23, 2014. http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/col/work/46662. Screen-printed wool. 91 x 94 cm.

[47] Russell Drysdale. 1946-47. "Tree Forms." *Josef Lebovic Gallery.* Accessed April 1, 2012. http://www.joseflebovicgallery.com/catalogue/CL_141_2010/Pages/pg12. Screen-printed wool.

Contorted tree roots and branches appear in an arid landscape where monumental tree trunks overwhelm the presence of humans, who appear as minute, transitory figures. The colours used in the sample held by the Art Gallery of NSW features jade greens, pastel salmon, red, maroon and bright yellow (see Figure 5.11) overlaid with black line drawings – colours clearly designed to tone down the gruesome nature of the subject matter, making it more palatable for interiors.

The chief motifs in Drysdale's second design 'Stone and Wood' are the skull and skeleton of a dead animal surrounded by bones and rock like forms The pictorial repeat is large – no doubt intended for curtains and upholstery. The design was available in at least three different colour ways (refer Figures 5.77 – 5.79). Lengths exist in blue, grey and light green with a maroon and purple background; pink, yellow and grey; and moss green, blue and grey picked out with pink and salmon highlights. The colourations deflect the macabre nature of the repeat motif, treating the subject matter as purely decorative, which can be unsettling once the subject of the pattern becomes apparent.

According to Alcorso's memoir, William Dobell (1899-1970) drew the inspiration for his design 'Burlesque' from a woman he had observed dancing around in Kings Cross Sydney, wearing a feathered hat.[48] The title 'Burlesque' suggests that the subject may have been a professional dancer working in one of the many night clubs in Kings Cross, though the figure also resembles the subject of his 1938 painting of a "pearly" called 'Derby Day' (Figure 5.12). The female figure in 'Burlesque' is dynamic, curvilinear and joyous - more of a quick sketch than a fully resolved study of a human figure. The 1947 Modernage catalogue illustrates Dobell's print in two sizes – the larger version printed in two colours on a light-coloured Dutch-cloth and the smaller design

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[48] Claudio Alcorso. 1993. *The Wind You Say.* Pymble, NSW Australia: Angus and Robertson, 84.

'Burlesque II' printed in classic black on a light-coloured rayon for dresses. The motif of the dancer has been reduced to a check, a repeat device that would have created challenges for dressmakers and upholsterers intent on matching checks on the larger scale version on seams and joins.

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Figure 5.12 William Dobell, 'Derby Day', 1938.[49]
Figure 5.13 William Dobell, 'Burlesque I', 1946, black, red and white colourway.[50]
Figure 5.14 William Dobell, 'Burlesque I', 1946, green and mustard colourway.[51]

A photograph of Thelma Clune (Figure 5.15), gallery owner and art aficionado, gives some idea of the type of customer who purchased Modernage fabrics. The photograph was taken by her husband, writer Frank Clune, as she greeted local children in Papua New Guinea on a visit there in 1949. Clune chose the print on a light-coloured base-cloth and has had the dress made to measure by

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[49] William Dobell. 1938. "Derby Day." In *A Story of Australian Painting*, by Mary Eagle and John Jones, 1994, 179. Sydney: Pan MacMillan. Oil on paper on board. 19.5 x 16.5 cm.

[50] William Dobell. 1946. "Burlesque I." *Josef Lebovic Gallery.* Accessed October 16, 2016. http://www.joseflebovicgallery.com/Catalogue/CL_141_2010/Large/141_0088b.jpg. Screen-printed cotton.

[51] William Dobell. 1946. "Burlesque I." *Art Gallery of NSW.* Accessed October 16, 2016. https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/94.1971/. Screen-printed cotton, 43.7 x 44.8 cm.

a dressmaker who has taken particular care in matching the pattern on the side seams, as would have been expected at the time. Her printed dress elevates her into an extravagant visitor, quite a contrast to the unadorned cloth of the local people in New Guinea.

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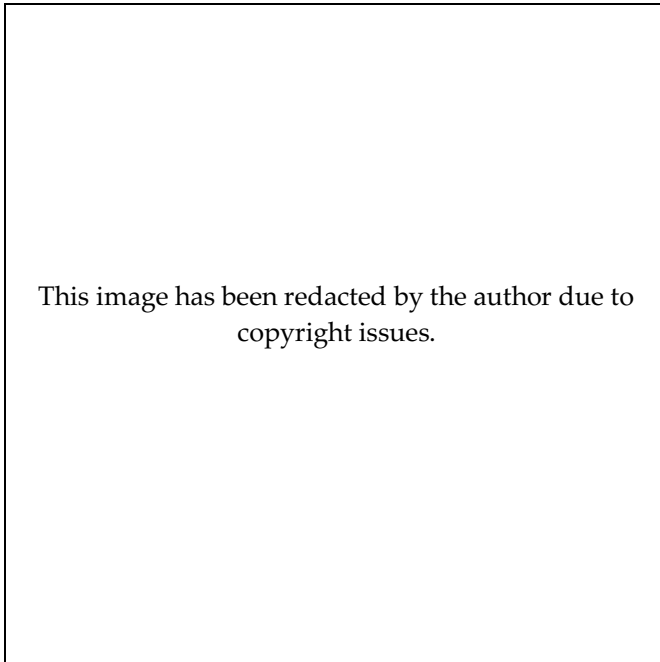
Figure 5.15 Thelma Clune in a rayon dress printed in Dobell's 'Burlesque II'.[52]
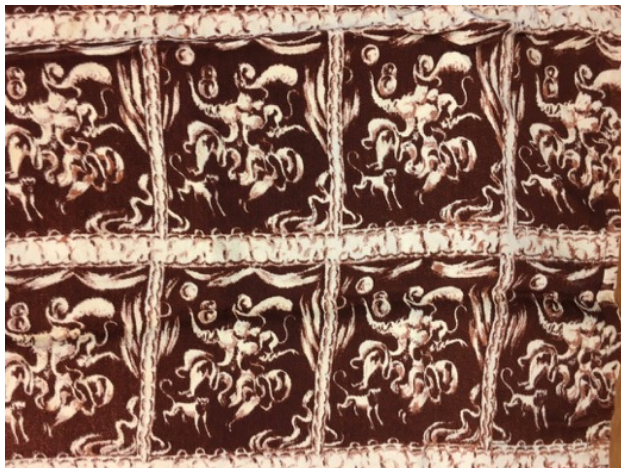
Figure 5.16 William Dobell, 'Burlesque II' , 1947, brown, caramel on cream rayon.[53]

Margaret Preston (1875-1963) based her Modernage design 'Adina' on the banksia flower, a motif often seen in her semi-abstract paintings of native

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[52] Frank Clune. Photo provided to Christopher Menz by Thelma Clune. Menz, Christopher. Summer 1987, No. 4. "1946. Modernage Fabrics." *Craft Australia:* 77.

[53] William Dobell. 1946. *Burlesque II.* National Library of Australia, Canberra. Accessed January 7, 2019. Author's photograph. Screen-printed rayon.

Australian flora such as 'The Brown Pot' (1940). 'The Brown Pot' (Figure 5.17) illustrates a still life arrangement of banksia flowers in tones of brown, beige, ochre and terracotta, highlighted with olive green foliage and black line. The colours reflect Preston's well-known desire to create a national Australian design style referencing the art of Aboriginal peoples.[54]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing the image was available at:

http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/sub/preston/events_talks.html.

Figure 5.17 Margaret Preston, detail, 'The Brown Pot', 1940.[55]

Figure 5.18 Margaret Preston, 'Adina', 1946-47.[56]

[54] Margaret Preston. 2006. "Paintings in Arnhem Land." In *Modernism & Australia: Documents on Art, Design & Architecture 1917-1967*, by Ann Stephen, Andrew McNamara and Philip Goad, 396-399. Carlton, Victoria: The Miegunyah Press.

[55] Margaret Preston. 1940. "The Brown Pot." *Art Gallery of NSW*. Accessed February 14, 2014. http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/sub/preston/events_talks.html. Oil in canvas, 51 x 45.8 cm.

[56] Margaret Preston. 1946-47. "Adina." Author's photograph. *National Gallery of Victoria*. Melbourne. Screen-printed rayon, 99 x 86 cm.

The colour-way of 'Adina' (Figure 5.18) held in the National Gallery of Victoria incorporates bright red, light orange, maroon and black on an off-white rayon base, fashion colours popular at the time that would have had greater appeal to fashion customers of 1946-47. Bold horizontal and vertical lines bisect the design forming black rectangles that contain the abstracted banksia motifs, which are surrounded by floating discs in white, orange and maroon that gaze out like eyes in the darkness.

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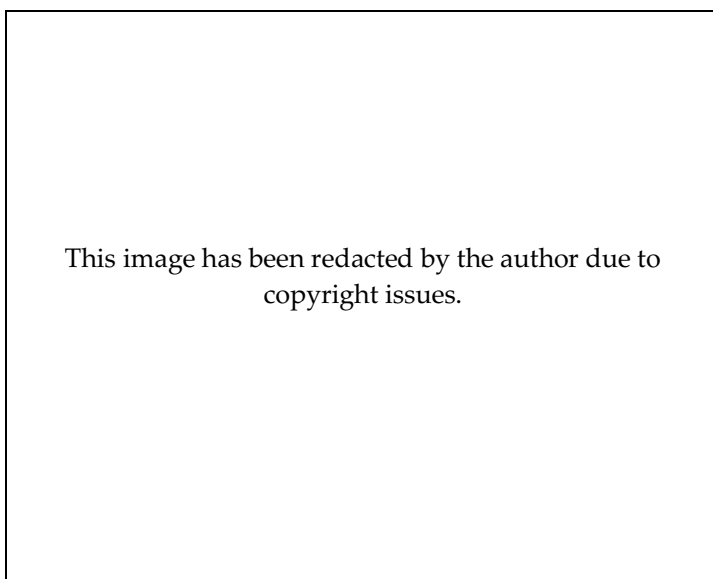
Figure 5.19 Donald Friend, "The Schooner 'Miena' refitting at Townsville", 1954.[57]

Figure 5.20 Donald Friend, 'Pearl Diver's, 1946-47.[58]

[57] Barry Pearce. 1990. *Donald Friend 1915-1989 Retrospective.* Sydney: Art Gallery of NSW & The Beagle Press, 82. Oil on canvas, 38.1 x 45.7 cm.

[58] Donald Friend. 1947. "Pearl Divers." Author's photograph. *National Gallery of Victoria.* Melbourne. Screen-printed cotton, 96 x 89 cm.

Donald Friend (1915-1989) based his design 'Pearl Divers' (Figure 5.20) on paintings from his travels to the Torres Straight Islands and Queensland, where he observed indigenous divers collecting pearls and mother of pearl for jewellery and button production (Figure 5.19).[59] The length held at the National Gallery of Victoria is printed on Dutch-cloth for furnishing, though the design would have perfectly suited the popular printed rayon 'Hawaiian' shirts increasingly worn as casual dress by fashionable Americans of the time. The design incorporates bright pastels with a predominance of blue, steel grey, aqua and eau-de-Nile, with accents of yellow, pastel and burnt orange creating a watercolour effect with an overlay of Figures picked out in black line.

Some of the most striking and original designs from the 1946 collection were by James Gleeson (1915-2008), a poet, critic, writer and curator and an accomplished draughtsman and painter in the Surrealist tradition made famous by Salvador Dali and Giorgio de Chirico. Gleeson was an arbiter of modern taste, writing for both the Sydney Sun and Herald Sun. He authored several monographs on well-known Australian artists including one on Sir William Dobell in 1964.[60] Two of his designs for the 1946 'Art in Industry' collection – 'Totem' and 'Stone Frond', recall his surrealist drawings of contorted and tormented body parts (refer Figure 5.21 'The Creation of Eve').

A third design, 'Cryptogram', is a Surrealist parody of a traditional foulard design, with organic, embryonic swirls resolving into what would appear to be a quite conventional monotone dress pattern when seen from a distance. Unlike the designs of Drysdale, Dobell, Preston and Friend, whose designs are essentially paintings that have been placed into a repeat, Gleeson's designs are purpose-designed for continuity. They demonstrate an understanding of motif design, arrangement, scale and pattern repeat. The use

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[59] Friend, *The Diaries of Donald Friend*, Volume 2, 2003.

[60] Art Gallery of NSW. n.d. "Biography: James Gleeson." Accessed December 10, 2019. https://artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/artists/gleeson-james/.

of monotone adds graphic drama, refining the design with an elegance making it suitable for the chicest interior furnishings and the most elegant fashion garments.

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Figure 5.21 James Gleeson, 'The creation of Eve', 1980.[61]   Figure 5.22 Gleeson, 'Stone Frond', 1946-47.[62]

Figure 5.23 James Gleeson, 'Totem', 1946-47 , screen-printed rayon.[63]

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[61] James Gleeson. 1980. "The creation of Eve." *Art Gallery of NSW.* Accessed November 14, 2014. https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/294.1993/. Charcoal, pastel and watercolour, 49.8 x 69.8 cm.

[62] Alcorso, *A New Approach to Textile Designing,* 1947: 12.

[63] James Gleeson. 1946-47. "Totem." Author's photograph. *National Gallery of Victoria.* Melbourne. Screen-printed rayon, 92 x 94 cm.

Like Gleeson's designs, 'Jungle Song' by Douglas Annand (1903-1976) demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of pattern repeat for surface design. Annand, using the nomenclature of the time, described himself foremost as a 'commercial artist' – he would be called a designer in the twenty-first century. Annand also produced sculptures, paintings, drawings and other artworks in a variety of diverse media including glass. Versatile practitioners like Annand could easily work across mediums and contexts, routinely producing commercial work as diverse as illustration, typography, photography, publications design and textile print design according to their client's needs.[64]

Figure 5.24 Douglas Annand, 'Jungle Song', 1946-47.[65]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing a similar image was available at:
https://media.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/thumbnails/collection_images/8/87.1971%23%23S.jpg.505x363_q85.jpg

Annand was a popular graphic designer known for his iconic poster designs cover designs for The Home. He had been instrumental in creating the design for the Australian Pavilion at The World's Fair in New York in 1939 and had contributed many. Where Dobell and Preston's pictorial design motifs were

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[64] Anne McDonald. 2001. *Douglas Annand: The Art of Life.* Canberra: National Gallery of Australia.
[65] Alcorso. *A New Approach to Textile Designing,* 1947, 41.

placed in repeat within the rigid confines of a check, Annand's elegant placement of circular motifs, simplified human figures, leaf fronds, stylised animals and sunbursts in olive, salmon red and ochre was clearly conceived as an overall pattern. The scale of 'Jungle Song' is large, colourful and bold. It would have been perfect for a wool challis, with the design lending itself to winter dresses and blouses for a sophisticated and fashionable woman of the time. Jungle Song reflects Annand's knowledge of the constraints of designing for surfaces as a commercial artist used to working to a client brief, rather than a painter creating a picture to please him or herself.
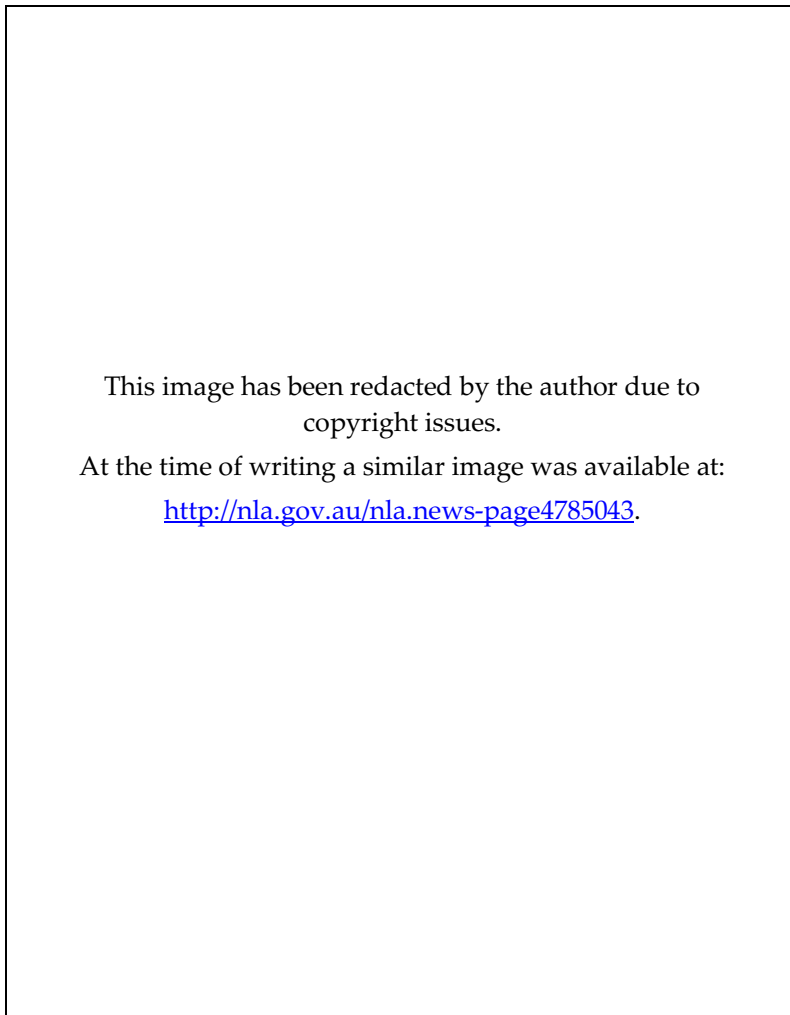
Figure 5.25 Scarves by Ascher, 1947.[66]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing a similar image was available at:
http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4785043.

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[66] The Australian Women's Weekly. 1947. "Scarves...by Ascher." 8 November. Accessed July 19, 2014. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4785043.

Apart from continuous fabric prints, the 1946 Art in Industry collection included a number of head-square or scarf designs.[67] Not only did the STP head-squares seek to emulate Ascher's success with the typology, they also provided a fully-fashioned product that STP could produce and sell direct to draperies, boutiques and department stores without any intermediaries, ensuring a higher profit percentage. As the Sydney Morning Herald advised its readers, scarves provided added chic - "That Extra Touch"- to a basic frock, together with the matching handbag, gloves and jewellery.[68] Figure 5.25 shows some of the ways that women of the late 1940s would use a scarf to accessorise their outfits.

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Figure 5.26 Alice Danciger, 'Voyage within a Dream', red colourway, 1946-47.[69]	Figure 5.27 Alice Danciger, 'Voyage within a Dream', black colourway, 1946-47.[70]

Modernage head-squares were displayed framed, like artworks, emphasising their role as works of art for the body and challenging the conception that commercial art was less valued. Alice Danciger (1914-1991) produced the

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[67] The Australian Women's Weekly. 1946. "Lovely materials designed by famous artists." 9 February. Accessed March 17, 2015. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4722822.

[68] The Sydney Morning Herald. 1947. "That extra touch in accessories." 11 August, 30. Accessed June 12, 2019. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page100843231 and http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page1008433.

[69] Arcadja.com. 1946-47. "Alice Danciger, Stage Designs." *Arcadja.com*. Accessed March 22, 2014. http://www.arcadja.com/auctions/en/danciger_alice/artist/362859/.

[70] Ibid.

head-square design 'Voyage within a Dream' (Figures 5.26 – 5.27) that recalled the theatrical landscapes of the sets she had designed for the Kirsova Ballet.[71] Available on either black or red backgrounds, 'Voyage within a Dream' depicts minimal, athletic and graceful ballet dancers in front of a painted backdrop of a ruined wall, a distant castle and wispy clouds. The painterly and ethereal pattern disappears into abstraction once the scarf is tied around the neck, head or waist. She said of her design: "……… I was primarily concerned with strong form, colour and movement. As it was to be printed on silk, it was necessary to keep in mind the lightness and delicacy associated with that material."[72]
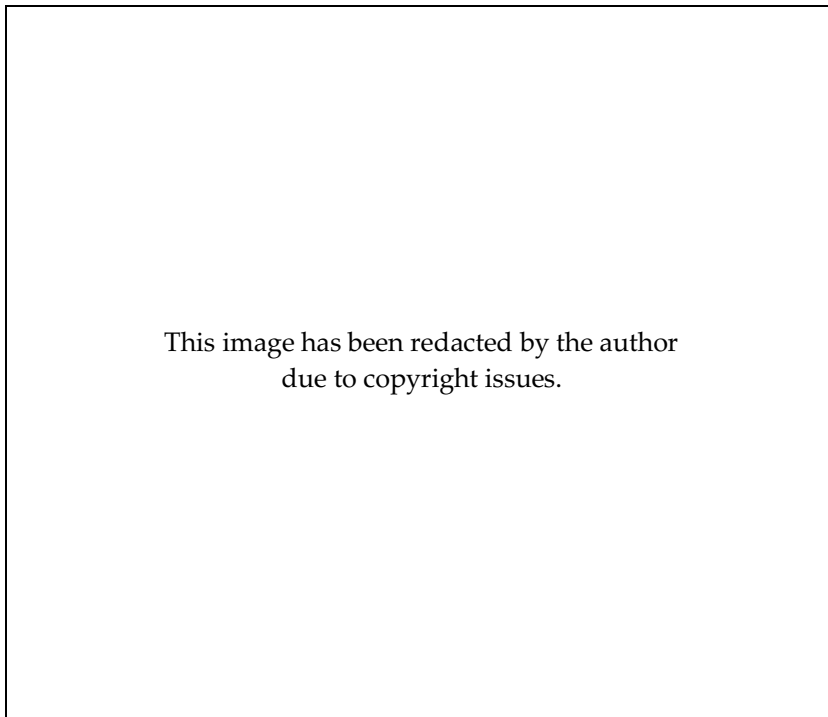
Figure 5.28 Paul Haefliger, 'Love Letter', 1946-47.[73]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

Artist and critic Paul Haefliger (1914-1982) designed an innovative black on white scarf based on a redacted love-letter, surrounded by a collection of crumpled, rejected drafts. Haefliger made the following, somewhat sexist

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[71] Anita Callaway and Joan Kerr. 2013. "Alice Danciger b.1 August 1914." *Design and Art Australia Online.* Accessed June 12, 2019. https://www.daao.org.au/bio/alice-danciger/biography/.

[72] Alcorso, *A New Approach to Textile Designing,* 1947, 13.

[73] Ibid.

comment about the text in this design: "Words of love, so embarrassing to man, stir, shall we say, the sensibilities of the beloved. What could be more delightful than a love letter around a woman's slender neck, or an 'incriminating' note in her handbag?"[74] The central square within the original design was also printed on 100% cotton lawn and sold as a handkerchief.
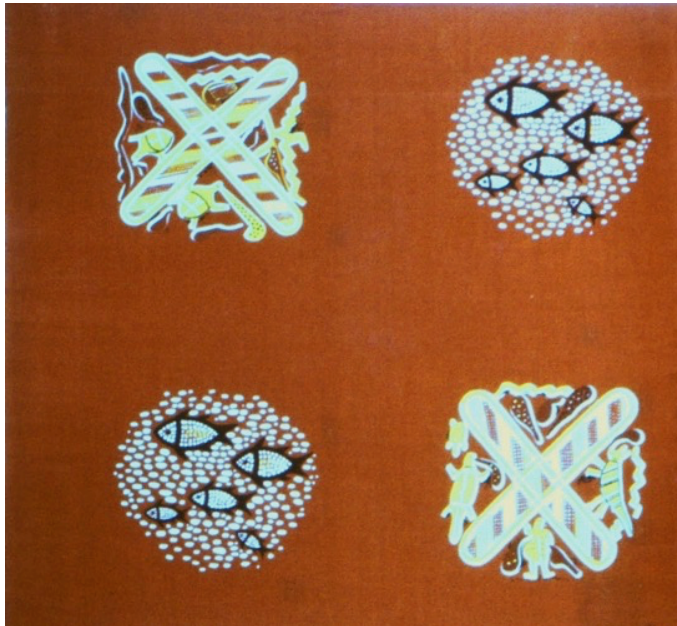
Figure 5.29 Roy Dalgarno, 'Arnhem Land', 1946-47.[75]

Figure 5.30 Roy Dalgarno 'Kangaroo', 1946-47.[76]

Roy Dalgarno (1910-2001) also produced a scarf for the 1946 collection titled 'Arnhem Land' (Figure 5.29). Dalgarno was a social realist painter who had trained at the National Gallery of Victoria School, who was tutoring at the National Art School in Sydney in 1946.[77] 'Arnhem Land' has a pattern diagonally opposed medallions of light-coloured fish outlined in black, balanced with crossed 'aboriginal' shields surrounded by stylised images of lizards, turtles and platypus against a terracotta ground.

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[74] Paul Haefliger. 1947. In C. Alcorso, *A New Approach to Textile Designing.* Sydney: Ure Smith Pty Ltd, 30.

[75] Roy Dalgarno. 1946-47. "Arnhem Land." Image courtesy of Dr Cassie Plate. *National Gallery of Australia.* Canberra. Screen-printed wool, 84.6 x 81 cm. Used with permission.

[76] Roy Dalgarno. 1946-47. "Kangaroo." Image courtesy of Dr Cassie Plate. *Art Gallery of NSW.* Sydney. Screen-print on cotton, 48 x 29.5 cm. Used with permission.

[77] Design and Art Australia Online. n.d. "Dalgarno, Roy (1910-2001)." Accessed December 10, 2019. https://nla.gov.au/nla.party-901491.

He said of his design:

> In Australia we have the opportunity to contribute something new and with taste to the old-world ideas. ……. In "Arnhem Land", although I have used authentic aboriginal motifs, I have taken all the liberty I felt necessary in the re-arranging of the forms to suit my all-over design. The original colours - gold, deep brown, white on a red earth background - seem to me the most suitable and decorative arrangement.[78]

Dalgarno's headsquare is one of several patterns in the Modernage collection that reinterprets indigenous design motifs with a view to developing an identifiable Australian design idiom. Dalgarno continued the theme of the Australian outback in his design 'Kangaroo' (Figure 5.30). Kangaroos hop through a scrubby outback landscape with the colours of the sky and land transposed, suggesting that it is probably sunset and the landscape is changing colour. The transposition of colours is an effective device to provide a pattern repeat, with sky becoming the land and vice versa.

Desiderius Orban (1884-1986), who had provided art lessons for the designers at STP also contributed several designs to Modernage. 'Nostalgia' (Figure 5.31), his first ever textile design, is based on boats passing apartment buildings in a busy port in Europe, drew from the content of his sketchbook. The technique evokes a quickly drawn sketch, filled in with watercolour. Orban pictured this print on pure silk, in an evening frock worn by a girl at her first ball.[79] 'Centuries' (Figure 5.32) is another translation of a drawing from Orban's extensive sketchbook. In this iteration it is a two-colour print based on line drawings of historic European architecture, surrounded by what could either be roads or tree branches, highlighted with teal green.

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[78] Alcorso. *A New Approach to Textile Designing,* 1947, 13.
[79] Ibid, 12.

Figure 5.31 Desiderius Orban, 'Nostalgia', 1946-47.[80]

Figure 5.32 Desiderius Orban, 'Centuries', 1946-47.[81]

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[80] Desiderius Orban. 1946-47. "Nostalgia." Images courtesy of Dr Cassi Plate, used with permission. Unknown collection.

[81] Desiderius Orban. 1946-47. "Centuries." Image courtesy of Dr Cassie Plate, used with permission. *Art Gallery of NSW.* Sydney. Screen-print on rayon, 23.2 x 38.5 cm.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

Figure 5.33 Betty Skowronski, 'Keramos', 1946-47.[82]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

Figure 5.34 Mary Curtis 'Old Sydney', 1946-47.[83]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing the image was available at:

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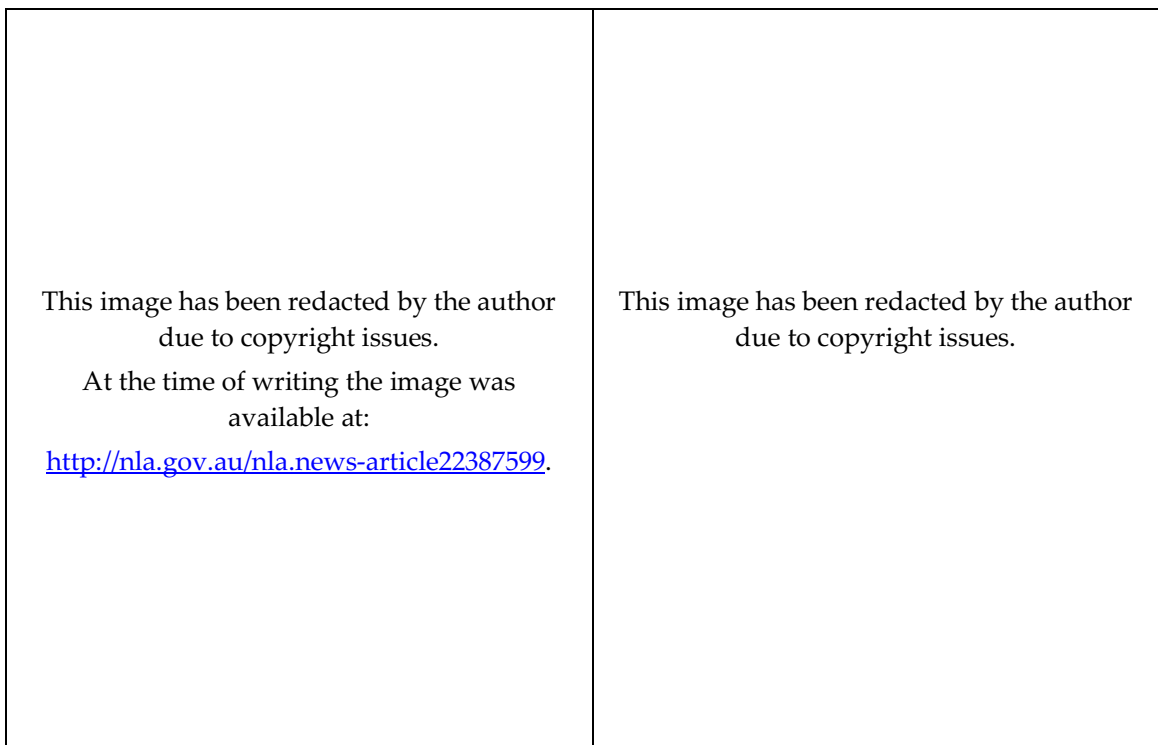
Figure 5.35 Mary Curtis and Betty Skowronski show their fabrics in The Argus.[84]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

Figure 5.36 Betty Skowronski 'Ringbarked', 1946-47.[85]

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[82] Alcorso, *A New Approach to Textile Designing* 1947, 18.

[83] Ibid, 31.

[84] The Argus 1946, 3.

[85] Alcorso, *A New Approach to Textile Designing* 1947, 18.

Alcorso took care to ensure that the work of his own design team was promoted in exactly the same way as textile designs by Australian painters. These women were career designers and he promoted their names with equal prominence to the names of famous artists who contributed to Modernage. Despite the endemic patriarchy in the Australian textile industry of the time,[86] the Alcorsos, to their credit, recognised the contribution that these women had made to STP during the war years by according their designs a status equal to that of the famous male painters commissioned to submit designs. Designs by Mary Curtis and Betty Skowronski, together with others by their colleagues, were regarded as an integral part of the 1946 'Art in Industry' collection.

Curtis and Skowronski's designs are some of the most commercially attractive of the 1946 collection, reflecting their expertise and experience in surface design. Desiderius Orban had taught them to be observant and their prints were inspired by their surroundings. They used images of the city of Sydney and objects from everyday life in their designs, turning them into stunning pattern repeats. Betty Skowronski is shown in Figure 5.35 holding a length of her design 'Keramos', also seen in Figure 5.33. The design is based on ceramic bottles, plates and bowls, that disappear into a large abstract print suitable for shirts and dresses. Her design 'Ringbarked' (Figure 5.36) is based on a cross-section of tree surrounded by twigs, an innovative variation on the polka dot, a traditional fashion stand-by of the late 1940s and 1950s.

'Old Sydney' by Mary Curtis (Figure 5.34) is a monotone print design inspired by drawings that she had made of historic houses around Circular Quay and Miller's Point. Curtis visualised the print on a soft silk or a light wool, for dresses,[87] though it also would have been a striking print for a

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[86] Cheryl Buckley. 1989. "Made in Patriarchy: Towards a Feminist Analysis of Women in Design." In *Design Discourse: History, Theory, Criticism*, by Victor (Ed.) Margolin, 251-262. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

[87] Alcorso, *A New Approach to Textile Designing* 1947, 31.

tailored shirt under a woollen suit. More affordable monotone and two-colour prints like 'Old Sydney' were an important component of any textile range from a pricing point of view. Every time another colour was added to a print design, the price went up. It was versatile prints that could be printed in one and two colours that provided the cheaper end of any textile collection.

Polychromatic print designs by Curtis that have survived in colour photographs and on fabric give some indication of the bright colour palettes used in the 1946 collection, which strongly differentiated Australian artist-textile designs of the 1940s and 50s. As an editorial in Design magazine observed in 1959, British …"designs in lovely pastel shades may have looked beautiful in a Manchester showroom… [however, they]….proved 'washouts' under the Australian sky".[88]

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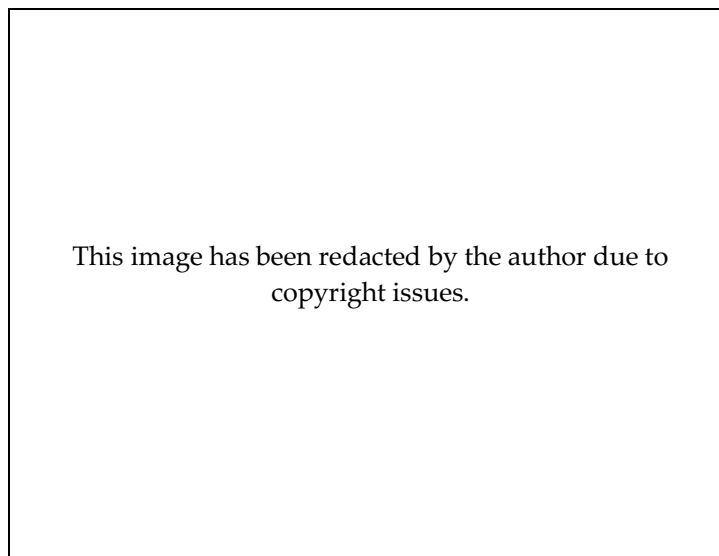
Figure 5.37 Mary Curtis, 'The Stranger', red colourway, 1946-47.[89]
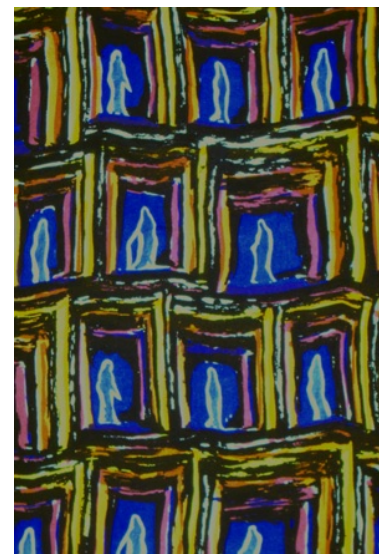
Figure 5.38 Mary Curtis, 'The Stranger', blue colourway, 1946-47.[90]

Curtis's design 'The Stranger' is based on a sketch for a stage design, with a figure shown in silhouette against a bright light stands surrounded by stage

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[88] Design. 1956. "Pacific Idiom in Fabrics for Australia." February: 40.

[89] Alcorso, *A New Approach to Textile Designing* 1947, 31.

[90] Mary Curtis. 1946-47. "The Stranger." Image courtesy of Dr Cassie Plate, used with permission. *Art Gallery of NSW.* Sydney. Screen-print on silk, 40 x 27.5 cm.

curtains. Curtis said that she was trying to impart a feeling of mystery in this print designed for lightweight silk.[91] The strong red, purple and yellow colourway (Figure 5.37) and blue, pink and yellow (Figure 5.38) colourway use complementary opposites as accents. From a distance the design resolves itself into a colourful, three-dimensional check that would work well in any dress or blouse.

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http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4723826.
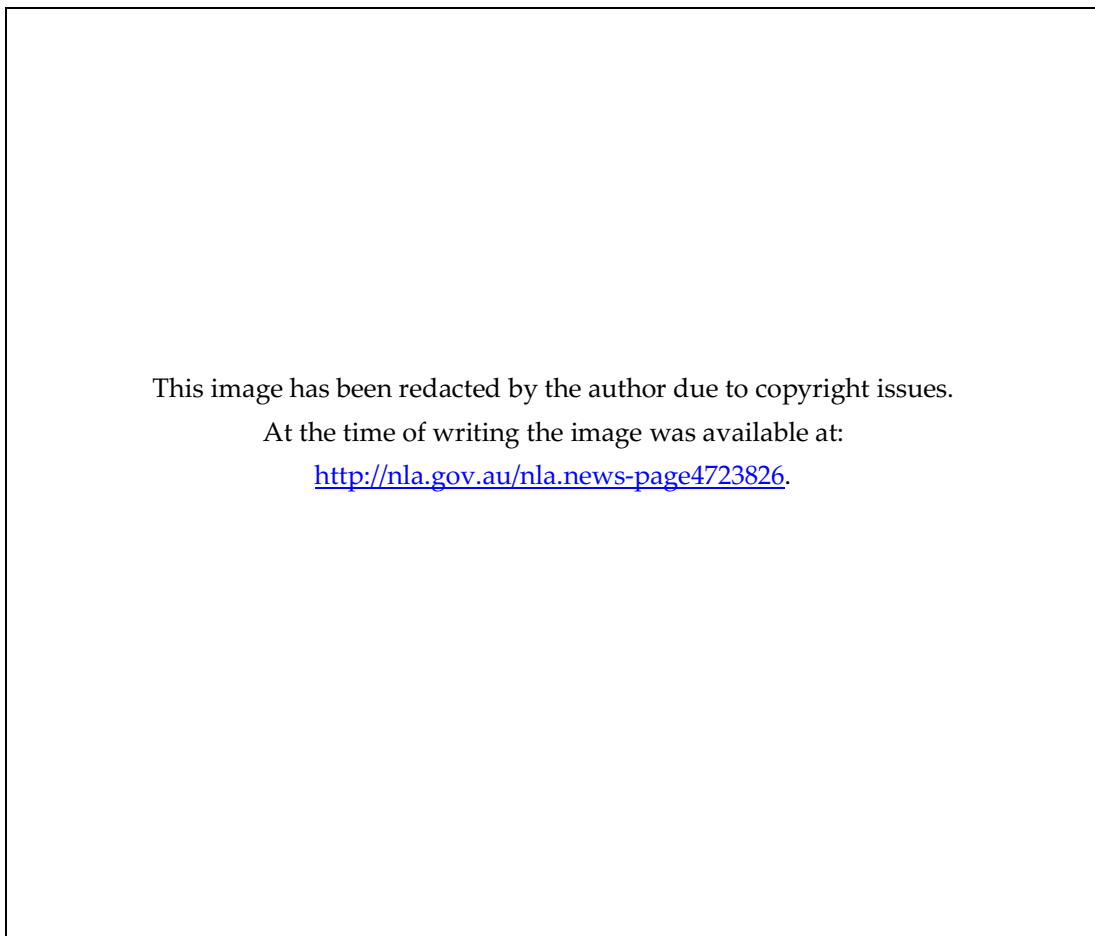
Figure 5.39 Wool dresses in prints celebrating Warner Bros movie 'Rhapsody in Blue', 1946.[92]

The work of STP's in-house designers received a great deal of editorial in metropolitan and regional newspapers and in popular women's magazines. The Australian Women's Weekly of 31 August 1946 featured editorial and full-colour images of frocks with print designs by Mary Curtis on a new fine

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[91] Ibid.

[92] The Australian Women's Weekly. 1946. "Hollywood wears Australian dresses." 31 August. Accessed March 17, 2015. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4723826.

woollen cloth from John Vicars Ltd, produced for an Australian Wool Board promotion expressing the mood and spirit of Warner Brothers' 'Rhapsody in Blue' (1946), a Technicolor musical based on the life of George Gershwin.

The magazine described the dresses as …. "An interesting result of fashion co-operation between Australia and America……. Australia provided the lovely dresses and American film actresses from Warner's studio in Hollywood are shown wearing them."[93] Every woman wanted to look like a movie star and so it was important for STP to align their products with Hollywood promotions. It was also important to have the textiles made up into fashionable garments, so that manufacturers and home dressmakers could picture how the fabrics would look in fashion garments.

Figure 5.40 Sheila Gray, 'Cross-Section', 1946-47.[94]

Other STP artists contributing designs for the 1946 collection included Claudio and Orlando's mother Niny Alcorso; Shirley Martin (later Shirley de Vocht),

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[93] The Australian Women's Weekly, 31 August 1946.

[94] Sheila Gray. 1946-47. "Cross-Section." Image courtesy of Dr Cassie Plate, used with permission. *Art Galley of NSW.* Sydney. Screen-print on rayon crepe, 29.3 x 41.7 cm.

Suzanne Rogers and Sheila Grey. Sheila Gray's design 'Cross Section' (Figure 5.40) was based on black and white line drawings of sliced fruit and vegetables placed against a brightly coloured ground. This design, together with many others developed in 1946, were also made up into garments that were paraded at the exhibition and photographed by the media.

Suzanne Rogers' cheerful design 'Wanderlust' (Figure 5.41) is an abstracted vision of waves and sailing boats in choppy weather, set against yellow sand dunes. Designed as a furnishing print to be printed on cotton, it was perfect for cushions, curtains and upholstery, particularly in a beach house, or in the sunroom of a house or apartment looking over the water.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing the image was available at:
http://www.joseflebovicgallery.com/catalogue/CL_141_2010/Pages/pg12.html.
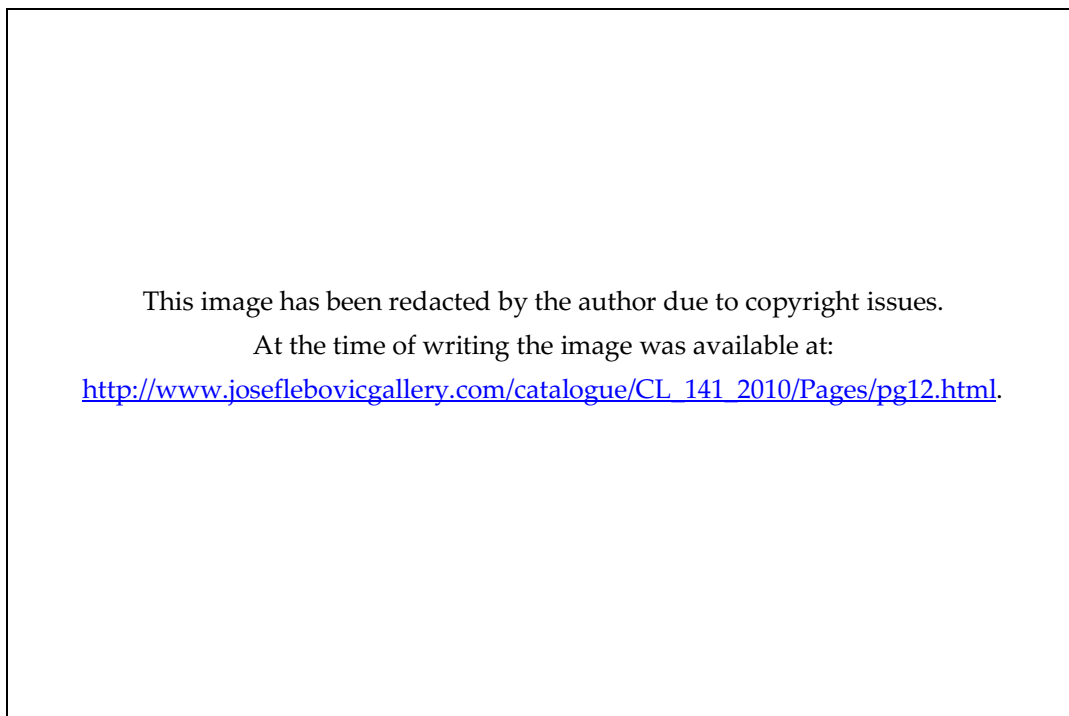
Figure 5.41 Suzanne Rogers, 'Wanderlust', 1946-47.[95]

As well as developing their own designs, STP staff designers also converted master artworks by painters into half-drop repeats, enabling the patterns to flow continuously across and down the fabric and match perfectly when

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[95] Suzanne Rogers. 1946-47. "Wanderlust." *Josef Lebovic Gallery.* Accessed April 1, 2012. http://www.joseflebovicgallery.com/catalogue/CL_141_2010/Pages/pg12.html. Screen-printed cotton, dimensions unknown.

pieced together in curtains, upholstery and garments. Shirley Martin, who had joined the design team after graduating from East Sydney Technical College in 1944, was responsible for converting Russell Drysdale's master paintings into pattern repeats for printing.[96] According to Claudio Alcorso, the artists were very interested in the technical conversion of their designs. "I got used to seeing one of the artists engaged in eager conversation with one of our technical people. Some went as far as retouching the technical drawings."[97]

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A similar image is available at:
https://thumbs.worthpoint.com/zoom/images1/1/0713/11/1947-approach-textile-design-postwar_1_b1ea9ab30a88ef078c83308e3fcae731.jpg
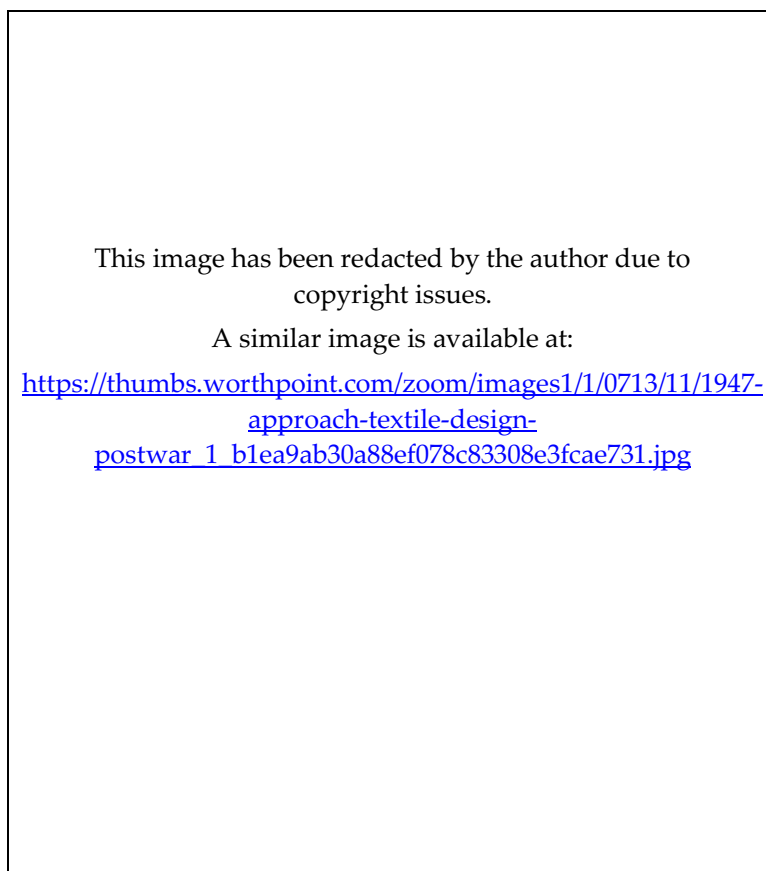
Figure 5.42 Douglas Annand, cover, 'A New Approach to Textile Designing', 1947.[98]

STP's 1946 'Art in Industry' collection was also displayed at the Windsor Hotel in Melbourne to critical acclaim. Confidence in the artist-designed collection must have been high, as shortly after the opening the Alcorsos began to look

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[96] Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences. 1945-48. "Photograph Album of Shirley de Vocht (nee Martin)." *Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences*. Accessed June 15, 2019. https://collection.maas.museum/object/11719.

[97] Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say*, 81.

[98] Alcorso, *A New Approach to Textile Designing*, 1947.

for larger premises. In November of 1946, they announced a plan to relocate the business to a former munitions factory in Hobart and to become to a public company with a nominal capital of £250,000, achieved by issuing 45,000 new shares to current shareholders.[99]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues. At the time of writing, the image was available at: http://www.artrecord.com/index.cfm/artist/618-danciger-alice/medium/1-paintings/?order=1&io=1&count=50&Submit=Refresh	This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues. At the time of writing a similar image was available at: https://collection.maas.museum/object/189102

Figure 5.43 Alice Danciger, 'Harem Girl with Fruit', c1940.[100]

Figure 5.44 Alice Danciger, 'Sea Fantasy', 1947.[101]

The reception that the 1946 'Art in Industry' collection had received from the press, the design community and from the artists themselves prompted the commissioning of additional designs for the 1947 collection and a new collection title – 'Modernage'. Sydney Ure Smith printed a catalogue for the 1947 collection with a striking modernist cover designed by Douglas Annand (Figure 5.42) containing details of 47 textile designs by 33 artists. The 1947 exhibition was once again opened at the Hotel Australia in Sydney, this time by internationally renowned conductor Eugene Goossens. It was also shown at the Hotel Windsor in Melbourne, where the exhibition was opened by

[99] The Mercury. 1946. "Silk & Textile Printers as Public Company." 30 November. Accessed March 23, 2011. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article26371449.

[100] Alice Danciger. c. 1940. "Harem Girl with Fruit." *Artrecord.com.* Accessed October 21, 2016. http://www.artrecord.com/index.cfm/artist/618-danciger-alice/medium/1-paintings/?order=1&io=1&count=50&Submit=Refresh,.

[101] Cochrane 1992, Colour Plate 2.

Professor Joseph Burke, recently appointed Chair of Fine Art at the University of Melbourne.

Alice Danciger, who had produced head-squares designs for the 1946 collection, transformed the sinuous female figures that featured in her paintings (see Figure 5.43) into a bold, graphic print called 'Sea Fantasy' (Figure 5.44), where mermaids hold court in an undersea dreamscape complete with horses and balloons. Once again, bright colours were used – in this case the mermaids and the surrounding architecture were a bright shade of hot pink, whilst the horses and a necklace of seaweed around the neck of a black merman holding an umbrella were highlighted in bright yellow. The mermaids loll on the light pink sea floor, against the pale blue sea.

Margo Lewers (1908-1978) produced an abstract design called 'In Thought' (Figure 5.45). Like the designs by STP staff and many of the artists who had previously worked in surface design, her angular, cubist inspired design was created with consideration to the principles of pattern repeat.

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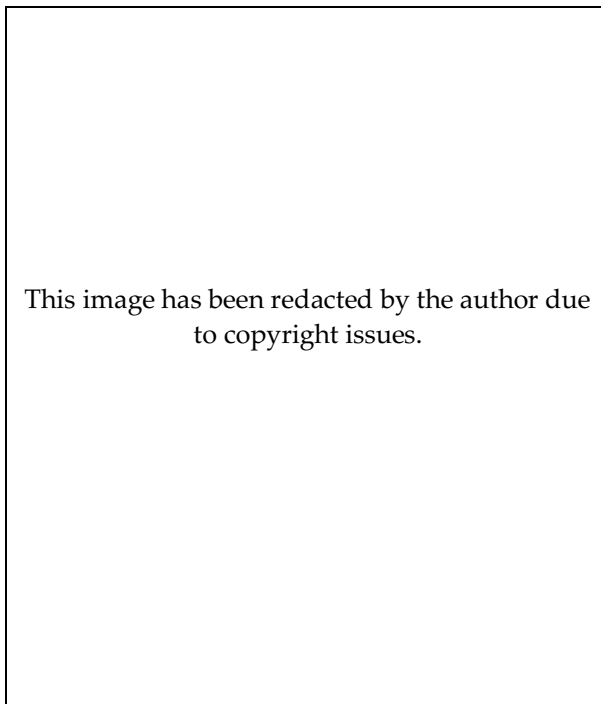
Figure 5.45 Margo Lewers, 'In Thought', 1947. [102]

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[102] Alcorso, *A New Approach to Textile Designing 1947*, 24.

Unfortunately, Lewers' design no longer survives on textile and there are no references available on the colourways or scale of the pattern. The strong triangular shapes of this design would have been most appropriate for either garments or furnishing. Lewers said of her design: "I believe that any well-conceived painting is dependent on its structure. By reducing this composition to the simplest forms and lines, I have tried to retain certain variations of tones which I feel are suitable to fabric design and still convey the interest of the original form."[103]

Lewers' brother Carl Plate (1909-1977) also contributed to the 1947 collection. He was an abstract painter and produced a design called 'Alpine Rocks' (Figure 5.47), based on stones and vegetation he had observed in the Snowy Mountains. The textile print is strongly reminiscent of his bold, palette knifed abstract paintings such as 'Destructive paradox number 7 moment' (Figure 5.46) with its solid, rectilinear shapes in earthy colours interspersed with black calligraphic lines.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues. At the time of writing the image was available at: http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov/collection/works/OA15.1960.	This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues. At the time of writing the image was available at: http://www.art.gallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/109.1971.

Figure 5.46 Carl Plate, 'Destructive Paradox no. 7 Moment', 1960.[104]

Figure 5.47 Carl Plate, Alpine Rocks, 1946-47, screen-printed cotton.[105]

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[103] Ibid.

[104] Carl Plate. 1960. "Destructive paradox no. 7 moment." *Art Gallery of NSW.* Accessed February 16, 2014. http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov/collection/works/OA15.1960.

[105] Carl Plate. 1946-47. "Alpine Rocks." *Art Gallery of NSW.* Accessed November 11, 2012.
http://www.art.gallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/109.1971. Screen-print on cotton, 44.8 x 80.8 cm.

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Figure 5.48 Loudon Sainthill, 'The Actress', 1947.[106]
Figure 5.49 Loudon Sainthill, Dress in 'Etruscan', 1946-47.[107]
Figure 5.50 Loudon Sainthill, 'Etruscan', 1947.[108]
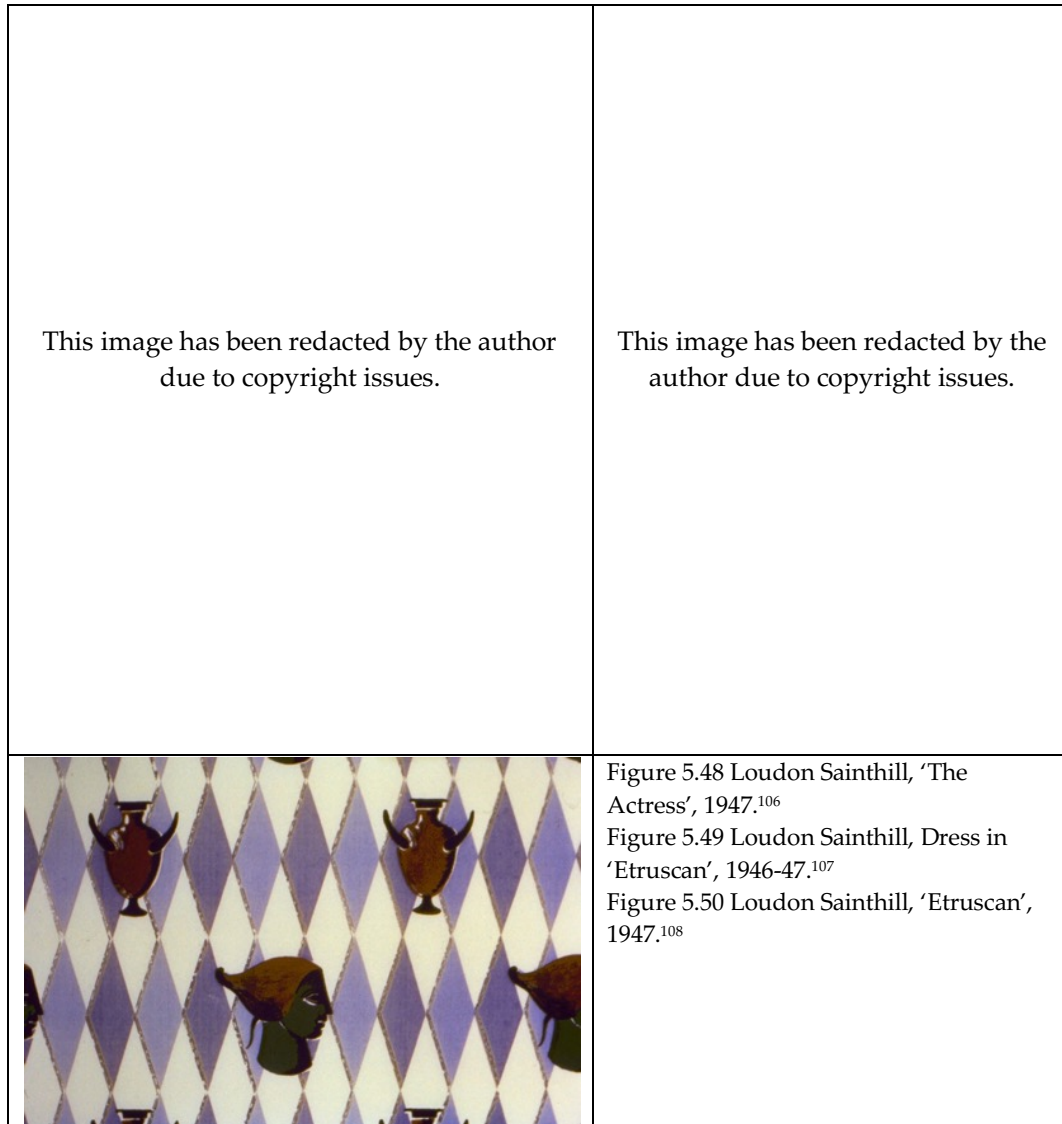
Merioola resident Loudon Sainthill (1918-1969) was known at the time for his commercial illustrations and paintings based on the visual language of both cubism and surrealism, as seen in Figure 5.48 'The Actress'. Sainthill created 'Etruscan' (Figures 5.49 – 5.50), a pattern based on spaced rows of graceful pottery urns, alternating with a stylised Graeco-Roman profile, set against

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[106] Loudon Sainthill. 1947. "The Actress." In *Fantasy Modern: Loudon Sainthill's Theatre of Art and Life*, by Andrew Montana 2013, Colour plate 15. Kensington NSW: University of NSW Press. Watercolour, pen and ink and coloured ink on paper, collection of the National Gallery of Victoria.

[107] Loudon Sainthill. 1946-47. "Etruscan." Image courtesy of Dr Cassie Plate, used with permission. *Art Gallery of NSW.* Sydney. Screen-print on wool, 45.7 x 30.3 cm.
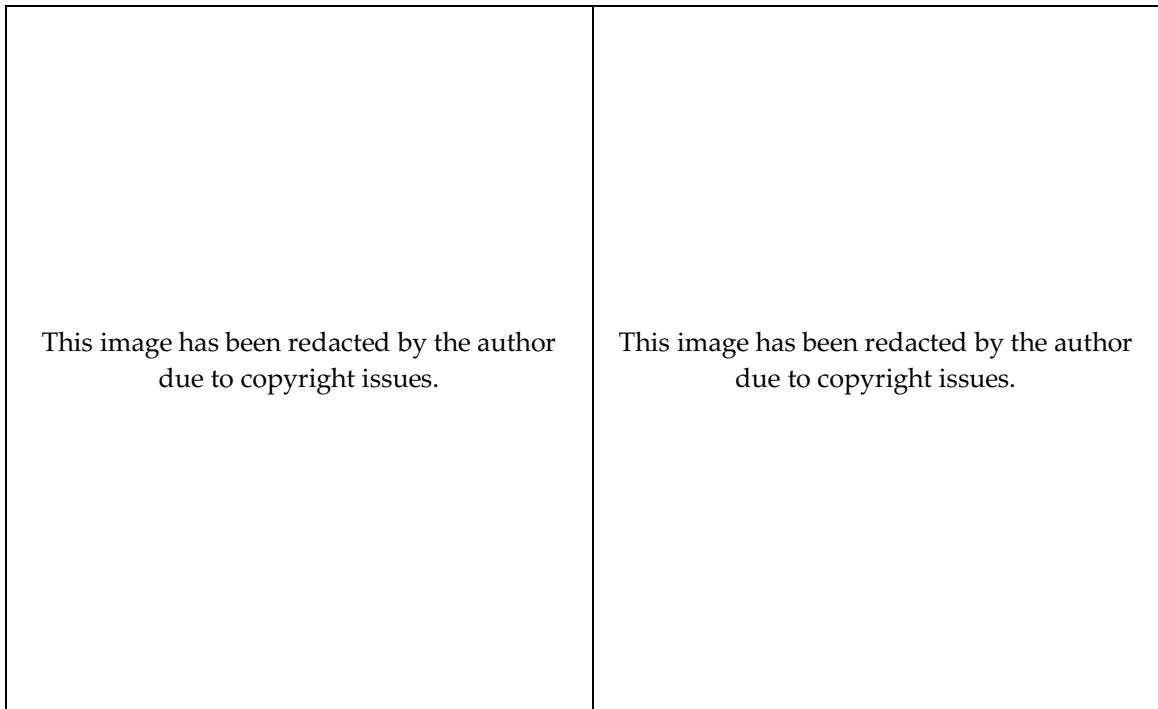
[108] EC Bowen. 1947. "Photograph of dress in Loudon Sainthill's Etruscan fabric." In *Fantasy Modern: Loudon Sainthill's Theatre of Art and Life*, by Andrew Montana 2013, 342. Kensington NSW: University of NSW Press.

contrasting diamond shapes in a close repeat. The design was printed on a dress-weight fabric and made up into an elegant frock (Figure 5.49) that was paraded as part of the promotional strategy for the Modernage collection.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues. At the time of writing the image was available at: http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/7934/.	This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues. At the time of writing the image was available at: http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/102.1971/.
Figure 5.51 Francis Lymburner, 'Three Dancers', 1947.[109]	Figure 5.52 Francis Lymburner, 'Jugglers'. 1946-47.[110]

Francis Lymburner (1916-1972) was an artist from Brisbane who had relocated to Sydney in 1939. His paintings of animals, dancers and circus performers attracted the attention of patrons including Sir Warwick Fairfax, publisher of the Sydney Morning Herald.[111] His Modernage design 'Jugglers' (Figure 5.51) is a monotone design in bright orange on an off-white background, suitable for furnishing. Roundels contain cartoon-like images of jugglers seen in a naïve combination of front and profile view, tossing four clubs. The solid,

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[109] Francis Lymburner. 1947. "Three dancers." *Art Gallery of NSW.* Accessed February 16, 2014. http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/7934/. Oil on canvas, 60 x 50.7cm.

[110] Francis Lymburner. 1946-47. "Jugglers." *Art Gallery of NSW.* Accessed November 11, 2012. http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/102.1971/. Screen-print on cotton, 59.6 x 43.8cm.

[111] Hendrik and Julianna Kolenberg. 2000. "Lymburner, Stanley Francis (1916-1972)." *Australian Dictionary of Biography.* Accessed February 02, 2014. http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/lymburner-stanley-francis-10876.

robust figures recall Lymburner's contemporary paintings of performers, such as 'Three Dancers' (Figure 5.52).

Figure 5.53
Jean Bellette
'Electra', 1944.[112]

In 'Myths and Legends' (Figures 5.54-5.55), painter Jean Bellette (1909-1991) transforms heroic mythological figures from her paintings into a fantasy print that oozes classicism, yet retains a feeling of theatrical pageantry. Bellette was born in Hobart and came to Sydney to study at the Julian Ashton School in the 1930s, where a traditional curriculum of life drawing and classical draughtsmanship strongly influenced her works, many of which were modernist translations of neo-classical nudes and landscapes with figures.[113]

Figure 5.53, 'Electra', illustrates the classicist oeuvre from which Bellette's textile design 'Myths and Legends' (Figures 5.54 and 5.55) is drawn.

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[112] Jean Bellette. 1944. "Electra." Author's photograph. *Art Gallery of NSW.* Sydney. Oil on paper on hardboard, 59.5 x 75.5 cm.

[113] Shirley Hodgson. 2006. "Jean Bellette (b.1909-d.1991)." *Companion to Tasmanian History.* Accessed February 15, 2014.
http://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion_to_tasmanian_history/B/Jean20%Bellette.htm.

'Myths and Legends' is a pictorial print incorporating nude and draped figurines surrounded by charioteers and classical architecture.

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At the time of writing the image was available at:
https://collection.maas.museum/object/189103.
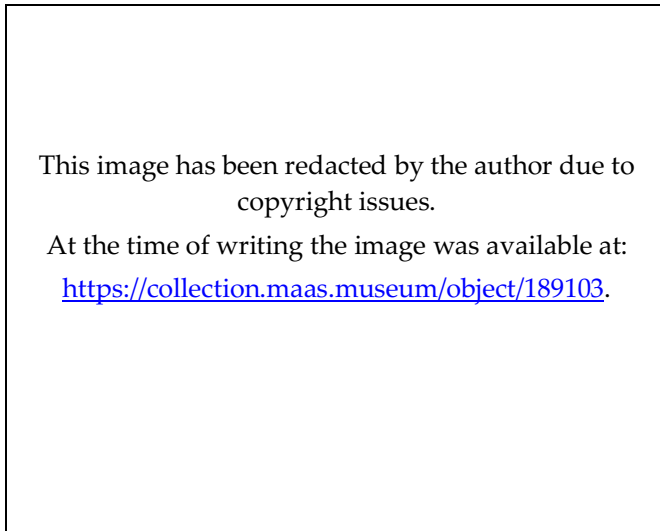
Figure 5.54 Jean Bellette, 'Myths and Legends', blue and red colourway, 1947.[114]

Figure 5.55 Jean Bellette, 'Myths and Legends', green colourway, 1947.[115]

It is a scene that could easily been inspired by genre paintings of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Several colourways of the print survive – a vivid blue and red combination (Figure 5.54) exploiting the modernist jar of complimentary opposites and a more sedate cream and khaki colourway (Figure 5.55),

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[114] Jean Bellette. "Myths and legends." *Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences.* Accessed February 3, 2013. https://collection.maas.museum/object/189103. Screen-printed cotton, 48.8 x 91.5 cm.

[115] Jean Bellette. 1947. "Myths and Legends." Author's photograph. *Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery.* Launceston. Screen-printed cotton.

classical enough to grace the upholstery of any traditional lounge or dining room.

William Constable (1906-1989) was a film and theatrical designer who also worked as an illustrator, painter and printmaker. Like Alice Danciger, Constable had designed for the Borovansky Ballet and regularly designed sets for the Minerva and Mercury Theatres.[116] His design 'Corroboree' is another example of decorative "Aboriginalia" that is not culturally acceptable in the twenty-first century. Constable said of his work:

> The elements used in this design are all derived from the primitive drawings and calligraphy of the Australian Aboriginals. All are in some degree or another associated with their corroborees. The arrangement of the units in the pattern as a whole has nothing to do with aboriginal lore or practice. It is entirely mine. I have made no attempt to reproduce an aboriginal colour scheme, but rather to translate their motifs into another field. Their intriguing use of cross-hatched lines and spots and dots sings gaily to a wider audience when dressed in our western palette, with its range of colours.[117]

The notion that Australia's First Peoples are "primitive" is now held in contempt, as is the notion that Aboriginal culture is limited to corroborees. Constable admitted that he had appropriated Aboriginal iconography from a number of sources to develop this decorative scheme. Although, at the time, this would have been seen as an acceptable homage to Aboriginal art and culture and a genuine representation of Australian visual identity, the suitability of artworks like this are now rightfully questioned by contemporary

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[116] Frank Van Straten. 2007. "William Constable." *Liveperformance.com.au.* Accessed April 13, 2014. http://liveperformance.com.au/halloffame/williamconstable2.html.

[117] Alcorso, *A New Approach to Textile Designing* 1947: 27.

First Nations artists. Twenty-first century commentators including Rex Butler have attempted to explain that Aboriginal art cannot be understood within the canons of western art and that appropriating the visual language of Australia's First Peoples to create a pastiche "Australian style" is neither creative nor useful in resolving long-standing tensions concerned with Australia's colonisation.[118]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing a similar image was available at:
https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/90.1971/

Figure 5.56 William Constable, 'Corroboree', 1947.[119]

Figure 5.57 Detail, William Constable, 'Corroboree', 1947.[120]

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[118] Rex Butler. 2002. *A Secret History of Australian Art.* St Leonards, Sydney: Craftsman House, Fine Art Publishing Pty Ltd.

[119] Alcorso, *A New Approach to Textile Designing* 1947, 27.

[120] William Constable. 1947. "Corroboree." Image courtesy of Dr Cassie Plate, used with permission. *Art Gallery of NSW.* Sydney. Screen-printed cotton, 45.1 x 37 cm.

'Corroboree' is a saccharine design. The earthy pigments referenced by other settler artists in their interpretation of aboriginality have been replaced with orange, yellow and dark khaki. The motifs have been so altered that they could just as well be amoebas rather than Aboriginal shield designs. From a distance, the design would have resolved into an overall pattern reminiscent of an English-style cottage garden floral.

Alistair Morrison (1911-1998) is regarded as a hero in graphic design history in Australia, in the same category as his contemporaries Douglas Annand, Gordon Andrews and Gert Sellheim.[121] Born in Melbourne and trained at the National Gallery School of Art, Morrison worked initially in advertising. In 1941 he designed the catalogue for the Art of Australia 1788-1941 exhibition in the Aboriginalia style. The exhibition, curated by Sydney Ure Smith, toured the United States and Canada for several years under the auspices of the Carnegie Corporation.[122]

Later, he became a collaborator of Dahl and Geoffrey Collings and worked with Dahl in London for ex-Bauhaus teacher Lazlo Moholy-Nagy. He later completed freelance artworks for British clients including Shell Oil, Gaumont British Films and the Dorchester Hotel. On his return to Australia on the outbreak of World War II he resumed his career as a commercial artist. Along with other designers including Annand, Morrison served on the Reserve Bank's decimal currency project. In 1965 he became famous for inventing *Strine* under the pseudonym 'Afferbeck Lauder'.[123]

One wonders when looking at Morrison's Modernage design 'Tan Track' (Figure 5.58), whether his travels and exposure to art and design from

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[121] Australian Graphic Design Association (AGDA). 2008. "Alistair Morrison 1911-1998." *AGDA Hall of Fame.* Accessed April 12, 2014. http://www.agda.com/imspiration/hall-of-fame/alistair-morrison-1911-1998.

[122] Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences. 1938-1954. "Art and design journals showing Dahl and Geoffrey Collings' artwork." *Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences.* Accessed June 19, 2019. https://collection.maas.museum/object/123694.

[123] Australian Graphic Design Association (AGDA) 2008.

overseas had ever exposed him to the drip paintings of Jackson Pollock? This design in two colours certainly may have started as an experiment with trails and blots of coloured paints. It is an elegant "no-pattern" pattern that would have worked well on silk or rayon in ladies' blouses and dresses, or on Dutch-cloth for curtains, cushion covers and furniture upholstery.

Figure 5.58 Alistair Morrison, 'Tan Track', 1947.[124]

Roderick Shaw (1915-1992) contributed 'Capricornia', a polychromatic fabric design that may have been intended as a homage to Xavier Herbert's novel of the same name, which survives in two colourways (Figures 5.59 – 5.60). Despite the name, it is difficult to discern where the inspiration for this print actually originated. The design could be a landscape, or a pattern repeat of a lipped mussel. Shaw said that his design was inspired by the lonely beaches of Melville Island and that it was meant to represent the simplicity of nature.[125] He envisioned the design being used on cotton beach gowns, dressing gowns

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[124] Alistair Morrison. 1947. "Tan Track." Image courtesy of Dr Cassie Plate, used with permission. *Art Gallery of NSW*. Sydney. Screen-printed rayon crepe, 22.0 x 38.0 cm.

[125] Alcorso, *A New Approach to Textile Designing* 1947, 20

and dirndl skirts. The large candy stripes also made the design fashionably suitable for printing on cotton duck for kitchen and sunroom curtains, beach umbrellas and veranda awnings.
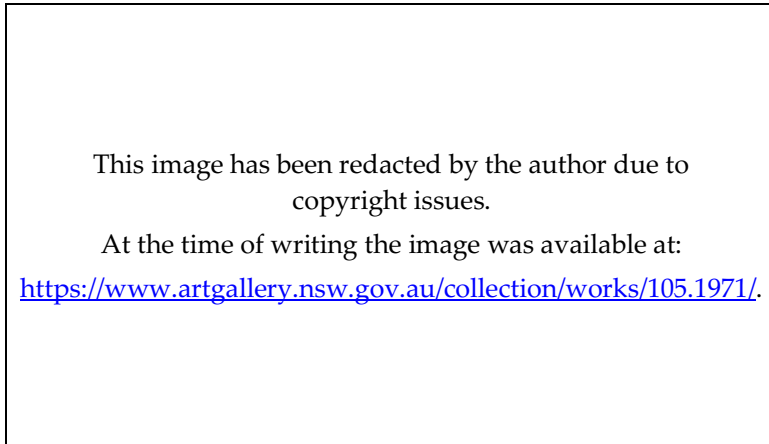
Figure 5.59 Roderick Shaw 'Capricornia', terracotta colourway, c1947.[126]

Figure 5.60 Roderick Shaw 'Capricornia', yellow colourway, c1947.[127]

Artist James Cant (1911-1982) was a Melbourne-born artist who had relocated to Sydney where he trained under Antonio Dattilo-Rubbo at East Sydney Technical College and later at Julian Ashton's Art School. Cant referenced the cubist styles of Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso, combining them with the

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[126] Roderick Shaw. c.1947. "Capricornia." *Art Gallery of NSW*. Accessed November 11, 2012. https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/105.1971/. Screen-printed cotton, 43.9 x 65.0cm.

[127] Roderick Shaw. c.1947. "Capricornia." Image courtesy of Dr Cassie Plate, used with permission. *National Gallery of Victoria.* Melbourne. 96.0 × 90.0 cm, screen print on cotton.

whimsy of Surrealists Rene Magritte and Giorgio de Chirico, and the social realism of Mexican artists Diego Rivera and Jose Orozco.[128]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
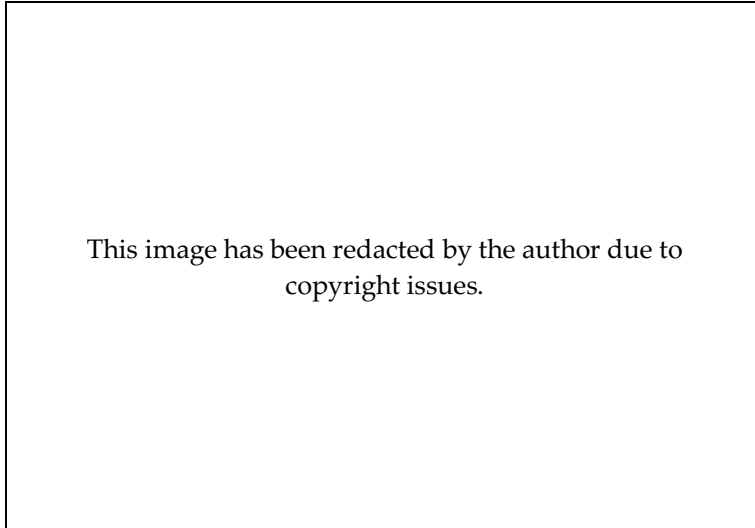
Figure 5.61 James Cant, 'Patriotic Duty', 1945.[129]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing the image was available at:

https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/89.1971/.
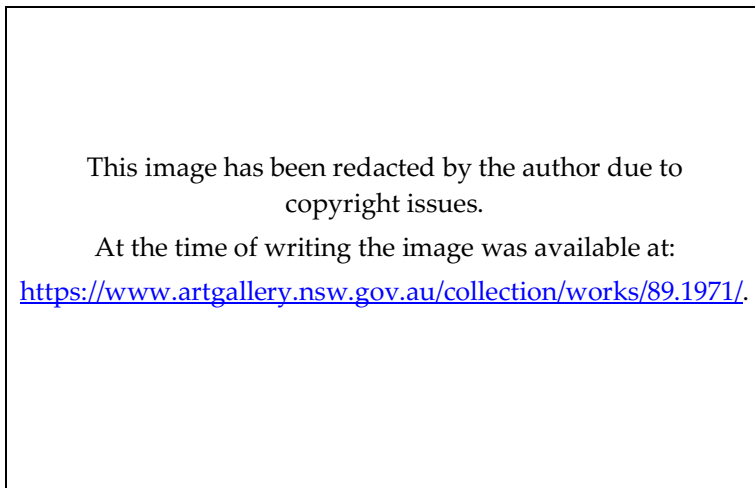
Figure 5.62 James Cant, 'Land', 1946-47, blue colourway.[130]

Cant's design 'Land' (Figure 5.62) was produced for the Modernage collection in at least two colourways – the blue colourway seen above and the reverse colourway of mainly red with blue highlights (see Figure 5.69). The design is abstract and whimsical, like a cross section of an ant's nest, with stick-like

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[128] Ron Radford. 2007. "Cant, James Montgomery (1911-1982)." *Australian Dictionary of Biography.* Accessed April 14, 2014. http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cant-james-montgomery-12291.

[129] James Cant. 1945. "Patriotic Duty." In *Creating Australia: 200 years of Art 1788-1988*, by Daniel Thomas (Ed.) 1988, 194. Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia & International Cultural Corporation of Australia Ltd.

[130] James Cant. 1946-47. "Land." *Art Gallery of South Australia.* Accessed October 16, 2016. https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/89.1971/. 41.7 x 64.1 cm, screen print on cotton.

creatures sporting gigantic eyes that recalls the sun motif used in his 1945 painting 'Patriotic Duty' (Figure 5.61). The design was printed on cotton Dutch-cloth for furnishing, however, it is not known whether it was also printed on dress-weight fabrics.

Tasmanian artist Jack Carington Smith (1908-1972) initially studied watercolour in his native Launceston, before moving to Sydney to study further at East Sydney Technical College. Carington Smith worked in both watercolour and in oil paint.[131] His contribution to Modernage – 'Tasmanian Bush' (Figure 5.63) draws equally from its subject Tasmanian landscape as from the technique of watercolour, using washes of only six colours to capture an abstraction of the depth of the bush viewed from eye level.

Figure 5.63 Jack Carington Smith, 'Tasmanian Bush', 1946-47, screen-printed cotton.[132]

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[131] Lindsay Broughton. 1993. "Jack Carington Smith b. 1908-d.1972." Accessed February 15, 2014. http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/carington-smith-jack-9690/text17089.

[132] Jack Carington Smith. 1946-47. "Tasmanian Bush." Author's photograph. *Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery.* Launceston. Screen print on cotton, exact dimensions unknown.

'Tasmanian Bush' was also printed on cotton Dutch-cloth and conceived principally as a design for curtains and upholstery.

5.5   Selling Modernage

Alcorso leveraged the knowledge and interests of merchants who were known patrons of the arts when promoting the Modernage collection. He had successfully sold designs from the 1946 trial range to David Jones. Sir Charles Lloyd Jones, grandson of the original David Jones was an amateur artist and had studied at Julian Ashton's in Sydney and the Slade School in London. Together with managing his commercial interests, Jones regularly exhibited with the Society of Artists in Sydney and collected the works of Charles Conder, Rupert Bunny and Arthur Streeton. He was also an early patron of William Dobell. Lloyd-Jones was involved in founding the journals 'Art in Australia' and 'The Home' in collaboration with Sydney Ure Smith and Bertram Stevens in 1916. He had served as a trustee of the National Gallery of New South Wales from 1934-58, wrote about the arts in the Australian press and was an avid supporter of music and the theatre.[133] As a follower of Read's notions of 'Art in Industry' he established the David Jones Gallery in his Elizabeth Street store in 1944. When the expanded Modernage collection was released in 1947, David Jones would dedicate fourteen of its store windows its promotion.

Merchants like Charles Lloyd Jones were not the only ones impressed with Modernage. Professor Joseph T. Burke, the Herald Chair of Fine Arts at Melbourne University gave the exhibition high praise and was quoted in the Argus describing the designs as "art for the people".[134] He said that Claudio

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[133] Ruth Thompson. "Jones, Sir Charles Lloyd (1978-1958)," *The Australian Dictionary of Biography,* (1983). Accessed August 22, 2015, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/jones-sir-charles-lloyd-6869/text11901.

[134] The Argus. 1947. "Professor's praise for fabrics." 7 October. Accessed April 17, 2012. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article22512192.

Alcorso was a "missionary for beauty" and heaped further praise on STP's chairman for narrowing the gap between art and industry that had been created with the advent of machine based manufacture.[135] Burke again praised the collection in the September 1947 issue of the Australian Home Beautiful, where he advised homemakers that they too could own an original Drysdale work for between 13 and 19 shillings a yard, as opposed to the £200 that it would cost to own an original painting by the artist.[136]

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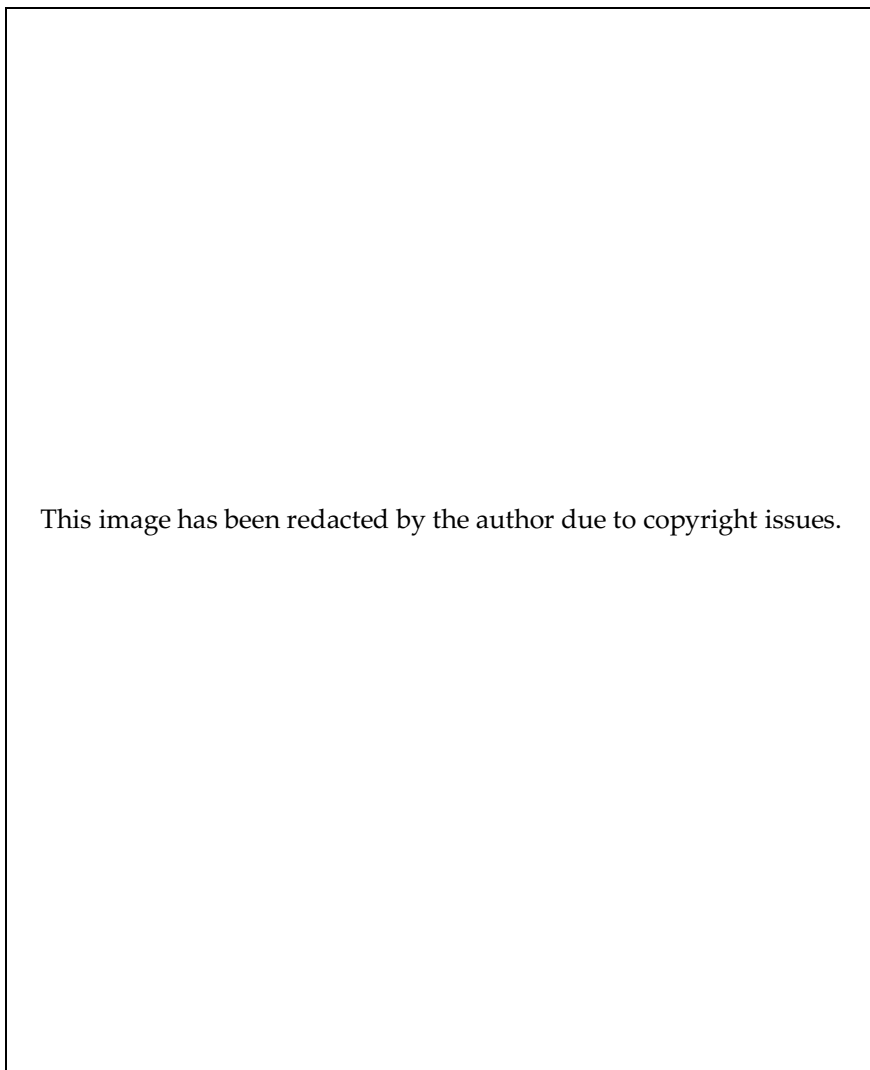
Figure 5.64 Editorial by Professor Joseph Burke, The Australian Home Beautiful, 1947.[137]

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[135] The Argus. 1947. "Professor's praise for fabrics." 7 October. Accessed April 17, 2012. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article22512192.

[136] Joseph Burke. 1947. "Australian Artists Create New Textiles." *The Australian Home Beautiful*, Sydney : Caroline Simpson Library, Sydney Living Museums, September, 7-9.

[137] Ibid.

Alcorso travelled to Adelaide to meet with his major customer there, Edward (Bill) Hayward, the owner of John Martins. Dining at his recently completed estate Carrick Hill, he admired William Dobell's 'Portrait of Joshua Smith', which had contentiously won the Archibald Prize in 1944. John Martins also purchased a number of Modernage designs. Haywood, like Charles Lloyd Jones understood both art and commerce and Modernage happily enabled him to bring his professional and cultural interests together.[138]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing the image was available at:

https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/7315699.
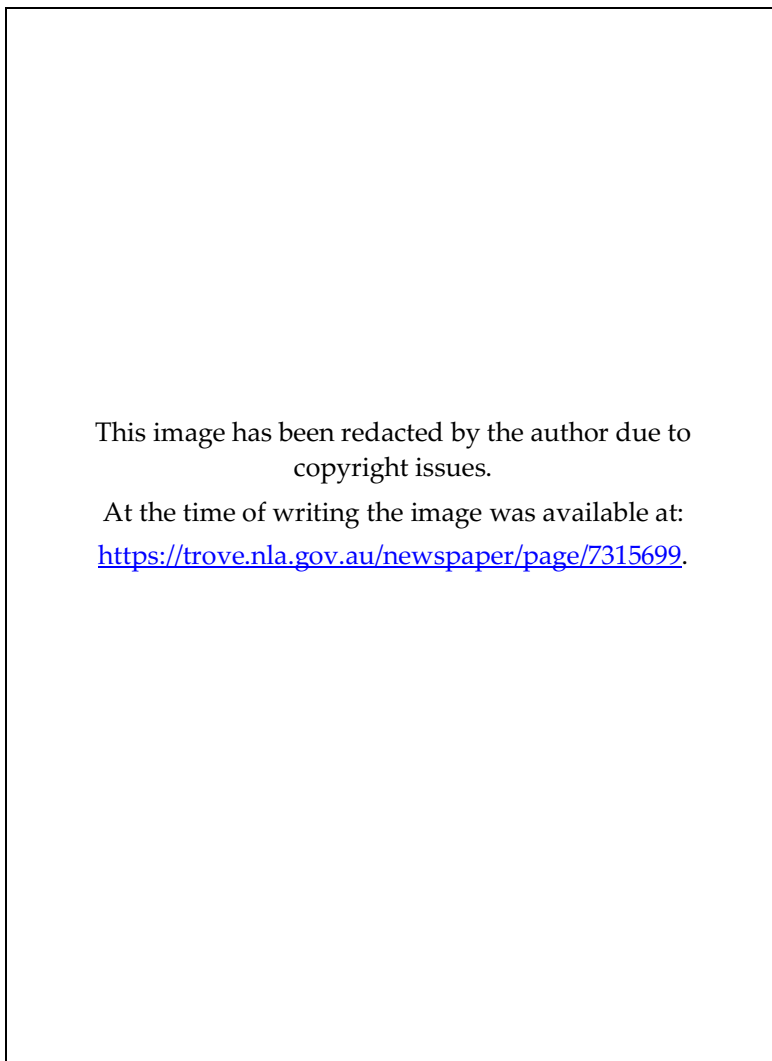
Figure 5.65 Advertisement for Modernage textiles, 1947.[139]

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[138] Claudio Alcorso. 1994. "Speech for the opening of an exhibition at Carrick Hill, Adelaide, 1994." *NS3001/1/1 Business Correspondence relating to Silk & Textile Printers, 1957-1994.* Hobart: State Archive of Tasmania.

[139] The Adelaide Advertiser. 1947. "Advertisement for Modernage Fabrics." 19 November: 12. Accessed July 24, 2018. https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/7315699.

Alcorso took samples of the expanded Modernage designs with him when he travelled to London and Italy on his first overseas trip in ten years. One of his friends in Italy, the iconic fashion designer Simonetta Visconti, thought that the designs were original and beautiful. She told Alcorso "The whole world will buy the fabrics!"[140] Unfortunately, the response to the expanded collection by some Australian retail buyers was not as warm as it had been for the trial designs. Whilst Charles Lloyd Jones had continued his support of the collection, his fabric buyers were not enamoured of Modernage. According to Alcorso's memoir, they resented their boss's interference. Clearly, the expansion of the Modernage concept into an extended collection was too much for the retail buyers who were burdened by the dual constraints of conservatism and the cultural cringe.

> .... there was a deeper, stronger antagonism: a cultural one. They hated all the bloody talk about creativeness, originality, Australian idiom. They knew nothing about the artists. the (sic) only name they knew was that of Dobell because of the widely publicised legal proceedings which had followed the award of the Archibald Prize. Probably they agreed with the plaintiffs that Dobell was a mediocre caricaturist and, I must admit it, the range was a cultural shock. .... [141]

Alcorso's reception was also cool at Myer, even though they eventually purchased several designs and, according to Alcorso, their sales were ultimately greater than those of David Jones in Sydney.[142] At this time store buyers in Australia closely followed fashion and merchandising trends from

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[140] Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say*, 83.
[141] Ibid, 85.
[142] Ibid, 86.

overseas and America and would usually only commit to products that had proved themselves in overseas markets. Manufacturers of all types of products travelled overseas regularly to see what sold and translated them for Australian consumers in their local factories. Modernage was new and different – and *Australian*. The fabrics were priced higher than conventional fashion and furnishing designs that were regarded as proven sellers, therefore the collection presented a risk to retail buyers.

Myer believed that Modernage was something that their average customers would not necessarily understand, or be happy to pay a premium price for. Alcorso, acknowledging Australia's "cultural cringe", observed some years later that: "If I had had more perception, I would have understood that selling these designs to France or to Italy would have helped me to sell them here."[143] There were some significant quantities sold of some designs. Russell Drysdale advised Donald Friend in a letter[144] that one of his designs had sold 1,000 yards, a significant amount for a premium hand-printed textile. However, at the end of the day the best seller was a traditional design by Adrian Feint called 'Foliage' (see Figures 5.75 and 5.76), which, according to Alcorso, was "a conventional design that might have been part of any good furnishing range".[145]

Australian interior designers including Marion Hall Best included Modernage designs in their decorating schemes, though no photos of interiors using the fabrics could be located. Customers patronising interior designers like Hall Best were educated in the arts and receptive to modernist Australian design. They could afford to commission a professional designer to refurbish their interior decoration schemes rather than selecting materials themselves and could also have afforded original artworks by Australian artists if they

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[143] Ibid, 87-92.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid.

chose to buy them. They understood the extrinsic value of artist-designed textiles and supported their designer's choice of them in preference to the conservative furnishing fabrics available in Australian drapery and department stores of the time.

Modernage textiles were distributed across Australia. Apart from David Jones in Sydney, Myer in Melbourne and John Martins in Adelaide, the designs were also sold in Ahern's in Perth and Fitzgerald's in Hobart. Sales at retail stores were clearly not huge, as the prices were comparatively high. In October 1948 Ahern's advertised Modernage silks from between 13 shillings and sixpence to 15 shillings and ten pence per yard, whilst in comparison, imported French silk fabrics ranged in price from nine shillings and eleven pence to twelve shillings and eleven pence per yard.[146]

Take up of Modernage by clothing manufacturers was minimal. According to Eric Riddler, Librarian at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, there is some evidence that the business owned by sculptor Robert Klippel's family 'Klipper Ties' purchased several designs for men's neckties. Whilst the narrow widths of the fabric would have made garments comparatively expensive compared to those made from the newer, wide-width fabric being used for dresses, shirts and suits, they would have been no issue for Klipper Ties as their products used little yardage.

Publicity for the Modernage collection in newspapers and popular women's magazines had also attracted the attention of Government representatives. The Australian Government acknowledged that the significant manufacturing capacity developed to service wartime needs must be maintained to provide jobs for returned soldiers and widowed women who had become family breadwinners. Given Australia's small population at the

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[146] The West Australian. 1948. "Ahern's Intense Specialising Primarily for Country Visitors." 8 October. Accessed April 17, 2012. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article47134333.

time, the creation of new export markets for Australia's manufactured goods was a logical course of action for Government to keep Australia's factories working at capacity.
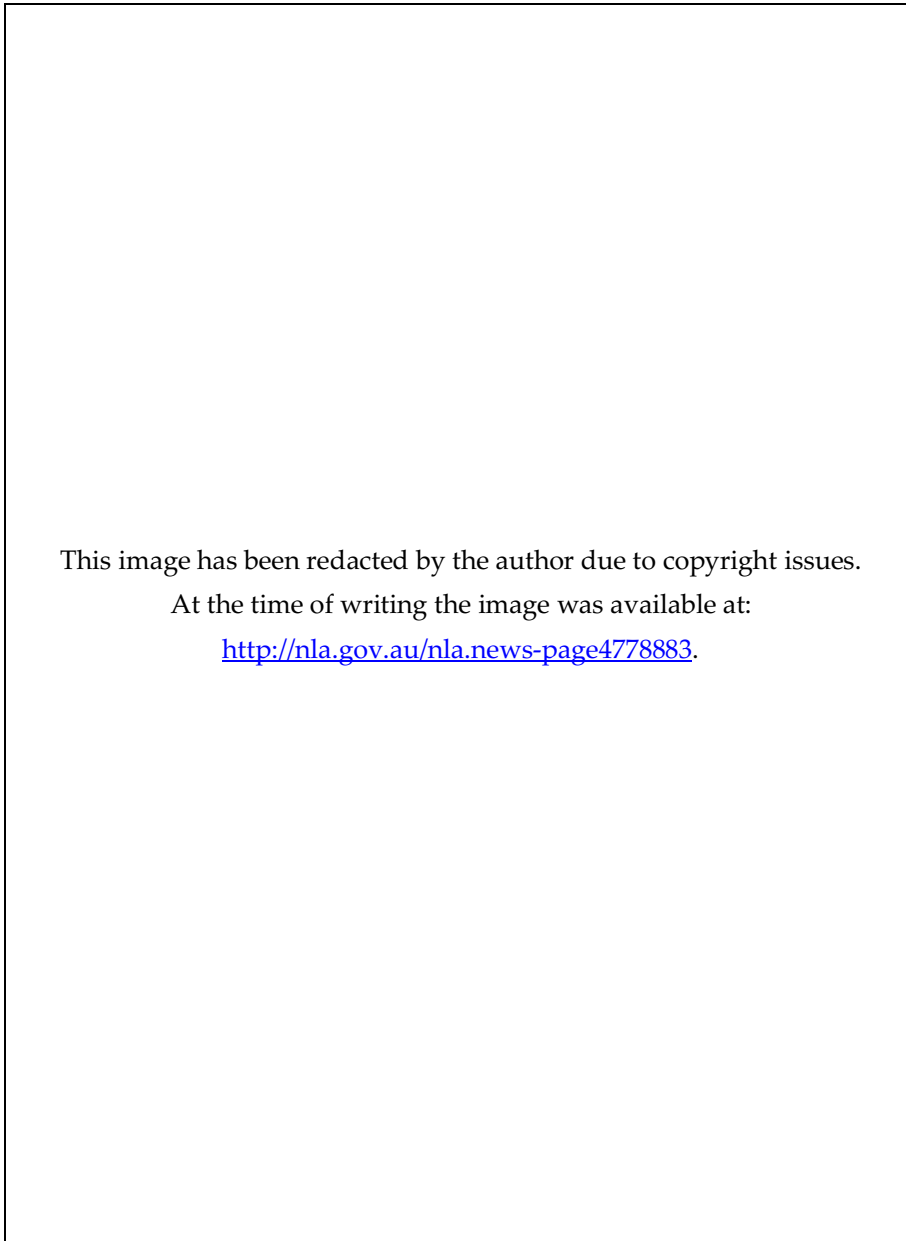
Figure 5.66 The Australian Women's Weekly, Modernage prints, 1947.[147]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing the image was available at:
http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4778883.

The images and editorial on Modernage in women's magazines (see Figure 5.66), together with the views of art and design 'experts' such as Professor Burke indicated that textile designs by Australian artists and designers could

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[147] The Australian Women's Weekly. 1947. "By Australian designers." 20 August. Accessed January 2, 2013. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4778883.

be used to enhance the desirability of one of Australia's key primary exports – *Wool*.

STP had developed their 'Peau D'Ange' (Angels' Skin), a pre-shrunk, washable lightweight wool challis for export to India, South Africa and the USA[148], and had contributed to several promotions with the Australian Wool Board in partnership with Sydney woollen mill John Vicars, including the 1946 'Rhapsody in Blue' promotion. The Australian Trade Board included a selection of STP's artist-designed textile collections on woollen base-cloths in the International Exposition of Textiles that opened on 3 June 1947 at the Grand Central Palace in New York. Australia's exhibit included a wide range of commercial Australian woollens and some hand loomed textiles that were exhibited alongside products from Italy, Holland, France, Canada and the United States. Modernage designs 'Tree Forms' by Russell Drysdale received mention in the press, together with 'Old Sydney' and 'Ceramic Forms' designed by Mary Curtis and Betty Skowronski respectively.[149]

Modernage designs were also displayed in the new Australian Trade Commission's Display Centre in New York. It had opened on August 6, 1947 to promote Australia's ability to convert its raw materials into desirable finished goods attractive to potential consumers in the United States. It was located on the concourse of the Rockefeller Centre in the direct path of daily guided tours of the complex, where an average of 35,000 people passed each day (see Figures 5.67 - 5.68). [150] Modernage designs by Loudon Sainthill, Hal Missingham, Ray Dalgarno, William Dobell, James Gleeson, Russell Drysdale,

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[148] National Archives of Australia. 1940. "Claudio Alcorso." *SP1714/1, N33832.* 30 July. Accessed December 30, 2017. 207.
https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=447243.

[149] The West Australian. 1947. "Australian Textiles: Interest in New York Exhibition."4 June. Accessed April 13, 2014. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article46316148. An edited version of this article also appeared on page 6 of *The Advertiser*, *Adelaide* on June 5, 1947 and on page 13 of *The Armidale Express and New England General Advertiser* on June 6, 1947.

[150] Sydney Morning Herald. *1948.* "New York Display Aids Australian Trade." 31 March. Accessed April 20, 2014. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article27894419.

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https://collection.maas.museum/object/123616.
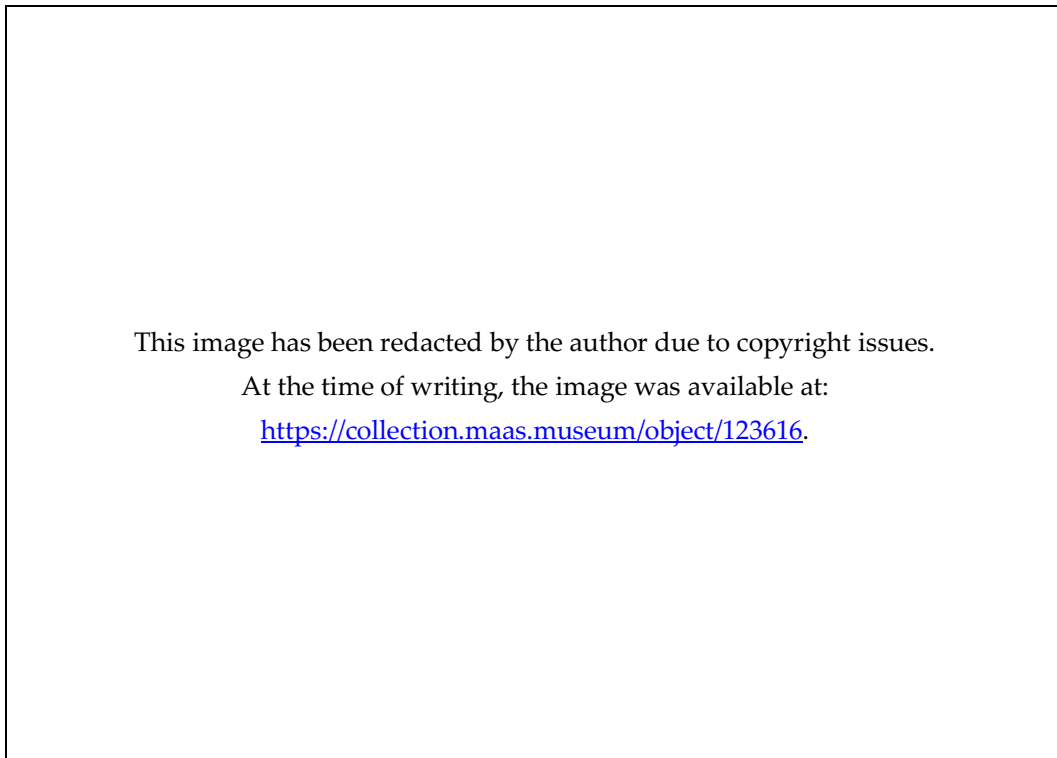
Figure 5.67 Australian Display Centre, Rockefeller Centre, New York, early1950s.[151]

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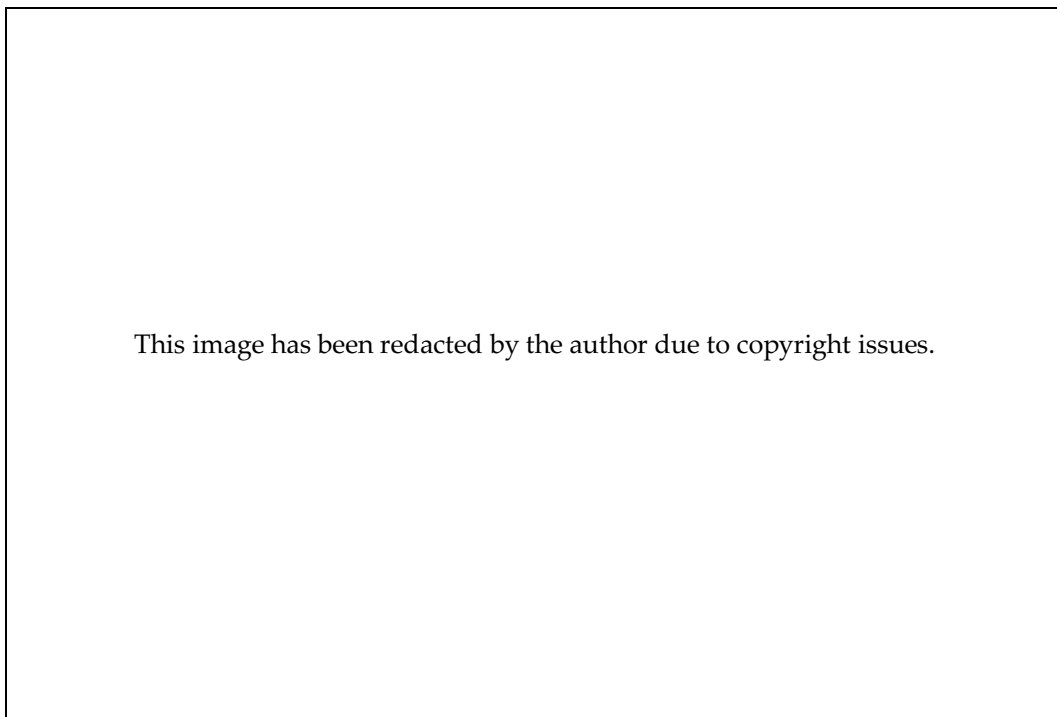
Figure 5.68 Display Textile Design: The Australian Trend, Rockefeller Centre, New York, 1949.[152]

[151] Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. Early 1950s. "Australian Display Centre, Rockefeller Centre, New York." *Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences.* Accessed November 22, 2016. https://collection.maas.museum/object/123616.

Mary Curtis and Douglas Annand were displayed for several weeks from Saturday February 15, 1948.

According to the Textile Journal of Australia, a fashion writer from the New York Herald Tribune devoted half of her column to the exhibition, praising the quality of the textiles and the print designs. Of particular note was a printed woollen sheer fabric "… so fine that it has almost a silky finish". This fabric was undoubtedly 'Peau D'Ange' – the Alcorso's innovative new woollen base cloth. The writer further enthused that "The show is just one more step in putting top artistic talent at the service of those who design dresses."[153] An article promoting the opening of the New York exhibition in the Sydney Morning Herald further reported:

> Textile designs by Australian artists were shown at the recent International Exposition of Textiles in New York and created considerable interest.
>
> Ascher, of London, has utilized designs by Henry Moore, Cecil Beaton, Feliks Topolski and others in America, Salvador Dali, Ludwig Bemelmans, Marcel Vertes and James Reynolds have designed prints and silk prints have been taken from paintings by Renoir, Matisse and Picasso. Australians who have now joined these ranks include William Dobell, William Constable, Russell Drysdale, Francis Lymburner, Adrian Feint Donald Friend, Margaret Preston, Douglas Annand, Hal

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[152] *Textile Journal of Australia.* 1949. "Window devoted to 'Textile Design - the Australian Trend' at the Rockefeller Centre, New York." 20 December (VIC : Wilkes & Co Pty Ltd, 1926-1970) Sydney, State Library of NSW): 914.

[153] *The Textile Journal of Australia.* 1948. "Australian Art Fabrics Gain High Praise in New York." 20 March (VIC : Wilkes & Co Pty Ltd, 1926-1970) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 58.

> Missingham, James Gleeson, Orban, Frank and Muriel
>
> Medworth, J. Carrington Smith and many others.154

Praise of Australian products from a place like New York was big news in Australia. Stories about the exhibition appeared in several Australian trade and daily newspapers from Hobart to Perth[155]. The Textile Journal of Australia further reported that the "……exhibition caused a great deal of interest and requests for samples have been received from the Museum of Modern Art".[156] Evidently the museum were seriously interested in the designs, as it currently holds seven lengths of Modernage fabrics in its collection, including 'Old Sydney' by Mary Curtis; 'Cryptogram' and 'Stone Frond' by James Gleeson; 'Doodle Dot' and 'Ngaboni' by Frank Hinder; 'Driftwood' by Hal Missingham and 'Tour de France' by Desiderius Orban.[157]

5.5.1 Modernage at sea

Modernage designs were further used as part of the global promotion of modernist art and design through their incorporation into interior decoration schemes on ocean liners, providing travelling exhibitions of sophisticated taste and positioning Australian design the international context. During the late 1940s and 1950s, travel by air saved time but was far too expensive for most

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[154] The Sydney Morning Herald. 1947. "Art Accent in Textile Show." 21 August. Accessed March 23, 2011. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article18040400.

[155] The story in The Textile Journal of Australia was credited to The Sun News-Pictorial. Editorial also ran in The Sydney Morning Herald on February 16, 1948 and rated two mentions in The Mercury, Hobart on February 16 and 17. The Sunday Times, Perth ran the story on February 15, 1948 and The Barrier Miner, Broken Hill, published it on February 17, 1948.

[156] The Federal Council of Textile Printers of NSW & Victoria 1948, 928, 930.

[157] *The Museum of Modern Art* in New York has the following holdings of *Modernage* fabrics:
Mary Curtis. *Old Sydney*, 1946-47, http://www.moma.org/collection/works/194448;
James Gleeson. *Cryptogram*, 1946-1947, http://www.moma.org/collection/works/194439;
James Gleeson. *Stone Frond*, 1946-47, http://www.moma.org/collection/works/194429;
Frank Hinder. *Doodle Dot*, 1946-47, http://www.moma.org/collection/works/194434;
Frank Hinder. *Ngaboni,* 1946-47, http://www.moma.org/collection/works/194430;
Missingham, Hal, *Driftwood,* black on white colourway 1946-47,
http://www.moma.org/collection/works/194442; and
Desiderius Orban. *Tour de France*, 1944-47, http://www.moma.org/collection/works/194427.
All pages were accessed on October 8, 2016.

people and still not entirely safe. Travel by ocean remained a popular alternative for government officials, business people, Australians on holiday or visiting family in England and Europe and for the carriage of mail and post-war migrants to Australia. One of the major shipping lines to Australia at that time was the Orient Line, which later merged with the Pacific Line to become the company now known as P&O.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing a similar image was available at:
https://artsearch.nga.gov.au/images/2400/135845.jpg.
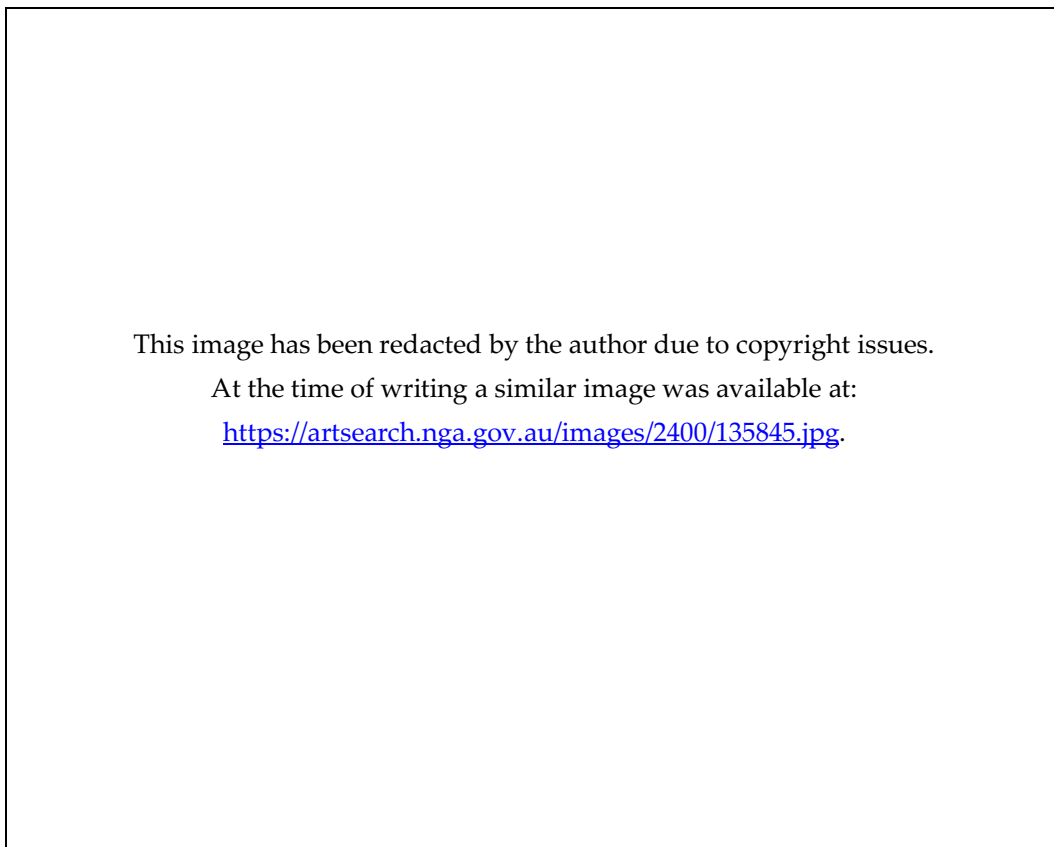
Figure 5.69 Douglas Annand painting the mural 'Kangaroo Hunt' on the RMS Orcades in 1949.
To his right is a length of James Cant's Modernage design 'Land' in the red colourway.[158]

Modernage artist Douglas Annand had worked on the Orient Line building in Sydney in 1938 under the direction of New Zealand architect Brian O'Rorke. Sir Colin Anderson, the chairman of the Orient Line at that time was a known patron of modern art and architecture. He had retained O'Rorke, who was highly regarded in international and design circles as the company's chief

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[158] Anne McDonald. 2001. *Douglas Annand: The Art of Life.* Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 33.

designer. O'Rorke clearly admired Annand and over the next few years gave him many commissions, including the mural 'Kangaroo Hunt' for the RMS Orcades (see Figure 5.69). Annand produced a mural for another Orient Line vessel the RMS Oronsay in 1950, for which he won his third Sulman Prize.[159] It may have been O'Rorke's regard for Annand that led him to view the Modernage collection in Sydney and purchase several designs for new ships under commission, including the Orcades.[160]

The Orcades was the third Orient Line vessel of its name. It was the first post-war passenger liner built for the company and the first new ocean liner to reach Australia after World War II. It was renowned for setting new standards for facilities and accommodation. The prefix 'RMS' indicates that the liner had a British Royal Mail Service commission to carry postal items between Britain, Australia and New Zealand. Orcades sailed from England to Australia via the Suez Canal, returning via the same route on a regular basis. From December 1954 operated a Circle Pacific Voyage via San Francisco, then returned to the UK-Australia via Suez run.[161]

In January 1949 the Federal Council of Textile Printers reported that overseas businessmen travelling from Britain to Australia and back now had the opportunity of seeing seven of the new Modernage textile designs in the library and other rooms on the Orcades.[162] Included in the décor schemes were 'Ringbarked' by Betty Skowronski; 'Alpine Rocks' by Carl Plate; 'Land' by James Cant; 'Pearl Divers' by Donald Friend; 'Jungle Song' by Douglas Annand, 'Seashells' by Hal Missingham and 'Three Kings' by Justin O'Brien.

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[159] Ibid, 57.

[160] Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say*, 84.

[161] "Orient Line RMS Orcades 3 – 1948 – 1972", SS Maritime.com, 2016, accessed October 31, 2016, http://www.ssmaritime.com/orcades.htm.

[162] The Textile Journal of Australia. 1949. "Australian Character in Design." 20 January (VIC : Wilkes & Co Pty Ltd, 1926-19700 Sydney, State Library of NSW: 928-930.

Some photographs survive of these textiles in situ. The red colourway of Cant's design 'Land' can be seen to the right of the figure of Douglas Annand in Figure 5.69. The soft furnishings in the first class flat were made entirely from Hal Missingham's design 'Seashells', printed on hard wearing cotton Dutch-cloth. Figure 5.70 shows the one of the bedrooms, with curtains, twin-bed coverlets, upholstery on the stool and easy chair and even the lampshade covered in seashells.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing the image was available at:
http://www.ssmaritime.com/orcades.htm.
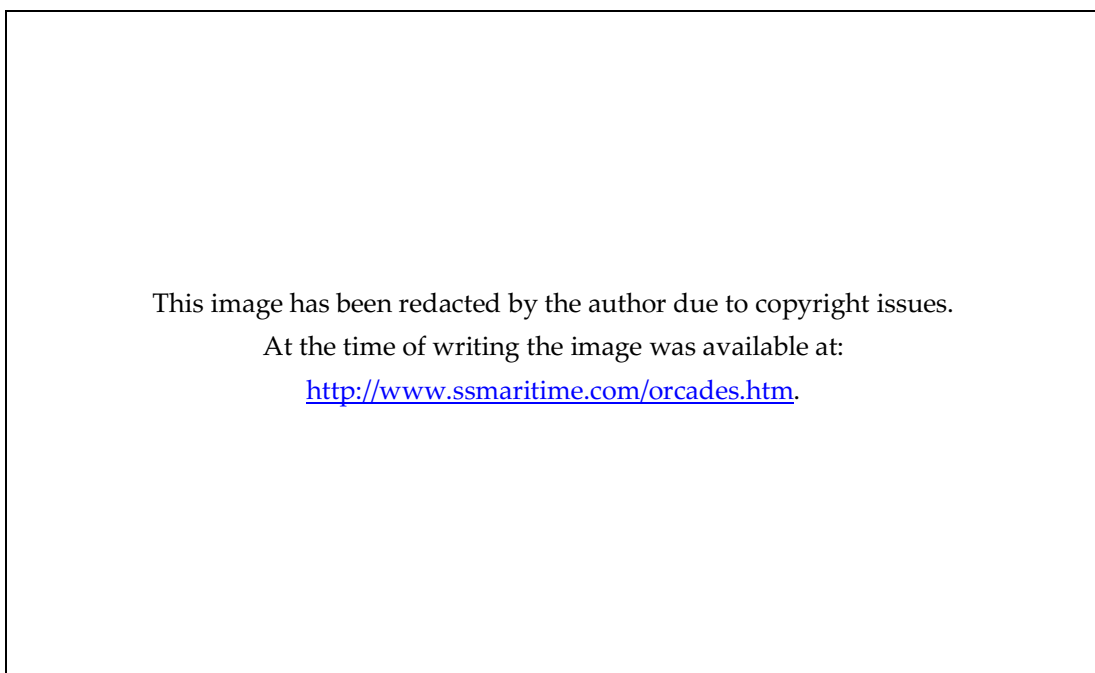
Figure 5.70 The Flat, deluxe first-class suite, RMS Orcades, c1949.[163]

'The Three Kings' (Figure 5.72) by Justin O'Brien (1917-1996) was used for the curtains in the First-Class Library on C-Deck of the Orcades (Figure 5.73). O'Brien's paintings were strongly influenced by Byzantine and Greek religious artworks, which he had encountered as a prisoner of war in Greece. His work was particularly admired by interior designer Marion Hall Best, who owned several of his paintings.[164] Compared with O'Brien's paintings like the

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[163] ssmaritime.com. c.1949. "SS Orcades - The Flat - First Class." *ssmaritime.com.* Accessed October 31, 2016. http://www.ssmaritime.com/orcades.htm.

[164] Michaela Richards. 1993. *The Best Style: Marion Hall Best and Australian Interior Design 1935-1975.* Roseville: Art and Australia Books.

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https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/8670.a-c.
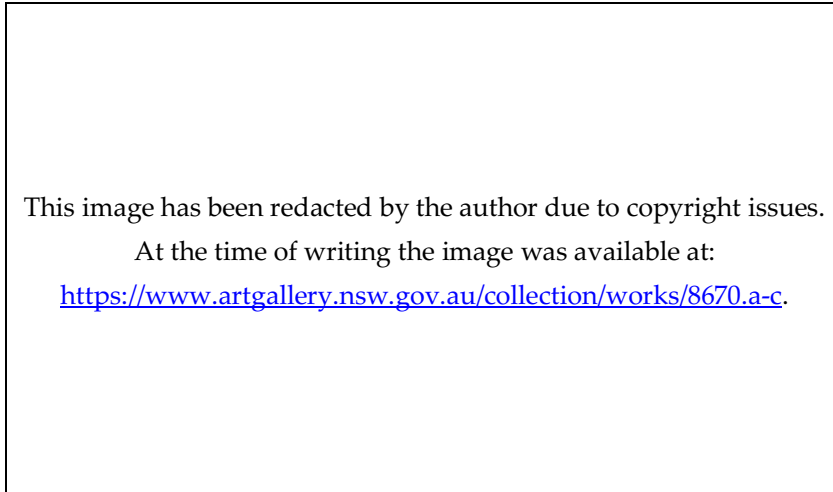
Figure 5.71 Justin O'Brien, 'The Last Supper', 1952.[165]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing a similar image was available at:
https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/107.1971/
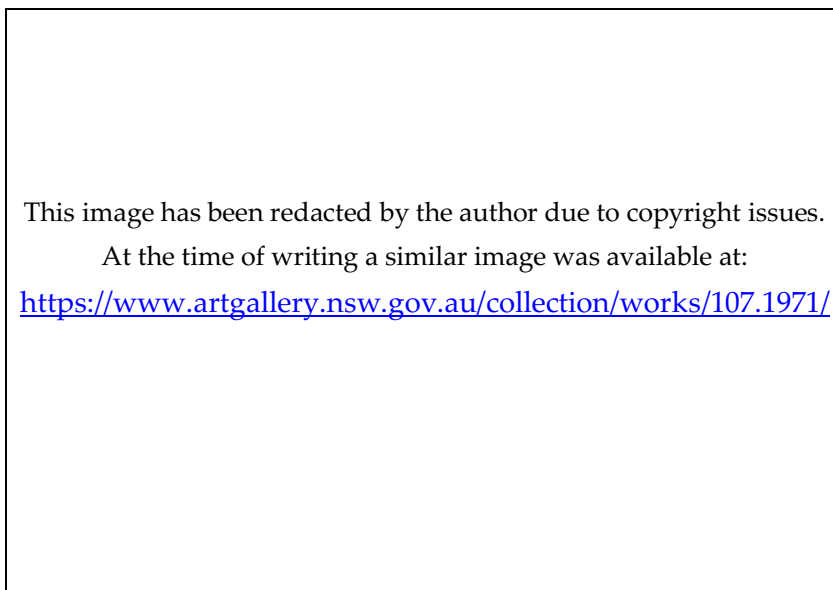
Figure 5.72 Justin O'Brien, 'The Three Kings', 1947.[166]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing the image was available at:
http://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/items/732086.
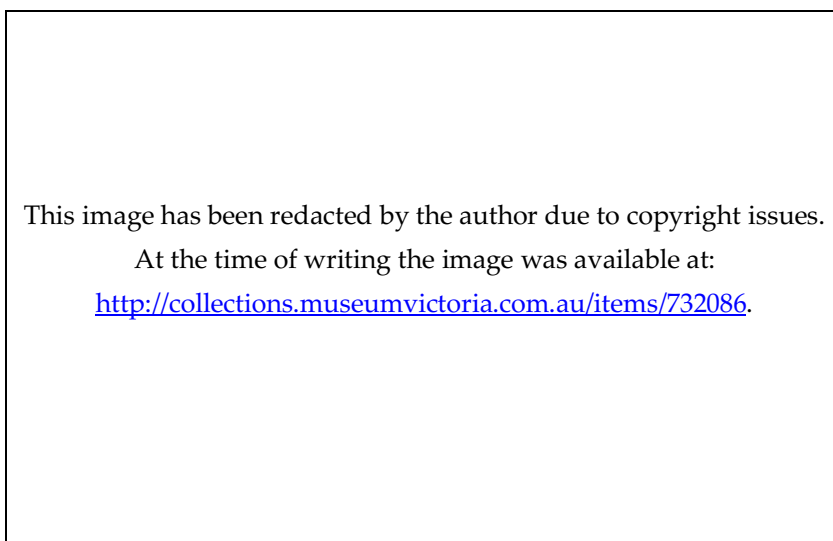
Figure 5.73 RMS Orcades, First Class Library, C Deck.[167]

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[165] Justin O'Brien. 1952. "The Last Supper." *Art Gallery of NSW.* Accessed April 11, 2014. https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/8670.a-c. Oil on canvas, 69.3 x 86.7 cm.

luminous 'Last Supper' (Figure 5.71), the pictorial print 'The Three Kings' is like a Christmas illustration for children, with cartoon like characters in confectionary colours interspersed with simplified buildings topped with onion domes. It was a design clearly intended for furnishing, particularly for curtains and cushions.

Despite extensive promotion of Modernage to international audiences, an artificial trade barrier introduced by the Australian Government inhibited the sale of the textiles overseas. The government had legislated that fabrics imported into Australia could not be re-exported. This prevented STP from exporting Modernage prints on rayons and silk base-cloths, which were, at that time, mostly imported from overseas. In 1947, with textile rationing still in force, there were strict controls on re-exportation of imported base-cloths, even if value had been added in the form of screen-printing by Australian factories. At that time, it was generally only feasible to export printed woollen fabrics. Any Modernage designs to be exported into overseas markets would have to be printed on wool, limiting their appeal and application in certain fashion markets.[168]

These trade arrangement highlights the often-paradoxical attitudes of different branches of the government of the day. Whilst one branch of government is keen to establish export markets for Australia's manufacturers, another branch places an illogical barrier on the export of goods that had clearly had significant value added to them by Australian factories. One can only speculate whether export sales of Modernage would have increased had the Alcorsos had the opportunity to export their printed silks and rayons to

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[166] Alcorso, *A New Approach to Textile Designing,* 1947: 11.

[167] Museum Victoria Collections. c.1949. "Orcades - First Class Library, C Deck." *Museum Victoria Collections.* Accessed October 6, 2016. http://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/items/732086.

[168] The Textile Journal of Australia. 1949, 928-930.

overseas markets. Perhaps we would have seen Australian Alcorso silk prints in the fashion collections of his friend Simonetta Visconti in Rome.

From the advertising and editorial of the day it is apparent that Alcorso was pitching the product to the top end of the market. The logic was that a premium price could be charged because of the collection's association with fine art, coupled with the shortages of interesting furnishing fabrics due to post-war rationing.[169] Thirty-six inch (90cm) wide Dutch-cloth fabrics printed by STP were featured in the Australian Home Beautiful of November 1947 for 17/4 shillings per yard, compared to locally made forty-eight inch wide cotton printed cloths at priced at 13/8 per yard. STP were not unique in charging a premium price for hand printed fabrics. Annan Textiles were also seeking top prices for their 48-inch 'November Lily' print, which was listed at 23 shillings per yard as part of the same promotion.[170]

FitzGerald's of Hobart advertised thirty-six inch wide Modernage Beach Cottons from 5/6 per yard; Modernage printed woollens from 12/10 per yard and Modernage printed silks from 13/6 per yard in a promotion for Home Sewing Week in October 1947.[171] The width of the textiles would have been a significant constraint to patternmakers working with the new full-skirted New Look made famous by Christian Dior that year. Yardages for garments would have been astronomical, pushing the prices far above those of the average consumer – and taking no account of the restrictions imposed by textile rationing. These considerations, coupled with the costs of manufacturing would have meant that using Modernage prints in ladies apparel would have

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[169] The Draper of Australasia. 1947. "Why Coupons for Furnishing Fabrics?" February (VIC : 1901-1966) Sydney : State Library of NSW: 2.

[170] The Australian Home Beautiful. 1947. "New fabrics for brighter curtains." Sydney : Caroline Simpson Library, Sydney living Museums, May: 19-20.

[171] The Mercury. 1947. "Advertisement for FitzGerald's Home Sewing Week." 8 October. Accessed April 17, 2012. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article26427709.

only been commercially viable by top-end manufacturers with customers willing to pay the price.

5.6   Was Modernage really a commercial failure?

Whilst the Modernage collection received critical acclaim in editorials by the likes of Professor Joseph Burke and others, the expanded collection of 1947 did not generate the levels of profit that the directors and board of the newly publicly floated STP had hoped for.[172] Both Burke[173] and Alcorso[174] respectively acknowledged that the collection as a grand experiment that could be abandoned if it proved commercially unsuccessful. Despite early indications of consumer and editorial support in 1946, the collection did not generate many repeat orders and there has been a general consensus amongst cultural commentators that the designs were too visually challenging for most consumers. The most successful design – 'Foliage' by Adrian Feint – presaged STP's return to conventional prints that would ensure good sales and future financial success.

Adrian Feint (1894-1971) was a painter and commercial artist who worked extensively for Sydney Ure Smith's publishing company Smith & Julius where he designed many covers for The Home. He was a talented painter of flowers and foliage and also excelled as a printmaker, producing many wood engravings and stylish bookplates for artists including his former teacher Thea Proctor, writers Dorothea Mackellar and Ethel Turner and gallery owner Frank Clune.[175] His paintings were carefully contained but visually luxuriant. His 1930 work 'Hunter in a tropical forest' (Figure 5.74) is a *moderne* treatment of foliage contained within a window-plate composition.

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[172] Burke, September 1947, 7-9
[173] Ibid.
[174] Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say*, 87–92.
[175] Roger Butler. 1996. "Adrian Feint b.28 June 1894 - d.25 April 1971." *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Accessed February 16, 2014. http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/feint-adrian-george-10161.

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https://s3.amazonaws.com/img.aasd.com.au/49171033.jpg.

Figure 5.74 Adrian Feint, 'Hunter in a tropical forest', c1930.[176]

Figure 5.75: Adrian Feint, 'Foliage', purple and yellow colour-way, 1947.[177]

Figure 5.76: Adrian Feint, 'Foliage', blue and orange colour-way, 1947.[178]

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[176] Amazonaws.com. c.1930. "Adrian Feint, Hunter in a Tropical forest." *Amazonaws.com.* Accessed June 14, 2019. https://s3.amazonaws.com/img.aasd.com.au/49171033.jpg.

Whilst the painting contains three small figures, the focus is his lush foliage, the form of which carries through to his furnishing fabric designs for Alcorso. Technically, 'Foliage' demonstrates an expert knowledge of surface design, no doubt a legacy of years of commercial artwork and bookplate design. It was probably the last design that Alcorso thought would be Modernage's best seller.

Writers who have previously examined the Modernage collection including Christopher Menz,[179] Alice Blackwood[180], John McPhee[181] and Liz Williamson[182] assumed that the lack of commercial sales and therefore profit, was the main reason behind the collection's demise. However, notions of failure connected purely to sales and profit may be contested. The collection generated interest and publicity, but not huge sales and repeat orders from retailers. It is possible that overly optimistic expectations of profit from the company's directors and shareholders may have contributed to these perceptions of failure. Despite not achieving monetary gain, the collection did bring advantages to STP.

In the twenty-first century commercial environment, fashion companies pay public relations companies huge amounts to achieve the kind of editorial exposure that Modernage achieved. Fashion designers in the couture market spend millions of dollars producing collections that will never sell but will end up being worn by film and television stars on the red carpet, creating desire for other products produced by the brand. Couture collections

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[177] Adrian Feint. 1947. "Foliage." Image courtesy of Dr Cassie Plate, used with permission. *Art Gallery of NSW.* Sydney. Screen-print on cotton, 37.4 x 59.8 cm.

[178] Adrian Feint. 1947. "Foliage." Author's photograph. *National Gallery of Victoria.* Melbourne. Screen-printed cotton, 52 x 90 cm.

[179] Menz 1987, 72-77.

[180] Alice Blackwood. 2005. "Claudio Alcorso - Art and the Everyday." *Textile Fibre Forum*, No. 4: 24-25.

[181] McPhee, "Sanctuaries: Three Textile Artists in Australia" 1997.

[182] Liz Williamson. 2010. "Interlaced - Textiles for Fashion." In *Australian Fashion Unstitched: The Last 60 Years*, by B English and L Pomazan. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

are lead-loss making activities designed to sell the idea of luxury and diffusion ranges and perfumes are what generates profits. In twenty-first century terms, publicity achieved by Modernage could be reinterpreted as a lead loss maker that enabled the virtuosity of STP's print capability to be demonstrated. Achievement of this level of promotion, together with the accolades Modernage received from academics such as Professor Burke would today be perceived as a great measure of success.

It is difficult to find conclusive documentary evidence that the collection <u>actually</u> lost money for STP. The balance of design and production costs and profit margins were at a viable ratio in 1946, because in 1947 Silk and Textile Printers was a profitable business on paper. The Argus reported that STP had achieved a profit of £7,301 (6.8% on shareholder's funds) as at June 30, 1947, compared with a profit of only £3,402 the previous financial year. This almost doubling of profits provides an indication why STP would have expanded upon the Modernage experiment of 1946 - resulting in the expanded collection promoted extensively in 1947.[183]

Modernage was not the only business initiative at STP in 1946-47 that may have put pressure on the business' budget. It had become a public company and had begun looking for opportunities to expand its production capacity in new premises. Various locations including a site at Penrith in NSW were considered to replace the factory at Rushcutters Bay. A number of munitions factories that had been built in Tasmania toward the end of World War II were sold off to state governments at the time, who then had to find industries to occupy them. STP were offered a brand-new munitions factory in Derwent Park, Glenorchy, Tasmania. A range of Government incentives and concessions were offered to sweeten the deal, including periods of free

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[183] The Argus. 1947. "Silk and Textile Printers' Profit Doubles." 8 October. Accessed March 23, 2011. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article22512625.

and reduced rental whilst the business was setting itself up. Despite the potential cost to relocate machinery and train new staff, the offer was too good to refuse. As a result of this proposal, Alcorso became acquainted with Herbert Cole ("Nugget") Coombs, then attached to the Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction, the authority negotiating the sale of government military infrastructure.[184] Coombs would later become an important contact and friend, influencing Alcorsos participation in the Elizabethan Theatre Trust, the Australian Opera and a number of Australian arts boards and committees.

During 1947 the Alcorsos operated STP in both Sydney and Hobart, clearly an expensive way of doing business. Shortages of suitably skilled workers required to build the printing tables and set up boilers and other ancillary equipment meant delays in production at the new factory at Derwent Park. Some staff, including senior designer Avis Higgs, Edward Malone and Shirley Martin elected not to move to Tasmania and therefore new staff had to be found in all sections of the business. Moving a factory is expensive at the best of times due to loss of production and the cost of paying idle staff during the move. In a post-war environment with material and labour shortages, the business would have been haemorrhaging money. The decision not to continue producing products perceived to be somewhat risky like Modernage would have been easy to make under these circumstances.[185]

The balance sheet for the end of the 1948 financial reflects the impact of the costs associated with the relocation to Tasmania. STP reported operational losses of £4,309, resulting from an accumulation of £2,022 in depreciation;

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[184] Herbert Cole Coombs. 1981. *Trail Balance.* Melbourne and Sydney: MacMillan, 22.
--. 1946. *Series A3995, Item 11/1946 Cabinet Sub-Committee (Secondary Industries) Minute.* Canberra: National Archives of Australia, 20 March. The minute documents the Government's approval of the lease of the former Derwent Park Munitions Factory to *STP*.

[185] Ibid. This document also contains Ministerial Briefing Notes authored by HC Coombs documenting *Silk & Textile Printers'* request for a full waiver of rent for six months and a reduced rental of £1,000 per annum for the first two years at least, due to the difficulties and monetary losses experienced though the relocation of the business.

£2,038 for alterations written off and £249 for scrapped plant.[186] The balance sheet for 1949 provides further poor results, with an annual loss of £7,805 again attributed to depreciation, alterations written off and plant sold. Cumulative losses that year were estimated at £26,509.

> In the report to the directors, these losses were attributed to:
>
> (a) The continued inflow of cheap imports from overseas entering the country free of duty; and
>
> (b) The time required to train suitable staff in Hobart proved longer than anticipated, delaying an improvement in the quantity and quality of production.[187]

Financial losses directly associated with Modernage are not mentioned anywhere in either of the profit and loss statements of 1948 or 1949. STP's lack of profitability in that period could arguably be attributable to other factors in addition to lack of sales from the Modernage collection.

In his memoir Alcorso mentions that all of the artwork and screens associated with the Modernage collection were lost during the businesses' relocation to Tasmania. It would have been a costly exercise to re-create even the best-selling designs from Modernage, without the original artwork. Taken collectively, all of the adverse factors would have culminated in a decision to invest only in proven commercial print designs like Adrian Feint's 'Foliage' in the future.

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[186] Silk & Textile Printers Ltd. 1948. *Report to the Directors for the year ended 30th June 1948.* Hobart: Morris Miller Library, University of Tasmania, 30 June.
[187] Silk & Textile Printers Ltd. 1949. *Report to the Directors for the year ended 30th June 1949.* Hobart: Morris Miller Library, University of Tasmania, 30 June.

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At the time of writing the image was available at:

http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/96.1971/.

Figure 5.77 Russell Drysdale, 'Stone and Wood', red colourway, 1946-47.[188]

Figure 5.78 Russell Drysdale, 'Stone and Wood', green colourway, 1946-47.[189]

Figure 5.79 Russell Drysdale, 'Stone and Wood', pink colourway, 1946-47.[190]

Alcorso said in his memoir:

> The message was clear and nobody had to rub it in. The Australian range had been my baby: my colleagues at the factory had loyally backed it and so had my conservative

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[188] Russell Drysdale. 1946-47. "Stone and Wood." *Art Gallery of NSW.* Accessed November 11, 2012. http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/96.1971/. Screen-printed cotton, 49 x 90.5.

[189] Russell Drysdale. 1946-47. *Stone and Wood.* Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston. Accessed September 9, 2012. Author's photograph. Screen-printed cotton.

[190] Russell Drysdale. 1946-47. *Stone and Wood.* National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Accessed August 16, 2012. Author's photograph. Screen-printed cotton, 98 x 90 cm.

friends of the company's board, but now I had to stand up to my responsibility. Our shareholders expected to receive dividends. My job was to make the company profitable, not to chase dreams about establishing an Australian idiom in textiles! We had received accolades of a cultural nature, but culture does not pay dividends, nor do banks count it as a tangible asset to determine the overdraft limit. ……..I went back with a vengeance to what I called a diet of boiled potatoes, but which was in fact a diet of flowers.[191]

It is also important to acknowledge the prevailing views of a number of scholars that the Australian public might not have been aesthetically ready for many of the designs featured in the collection. Some of the more unusual designs and colour ways would have had restricted appeal. Some colour-ways bear little relationship to the subject matter and may be considered incongruous. This is illustrated in the colourations of Drysdale's 'Stone and Wood' seen in Figures 5.77 to 5.79. The use of pastel pinks and yellows seem a little incompatible given the subject matter of animal bones lying desolate in the outback. They neither reflect the colours of the Australian outback, nor do they present a subject matter that would necessarily appeal to lovers of pastel tones.

Many of the designs are also very difficult to style, given that the repeats are so large or are resolved into checks. 'Adina' by Margaret Preston and 'Burlesque' by William Dobell fall into this category. Any dressmaking or furnishing application would require pattern matching. More fabric is required to match larger checks than small ones and at a premium price it

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[191] Claudio Alcorso. 1994. "Speech for the opening of an exhibition at Carrick Hill, Adelaide, 1994." *NS3001/1/1 Business Correspondence relating to Silk & Textile Printers, 1957-1994.* Hobart: State Archive of Tasmania.

would have been expensive to cover, for example, a lounge suite with these patterns.

This calls into question Alcorso's concept of commissioning artists with little experience to design textile prints. Alcorso believed that lack of "constraining" knowledge might produce a more creative result, but in fact it was the designs by artist with knowledge of pattern repeat that were most successful. Nicolaus Pevsner's 1946 essay "Can Painters Design Fabrics?" points out that whilst the …." artist seeks pattern of emotional significance, the manufacturer pattern chiefly of decorative appeal".[192] In other words, whilst the designs may be creative and painterly, they are not necessarily usable in a variety of end-use contexts and therefore not universally appealing or commercial.

Alcorso, with the benefit of hindsight, summarised his reasoning behind the low success of Modernage as follows:

> We did not understand the mood of the public. We did not understand the signs that were around us. After all, it was in those days that we had witnessed a unique event that could only have happened in Australia, when William Dobell was brought to course on the basis that his painting which had been awarded the Archibald prize was not a painting, but a caricature. …………[193]

John McPhee also quotes Alcorso in an interview as saying "Looking back I think that we were too far ahead of the times. Fifteen years later we would have been more successful."[194] With deference to Alcorso and scholars who

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[192] Nicolaus Pevsner. 1946. "Can painters design fabrics?" *Art in Industry*, December: 11-17.
[193] Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say*, 87-92.
[194] John McPhee. 1982. *Australian Decorative Arts in the Australian National Gallery*. Canberra: Australian National Gallery, 82-83.

have previously written about Modernage, it is reasonable that many of Australians were not culturally equipped to comprehend the collection in 1947. As Pierre Bourdieu states:

> Any art perception involves a conscious or unconscious deciphering operation. ….'comprehension', is possible and effective only in the special case in which the cultural code which makes the deciphering possible is immediately and completely mastered by the observer (in the form of cultivate ability or inclination) and merges with the cultural code which has rendered the work perceived possible.[195]

Bourdieu goes on to say that without some kind of artistic competence – that is to say – an understanding of aesthetics and the elements and principles of design, let alone the symbolic nature of images, that "misunderstanding is inevitable" …….."one unconsciously applies the code which is good for everyday perception, for the deciphering of familiar objects, to works in a foreign tradition."[196]

Bourdieu's concept of 'Art Perception'[197] explains previous scholarly consideration of Alcorso's Modernage collection as a form of legitimate culture that was introduced too early for the 'visually illiterate' Australian public. It was targeted at people like Alcorso, not the average domestic dressmaker or furniture manufacturer in Australia. This explains why the collection was applauded by cosmopolitans like Charles Lloyd Jones and Marion Hall Best, who were sufficiently endowed with the cultural capital and habitus required to appreciate it.

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[195] Pierre Bourdieu. 1984. *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art & Literature*. Columbia University Press, 1.

[196] Ibid, 2-3.

[197] Pierre Bourdieu. 1984. "Chapter 8: Outline of a Sociological Theory of Art Perception." In *the Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art & Literature,* by Pierre Bourdieu. Columbia University Press.

However, it must also be acknowledged that consumer incomprehensibility was not the sole factor influencing the collection's poor sales performance. Other factors cited including the premium prices charged; the usable width of the base-cloths and the limited types of base-cloths used were all contributing factors. Together with the costs of relocation to Tasmania and the loss of all artwork and screens, it is not surprising that Modernage designs were not produced after 1947. Alcorso regarded Modernage as a learning experience to inform the future business activities of Silk & Textile Printers:

> Looking back it was not all negative. These experiences are never negative. For the staff of the company, it broke through a lot of barriers about what could be done and what could not be done. It was a great challenge to do this sort of work and so it broadened the outlook of the staff. Similarly, it was a challenge to the prejudices of the buyers. In those days – and this may seem strange to you, as indeed it was to me, coming from Italy – I soon discovered that if you were inclined toward respect for the arts, you were considered to be somewhat unsound……….. That was the mood in those days. Nonetheless, something remained which made the company different. We did not abandon altogether the idea of doing creative work and by the time the company was taken over we had established a good export market. ………..[198]

The ideas behind the Modernage experiment did contribute to the success of other business ventures in the 1950s. By 1951 STP was printing around four

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[198] Ibid.

million yards of textile piece-goods each year.[199] Continued business success in the 1950s meant that new investments needed to be made in technology and equipment. The 1960s saw STP winning awards for exporting their silk prints overseas, which created a desire for the products in Australia. Machinery in the factory had to be upgraded to keep up with demand. Throughout this period of success Alcorso never forgot that fine and commercial artists could be the potential source of innovative design concepts for textile prints.

The Modernage designs had also clearly played a part in introducing contemporary Australian art and design to an international audience and many of the artists who contributed designs later became well known overseas. Modernage had also demonstrated that Australian artists and designers were more than capable of developing textile design for that would be accepted in domestic and international markets.

Engineering and design historian Henry Petroski has written extensively of the contribution of early failure to eventual success. Whilst his commentary relates primarily to the design and construction of bridges, his notion that 'success and failure are intertwined' could arguably explain how the failure of Modernage may have contributed to the success of later endeavours including Sheridan. He wrote:

> Failures are remarkable. The failures always teach us more than the successes about the design of things. And thus the failures often lead to redesigns—to new, improved things. Modern designers and manufacturers can do this on their own, or they can be encouraged to do it by consumers, who essentially are design critics who vote with their purchases.
>
> ………

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[199] The Textile Journal of Australia. 1951. "The Textile Printing Industry in Australia." 20 January (VIC : Wilkes & Co Pty Ltd, 1926-1970) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 1129.

> Design is Janus-faced, looking always both backwards and
> forwards. In the past, design sees at the same time an
> inspiring and yet an imperfect world, full of things to be both
> admired and improved upon. ….. If heeded, the past provides
> caveats and lessons for future designs.[200]

Alcorso would ironically achieve his greatest commercial successes with traditional and non-traditional floral prints, which later became the core of his fashion collections throughout the 1950s and 1960s. It was also the ubiquitous floral that became the mainstay of his most successful printed textile product, Sheridan bed-linen.

Alcorso continued to employ artists and designers directly in his business. Like other textile producers, he purchased designs outright from textile studios overseas, but he also found ways to create new opportunities for Australian artists and designers in the form of textile design competitions, an approach widely imitated by his competitors, which forms the subject of the following chapter.

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[200] Henry Petroski. 2006. *Success through Failure - the paradox of design.* Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 49, 63.

6 STP IN THE POST-WAR BOOM

6.1   Post war European migration

As discussed in Chapter 5, after World War II Australia had agreed to take its fair share of migrants and refugees, though the White Australia Policy[1] and an entrenched undercurrent of bigotry and racism initially saw a preference for white Aryans from northern Europe.[2] European migrants from former Axis nations experienced bigotry and discrimination from returned soldiers and their families and others who had lost loved ones in the European theatre of war.

The Australian Government initially placed a quota on the numbers of Jewish migrants after the war.[3] Jewish families, including the family of the writer, had existed in Australia since colonisation and there were many assimilated Jews and recent migrants from the 1920s and 30s already residing in the country. Members of the community supported by the Australian Jewish Welfare Society met the boats and assisted newly arrived Jewish refugees and migrants to find housing and work.[4] Many of these refugees went to work in established Jewish businesses, including tailor's shops and the small clothing factories then clustered around Clarence Street in Sydney and Flinders Lane in Melbourne. Many migrants also set up their own retail and wholesale businesses that eventually became important collaborators and clients of Claudio Alcorso.

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[1]   Immigration Restriction Act of 1901.

[2]   Ann-Mari Jordens. 1995. *Redefining Australians: Immigration, Citizenship and National Identity.* Sydney: Hale & Iremonger Pty Limited, Chapter 4.

[3]   Ibid.

[4]   My father Sidney Sernack told me that he often accompanied his mother and father when they met Jewish migrants who had arrived by ship. Some families stayed a short time with my grandparents, father and uncle until they found accommodation. My grandmother taught the women migrants where to shop for kosher food, whilst my grandfather often found skilled workers sewing jobs at David Jones where he was the buyer for young men's clothing.

Greeks and Italians already living in Australia sponsored their relatives and friends, but these migrants were not necessarily welcomed with open arms. Southern Italian migrants were sometimes described as being of a 'swarthy' appearance compared to their northern compatriots. Those with family already here joined or established family businesses in cities and in regional Australia.

Despite the support of compatriots who tried to ease their transition into Australian society, many migrants were still called 'wogs', 'dagos' or 'reffos' by members of the predominantly white Anglo population, who also accused them of taking jobs away from Australian citizens. As a result, many migrant groups established their own places of worship, national and faith-based social clubs, only to be further criticised by white Australians for their inability to assimilate into Australian society.[5]

Yet despite the initial bigotry experienced by many migrants, once their neighbours had gotten to know them, they often became accepted members of their local community. Some Australians happily voiced their prejudice against certain migrant groups amongst their friends, but treated their migrant neighbours as mates, because 'they were different from the rest of them'. This paradoxical behaviour might be attributed to notions of 'giving people a fair go' – but it also illustrates the irony that many Australians of the period did not let entrenched bigotry stand in the way of mateship.

Many young people arrived in Australia alone during the war years and in the immediate post-war period. Children were evacuated from Britain and some were later (falsely) told that their families had perished in the war. Young Europeans who were last of their families arrived alone and without local connections. Young men and couples without children found agricultural employment in regional Australia. Those who arrived with

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[5]   Jordens 1995.

experience in the building trades joined number of post-war infrastructure development schemes like the Snowy Mountains Scheme. Young, unaccompanied women often found themselves employed as maids or au pairs for wealthier families with a large number of children. Sometimes married couples were split up, with the men taking up employment in agricultural or major infrastructure projects whilst their wives worked as cleaners and domestics.[6]

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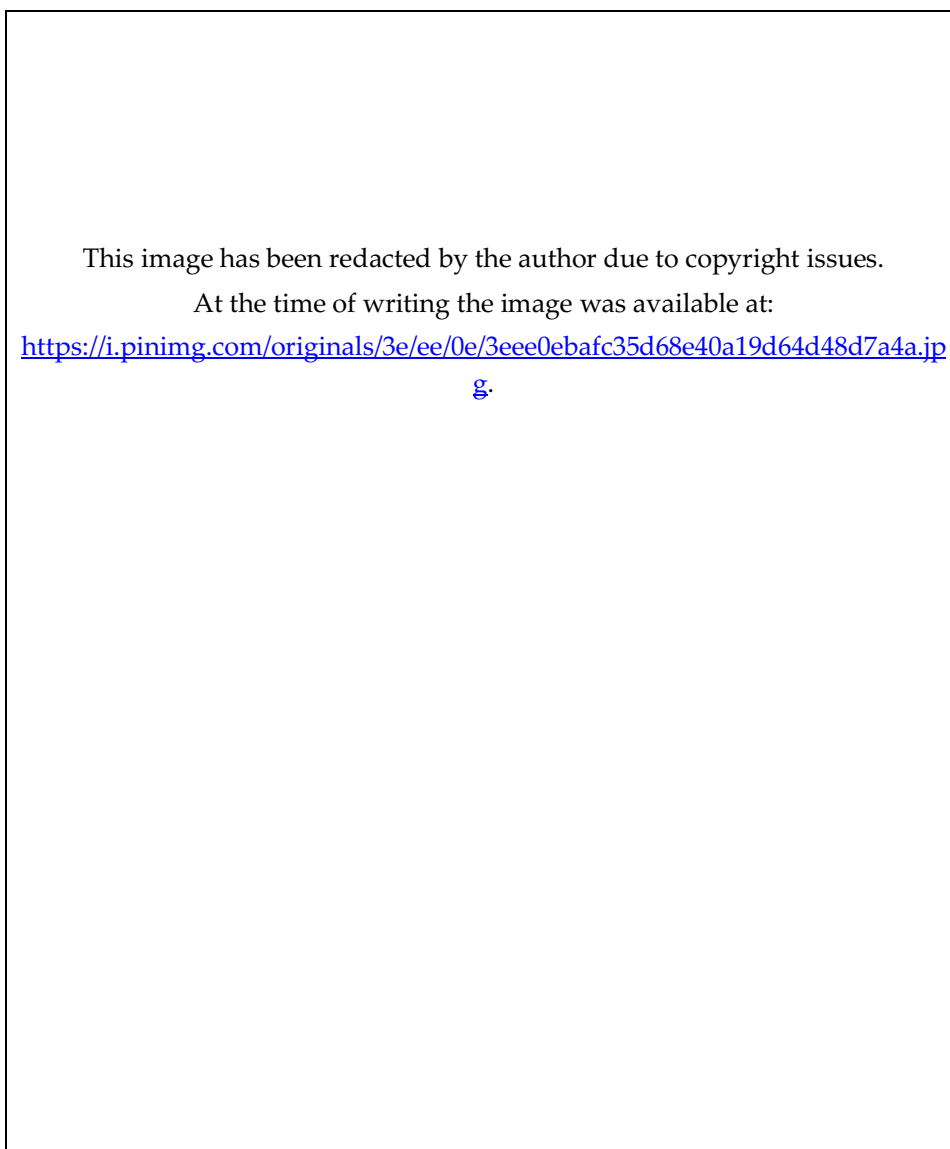
Figure 6.1 Poster promoting British migration to Australia, n.d.[7]

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Commonwealth of Australia. n.d. "Your family will flourish in Australia......" Accessed October 22, 2018. https://i.pinimg.com/originals/3e/ee/0e/3eee0ebafc35d68e40a19d64d48d7a4a.jpg.

Lucky families, including 'Ten Pound Poms' (pictured in Figure 6.1) who had emigrated with their entire families were housed in former army and internment camps, until they had secured employment and accommodation.[8] British migrants with trade skills were almost immediately employed, as their Australian bosses understood their qualifications and skills. Qualifications that had been earned in other languages in Europe were not recognised and many qualified professionals undertook university study again, or worked in unskilled jobs to build their English language skills to the level where they could take local examinations that would allow them to practice as professionals in Australia.

European migrants undertook work in factories manufacturing all types of products – industrial machinery, domestic appliances, food, textile and clothing factories benefitted from an influx of labour – both skilled and unskilled. The arrival of migrants from a rich variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds provided a new talent pool from which developed an expanded range of artistic and creative pursuits. Many made a valuable contribution to Australian post-war culture, bringing previously unknown cultural practices from Europe. Many saw Australia as behind the times. Some complained that they could not get a decent cup of coffee except in cosmopolitan areas of cities like Sydney and Melbourne where previous migrants had already settled – somewhat ironic given Australia's celebrated twenty-first century café culture.[9]

Claudio Alcorso and his circle, still relatively new arrivals in the country at war's end, also experienced the full gamut of the Australian migrant experience. Despite the many friendships that he had made in Australia, he never forgot the way that bigots had treated him. He wanted to

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[8]   Ann-Mari Jordens. 1995. *Redefining Australians: Immigration, Citizenship and National Identity*. Sydney: Hale & Iremonger Pty Limited, Chapter 4.
[9]   Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say.*

create opportunities for migrants to come to Australia to work in his new factory in Hobart, enjoy the relatively mild climate so similar to many parts of southern Europe and buy into their own piece of the Australian dream.

6.2 Post-war changes at Silk & Textile Printers

6.2.1 STP's Migrant workforce

STP's relocation to Tasmania provided the business with an opportunity to expand their production base and create their own internal supply chain. Clean water, cheap electricity as well as labour was plentiful in Tasmania and the new factory provided jobs for both men and women in Glenorchy, close to Derwent Park. At the end of June 1947, increased production had resulted in turnover three times larger than the previous financial year.[10]

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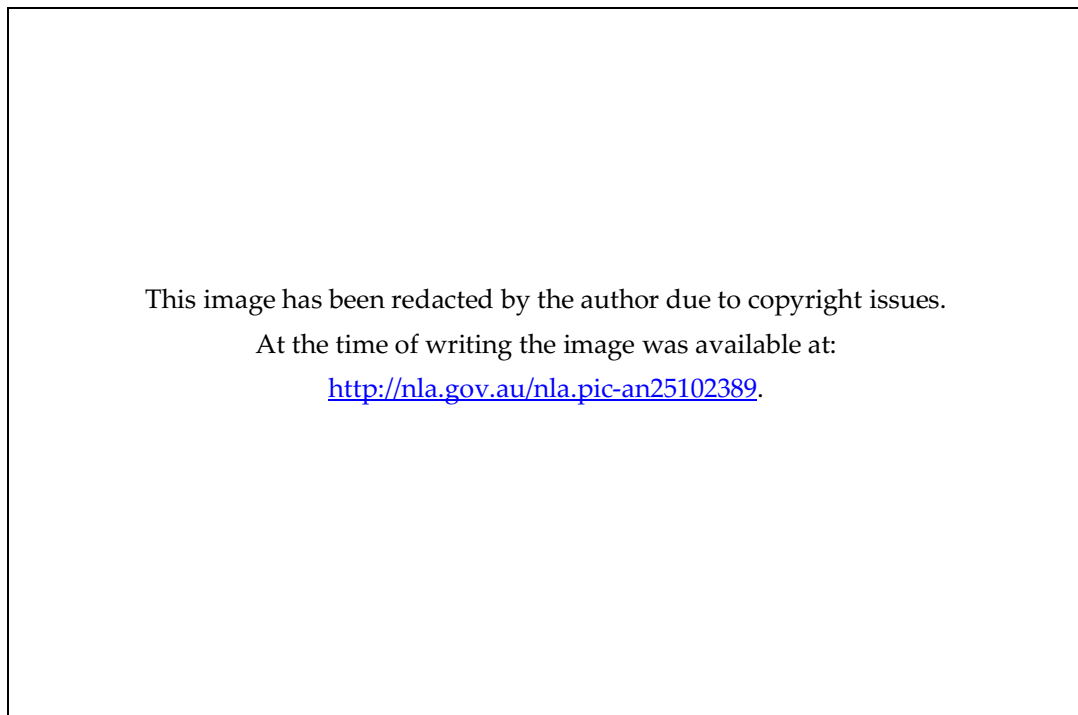
Figure 6.2 STP printing factory in Derwent Park, Tasmania, 1954.[11]

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[10] Silk & Textile Printers Ltd. 1947. *Report to the Directors for the year ending 30th June 1947.* Hobart: Morris Miller Library, University of Tasmania, 30 June.

[11] Sievers, Wolfgang. 1954. "Image no. 25102389." *Silk & Textile Printers, Derwent Park, Hobart, Tasmania.* Accessed April 3, 2011. http://nla.gov.au/nla.pic-an25102389.

Figure 6.2 shows two women printing in the factory in 1954. There are at least nine printing tables approximately 50 yards long, the average length of a piece or roll of fabric. The widths of the tables now appear to accommodate up to 48-inch-wide fabrics, allowing for greater diversity in output. The latest ergonomic printing equipment is used. The handles on the squeegee that the printers pull across the fabric provides an extension for their arms, enabling them to easily pull the ink effortlessly across the entire width of the table without the assistance of another operator. They have no need to bend across the table, their backs are protected by their specially designed equipment. Above their heads, fabric that was printed earlier in the day air dries before it is printed with the next colour, before finally being heat-set and rolled onto tubes ready for delivery to customers.

Two new manufacturing departments – dyeing and finishing – were created and equipped with the latest machinery.[12] In March 1949 a subsidiary company, La Claire Fabrics Pty Limited, was set up in partnership with long-established Sydney woollen mill John Vicars, to weave fine worsted fabrics. The company was beginning to experience competition from the new mills in Japan. The annual report for 1949 stated:

> At present our products meet unrestricted duty-free competition from products of countries which not only have long experience in our industry and an ample supply of skilled labour, but work longer hours for lower wages. Results of the Tariff Board inquiry on our industry have not yet been announced. [13]

During the 1950s, a number of British textile firms established satellite mills in Australia to circumvent Australian tariff arrangements that made imported

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[12] Silk & Textile Printers Ltd 1948.
[13] Silk & Textile Printers Ltd 1949.

fabrics more expensive that those manufactured locally. It was British firms that had the major impact on Australian textile manufacturing companies. Bradford Cotton Weaving Mills (Vic) Pty Ltd (aka Bradmill) was one of the first British textile firms to set up in Australia, beginning with a relatively modest investment of £10,000 in 1927. By 1940, in response to wartime demand, they had established cotton spinning and weaving mills in Victoria, at a total capital investment of £1,000,000.[14] By 1941 an additional spinning mill had been established at Camperdown in Sydney, servicing a new weaving mill and dye-house at Newtown, which produced cotton tweed, drill, denim, duck and dungarees for the war effort.[15]

By 1945, Bradford Cotton Mills was regarded as …"one of the front-rank textile concerns of the Commonwealth", reporting a profit of £105,811 that year.[16] By 1950, Bradford was a corporation encompassing an extensive number of specialised divisions. That year the Bradford Dyeing Association purchased 27 acres at Sale in Victoria to establish a rayon works to compete with a new plant near Newcastle being built by rival firm Courtaulds.[17]

That same year James Nelson Ltd of Lancashire, a company closely associated with Bradford Textiles in Britain, initiated a tender to build a weaving mill at Mowbray near Launceston to weave rayon fabric using plant and equipment brought from England.[18] Tasmanian Premier Mr Cosgrove

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[14] The Daily Telegraph. 1940. "Bradford Cotton Forms New Subsidiaries." 31 May. Accessed July 10, 2019. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article24776287.

[15] The Herald. 1941. "Cotton Mills Opening on May 21." 12 May. Accessed July 10, 2019. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article244987893.

[16] The Mercury, Hobart. 1945. *Bradford Cotton Mills Report Steady Profit.* 18 November. Accessed July 10, 2019. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article26145437.

[17] Textile Journal of Australia. 1950. "Expansion of Textile Industry in Australia: Bradford Dyes Association To Set Up Rayon Plant." 21 August (VIC : Wilkes & Co Ltd, 1926-1970) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 582.

[18] Ibid.

expressed his delight that the first overseas branch of James Nelson would be established in Tasmania.[19]

Rival British textile company Courtaulds began building their Australian factory at Tomago near Newcastle in NSW in 1949, without any subsidy or support from the Australian government. Though initially set up to manufacture rayon tyre cord, which was fully imported at the time, ongoing plans included manufacture of rayon yarn for the Australian weaving industry. Courtaulds advised the Textile Journal of Australia that they also anticipated supplying many other overseas textile producers contemplating investing in factories in Australia.[20] The factory became fully operational in 1953.[21]

Carrington & Dewhurst based in Lancashire had established a rayon weaving factory in Victoria in 1951.[22] In 1956 STP made an agreement with them to jointly develop synthetic yarn processing and weaving at Derwent Park, with the British firm purchasing 60,000 £1 shares at the discounted rate of 55/- cash and acquiring two seats on the board.[23] Staff from Carrington & Dewhurst's Lancashire mill were offered the opportunity to relocate to Tasmania and purchase their own modern homes with company-subsidised loans at favourable interest rates, at the Alcorso Estate development at Moonah, outside Hobart.

A housing estate for STP's workers was initially proposed in 1952, when Amilcare Alcorso finally left his own entrepreneurial activities in the

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19 The Textile Journal of Australia. 1949. "New Rayon Mill for Tasmania." 21 November (VIC : Wilkes & Co Pty Ltd, 1926-1970) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 814.

20 The Textile Journal of Australia. 1949. "£5,000,000 Rayon Project. Courtaulds Plant for Newcastle." 20 August (VIC : Wilkes & Co Pty Ltd, 1926-1970) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 522.

21 The Sydney Morning Herald. 1964. "Fifth Industry In Australia." 18 May. Accessed March 16, 2015. https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1301&dat=19640518&id=-gtiAAAAIBAJ&sjid=TuYDAAAAIBAJ&pg=5732,6185948.

22 The Adelaide Advertiser. 1951. "New Rayon Plant." 1 November. Accessed February 20, 2019. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article45773459.

23 The Adelaide Advertiser. 1951. "New Rayon Plant." 1 November. Accessed February 20, 2019. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article45773459.

United States and Europe to live permanently with his family in Tasmania and supervise the building project. In Roger Penny's interview with Alcorso in 1994, Claudio explained that textile workers in England and in Italy were accustomed to being housed in company built accommodation and he felt this was necessary to attract the best staff, given that mainland textile and clothing producers including John Vicars in Sydney offered newly built homes to their staff.[24]

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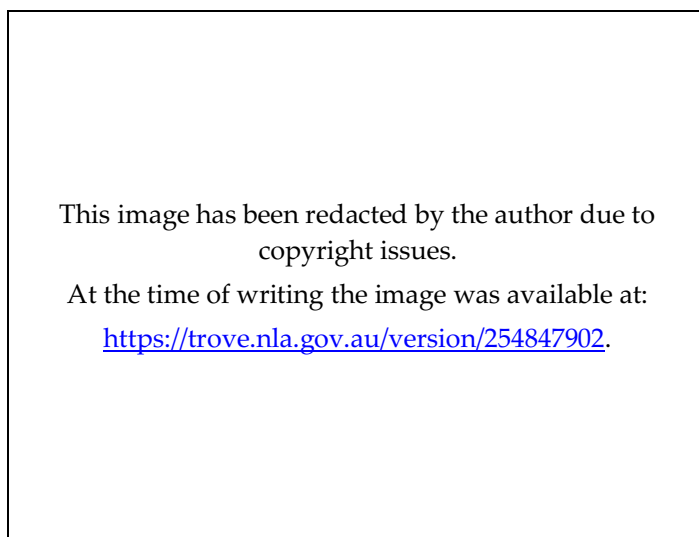
Figure 6.3 British migrants in the synthetic spinning plant, 1958.[25]

By 1958 the new synthetic spinning and weaving sections at STP were in full production, staffed by experienced migrants from Britain. Figure 6.5 shows two British migrants from Wigan in Britain, working in the new synthetic spinning and weaving sections at STP. The high number of official photographs of STP's factory and workers available in Australian archives from the period illustrates that the business was highly regarded as a showcase of Australian modernity in manufacturing.

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[24] The Textile Journal of Australia. 1949. "Housing for Textile Migrants." 20 August (VIC : Wilkes & Co Ltd, 1926-1970) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 519. According to this article, *John Vicars Pty Ltd*, who partnered with *STP* in the establishment of *La Claire Fabrics Pty Ltd* in Hobart, had built 60 new homes at Clempton Park, NSW for skilled British migrants. *Vicars* received 700 applications for the new homes and awarded preference to families with the largest number of woollen mill operatives. The brick bungalows of two or three bedrooms could be secured with a deposit of £500 and repayments of 28/-. Vicars subsidised the deposits for those who could not afford them.

[25] Don Edwards. 1958. "Migrants in employment in Australia, Image no. A12111, 1/1958/16/288." *Immigration.* Accessed April 3, 2011. https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/254847902.

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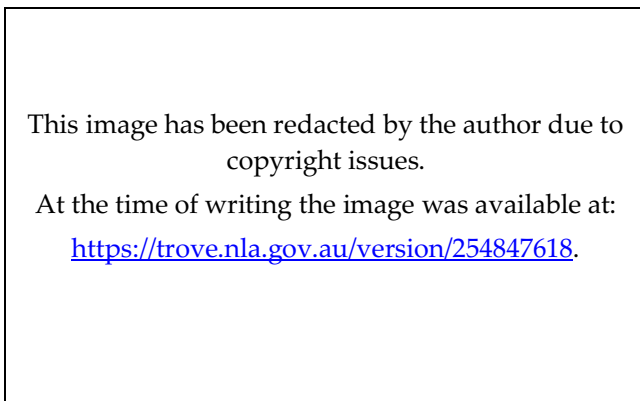
Figure 6.4 Building a road at Alcorso Village, Moonah, 1958.[26]

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At the time of writing the image was available at:

https://www.destinationaustralia.gov.au/photographs/photograph-7495505.
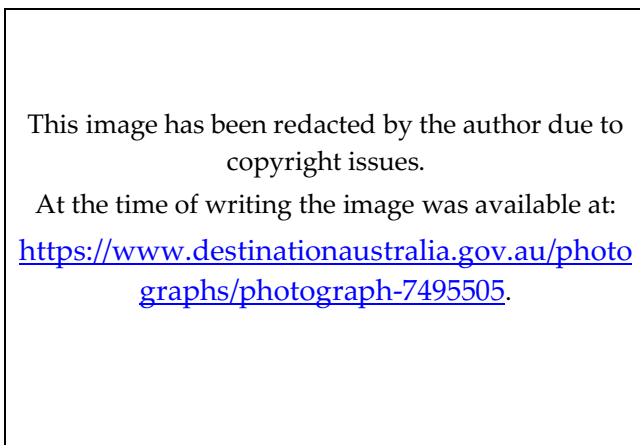
Figure 6.5 The first double-unit dwelling, Alcorso Village, Moonah, 1958.[27]

New worker homes built at Moonah were designed by architect Roy Grounds between 1957 to 1958. Grounds, together with his partners Robin Boyd and Frederick Romberg, had designed some of the leading modernist buildings in Australia since establishing their practice in 1953. Grounds had already designed a circular home for Claudio Alcorso and his family for his Berriedale property Moorilla in 1955. This home was eventually occupied by Claudio's parents Niny and Amilcare after they moved permanently to Tasmania that year. In 1965 Grounds would design the iconic modernist home for Claudio and his family which now forms the entrance to the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) now located at Moorilla[28].

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[26] Don Edwards. 1958. "Migrants in employment in Australia, Image no. A12111, 1/1958/16/285." *Immigration.* Accessed May 15, 2019. https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/254847618.

[27] --. 1958. "Migrants in employment in Australia, Image no. A12111, 1/1958/16/286." *Immigration.* Accessed May 15, 2019. https://www.destinationaustralia.gov.au/photographs/photograph-7495505.

[28] Museum of Old and New Art (MONA). n.d. "Museum Architecture." Accessed August 7, 2019. https://mona.net.au/museum/architecture.

Like the simple, round home he had designed for the Alcorsos, the fully electric, all weatherboard staff housing designed by Grounds were modern and unadorned (Figures 6.4 and 6.5). They were priced at £3,845 and required a minimum deposit of £500. Access to housing was not the only incentive used to attract skilled textile workers to STP. Workers enjoyed a profit-sharing arrangement whereby 10% of net company profits before tax were paid to every man and woman working at STP on the same day as shareholders received their dividends. In October 1954, £15,600 in bonuses averaging £125 for men and £96 for women were paid out in addition to regular incentives. Workers repaid STP with an absentee rate of 3%, which was described by the Hobart Mercury as "…. probably the lowest of any factory in the Commonwealth."[29]

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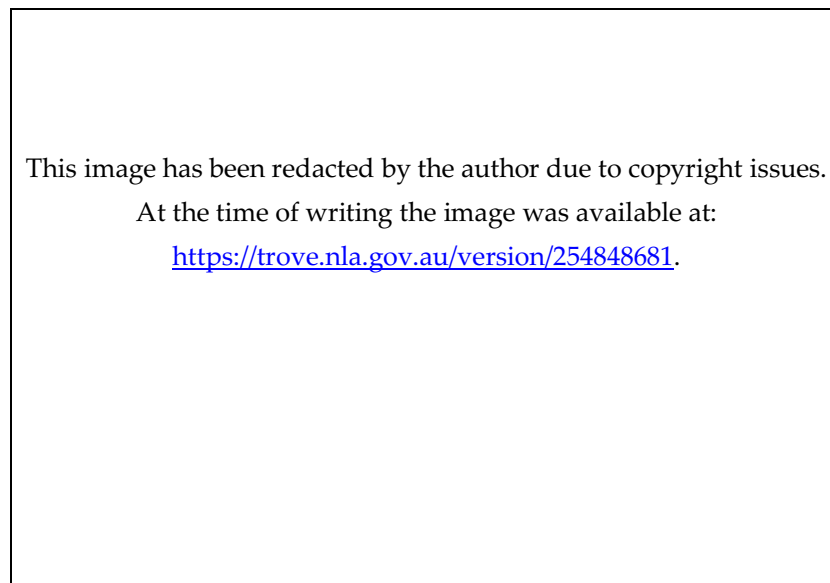
Figure 6.6 Kasper Spiegel inspects a sign announcing Alcorso Village, 1958.[30]

Whilst this profit sharing was fantastic for morale, it also would have been good for business, as sharing the profits before tax would have actually reduced the amount of tax that STP would have paid.

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[29] The Mercury, Hobart. 1954. "15,600 Paid in Bonuses." 16 October. Accessed March 23, 2011. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article27252753.

[30] Don Edwards. 1958. "Migrants in employment in Australia, Image no. A12111, 1/1958/16/284." *Immigration.* Accessed April 3, 2011. https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/254848681.

STP were an important provider of training for the textile printing and associated trades. Printers from overseas came to STP to learn specialist skills that could be taken back to their home countries. In 1958 STP hosted U Ko Ko Gyi, Senior Textile Printing Instructor from the Government Service in Rangoon (now Yangon), Burma, possibly under the auspices of the Columbo Plan. The plan, launched in 1951 in Columbo, Sri Lanka by developed countries within the Commonwealth of Nations, sought to assist the economic development of developing nations through programs of education and training. Australia used the Columbo Plan to forge better relations with its Asian neighbours and counteract the negative legacy of the White Australia Policy.[31]

The Columbo Plan also included a Technical Cooperation Scheme, which allowed experienced industrial workers from developing nations to undertake advanced study. In 1957 eight Pakistani textile scholars arrived to study wool and textile processing at the Gordon Institute of Technology in Geelong. They were welcomed with fanfare by Mr David Durie, Education Officer of the Commonwealth Department of Education.[32] Sponsorship of the plan was later expanded, with Japan and the United States joining Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Britain to provide grants and loans for the development of agriculture and industry and funding for study in developed nations. By 1985, Australia had trained approximately 20,000 students in its universities and industries.[33]

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[31] NSW Migrant Heritage Centre. 2019. "1945-1965 Australia's migration history timeline." Accessed February 20, 2019. http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibition/objectsthroughtime-history/1945-1965/index.html.

[32] National Archives of Australia. 1957. "Eight Pakistani textile scholars arrived in Australia, Image no. A1501:A915/2." Accessed May 16, 2019. https://trove.nla.gov.au/work/231179775.

[33] David Lowe. 2011. "The Columbo Plan: An initiative that brought Australia and Asia closer." *The Conversation.* 17 October. Accessed February 20, 2019. http://theconversation.com/colombo-plan-an-initiative-that-brought-australia-and-asia-closer-3590.

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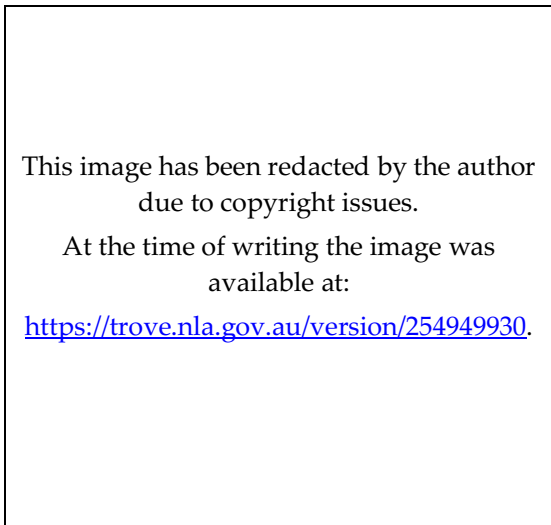
Figure 6.7 U Ko Ko Gyi and Chief Designer Hans Roth at STP, 1958.[34]

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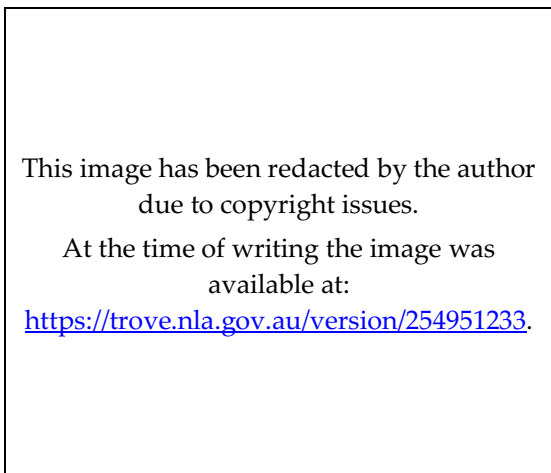
Figure 6.8 U Ko Ko Gyi mixing dye powder at STP Hobart, 1958.[35]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing the image was available at:

https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/254949931.

Figure 6.9 U Ko Ko Gyi seals a silkscreen at STP Hobart, 1958.[36]

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[34] National Archives of Australia. 1958. "U Ko Ko Gyi, Senior Textile Printing Instructor in the Government Service in Rangoon, Burma, Image no. A1501, A1268/2." Accessed December 30, 2017. https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/254949930.

A series of official Australian photographs documented Australia's sharing of its industrial knowledge with its neighbours throughout the life of the Columbo Plan. U Ko Ko Gyi is shown at work at Silk & Textile Printers in a number of official Australian photographs taken in 1958. U Ko Ko Gyi would need to know every technical operation in detail in order to train screen-printing workers in Burma on his return home. Figure 6.9 shows him at the drafting table in the design studio under the supervision of Chief Designer Hans Roth, a migrant from Switzerland. He is also seen transferring a design motif onto tracing paper, which will later be used to create the positive print design that will be transferred to screens for printing. Though the images have clearly been posed for the photographer, they provide insights into the different processes undertaken before fabric could be screen-printed.

Figure 6.10 shows U Ko Ko Gyi mixing powdered dyes under the supervision of laboratory technician Mr R Dreaper. STP had its own chemical laboratory that custom mixed dyes for vat dyeing and the making of printing inks for different types of fabric substrates. The mixing of dyes was an exact science that required attention to detail, particularly for fashion textiles, as miscalculations could potentially see an entire production run being printed in the wrong colour shades, causing the customer to reject the order.

In Figure 6.11 U Ko Ko Gyi is seen sealing a small hole in the stencil of a prepared silkscreen with a paint brush costed with stencil paint. This is an important quality step that prevents the printed fabrics from being spoiled by excess ink-spots in inappropriate places. This type of printing fault might render a printed fabric as "B-grade" – meaning that the company could not

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[35] National Archives of Australia. Image no. A1501, A1268/1." Accessed December 30, 2017. https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/254951233.

[36] National Archives of Australia. Image no. A1501, A1268/3." Accessed April 3, 2011. https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/254949931.

deliver the fabric to the customer as first quality without risking it being rejected or reduced in price to compensate for unusable portions of the fabric.

The participation of STP in this scheme, together with Alcorso's decision to provide subsidised housing to enable his staff to live in comfort and security near the factory, illustrate his commitment to managing his business in a socially responsible manner. Not all Australian owned manufacturing businesses were this welcoming to migrants. In 1995 Claudio Alcorso explained his attitude to operating a socially responsible business as follows:

> I am convinced that when future historians will examine the consequences of some of the socio-economic policies adopted in our time, they will wonder how we came to give credibility to the economic rationalists who proposed them. …..Humans need more than shelter, warm clothes and sustenance – they need happiness, freedom and justice.

> The most important weapon in their arsenal is named "efficiency"….The cult of making money, the looking at issues – all issues – from the self-centred standpoint of "what is in it for me? Has been accepted as perfectly legitimate………Economic rationalists make certain categories of humans obsolete, however, since they cannot be discarded [i.e. like obsolete machinery] they are marginalised….[37]

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[37] Claudio Alcorso. "Letters to the Mercury Editor and Newspaper Clippings." *NS3001/1/27 Writings and talks by Claudio Alcorso, 1957-1999.* Hobart: State Archive of Tasmania.

6.2.2 Design strategies at STP

As an entrepreneur cognisant of his responsibilities to his shareholders and board of management, Alcorso knew that he must embrace new design and management practices to keep his business viable and efficient in response to increased competition from within Australia and overseas. Alcorso also knew that there was always something new to learn about business. He travelled to Harvard University in America in the late 1950s[38] and undertook short courses in business management and marketing so he could work more efficiently with his employees, clients and PR partners

Alcorso's response to increased competition to changes in the industry was to go 'upmarket', staying true to the company's original vision - using silk for the high end. He believed that if you are going to do something then you should do it well and you should use the best base cloths and the best possible designs. Successful production hinges on understanding what the customer wants before they even know they want it. Then you let the customer decide what they want and build on that.

Alcorso addressed business issues by bringing in the best experts that he could afford to advise him on alternative ways of working. When quality problems resulted in a particularly high output of B-grade prints, he brought in a technician from the Ciba-Geigy organisation in Switzerland to advise on the introduction of quality management techniques in his production line. He hedged his bets on the designs that he produced, by not only fostering local design talent, but buying in finished designed work from the best textile print design agencies in Paris.

Alcorso employed advertising and public relations (PR) consultant Ralph Blunden at Basil Carden Advertising[39] to ensure that his products got

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[38] Claudio Alcorso. *Alcorso interviewed by Roger Penny* 1994. (Transcript) 13.
[39] Jobbins, Joy, interview by Tracey Sernack-Chee Quee. 2017. *Interview* (2 June).

the greatest exposure, enabling him to win the quality customers that he need to stay at the top of his game. Claudio Alcorso did not merely sell to his major clients during the 1950s and 1960s. He worked with them to analyse their target consumer and produce the kinds of fashion products that would not only delight them, but products that would also sell.

6.2.2.1   Design and production interface

By 1951, the problems of post-war raw material shortages had receded, but there were new economic problems to deal with, including the price of wool, which had reached a pound per pound. The use of synthetic fibres began to increase at this time, becoming popular with consumers for their easy-care properties. Blends made from Terylene and Wool, Orlon and Nylon had gained wide acceptance by the mid 1950s in women's wear, though the more conservative menswear sector was slower to adopt synthetic mixes. But by the end of that year, wool prices had plummeted and Australia was in the grip of another economic recession. [40]

STP continued to produce exclusive hand-printed textiles for all segments of the clothing, fashion and furnishing markets in Australia and overseas. The partnerships with Carrington & Dewhurst and John Vicars & Co. Pty Ltd enabled Tasmanian-based production of spun yarn and high-quality woven base-cloths, securing an internal supply and value chain and guaranteeing the business greater autonomy and less dependence on suppliers in mainland Australia and overseas. According to Claudio Alcorso's address at the Eleventh Annual General Meeting on October 5, 1950, subsidiary company La Claire Fabrics Pty Ltd, established in Hobart in

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[40]   Michael J Baston. 1996. "Australia's Textiles, Clothing and Footwear Industries." In *Australasian Textiles and Fashion Index*, by Australian Textile Publishers, 5-27. Belmont, Victoria: Australian Textile Publishers.

partnership John Vicars was producing "…. the best quality pure merino wool obtainable in this country."[41]

Despite STP's overall expansion and diversification into the latest spinning and weaving technologies, the actual printing of textile piece goods was still completed by hand on tables measuring the length of a typical piece of cloth. According to Biegeleisen[42], mechanisation of screen printing did not occur until just after 1950. Operators printing textiles using screens could only print an average of 250 imprints per hour, as opposed to the many thousands of meters that could be printed with a roller.

This labour-intensive way of printing provided a richness of colour that could not be achieved by roller printing and it was highly desirable. The simplicity of the screen-printing process and standardisation of design repeats, screen sizes and table widths meant that set up times for new batches were minimal when compared with roller set-ups. Therefore hand-printing remained commercially viable for small production runs.

Despite the automation of textile screen-printing in the 1950s, the use of the flat screen persisted for some time. A combination of roller and screen-printing technologies resulted in the ability to undertake continuous printing of fabric in multiple colours using cylindrical copper or nickel screens with the dyestuff supplies and squeegee positioned inside. This process eventually superseded flat-bed screen and conventional roller printing technologies in bulk textile manufacture.[43]

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[41] Claudio Alcorso. 1950. "Silk & Textile Printers Ltd Chairman's Address at the Eleventh Annual Meeting." Hobart: Morris Miller Library, University of Tasmania, 5 October.

[42] JI Biegeleisen. 1963. *The Complete Book of Silkscreen Printing Production.* New York: Dover Publications, 165.

[43] Alex Russell. 2011. *The Fundamentals of Printed Textile Design.* Lausanne, Switzerland: AVA Publishing SA, 32-34.

6.3   Marketing and promotional strategies

6.3.1   Marketing Alcorso Handprints

The Alcorso family's Italian heritage and expertise in developing printed silk fabrics was a key promotional tool used by STP to promote and position them in the top echelons of the fashion textile market in Australia. Alcorso celebrated the luxurious and artisanal characteristics of his hand printed silks, marketing them as exclusive 'Alcorso Handprints'.

Figure 6.10 'Alcorso Handprint 'Trademark, early 1950s.[44]

Alcorso and his public relations firms exploited the ability of Alcorso Handprints to provide exclusive, premium products, with fast turnaround on new designs and repeat orders. Individual, exclusive designs were specially created for larger manufacturers and wholesalers, differentiating their collections from their competitors who depended on textiles from the United States, Britain and Europe that took weeks to arrive, or inferior copies of the latest textile overseas designs printed by STP's competitors in large quantities that were sold to all and sundry.

Unlike other Australian printing companies that were making money from high volume printing of limited designs, Alcorso turned over small quantities of many original designs targeting his high-end clients like Leroy, enabling them to sell out of popular styles quickly and repeat their best-selling garments in new prints, encouraging multiple purchases.

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[44] Author's photograph, Morris Miller Library, University of Tasmania, 28 August 2012.

6.3.2 Silk as a corporate weapon

Faced with competition from the increased capacity of Japan to produce high quality textiles prints, Claudio Alcorso ensured the ongoing viability of his business through the development of a direct sourcing strategy to secure the silk base-cloths. In 1957, well before the re-establishment of diplomatic relationships with mainland China by Gough Whitlam's Labour Government in 1972, Alcorso was one of the first Australian businessmen to visit China to buy silk.

In 1957 the Communist regime in China were most enthusiastic about building a trade relationship and had just established a £1 million line of credit to purchase Australian wool, which they had sought to balance with the export of Chinese goods in return. On his first visit to China that year, Alcorso visited about 30 different silk mills, taking every opportunity to promote his business connection with China and remind the public of his family's expertise in producing prints on silk suited to Australia's warm climate.[45]

A 1957 article in the social pages of the Sydney Morning Herald mentions Alcorso stepping off his flight from Hong Kong after a five-week sourcing trip to China in an " impeccable suit of tan silk shantung – unwrinkled after the flight….". He advised the eagerly waiting press that the fabric the suit was made from "Weighs only three ounces to the square yard……Just the thing for men's summer suits here."[46] His memoir 'The Wind You Say' devotes an entire chapter to explaining the intricacies of silk cultivation and processing, the differences between various types of silk and his cultural and business experiences in China.[47]

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[45] The Draper of Australasia. 1957. "S.T.P. China Purchase." 10 July (VIC : 1901-1966) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 43.

[46] The Sydney Morning Herald. 1957. "Social News and Gossip." 6 June. Accessed June 9, 2018. http://smharchives.smedia.com.au/Olive/APA/smharchive/Print.Article.aspx?mode=image&href=SMH%2F1957%2F06%2F06&id=Ar02600.

[47] Alcorso, 1993, *The Wind You Say* 93-109.

Despite the disappointment of Modernage several years earlier, Alcorso knew that there was still money to be made from artist design textiles, as they offered an alternative to simply copying textile designs from Europe as volume producers did. Given that one of the sensitivities of artist-designed textiles is their comparatively high price, Alcorso reserved the artist designs for his hand-printed silk collections, purchasing designs from established artists and designers from Australia and overseas. As Pouillard and Kuldova have pointed out, the 'artification' of fashion and textiles was a strategy of the post-war period to add perceived value and justify the cost of high-end fashion products.[48] Artists designed prints from Paris were the perfect product to generate demand for high-end silk prints.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
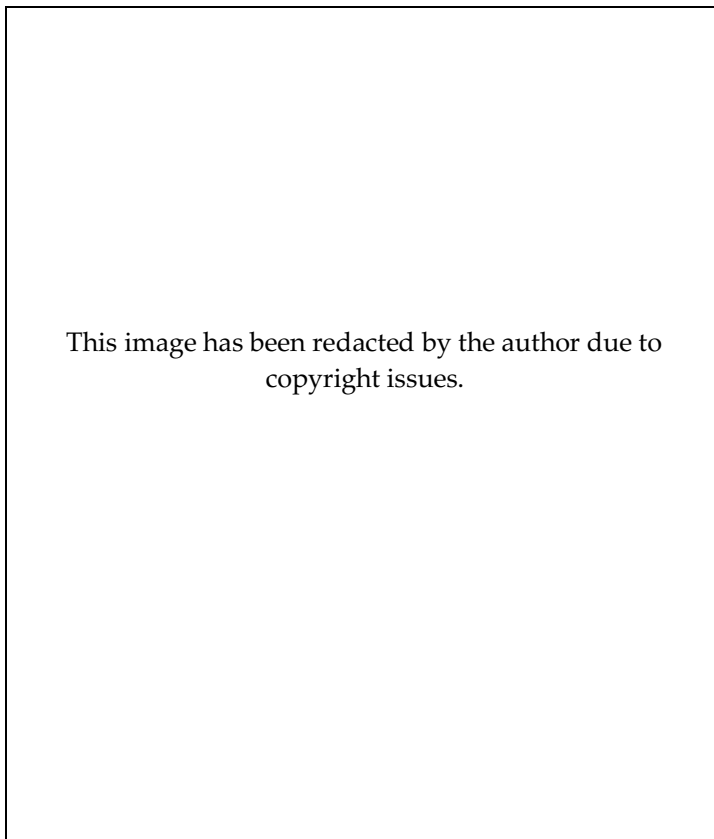
Figure 6.11 TV personality Del Cartwright pictured with George Delhomme, 1959.[49]

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[48] Veronique Pouillard and Tereza Kuldova. 2017. "Interrogating Intellectual Property Rights in Post-war Fashion and Design." *Journal of Design History, Vol. 30, No. 4.* 9 May. Accessed July 25, 2019. doi:10.1093/jdh/epx014, 352.

[49] Ibid.

One of the regular suppliers of print designs to STP was Parisian artist George Delhomme, the noted designer of perfume bottles.[50] Delhomme's studio turned out seasonal collections of prints that enabled Alcorso to market his printed textiles as "designed in Paris and printed in Australia". He and Delhomme became friends and Claudio travelled regularly to Paris to commission and choose designs. Delhomme also visited Australia in December 1959. The Draper of Australasia quoted his (unsurprising) prediction that pure silk, "the queen of fabrics", would be the main fashion fabric for Spring/Summer 1960.[51]

Delhomme went on to speak of the new easy-care finish by Silk & Textile Printers that made pure silk spot proof, uncrushable, unshrinkable and stabilised for easy cutting, sewing and hand washing. He added that Australian women were very fortunate to be able to purchase silk at such reasonable prices. Del Cartwright interviewed Delhomme on television at ATN 7 Sydney during his visit (Figure 6.11), illustrating the keen interest of the public and the media in high-end fashion design at the time.[52]

Despite his connections to silk, Alcorso pragmatically realised that not all women could afford to buy this luxury fibre on a regular basis. As the 1960s progressed, STP began producing synthetic fabrics that felt like silk, making the customer feel special at a special price. Alcorso used his own design studio to develop fashion-right prints aligned to fashion trends for a more conventional client. These new fabrics also sold to home dressmakers who valued their wash and wear properties.

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[50] Ibid, 88.

[51] Lou Taylor. 2012. "De-Coding the Hierarchy of Fashion Textiles." In *The Textile Reader*, by Jessica Hemmings, 418-429. London, New York: Berg.

[52] The Draper of Australasia. 1960. "Top Parisian Designer Predicts Pure Silk for Spring/Summer 1960 Fashions." 11 January (VIC : 1901-1966) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 9.
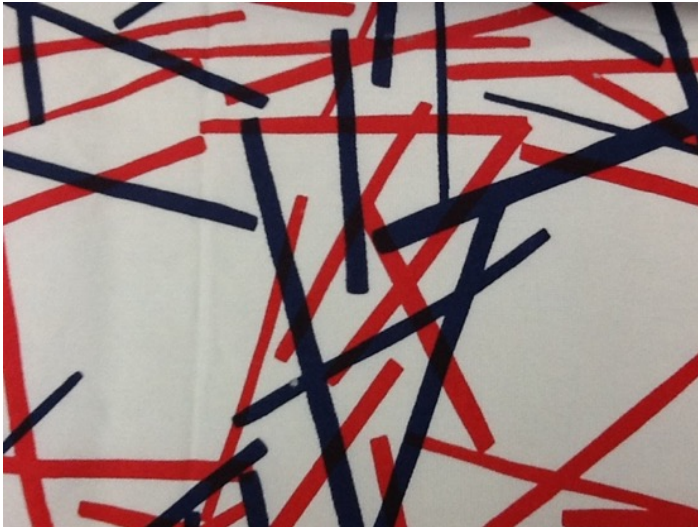
Figure 6.12 STP geometric textile design from the 1950s.[53]

Figure 6.13 STP monotone floral print of the 1950s.[54]

Figure 6.14 STP swirl print in yellow, black and white .[55]

[53] Image courtesy of Stephenie Cahalan. Used with permission.

6.3.3 Strategic collaborations

Having established his factory and secured his workforce, Alcorso entered strategic alliances with local fashion houses to establish a new Australian fashion identity to compete with other fashion capitals throughout the world, in a bold response to the cultural cringe. He was determined that his prints would build international the reputation of Australian textiles, gaining them recognition as the equal of those in any other industrialised nation.

Though it was more usual for a textile producer to sell to fashion manufacturers through a textile agent or wholesaler in Australia, STP had direct customer relationships with several large and prestigious garment producers including Cole of California (Section 6.4.4) and The House of Leroy (Section 6.4.5). These important fashion clients would have first refusal of designs in any of the new collections and providing that they bought a sufficient quantity, would have designs made exclusive to them.

Alcorso also worked directly with textile wholesalers in Australia and overseas to reinforce his business' position in international markets. Major wholesale clients included Martin & Savage (see Section 6.4.7), Makower MacBeath (Section 6.4.8) and Sekers Silks - the Australian franchise of the West Cumberland Silk Mills, which would later become a major business partner of the Alcorsos during the 1960s (Section 6.4.9).

Internationally, textile designs developed by STP were licensed for use in the collections of the Cohn-Hall-Marx Company in the United States and the Berne Silk Manufacturing Company in Great Britain, ensuring that they reached beyond the geographical confines of Australia.[56]

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] The Draper of Australasia. 1954. "Leroy-Alcorso Textile Design Prize." 10 March (VIC : 1901-1966) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 46.

6.3.4   Cole of California

Cole of California was founded in the United States by Fred Cole, a former Hollywood actor, who had repurposed his family's knitwear business in 1923 into a specialist swimwear manufacturer. Drawing on his Hollywood connections, Cole hired Hollywood costume designer Margit Fellegi in 1936 and in 1950 signed Esther Williams as a spokesperson for the brand.

American swimsuits were the benchmark in beachwear for Australian women in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. Cole was one of a trio of great American swimwear producers of the period together with Jantzen and Catalina, whose brands were also heavily promoted in the Australian market. Collectively, these brands represented a move away from the fashions of London, Paris and New York to the more relaxed styling of the American west coast and the French and Italian Riviera, which has similar climate and lifestyles to that of Australia.[57] In addition to Cole, Australia had many other manufacturers with Californian connections - including 'Saba of California', 'Spire of California' and 'Ada of California'[58], though it is possible these 'Californian connections' may have been manufactured purely for marketing purposes.

Cole of California depended heavily on sex appeal and redefining the female form into a curvy, appealing shape. Swimwear had previously been made from wool, which became heavy when wet and dried slowly. Cole introduced new fibres and fabrics and were the first to use gathering and eyelet lacing during World War II when rubber was in short supply. The company produced swimwear for Christian Dior in 1955 and was purchased by Kayser Roth in 1960. The business was sold to the Wickes in the early 1960s, when Fred Cole's daughter Anne became involved, shaping design direction

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[57]   The Draper of Australasia. 1956. "Range of "Signature" styles marks Leroy's entry into casual wear field." 10 April (VIC : 1901-1966) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 12.

[58]   These names were obtained from advertisements in the Draper of Australasia between approximately 1955 and 1960.

throughout the later part of the twentieth century. The company changed ownership several times until it was eventually merged with Catalina swimwear to form Catalina Cole in 1993.[59]

In Australia, Cole of California garments were manufactured by a licensee, California Production Pty Ltd, who also manufactured Horrockses Fashions for the region.[60] Presumably Horrockses Fashions used the cotton prints and garment designs developed by its British parent company, though it is unknown whether these designs were locally printed in Australia or imported from Britain.

No such constraints applied to the Cole of California brand. Gloria Mortimer-Dunn, (who would later design for Speedo in the 1960s as Gloria Smythe) was the chief designer. According to Christine Schmidt "Mortimer-Dunn had access to international fabrics and established manufacturing systems" and was a favourite customer of all of the textile producers, wholesalers and agents, who often gave them first refusal on new fabrics. [61]

Cole's Australian licensee was highly regarded by the parent company, who regularly visited to inspect design and production facilities to ensure that they were up to standard. On a visit to Australia in 1953, Fred Cole paid tribute to California Productions in an interview with the Draper of Australasia. He was quoted saying that their factory at Bathurst was the largest and best in which he had seen Cole of California garments being made.[62]

[59] Fashion Designer Encyclopedia. n.d. "Cole of California." Accessed October 5, 2018. http://www.fashionencyclopedia.com/Ch-Da/Cole-of-California.html.

[60] Horrockses Fashions was a business initiative of the cotton textile company Horrockses, Crewdson & Company Ltd in Preston, England, who saw an opportunity to create a vertically integrated business by manufacturing fashion garments from their fabrics.
Christine Boydell. 2010. *Horrockses Fashions: Off the Peg Style in the '40s and '50s.* London: V&A Publishing, 9,

[61] Christine Margaret Schmidt. 2008. "Second skin: Annette Kellerman, the modern swimsuit and an Australian contribution to global fashion." *Queensland University of Technology.* Accessed December 11, 2018. https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/47362136, 42.

[62] The Draper of Australasia. 1953. "Cole of California visits Australia: Famous Swimsuit Manufacturer sees Preview of next Summer's Beachwear." June (VIC : 1901-1966) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 30-31.

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At the time of writing the image was available at:

http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4816196.

Figure 6.15 Cole of California advertisement (left page), September 1954.[63]

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[63] California Productions Pty Ltd. 1954. "Advertisement for Cole of California swimsuits." *The Australian Women's Weekly*. 8 September. Accessed February 28, 2016. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4816196.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing the image was available at:
http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4816197.

Figure 6.16 Cole of California advertisement (right page), September 1954.[64]

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[64] California Productions Pty Ltd. 1954. "Advertisment for Cole of California swimsuits." *The Australian Women's Weekly*. 8 September. Accessed February 28, 2016. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4816197.

STP were well placed to provide the latest fashion prints to California Productions. They supplied mainly printed cottons which were made into figure flattering one- and two-piece bathing suits that were teamed with matching overskirts and party frocks, perfect for relaxed summer outings or weekend barbeques in the backyard of the dream homes of the 1950s. STP included illustrations and photographs of Cole of California garments made from "no iron" STP printed cotton fabrics in their 1955, 1956 and 1957 Annual Reports.[65]

In September 1954 the Australian Women's Weekly included a double-page spread (Figures 6.15-6.16) illustrating "the most exciting range in all Cole history" – a fabulous collection of swim and beach wear "with styles hitting headlines on exotic beaches from Biarritz to Bermuda, Miami to Monaco, Long Beach to Bermuda." There were sun-frocks with influence from the Italian Riviera and featuring the popular new princess line frock with a bare neck … in the newest Alcorso hand-screen prints in a kaleidoscope of colours…".[66]

The double-page advertisement, styled like a fashion news story, included advice for potential customers. News for people with figure problems was that "Cole styles actually improve your figure. Every figure fault has been specially considered." There was also news about the special wired support built into each Cole swimsuit and that the rhinestones used as decoration on the swimsuits would "go happily into the water."
The "glorious handprints by Alcorso" included a design of sailing boats made up into a strapless playsuit with flared shorts to disguise problem thighs, a pink, black and white full piece with black contrast and a clever two-way neckline to avoid strap marks from sun tanning. The advertisement also promised a special Cole announcement each week and subsequent issues of

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[65] STP Annual Reports, National Library of Australia.
[66] California Productions Pty Ltd. 1954.

the Australian Women's Weekly carried sidebar advertisements with follow up news on sun-frocks designed to flatter waists, playsuits designed to lengthen legs and swimsuits designed with spiral wiring to keep the bust in place.

Advertisements evidencing STP's collaboration with Cole of California did not appear to extend into the 1960s and no clues are available on why this is the case. The relationship may have moved with Gloria Mortimer-Dunn to Speedo Knitting Mills in the 1960s. Alternatively, STP may have decided to pass on its relationships with its fashion customers to textile wholesalers whose businesses were designed to cater for the fashion market and who could consolidate and process the orders on their behalf. It is also possible that like many other Australian manufacturers, Cole began to buy from agents and wholesalers selling cheaper fabrics from the Far East.

6.3.5   The House of Leroy

Another of STP's major clients was the Melbourne-based Leroy Manufacturing Company Limited, known in industry as the 'House of Leroy'. The business was founded as a lingerie manufacturer in 1911 and was owned by the Schwarz family, Russian migrants who had changed their name to 'Shaw' on arrival in Australia. Mr JM Shaw, who had worked with the company since 1915 was the chairman and managing director throughout the 1950s and 1960s.[67] According to a 1961 article in Clothing News celebrating their fiftieth year of business operations, Leroy was the first Australian fashion house to achieve a half-century milestone and, at the time was "…the largest fashion house in Australasia".[68]

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[67] Lesley Sharon Rosenthal. 2005. *Schmattes: Stories of fabulous frocks, funky fashion and Flinders Lane.* South Yarra, Victoria: City of Melbourne, 19.

[68] Clothing News. 1961. "Leroy Golden Jubilee: Celebrating fifty years of service to Australian fashion." February (VIC : Thomson Publications, 1947-1968) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 17-23.

The House of Leroy traditionally manufactured coats, suits and dresses for the middle to upper-level fashion market, using woollens, silks, rayons and the new nylon synthetic fabrics, trimming their styles with luxury features including Indian Lamb and Fox furs on coats and premium buttons, laces and ribbons on dress styles.[69] By 1953, their products had expanded into casual wear, including skirts, slacks, swimsuits and knitwear.[70]

The business had several divisions including one for dancewear and 'after five' (evening wear) and another called 'Signature Casuals' for sportswear. Leroy also had a brand catering to the larger fitting market called 'Helen Harper' and another for 'the shorter figure' – what would now be called the petite market – called 'Marion Harper'. According to editorial supplied by the company, they were the first in Australia to manufacture ready to wear fashion maternity clothing under the brand 'Storkstyles by Leroy'.

The company participated in international trade fairs and exported garments manufactured under their various brands to New Zealand, Rabaul, Fiji, Norfolk Island, the New Hebrides, Singapore and the Netherlands. Signature Casuals stock was also sold in Harrods of London.[71] The company was a large and important client for STP and their products featured regular in STP's annual reports from 1954 to 1957 alongside those of Cole of California.

Leroy sourced their seasonal silhouettes and fashion detailing internationally, as did many other manufacturers at the time. In the late 1940s they had a licensing arrangement with New York based Belciano Studios to reproduce their designs for the Australian market. The Australian Women's Weekly of March 13, 1948 featured advertising with illustrations of new Belciano full-skirted ballerina length dresses and coats with 'nipped in' waists

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[69] The Draper of Australasia. 1946. "Coats by Leroy Manufacturing Co. Pty. (sic) Ltd., Melbourne." 31 December: 46-47.

[70] Clothing News 1961.

[71] Ibid.

for Winter 1947. This exclusive styling, emulating Christian Dior's 'New Look' silhouette, would have also been used as inspiration for styling marketed under Leroy's own brand, with key features such as necklines, openings, sleeve details and trimmings modified to avoid intellectual property infringements.[72]

By the 1960s Leroy had entered into an arrangement through a subsidiary company to manufacture ballerina and evening dresses designed by Susan Small of London under license and another with the Mam'selle Incorporated of New York to manufacture garments targeted at the junior women's market – a relatively new market segment. It was commonplace for Australian retailers and manufacturers to enter into such licensing arrangements with haute couture, fashion and garment producers overseas. It allowed manufacturers to translate proven best sellers from other markets into Australian products with a reduced degree of risk, given that the styling would have already proved profitable for its original producer.

Overseas design houses worked a season ahead of Australia and many were not concerned about what happened in a country with such as small population located at the other end of the planet. The seasonal mismatch gave Australian licensees time to cherry-pick only the best-sellers from overseas collections and purchase an original calico or sample pattern, already market tested, which they could adapt for Australian conditions. It was the beginning of the homogenous global fashion that we are so familiar with in the twenty-first century. Licensing deals like these lasted until the 1970s, when merchandisers - particularly from the smaller Australian fashion houses - began to-pass overseas producers, buying "overseas samples" from hot designers at retail level, ordering fabrics to be copied in Japan, resulting in the

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[72] Leroy Manufacturing Company Ltd. 1948. "Leroy portrays "the new line"." *The Australian Women's Weekly.* 13 March. Accessed July 19, 2014. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4781139.

proliferation of copies of both styling and prints for the subsequent Australian season that made such licensing arrangements irrelevant.

Between 1946 and 1951 sales at Leroy more than doubled from £384,206 to £1,006,886, with a net profit that year of £59,620.[73] It may have been the House of Leroy that introduced Claudio Alcorso to Carden Advertising in Melbourne, or conversely, it may have been Basil Carden that introduced Alcorso to Shaw. Whilst we will probably never know how the collaboration between the three businesses began, it is clear that by 1952 Carden Advertising were placing advertisements on behalf of both companies in the Australian Women's Weekly, featuring sophisticated illustrations of Leroy garments with Alcorso fashion prints rendered in detail, as can be seen in Figure 6.19.[74] Leroy takes full credit for styling the sundresses, whilst Alcorso takes advantage of the opportunity to promote both his prints and the superior quality of its 'launderized' silk base cloths that require no ironing, providing that they are washed in Lux soap flakes.

STP once again began producing artist-designed prints. According to the Draper of Australasia, which published a black and white photograph of the garment illustrated in the Australian Women's Weekly advertisement, the striped print of white, green, red and blue alternating bands with a design of ballerinas and clowns ….."was designed by contemporary French painter Rouault who specialises in modern design for theatres and churches".[75] Alcorso continued his commitment to artists, though in the 1950s they were more likely to be artists from France rather than Australia. Leroy's

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[73] Leroy Manufacturing Company Ltd. 1951. *Annual Report 1950-1951.* Canberra: National Library of Australia, 30 June.

[74] The House of Leroy Annual Report for 1950-1951 mentions its relationship with Carden Advertising. An interview conducted with Joy Jobbins on 2 June 2017 revealed that she worked for Ralph Blunden on the Leroy-Alcorso Signature Print Textile Competition at Carden Advertising when they held the accounts for both STP and the House of Leroy in 1954-55.

[75] The Draper of Australasia. 1952. "Ballet Extravaganza." 10 September (VIC : 1901-1966) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 28.

management and design team were of a similar mind, selecting prints from Alcorso that had identifiable links to art, history and culture, adding what Bourdieu would describe as 'symbolic capital' to their fashion garments.

This is further exemplified in a fashion story by Leroy produced for the same season celebrating MGM's production of 'Quo Vadis' (1951), photographed in the Draper of Australasia in January 1953. Day dresses were made of "Cool washable filaments, shantungs, poplins and semi-sheer silks splashed with vivid colour".[76] Figure 6.17 illustrates a dress "….boldly patterned in bayadere"…. (images forming stripes) incorporating "Imperial roman eagles, medallions, laurel wreaths, heads of tournament trumpeters, chariots, horses and arena scenes…….".[77]

For the spring collection released in July 1953, Alcorso Handprints produced a brightly coloured tribal print in alternating bayadere stripes of brightly coloured voodoo statuettes and what could be either spear points or stylised tropical leaves. Leroy styled the print into a dramatic draped bodice day dress perfect for appointments in town or society luncheons (Figures 6.18). Tribal and Polynesian prints, popular throughout the 1950s and revived every few fashion cycles throughout the 1970s, 80s and 90s, drew on the artwork of indigenous Pacific and African peoples, who, like the people of Australia's First Nations, had no political or legal means to prevent the appropriation of their cultural works for use in commercial products including textiles, wallpapers and other pattern-based products. This type of appropriation for fashion's sake would have gone unremarked at the time. In the twenty-first century most ethical and socially responsible textile designers try to avoid such types of culturally appropriated designs.

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[76] The Draper of Australasia. 1953. "Leroy adopts "Quo Vadis" as Fashion Theme." 10 January: 30.
[77] Ibid.

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At the time of writing the image was available at:
http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4388109.

Figure 6.17 Advertisement for House of Leroy frocks in 'launderized' Alcorso Handprints, 1952.[78]

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[78] Leroy Manufacturing Company Ltd. 1952. "Lucky for you it's launderized." *The Australian Women's Weekly.* 17 September. Accessed February 28, 2016. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4388109.

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At the time of writing the image was available at:
http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4382919.

Figure 6.18 Advertisement for Leroy 'tribal print' dress, 1953.[79]

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[79] Leroy Manufacturing Company Ltd. 1953. "Sky High Fashion." *The Australian Women's Weekly*. 7 October. Accessed February 28, 2016. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4382919.

6.3.5.1 The Leroy-Alcorso Signature Print textile design competition

There are differing opinions about how the Leroy Alcorso Signature Print competition came about and at some time or another, both Jack Shaw and Claudio Alcorso took credit for the initiative.[80] The competition was announced in October 1953 in advertisements and editorial in the trade and popular press, placed by Carden Advertising.[81]

However, the notion of a competition with cash prizes to encourage emerging artists and designers to design textiles was not altogether new. British textile manufacturers the Calico Printers Association and wholesaler Grafton had initiated a similar textile competition in Australia in 1951, offering a prize of 300 guineas for the best design. The Grafton Prize was promoted in trade and women's magazines and in its first year attracted 750 entries. According to an article in the Australian Women's Weekly, the intent was to create collections of original textile designs that could be marketed internationally by Grafton.[82]

The first competition was won by Modernage alumnus Douglas Annand for his design 'Scherzo', which, along with other selected entries by artists in Australia, New Guinea, Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands, was shown in David Jones Sydney Art Gallery in an exhibition opened by artist Will Ashton on September 12, 1951.[83] The Grafton Prize also ran in 1952, when

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[80] According to Lesley Sharon Rosenthal's book *Schmattes* (2005), Jim Shaw from *Leroy* took credit for the idea of the *Leroy-Alcorso Signature Print Competition*. However, it is likely that Alcorso influenced the royalty model, which was similar to that proposed for *Modernage*. Business risk was minimised even further by offering a cash prize and a royalty on every yard printed for the winning entry, on the proviso that Alcorso and his business affiliates could use the designs for as long as they liked.

[81] The Courier-Mail. 1953. "Royalties offered for new textile designs." 13 October. Accessed April 20, 2014. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article51071860.

[82] Australian Women's Weekly 1951. "New contest for fabric designs." 12 September. Accessed December 27, 2018. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4389898.

[83] The Draper of Australasia. 1951. "Splendid Success of Grafton Textile Design Contest." 20 November (VIC : 1901-1966) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 62.

judges included Charles Lloyd Jones, Mrs Harold Holt, Hal Missingham, Jean Bellette, Mr George Hastie and Mr KA Pittman.[84]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing the image was available at:
http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4389898.
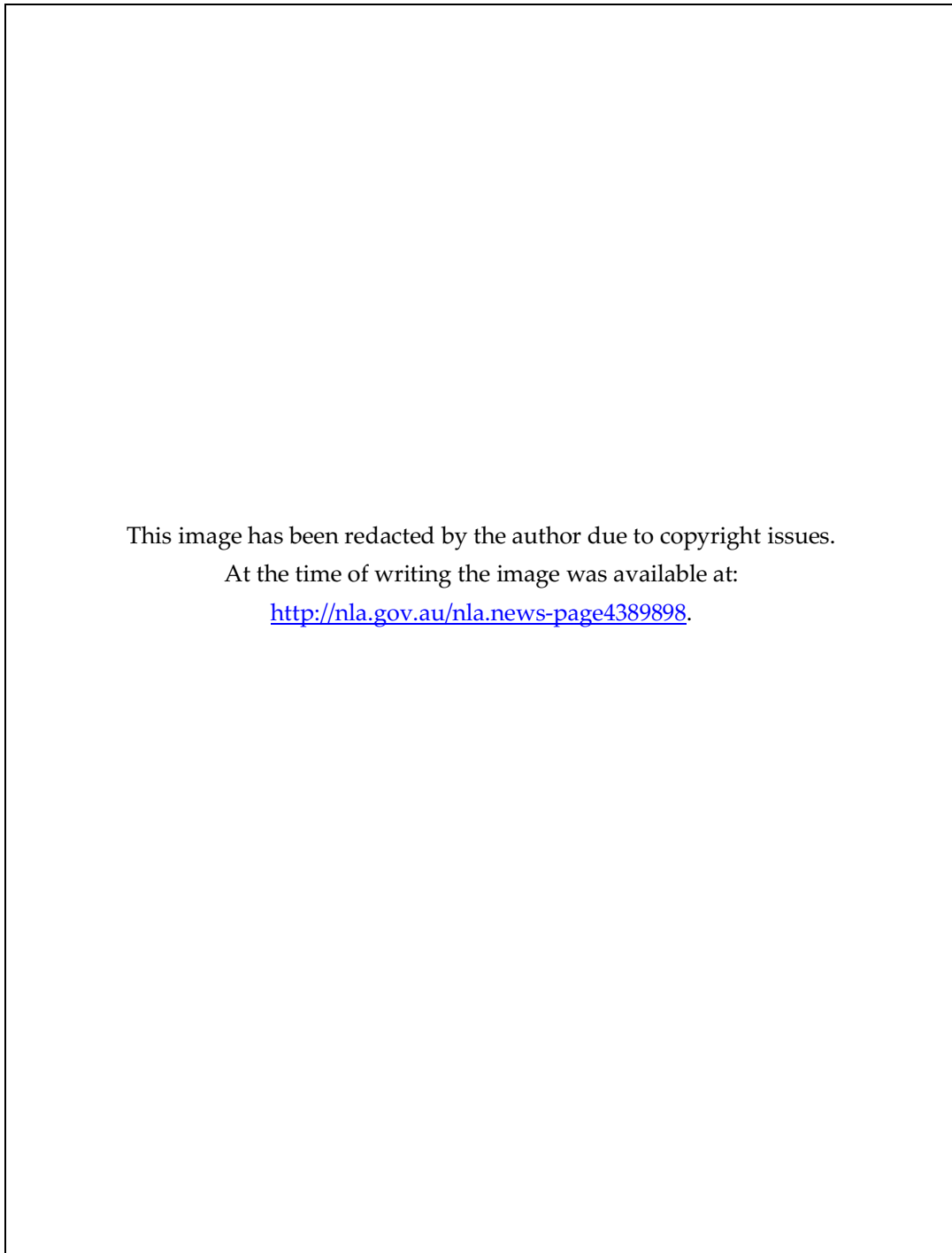
Figure 6.19 Editorial on the Grafton Prize in the Australian Women's Weekly, September 1951.[85]

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[84] The Draper of Australasia. 1952. "Australian Textile Designs Accepted." 10 April (VIC : 1901-1966) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 74.

[85] The Australian Women's Weekly. 1951. "New contest for fabric designs." 12 September. Accessed December 27, 2018. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4389898.

In 1953 the competition received 1,000 entries from established artists and designers as well as amateurs, including children and teenagers. It was won that year by Melbourne-based textile designer Marion Fletcher for her design 'Hieroglyphics', a modernist interpretation of ancient pictographic writing incorporating schematic female figures in various poses interspersed with floral and foliage wreaths.[86]

The duplication of key characteristics of the Grafton Prize in the Leroy Alcorso Signature Print competition calls into question the professional ethics of both Alcorso and Shaw. Both were quick to speak out in the media about the proliferation of copycat garments and print designs produced by their competitors, but did not hesitate to appropriate the idea of a textile competition from Grafton. It is likely that this decision would have been rationalised by Alcorso as a means of providing more opportunities for artists and designers.

Whilst both competitions professed the central aim of encouraging the arts, it is questionable whether the Australian market had the capacity to support both competitions. Unfortunately, neither competition had any longevity. The Grafton Prize ceased in December 1953, recognising that the Leroy-Alcorso competition had supplanted it.[87] The Leroy-Alcorso Signature Print competition was only offered twice and was quietly abandoned after the second competition in 1955.

Despite the fact that the Leroy-Alcorso Signature Print competition was an appropriated strategy, it brought increased awareness of Australian artists and designers and the benefit of increased sales to all businesses concerned. Leroy and Alcorso invested a bigger promotional budget than Grafton and

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[86] The Draper of Australasia. 1953. "Grafton Award Winners and the Winning Design." 10 November (VIC : 1901-1966) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 26-27, 40.

[87] The Age. 1953. "Industrial Design Standards." Friday December. Accessed December 17, 2018. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article206915058.

their strategy pitched it as a fashion initiative. It had a far greater reach than the Grafton Prize in the popular press. It was promoted in metropolitan and regional daily newspapers, trade and popular women's magazines.

Alcorso used his networks of associates to license the winning designs for other international markets, ensuring that the prints would also generate indirect profits. A significant factor pitched to artists and designers was that selected entries would be produced by the Cohn-Hall-Marx Company in America and the Berne Silk Manufacturing Company in Great Britain, offering an opportunity to raise their international profiles.

Using a familiar (but less generous) royalty formula than that used for Modernage, designers were to be paid 2d commission on each yard sold, with a prize of £100 to be awarded to the designer of the best-selling design. Many of the artists who had contributed designs to Modernage also entered the two Signature Prints competitions. The 1953 competition received 1,600 entries and like the Grafton Prize, included entries from amateurs, students and even children.

The competition was a cost-effective way for Alcorso and Shaw to commission art and design work without excessive cost or risk to either business. It provided artists with a monetary incentive to produce designs that were innovative and original. Ironically, today commercial competitions like the Leroy-Alcorso Textile Design Competitions are seen as exploitative, rather than supportive of artists and designers. The Design Institute of Australia currently believes that activities such as open design competitions and crowd sourcing of designs undermined the ability of professional designers to earn a living, as it is cheaper to sponsor a competition prize than to engage a professional designer or design studio to undertake commissions. [88]

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[88] Design Institute of Australia. 2015. "Free Pitching Policy." Accessed September 25, 2015. http://www.design.org.au/media/DIA_FreePitchingPolicy.pdf, 1 – 2.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing the image was available at:

http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4814351.

Figure 6.20 Advertisement for Leroy illustrating a dress in the winning design by Douglas Annand for the 1953 Leroy-Alcorso Signature Print Textile Design Competition.[89]

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[89] Leroy Manufacturing Company Ltd. 1954. "Leroy Signature Prints." *The Australian Women's Weekly.* 22 September. Accessed May 20, 2019. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4814351.

Competition judges included Charles Lloyd-Jones of David Jones in Sydney, Ken Myer of Myer Emporium in Melbourne, Professor Joseph Burke (Herald Professor of Fine Arts at the University of Melbourne), Hal Missingham (Director of the National Gallery of NSW), Gordon Thomson (Assistant Director, National Gallery of Victoria), Desiderius Orban, Claudio Alcorso and Jack Shaw. Modernage alumni, including Douglas Annand, Alistair Morrison, Donald Friend, Roy Dalgarno, Jack Carington-Smith, Paul Haefliger and former STP employer Shirley de Vocht (nee Martin) all entered designs. Fashion photographer Athol Shmith entered an innovative print based on an enlargement of a grass seed.[90]

Leroy manufactured frocks in the finalists' designs, which were paraded by models down the aisle of the flight carrying the designs and judges from Melbourne to Hobart. High profile fashion model Bambi Shmith, then the wife of photographer Athol, modelled for the competition and was photographed holding her husband's design. By the time the flight arrived in Hobart, the competition's outcome had been decided.[91]

Douglas Annand won the first prize of £300, whilst works by fellow Alistair Morrison and Jack Carington-Smith were highly commended, receiving prizes of £25 each.[92] Other highly commended prizes were awarded to Roy Dalgarno, Elizabeth Vercoe and Fay Bottrell.[93] A further prize of £100 would be awarded in December 1954 to the creator of the best-selling design, whilst any designs selected for printing by Alcorso and his international

[90] The Australian Photo Review. 1954. "An Unique Competition." December. Accessed October 26, 2018. nla.obj-452826590.

[91] The Mercury, Hobart. 1954. "Textile Art Work Judged In Flight." 13 February. Accessed March 23, 2011. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article27207672.

[92] 'Textile Design Award Goes To Leading Sydney Artist', Mercury (Hobart, Tas. : 1860 - 1954), Monday 15 February 1954, page 5

[93] The Australian Home Beautiful. 1954. "Boost for our textile designers: Entries in Australian competition to be printed in three countries." May, Sydney, Caroline Simpson Library, Sydney Living Museums: 64-65.

affiliates Cohn-Hall-Marx or the Berne Silk Company would earn their designer the 2d per yard royalty.[94]

Figure 6.20 is an advertisement for Leroy's Summer 1954 collection titled "Out of the art gallery and into your wardrobe" incorporating designs from the initial Signature Print competition. The main dress illustrated is made from Douglas Annand's prize-winning print, a repeat made up scraps of torn black and black and white spotted paper arranged on a brightly canary yellow base. The frock features the same draped front silhouette used by Leroy in its tribal print dress of 1953 (Figure 6.18), indicating that they were recycling styling from previous collections, using the Alcorso prints to differentiate products for the season.

Queensland artist and designer Olive Ashworth was runner up in the 1954 competition with her design 'Aquarelle' (Figure 6.21), based on fresh and seawater plants, which eventually won the £100 prize for the best-selling print design. Ashworth had studied design in Melbourne in the early 1930s, returning to her native Brisbane to head the art department of travel company Burns Philp. She established a commercial design and advertising business in 1945, designing travel brochures for Herron Island and the Great Barrier Reef that were instrumental in promoting these as tourist destinations.

'Aquarelle' was printed on wash-and-wear nylon taffeta and made up into an innovative "two-way" skirted evening dress that mimicked the effect of a full overskirt worn over a pencil thin skirt, but without the making of two separate layers (Figure 5.21). Ashworth went on to establish clothing and textiles brand 'Indigenous Designs of Australia' in 1971, adapting her interpretations of iconic Australian design to casual beachwear.[95]

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[94] The Australian Home Beautiful 1954.

[95] Nadia Buick and Madeleine King. 2015. *Remotely Fashionable: A Story of Subtropical Style.* Brisbane: The Fashion Archives, 146-147.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing the image was available at:
http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4813093.

Figure 6.21 Advertisement for Leroy dresses, 1954. A dress in Olive Ashworth's design 'Aquarelle' is pictured in the centre.[96]

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[96] Leroy Manufacturing Company Ltd. 1954. "See how Leroy makes life beautiful and easy for you." *The Australian Women's Weekly*. 3 November. Accessed February 28, 2016. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4813093.

Other designers winning prizes included Gerard Herbst, for his design 'Bayadere'. Herbst was then Art Director at competing Melbourne-based textile firm Prestige. He entered two designs into the Leroy-Alcorso Textile Design Prize under the pseudonym "Mrs Ruth Noad" as a joke, winning a £25 runner up prize for both designs. Like Alcorso, Herbst was a pre-war migrant arriving in Australia in 1939. He had studied textile and industrial design in Germany and had worked there at Krueger and Wolff. Herbst joined the design team at Prestige, anglicising his German name 'Gerhard' to the more common 'Gerard'.

Herbst initially worked on visual presentations for hosiery and on the declaration of war enlisted in the Australian army, where he met photographer Wolfgang Sievers, with whom he would later collaborate extensively. After demobilisation Herbst returned to Prestige, becoming the Art Director in 1946. Herbst worked with Prestige's owner George Foletta, to expand the product range and a professional art and design studio was established under Bauhaus lines. [97] In 1949 Prestige acquired the plant and equipment of Impression Textiles at St Marys (see Chapter 4), relocating them to their Victorian plant. This enabled them to compete with STP by developing and printing their own fabrics designs.

Herbst later taught at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) where he became a principal lecturer in 1960. Like Alcorso, Herbst saw the importance of "adding art to skills" and identified a need to "develop a product which was sympathetic to the Australian market".[98] He encouraged the designers at Prestige to "think away" from obvious and clichéd design

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[97] Veronica Bremer and Anne-Marie Van de Ven. 2016. "The Bauhaus Link in the Life and Work of Emigre Artist Gerard Herbst." *emaj.* 9 May. Accessed December 30, 2017. www.emajartjournal.com, 4-5.

[98] Anne Brennan. 1997. "A Philosophical Approach to Design: Gerhard Herbst and Fritz Janeba." In *The Europeans: Emigre Artists in Australia 1930-1960*, by Roger Butler, 152-166. Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 156; Bremer and Van de Ven 2016, 5.

solutions and experiment "with open-ended processes" that included study of inspirational photographs, forms and patterns occurring in nature and everyday life and even microscopic images.[99]
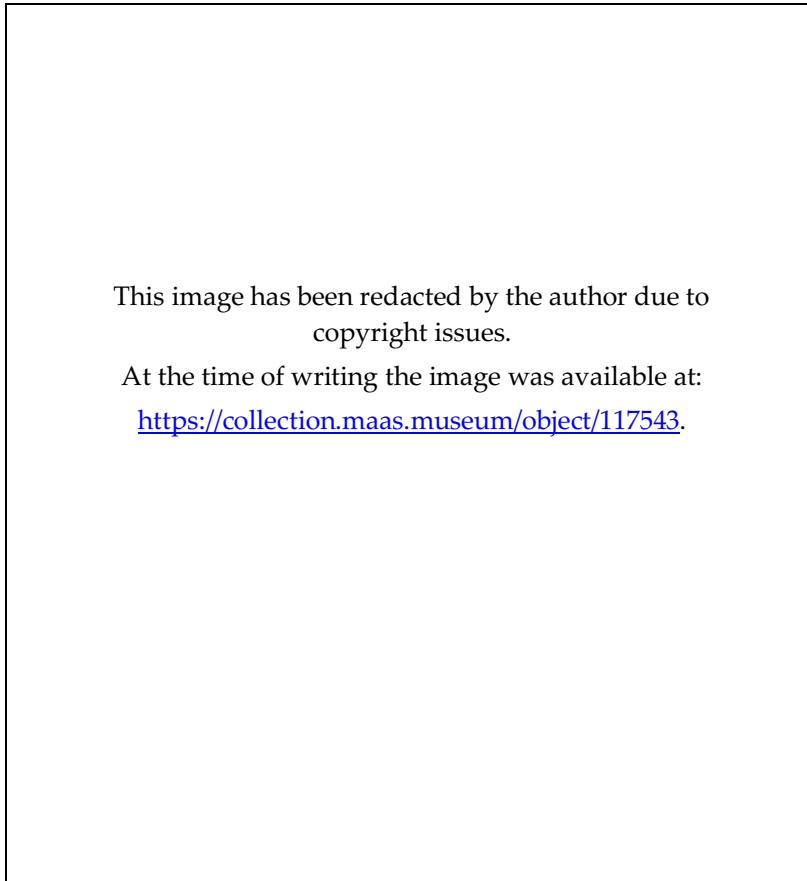
Figure 6.22 Gerard Herbst, artwork for 'Bayadere', 1954.[100]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing the image was available at:
https://collection.maas.museum/object/117543.

The original artwork submitted for 'Bayadere' survives in the collection of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (Figure 6.22). Rows of elegant women, their bodies and evening dresses rendered in sketchy line drawings wave their arms in time to a silent symphony as they dance across a mustard yellow carpet against a backdrop of grey decorated with sprigs of delicate flowers. Herbst obviously felt a thrill when he read the publicity in the media about the competition and the talented "Mrs Ruth Noad". The look on

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[99] Brennan 1997, 158.

[100] Gerard Herbst. 1954. "Bayadere." *Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences.* Accessed October 18, 2018. https://collection.maas.museum/object/117543.

Alcorso's face when he actually discovered who had completed the prize-winning designs would have been priceless.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

Figure 6.23 Leroy dress in 'Melbourne Coronation Lights', a print by eight-year-old Andrew Blunden.[101]
Figure 6.24 Close up of 'Melbourne Coronation Lights' by Andrew Blunden.[102]
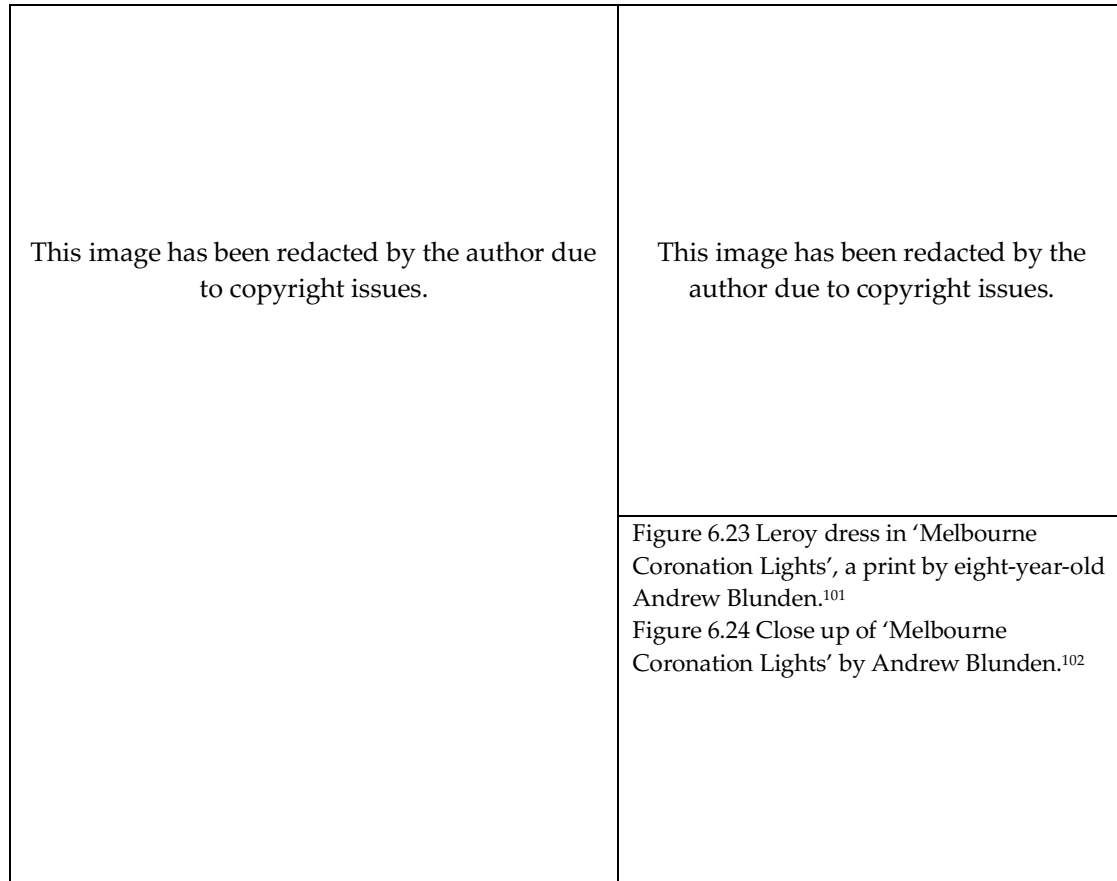
Several children entered the first Leroy-Alcorso Textile Design Prize, including eight-year-old Andrew Blunden. His entry 'Coronation Lights' (Figures 6.23 and 6.24) was based on the lighting displays on Melbourne's streets during the Australian tour of the Queen in 1953. It won the junior section of the competition, earning him £25 and receiving a great deal of editorial in both the popular and trade press. The judges commented that the design was…"…outstandingly beautiful in colour and completely fresh and original in its approach."[103] The design was printed on launderized silk and

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[101] The Draper of Australasia. 1954. "Artists see their Fabric Designs Paraded at Leroy Summer Showing." 10 September: 43; "Leroy-Alcorso Design Competition for 1955." 10 September: 24.
[102] The Australian Home Beautiful May 1954.
[103] Leroy Manufacturing Company Ltd and STP 1954.

styled by Leroy into a smart front-buttoned day-dress with a sweetheart neckline, teamed with a contrasting plain belt (Figure 6.24) ….. "its brilliant colours and free flowing pattern create an effect of glowing illuminations."[104]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
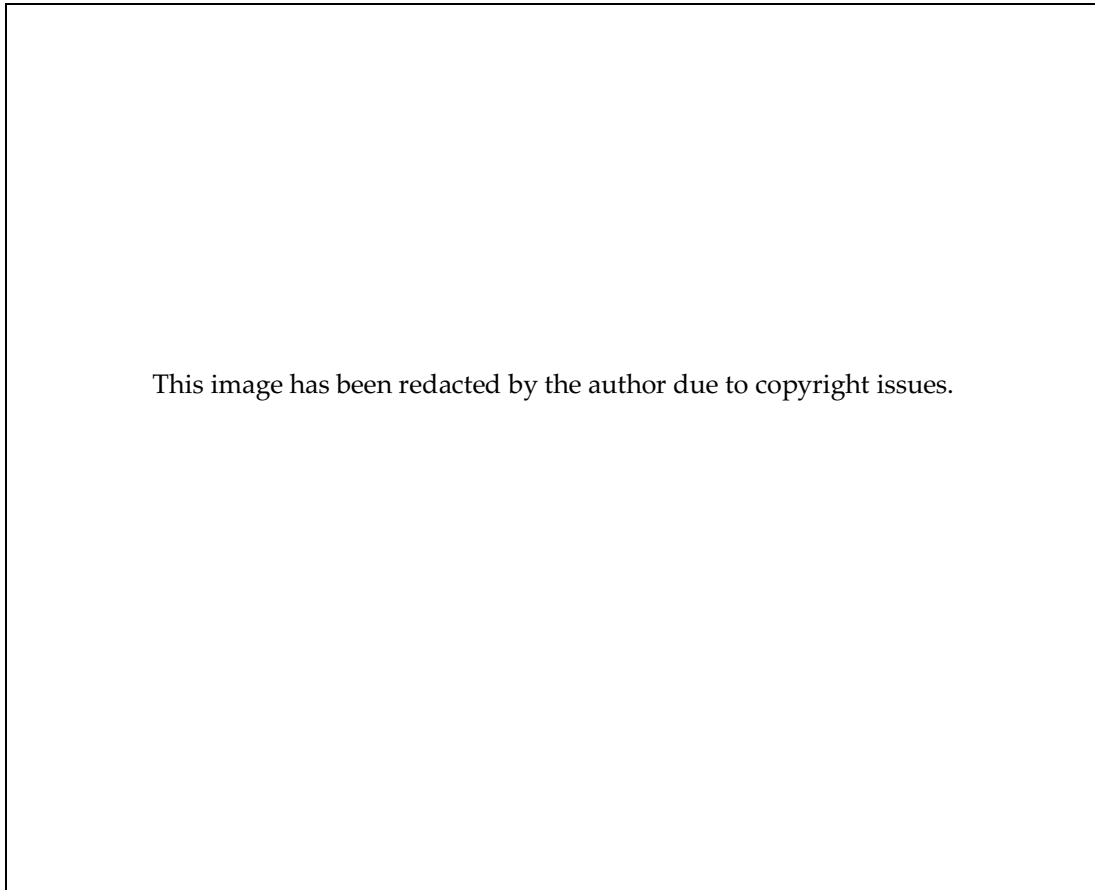
Figure 6.25 Mrs Norma Halliwell, Miss Jill Cahn and Miss Elizabeth Vercoe at the exhibition at the Myer Mural Lounge.[105]

Continuing a tradition established by Alcorso and used in the promotion of Modernage, one hundred designs selected from the 1,600 entries were shown at the Myer Mural Lounge in Melbourne in an exhibition opened by Professor Joseph Burke[106], at the Grace Bros Sydney store and in Brisbane.[107] The exhibition openings in each state were attended by local winners who were

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[104] The Australian Home Beautiful 1954 and the Draper of Australasia, 1954. "Leroy-Alcorso Textile Design Prize." 10 March (VIC : 1901-1966) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 46.

[105] The Textile Journal of Australia, 1954. "Leroy-Alcorso Textile Design Competition - Three Prize Winners." 20 April: 152.

[106] The Textile Journal of Australia 1954, 152.

[107] James Gleeson. 1954. "Textile Designs on Show." *The Sun*. 26 August. Accessed September 9, 2019. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article229169410.

presented with their prize, some of whom wore dresses in the prints that they had designed. Figure 6.25 shows runner up prize winner Jill Cahn (centre) wearing a dress made of the print that she designed for the competition, at the opening of the exhibition at the Myer Mural Lounge. To her right is artist Elizabeth Vercoe, who also collected her £25 prize at the event. The catalogue for the exhibition included an introduction by Jack Shaw that expressed the pride that he felt in presenting the exhibition to the public.

> We have long shared the conviction that Australian artists were capable of producing textile designs equal in quality to the best in the world and the Leroy-Alcorso Prize was sponsored as a direct encouragement to these artists. ……………
>
> Arrangements for two of the biggest textile printing firms in Great Britain and the U.S.A. to print the winning design will afford unprecedented recognition of contemporary Australian textile art.[108]

The second Leroy-Alcorso Signature Prints competition was announced at the Brisbane exhibition at the end of 1954, with a closing date in January 1955.[109] The second competition would have prizes of more than £600 and sought designs for release in Spring 1956 to take advantage of the Olympic Games to be held in Melbourne that year. The geographical scope of the 1955 competition was extended from Australia to New Zealand and New Guinea and citizens of those countries living overseas.[110]

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[108] Leroy Manufacturing Company Ltd and STP 1954, 1.

[109] The Draper of Australasia, 1954. "Leroy-Alcorso Design Competition for 1955." 10 September: 24.

[110] The Draper of Australasia. 1954. "Textile Art Context Now Open." 19 December (VIC : 1901-1966) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 16.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
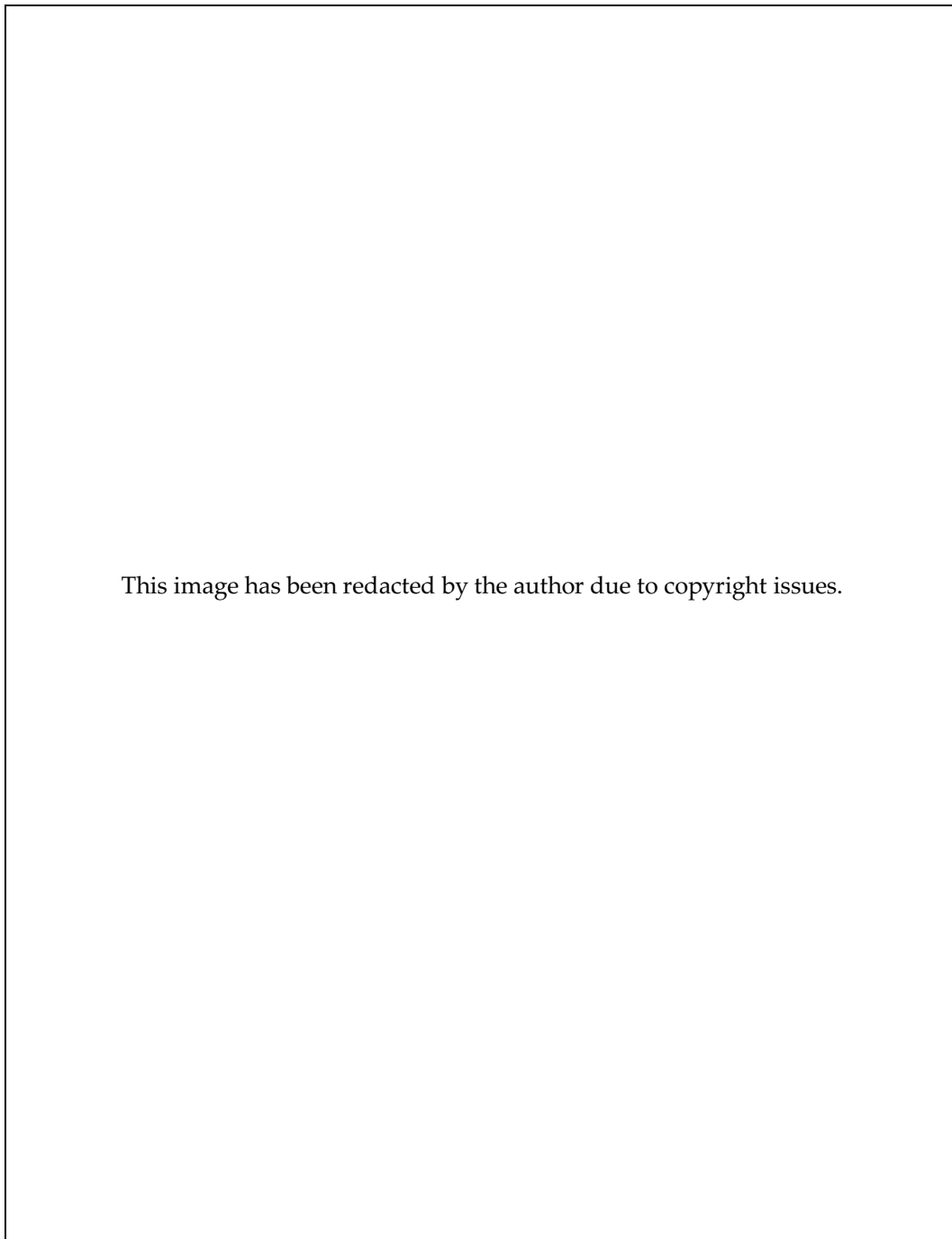
Figure 6.26 Judges of the second Leroy-Alcorso Signature Print competition.[111]

Once again there was a special section for students under nineteen years of age, in addition to the Junior section for under-fourteens. The prestigious panel of judges that year included the 1954 winner Douglas Annand, Mrs Harold Holt (Zara Holt - designer, boutique owner and wife of Harold Holt,

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[111] Silk & Textile Printers Ltd. 1955. *Annual Report 1955.* National Library of Australia.

then Minister for Immigration), Donna Consuelo Daneo (wife of Italian Consul in Sydney), Hal Missingham, Darryl Lindsay (Director, National Gallery of Victoria), Claudio Alcorso and Jack Shaw.[112]

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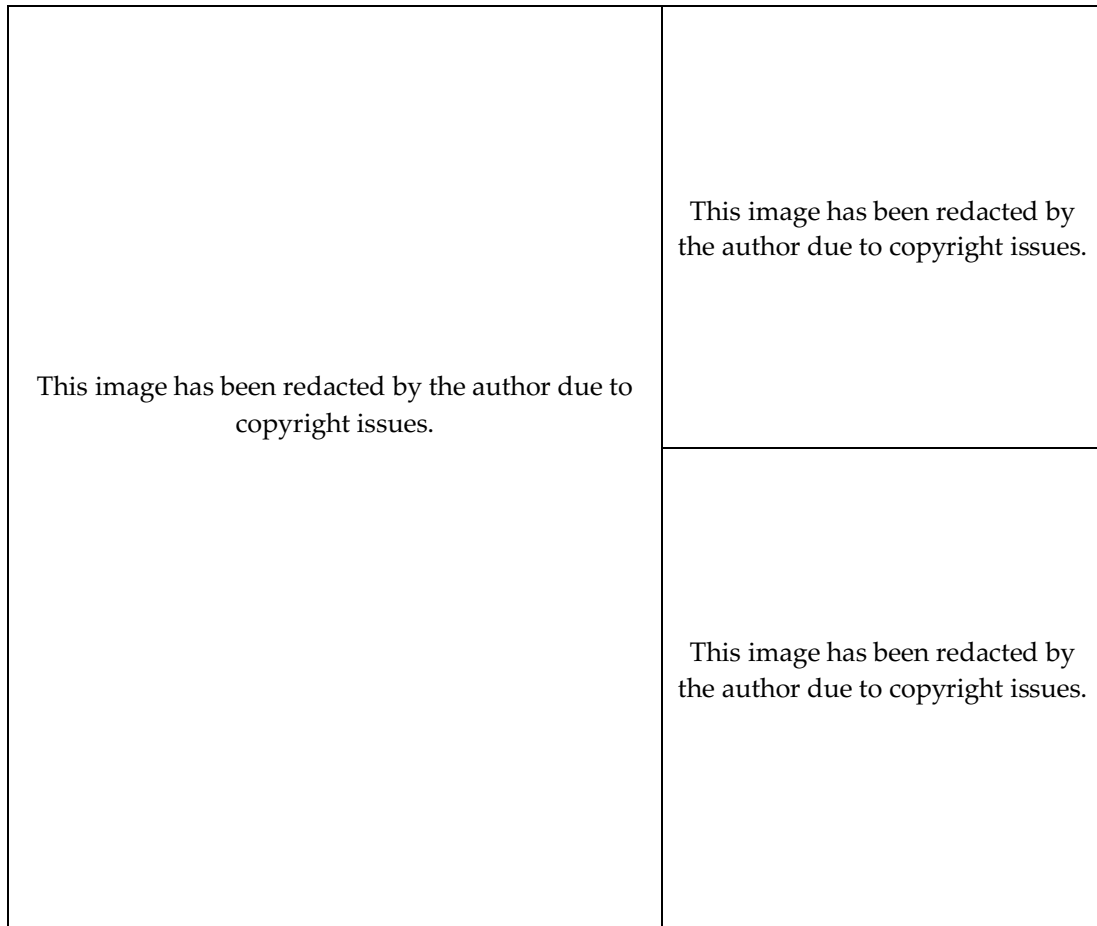
Figure 6.27 (A) Joint winner Mrs. Susanne Copolov with her prize-winning design.
Figure 6.28 (B) 'Prayer', a design by twelve-year-old Kenneth Fleay.
Figure 6.29 (C) Joint winning design by Patricia Thwaites.[113]

There were two joint winners of the second Leroy-Alcorso Signature Prints competition, each receiving £300. The first joint winner Susan Copolov had entered 'Australia', a design based on native flora and fauna. The equal winner was Patricia Thwaites with her design of draped Assyrian, Medieval and Indian draped figures (Figure 6.29).[114] Susan Copolov's design was printed on

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[112] The Adelaide Advertiser. 1954. "Second Contest in Textile Design." 26 October. Accessed October 26, 2018. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article47611258.

[113] The Draper of Australasia. 1955. "First Showing of Games Dress Fabric at Opening of Textile Design Exhibition." 10 May (VIC : 1901-1966) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 22.

[114] Ibid; The Draper of Australasia. 1955. "Two Girls share £300 Design Prize." 10 March: 42.

a nylon plisse fabric and styled into a party dress with the signature Leroy wrap front and a soft bow secured with a diamante buckle that was photographed for STP's 1955 Annual Report (Figures 6.26 and 6.30-6.32).

	This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues. At the time of writing the image was available at: http://circavintageclothing.com.au/2012/04/26/1950s-leroy-alcorso-print-dress/.
This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues. At the time of writing the image was available at: http://circavintageclothing.com.au/2012/04/26/1950s-leroy-alcorso-print-dress/.	This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues. At the time of writing the image was available at: http://circavintageclothing.com.au/2012/04/26/1950s-leroy-alcorso-print-dress/.

Figure 6.30 Leroy nylon plisse dress printed with Susan Copolov's design *Australia*.
Figure 6.31 Sew-in label from nylon plisse dress.
Figure 6.32 Front detail of nylon plisse dress with diamante buckle detail.[115]

In 2013 the garment later turned up on the website of vintage clothing shop who published Figures 6.30 to 6.32 online. The close-up photographs show the detail of the pleated nylon base cloth, printed with a design of turquoise wattle flowers on branches of sinuous caramel and chocolate brown foliage. The sew-

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[115] Circa Vintage Clothing. 2013. "Leroy dress printed with "Australia 1956" design." Accessed October 23, 2013. http://circavintageclothing.com.au/2012/04/26/1950s-leroy-alcorso-print-dress/.

in label of the garment shows both the Leroy and Alcorso logos, which advises the buyer that the garment is the result of the special collaboration between the creators of beautiful handprints and extraordinary designer gowns.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
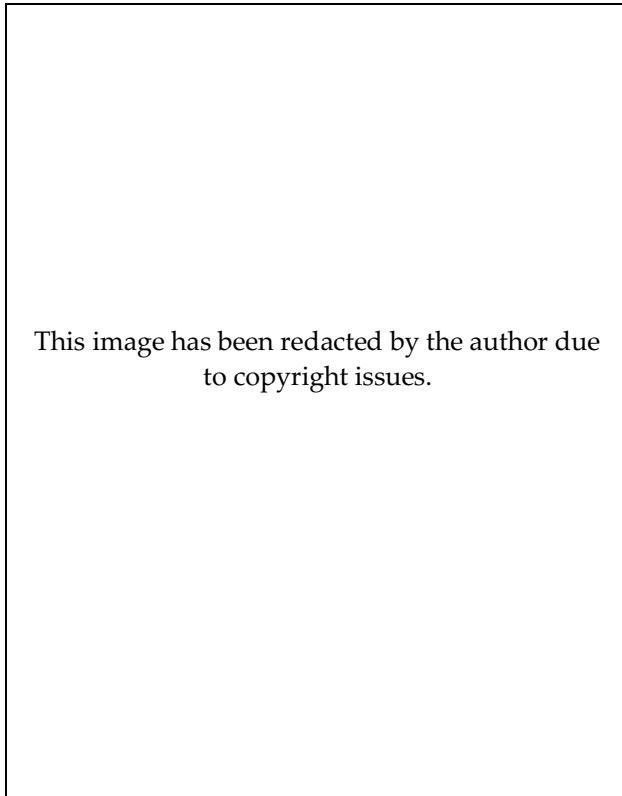
Figure 6.33 Winning design by student Judy Ann Woodlock.[116]

Student Judy Ann Woodlock won £25 for her monotone design 'Olympic' based on Melbourne stadiums, the Olympic rings and the Southern Cross (Figure 6.33). It was judged by Sir Darryl Lindsay as being "…crisp, well executed and eminently suitable for Olympic year."[117] The Junior prize of £25 was won by twelve-year-old Kenneth Fleay with his design 'Prayer' [(B) - Figure 6.33].

Twenty First Nation artists from the Yirrkala mission station four hundred miles east of Darwin also entered the second Leroy Alcorso competition. Malawan 1 Marika, a forty-eight-year old stockman and artist

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[116] The Draper of Australasia, 1956. "Aboriginal and Olympic prize-winning prints for Leroy range." 10 September: 22.
[117] Ibid.

from the mission won a prize of £25 for his entry depicting native birds against a cross hatched background. Editorial in the Draper of Australasia illustrates the condescending manner that European Australians treated indigenous artists at the time. Malawan was described as a "…primitive aborigine…", who "…has never seen civilisation… and lives and hunts in the age-old manner …… . He has done many paintings on rocks and caves in the area." The chairman of the judging panel, Sir Darryl Lindsay, described the design as "savage and authentic." The same editorial mentions that many of the other artists submitting designs also used Aboriginal themes as inspiration, including the winner of the £300 open section prize, Richard Tony Fraser of Moonah in Tasmania, an employee of STP.[118]

Marika 1 Malawan (c1908-1967) was in fact, an influential and respected artist and leader of the Rirrattjingu clan, the traditional custodians of the land on which Yirrkala Mission was established in 1936. He was also a political activist who used art as a form of advocacy to promote a better understanding and appreciation of Yolngu Peoples and their country. He was instrumental in the development of commercial bark painting at the mission and contributed 365 crayon drawings for Ronald and Catherine Berndt in 1947. He also established a dynasty of First Nations artist in the Northern Territory - his daughters Banduk and Dhuwarrwarr continued working as artists after his death.[119]

Leroy designer Dena Cutts styled Malawan's print into Capri pants with a matching sleeveless top and overskirt for the 1956 Signature Casuals resort-wear collection. Photographs of the outfit were shown on page 3 of 'The Age' on October 3, 1956 to promote the exhibition of winning and runner-up

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[118] Ibid.

[119] National Museum of Australia. n.d. "Malawan 1 Marika (c.1908-1967)." Accessed October 23, 2013.
  http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/yalangbara/the_marika_family.

textiles at the Myer Mural Hall and in the November 10 issue of the Draper of Australasia (Figures 6.34 and 6.35).

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

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Figure 6.34 Prize-winning design by Marika 1 Malawan. [120]

Figure 6.35 Leroy 'Capri' pants and sleeveless top in print design by Marika 1 Malawan.[121]

The Leroy-Alcorso Signature Print competition ended quietly after the 1955 competition. Perhaps both businesses jointly decided that the promotion had run its course. The second competition had only 526 entrants[122], compared with the 1,200 entries received for the first competition. It may also be that

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[120] The Draper of Australasia, September 10, 1956, 22.

[121] The Draper of Australasia. 1956. "From Arnhem Land to Saville Row." 10 November (VIC : 1901-1966): 26.

[122] The Draper of Australasia, September 10, 1956, 22.

Leroy had decided to source their prints from other suppliers, including those overseas, which were now becoming more competitive in price. Japanese suppliers had started appointing Australian agents and advertising in trade magazines and a business with the size and profile of Leroy would have been a natural target. Leroy would have the capacity to meet the minimum order quantities for print runs from Hong Kong and Japan, at prices that would have been a fraction of STPs. The business relationship between Claudio Alcorso and Jack Shaw evidently continued in some form for at least the next year, as Leroy's Signature Casuals continued to promote their use of Alcorso's new "circular print" cottons that imitated pleats and produced innovative bayadere border prints.[123]

However, from 1957 STP's annual reports included no photographs of any garments from Leroy's collections. STP's 1957 annual report did, however, include garments made from textiles produced exclusively for a number of Australian wholesalers, including Sekers, Martin & Savage and Makower McBeath. The fact that STP had decided to collaborate closely with wholesalers who had the capacity to sell on their designs to smaller dress manufacturers may have deterred Leroy, though it clearly did not deter California Productions, whose garments still appeared in STP's 1957 annual report. Though we will never know whether adverse discussions actually transpired between STP and Leroy, it is clear that Alcorso's new relationships with wholesalers continued to ensure business growth without dealing directly with fashion manufacturers.

Further information about Alcorso's dealings with Australian wholesalers is provided in sections 6.4.3 to 6.4.5.

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[123] Draper of Australasia. 1956. "Range of "Signature" styles marks Leroy's entry into casual wear field." 10 April: 12.

6.3.6 Tennyson, Taffs & the Contemporary Art Prize

Tennyson Textile Mills Pty Ltd, textile dyers, printers and finishers, was founded in Gladesville, Sydney in around 1945. One of its founders, Emery Yass, arrived in Australia before World War II from Hungary, where he had trained with a leading textile mill. On arrival he was employed by the Alcorso family as a printing adviser to STP. After leaving the business to serve in the war, Yass teamed up with William Henry Bentley and Victor Nicholas Vadas to form the company that would become one of STP's major Australian competitors.

The business expanded rapidly, benefitting from the disruption to STP's production caused by their relocation to Tasmania. In 1948, with STP no longer in Sydney, the company began an ambitious expansion with the publication of an abridged prospectus for a new public company - Tennyson Textile (Holdings) Limited. The company issued ordinary shares at 5/- each, which provided funds for the expansion.[124] Tennyson became a member of The Association of Textile Printers of NSW and Yass served as acting president in late 1949.

Like STP, Tennyson employed their own internal design team, which included Shirley de Vocht (nee Martin) who had worked at STP from 1944 to 1946. Deciding not to relocate to Hobart, de Vocht had worked for a couple of years as a designer at Modern Ceramic Products Pty Ltd, joining the design team at Tennyson in 1949.[125] De Vocht later worked for eight years at Dri-Glo Towels Pty Ltd, where she designed the commemorative towel used by the Australian team at the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne.[126] She entered both

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[124] Sydney Morning Herald. 1948. "Abridged Prospectus Tennyson Textile (Holding) Limited." 2 September. Accessed October 02, 2018. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article18083288.

[125] Anne-Marie Van de Ven. 2015. "Shirley Martin: Australian industrial designer." *Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences.* 29 July. Accessed July 15, 2019. https://maas.museum/inside-the-collection/2015/07/29/shirley-martin-australian-industrial-designer/.

[126] Van de Ven, Shirley Martin: Australian industrial designer 2015.

Leroy Alcorso competitions and her entries form part of an extensive design archive held at Sydney's Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences.

In the absence of competition in Sydney from STP, the profits of Tennyson Textile (Holdings) Ltd's continued to multiply in the early 1950s. The Sun reported that profit for the financial year up to June 1950 was £19,531 against the previous year's profit of £7,595. The same year, its subsidiary company Tennyson Textile Mills Pty Ltd showed a net profit of £24,816 against £8,793 for the previous financial year. The increase was the result of improved turnover, particularly in the dyeing and finishing parts of the business.[127]

Unfortunately, production at the Gladesville plant was interrupted by a fire in December 1950. According to The Daily Telegraph, the plant had been built on land containing dumped ash and cinders, reclaimed from the Parramatta River. A senior Fire Brigades officer reported that the fire may have been smouldering for months, even before the plant was built. Two fully stocked warehouses were destroyed and fire fighters had to contend with the danger of exploding chemicals whilst they battled the flames.[128] Despite this setback, orders and profits continued to rise steadily over subsequent years and additional plant and machinery was installed to keep pace.[129]

Textile designer and merchandiser Werner Rares joined Tennyson in 1955 in a senior executive role. According to Ragtrader magazine, Rares was regarded as "Australia's magician of textile prints", holding various marketing, styling and executive roles with both Tennyson and UTA until his retirement in 1976.[130]

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[127] The Sun, Sydney. 1950. "Tennyson Textile Dividend Raised." 12 September. Accessed October 12, 2018. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article230470911.

[128] The Daily Telegraph. 1950. "Factory May Have Been Built On Fire." 18 December. Accessed December 18, 2018. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article248413082.

[129] The Daily Telegraph. 1953. "Tennyson Profit Quadrupled." 14 November. Accessed November 18, 2018. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article248732983.

[130] Ragtrader. 1976. "Werner Rares will still work magic." 15 August (NSW : 1972-1994) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 6.
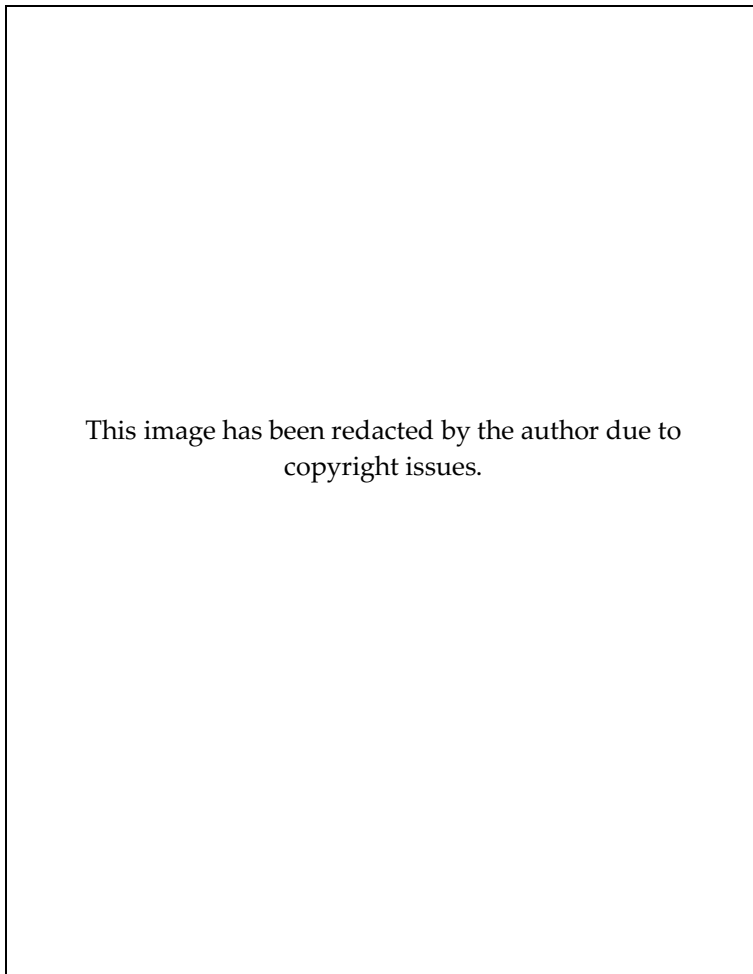
Figure 6.36 Advertisement
for 'Disciplined Fabrics' by
Tennyson, 1957.[131]

This image has been redacted by the author due to
copyright issues.

Tennyson Textiles – like STP – had a network of international collaborators
with whom they shared designs through licensing arrangements. [132] By 1957
Tennyson were promoting the expansion of their exclusive license with Bates
Fabrics Incorporated of New York to print and distribute the exclusive
'Disciplined Fabric' range in Flair magazine, which, before the arrival of the
local version of Vogue was arguably the foremost fashion publication in
Australia.[133]

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[131] Ibid.

[132] STP had a reciprocal arrangements with the Cohn-Hall-Marx (Cohama) Company in the United
States to reproduce each other's designs in their respective sales territories. Sekers were able to
arrange commission printing of designs from their British parent company for distribution in
Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. In many cases these arrangements allowed for local
variation, including re-colouring of the print designs to suit the local market.

[133] Tennyson Textile (Holdings) Ltd. 1957. "It's smarter to be disciplined - Disciplined Fabrics by
Tennyson." *Flair Magazine* , October (Sydney, NSW : 1956-1973) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 6.

The advertisement for 'Disciplined Fabric' placed in Flair (Figure 6.36) incorporates a figure of a fashionable woman drawn in the pen and ink-wash style of French fashion illustrator Rene Gruau. She represents the target market for Flair magazine – a sophisticated young women who maximises her wardrobe by making a few key pieces like simple tops and full skirts using distinctive fabrics, which she subtly mixed in with ready-made garments from high-end makers. In this context, "disciplined" means fabric that "behaves" when you cut and sew it, making it ideal for home dressmakers.

By the early 1960s Tennyson had established their own channel of distribution to manufacturers and retailers through their wholly owned subsidiary Universal Textile Agency Pty Ltd, based in Sydney. In 1964, a new branch of Universal opened in Melbourne (Figures 6.37 and 6.38) offering fast turnaround on sampling and stock fabrics for their Victorian and Tasmanian customers, increasing competition for STP in these states. Around the same period, Tennyson began actively promoting their collaboration with the Japanese fibre producer Toray to produce local print designs on their 'Tetrex' polyester taffeta, batiste and crepe base-cloths. The textiles and garments produced by Australian manufacturers from these new wash and wear fabrics were showcased in the seasonal parades of David Jones and Myers.[134]

Tennyson Textiles also had direct relationships with some of the larger mass market fashion manufacturers in Sydney including Neater Fashions and Pretty Girl Fashions.[135] These manufacturers were positioned in the middle of the Australian ready-to-wear market, appealing to wives and teenage children of white- and blue-collar workers, unlike STP's major clients Cole and Leroy,

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[134] Tennyson Textile (Holdings) Ltd. 1964 (VIC : Thomson Publications, 1947-1968) Sydney, State Library of NSW. "Toray Tetrex Materials Printed by Tennyson." *Clothing News*, August: 24-25.

[135] My grandfather Jack Sernack worked for Pretty Girl Fashions in the latter stages of his career, during the late 1960s and 70s. He 'worked the phones', inviting clients from boutiques and department stores to come and view the ranges. He also performed this function at our family business Rain'N'Shine Pty Ltd until he was well into his seventies.

whose merchandise was priced higher and situated at the top of the middle market. Like Cole and Leroy, Neater and Pretty Girl had the capacity to buy out entire print runs of textile designs, justifying their demands for design exclusivity with orders of substantial volume.

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This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

Figure 6.37 Melbourne showroom of Universal Textile Agency Pty Ltd, the wholesale arm of Tennyson Textiles.[136]

Figure 6.38 Fabric displays at Universal Textile Agency's Melbourne showroom.[137]

In 1963, under the design leadership of Werner Rares, Tennyson revived the open textile design competition in partnership with Bruck Mill, ladies fashion manufacturer RH Taffs and the NSW Contemporary Arts Society, ten years after the launch of the Leroy Alcorso Signature Print Competition.

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[136] Universal Textile Agency Pty Ltd. 1962. "31 Flinders Lane is the new Melbourne home of Universal Textile Agency Pty Ltd." *The Draper of Australasia*, 10 November (VIC : 1901-1966) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 3.

[137] Ibid.

In May 1963 Clothing News reported that the intention of the R. H. Taffs 'Contemporary Art Prize for Paintings Suitable for Textile Printing' was to supply print designs for the manufacturer's Summer 1964 dress ranges, destined for sale in Australia and overseas. Winning textile designs based on the paintings were to be printed by Tennyson on Arnel's 'Surah' (lightweight imitation slub silk) and Terylene taffeta produced by Bruck Mill.[138]

The inaugural competition received 280 entries from 175 artists. As with Modernage and the Leroy Alcorso Prize, the winning paintings were exhibited to the public in a gallery setting at Farmer's Blaxland Galleries. The competition judges included Keith Bruce of the Contemporary Art Society, Werner Rares, of Tennyson, Mr Walter Bunning, an Art Gallery of NSW trustee, Sheila Scotter of Vogue Australia and Mr E.L. Byrne, Managing Director of Farmers, with the winner of the first prize to be announced on 26 June that year.

Mrs Veronica Noach, a 22-year-old housewife who had migrated from Hungary in 1936, won the first prize of £800 that year.[139] Sculptor Clement Meadmore won the second prize of £200, whilst artist John Coburn won the fourth prize of £80. Coburn also won £45 for a 'highly recommended' design, together with James Gleeson, John Coburn and Stan de Teliga.[140] Other Australian artists contributing designs to the Contemporary Art Prize that year included Guy Warren, Ken Reinhard, Carol Rudyard, Nancy Borlase and Colin Lancely.[141]

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[138] Clothing News. 1963. "Market Week - R.H. Taffs." May (VIC : Thomson Publications, 1947-1968) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 33.

[139] Mary Coles. 1963. "Fabric design is compliment to Australia." *The Australian Women's Weekly.* 3 July. Accessed May 11, 2017. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page5526706.

[140] Clothing News. 1963. "Women Artists Score in Textile Designing." June (VIC : Thomson Publications, 1947-1968) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 17.

[141] Grace Cochrane. 1992. "Chapter 5 - the Practitioners 1940 - 1972: Textile Design." In *The Crafts Movement in Australia: A History.* Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 174-80.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

Figure 6.39 Advertisement for dresses manufactured by RH Taffs in prize-winning artist prints, 1963.[142]

Garments made from the winning prints were offered to retailers in the July 1963 issue of trade journal Clothing News (Figure 6.39).[143] Like the Grafton and Leroy-Alcorso Signature Print competitions before it, the Contemporary Art Prize was successful and evolved into an annual event. By 1966 the prize money had increased to $1,000 with Bruck Mill, Tennyson and RH Taffs partnering as equal sponsors of the competition, indicating that the work of Australian artists had once again become valued within the textile and fashion industry.[144] Roy Taffs showroom became like a gallery for contemporary Australian painting. In 1975 Ragtrader reported that the Taffs family had so many artworks that they could not keep them all at home. "…you will find paintings and drawings on almost every wall."[145]

It is ironic that the notion of a textile design prize was appropriated by Alcorso's greatest rival Tennyson Textiles, given that the Leroy-Alcorso textile competition was inspired by its predecessor the Grafton Prize. Appropriation was not only rife in textile and fashion design, but also in marketing and advertising strategies, illustrating the ruthlessness of the textile trade in the 1950s and 1960s. It was a time when many Australian manufacturers were happy to appropriate the latest ideas from producers overseas and locally but balked when someone imitated their own ideas. The unethical manufacturer saw no problem with this – they saw the practice as adaptation – a form of re-interpreting and re-creation of an international design trend, rather than a copying.[146] In the fast-moving world of fashion, where, at the time, design

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[142] RH Taffs. 1963. "Taffs of Sydney Present the 1963 Fabric Design Award Stylesetters." *Clothing News*, July (VIC : Thomson Publications, 1947-1968) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 5.

[143] "Taffs of Sydney Presents the 1963 Fabric Design Award Stylesetters", *Clothing News*, July 1963, 5.

[144] "Queensland Artists Wins 1966 Design Award", *Clothing News*, August 1966 , 42.

[145] Ragtrader. 1975. "The house that Taffs built." July 1-15 ((NSW : 1972-1994) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 16.

[146] Rainer Emig. 2012. "Adaptation in Theory." In *Adaptation and Cultural Appropriation: Literature, Film and the Arts*, by Pascal Nicklas and Oliver Lindner, 17. Berlin, Boston: Walter de Gruyter.

registration was the exception rather than the rule, there were rarely any legal consequences for intellectual property infringement.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
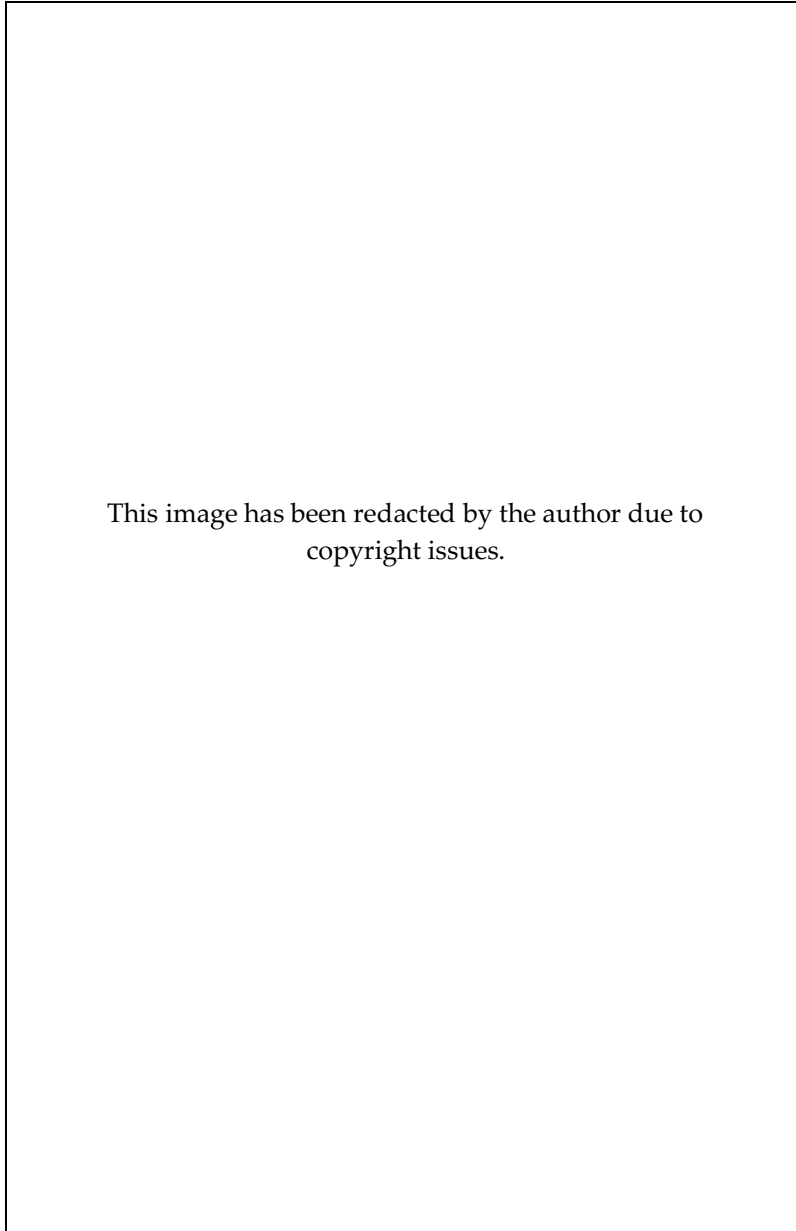
Figure 6.40 Advertisement for Tennyson's 'Fiesta Prints', July 1966.[147]

In 1966 Tennyson created the 'Fiesta Prints' collection based on the art and cultural traditions of central and south America. Figure 6.40 is an advertisement for the collection, which includes stereotypical images of mariachi musicians and a couple dancing, presumably at a fiesta. Line

[147] Tennyson Textile (Holdings) Ltd. 1966. "Fiesta Prints." *Clothing News*, July (VIC : Thomson Publications, 1947-1968) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 19.

drawings show a Mexican cathedral, Pre-Columbian pyramid, relief carving depicting the sun god, a peasant cart and horse and some pottery. Under the dancing figures we see line drawings of a stereotypical Mexican riding a horse, a figurative sculpture, a bullfighter and a bull and two buildings to remind us that central and south America are places where modernity co-exist with traditional culture. Together with STP's tribal print design for Leroy (Figure 6.18), 'Fiesta Prints' by Tennyson illustrate that cultural appropriation extended beyond the reproduction of Aboriginal iconography into the cultural traditions of other First Nations across the world. It was an international pursuit, mining the cultural traditions of many nations.

Tennyson, like many other Australian producers of textiles, recognised the need for stable commodity products that could be produced, packaged and sold in small or large quantities by all levels of retailers, from the smaller draperies to the larger department stores, unaffected by the vagaries of seasonal fashion. Other companies like Bradmill Nile who produced cotton fabrics and bedlinen also had a line of colourfast printed handkerchiefs in patterns that would be attractive to children and women.[148]

In 1964 Tennyson began to produce and market a range of pre-packaged printed tablecloths.[149] Unlike fashion fabrics which became outdated quickly, printed domestic textiles like aprons and tablecloths appealed to all market levels and had a much longer shelf life than season garments. The tablecloths were drip dry and non-iron and printed in bright colours with patterns of Australian animals and birds and pictures of the Australian outback. Tennyson also produced a souvenir tablecloth to mark the launch of the Empress of Australia, showing the ship and a pictorial tourist map of

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[148] Nile Distributors Pty Ltd. 1954. "Drop a hint... Nile Colourfast Handkerchiefs." *The Australian Women's Weekly.* 5 May. Accessed September 2, 2019. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4814082.

[149] Clothing News. 1964. "Attractive Cloth Range." July (VIC : Thomson Publications, 1947-1968) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 45.

Tasmania, which no doubt would have annoyed STP, given their business location in Hobart.[150]

6.3.7 STP's collaboration with textile wholesalers

Though some textile producers like STP directly serviced their larger manufacturing customers, department stores and retail chain stores, many smaller manufacturers and textile retailers purchased smaller quantities from the many textile wholesalers servicing metropolitan and regional areas. Wholesalers were important customers of textile mills, because they were able to buy in bulk. Large textile wholesalers bought grey fabric from mills and converted them to dyed and printed piece-goods. They sometimes imported their own base-cloths, using local dye houses and printers to convert the fabrics as needed for fulfil orders.

Wholesalers enjoyed the privilege of range previews that allowed them to make exclusive selections of fabrics from STP and Alcorso Handprint ranges. They could also purchase their own designs from studios in Australia and overseas and have them produced exclusively for them as prestigious Alcorso Handprint textiles. Dealing with wholesalers meant that STP did not have to deal with the smaller manufacturers and dressmakers who bought only one roll of a print and draperies who purchased half-pieces and cut lengths sold to their clients from sample swatches. STP partnered with Australian wholesalers in publicity campaigns, just as they had with Cole of California and the House of Leroy, spreading the cost and making more advertising possible. Everyone benefitted from these collaborations.

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[150] Ibid.

6.3.8 Martin & Savage

STP developed an exclusive collection of print designs for textile wholesaler Martin & Savage (M&S) from the mid-1950s. The company was established in Australia in 1929 as a subsidiary of the London firm of the same name and, after buying out overseas interests it became 100% Australian owned by the time of its 40th anniversary in 1969. M&S maintained their own sales offices in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne and used agents in other capital cities, New Zealand and South Africa.

Like many other Australian wholesalers, M&S sourced local and imported woollen, linen, synthetic and blended-fibre base-cloths including gabardine, crepe and linen look, converting them into finished goods by dyeing or having them printed to order in current seasonal colours and patterns. As well as their connections with STP, M&S enjoyed a strong relationship with Bruck Mill in Victoria for many years, wholesaling their 'Marchioness' brand of fabrics across Australia. [151]

M&S marketed an exclusive collection of Alcorso prints under the brand name 'Fifth Avenue Handprints'. Targeted at smaller manufacturers, boutique chains and home sewers, the textiles were heavily promoted with beautifully illustrated advertisements in women's magazines including the Australian Women's Weekly. Both the Alcorso and M&S brands featured prominently in the advertisements for 'Fifth Avenue Handprints', following the formula that had been used successfully in collaboration with Cole of California and the House of Leroy. The illustrations evoke a romantic vision of the textile collections and the types of women who it was thought made or had their clothes made from them.

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[151] Thomson's Clothing News. 1969. "Martin & Savage celebrate 40 years of Fashion Service in Australia." July (VIC : Thomson Publications, 1947-1968) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 18.

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http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4387560.
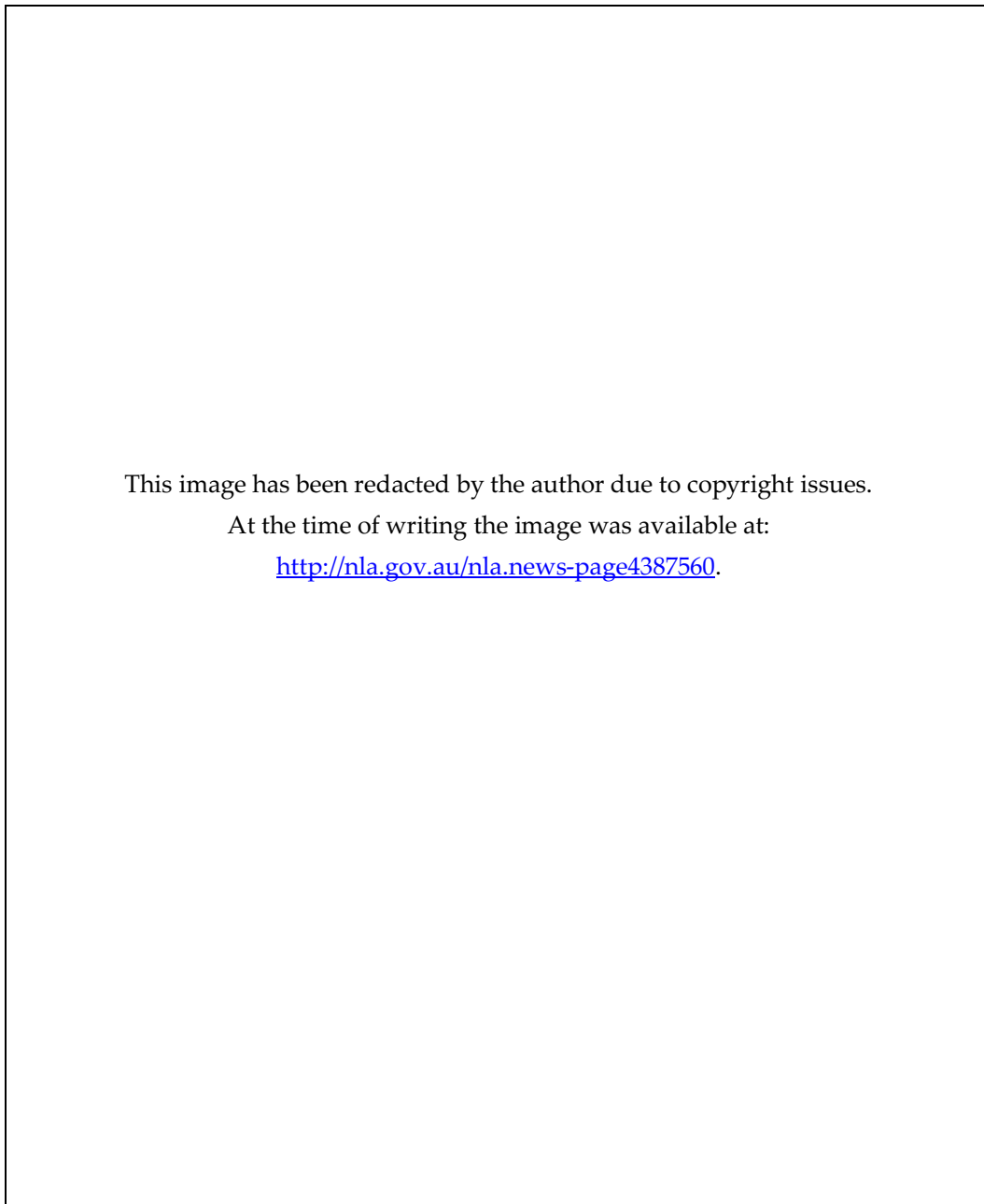
Figure 6.41 Advertisement for Alcorso 'Fifth Avenue Handprints' from Martin & Savage, 1952.[152]

Figure 6.41 shows a central figure that appears to be a salesman or floor walker wearing tails, unravelling a roll of rainbow coloured fabric which eventually turns into a sidewalk. Along the pavement walks a well-dressed woman in the latest New Look-style suit, teamed with a stylish black Juliette hat and long

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[152] Martin & Savage Pty Ltd. 1952. "Fashion Follows Fifth Avenue." *The Australian Women's Weekly*. 6 August. Accessed May 27, 2018. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4387560.

black gloves. She walks her toy poodle, fashionably clipped in the 'pom-pom' style, along the sidewalk of the imagined Fifth Avenue, towards the store selling beautiful fabrics for her new season's wardrobe.

The image of the fashionable woman walking her dog was first seen advertising for the Piperno Alcorso store in Piazza Fiume, Rome in 1937 (refer Chapter 3, Figure 3.28) and it is interesting to speculate how she came to reappear in advertising for this collection in 1952. It is possible that one of the Alcorsos - either Claudio, Orlando or perhaps even their father Amilcare - remembered this iconic image from their business in Rome and thought that it fitted the image of the new 'Fifth Avenue' collection. The fashionable dog-walker evidently became a sub-brand for the collection, featuring in several advertisements for Fifth Avenue Handprints over the next few years (refer Figures 6.42 and 6.43).

In Figure 6.42, a skilled dressmaker with a tape-measure around her neck expertly drapes an attractive abstract floral silk fabric around the body of her client, showing how Fifth Avenue Handprints "make beautiful clothes". "Do you notice how compliments come your way when you wear a cool, silk summer frock with an original and unusual design?" the advertisement asks. It suggests that having bespoke garments made from Fifth Avenue Handprints will show both your admirers and your rivals how well you appreciate the luxury and originality that comes with your purchase.

In Figure 6.45, we see our dressmaker showing her client the new "Silk Look" fabrics that are … "washable, unshrinkable….and sensibly practical!". Madam is discerning, but also practical and realises that 'Fifth Avenue Handprints' are so stylish and fashionable that her friends and rivals will never know that they are not pure silk! In the background we see an elegant model parading the latest fashions in front of a group of women who appear to have stepped out of a Renee Gruau illustration from Paris.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing the image was available at:
http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4816278.

Figure 6.42 Advertisement for 'Fifth Avenue Handprints', July 1954.[153]

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[153] Martin & Savage Pty Ltd. 1954. "Fifth Avenue Makes Beautiful Clothes." *The Australian Women's Weekly.* 28 July. Accessed October 30, 2018. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4816278.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing the image was available at:
http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4813157.

Figure 6.43 Advertisement for 'Fifth Avenue Handprints', November 1954.[154]

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[154] Martin & Savage Pty Ltd. 1954. "The Silk Look…The Luxury Look of Fifth Avenue Handprints." *The Australian Women's Weekly*. 3 November. Accessed November 11, 2018. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4813157.

Advertisements for Fifth Avenue Handprint collections appeared in women's magazines and in regional and metropolitan newspapers up to about 1955. The fabrics also appear made up into dresses in STP's annual reports from 1954 to 1956, together with garments made from fabrics produced for other Australian textile wholesalers.

STP not only produced specified product lines for Martin & Savage. They were also producing exclusive printed silk fabrics collections for other textile wholesalers in Australia, keeping the relationships and individual product lines separated using strategic branding.

6.3.9 Makower, McBeath and Company Pty Ltd

Makower, McBeath and Co. Pty Ltd were originally established as silk merchants, the Australian arm of a London based business. Makower operated at the top end of the luxury textile market, supplying the small number of Australian couturiers and exclusive boutiques who made garments to measure for society ladies. From the early 1950s STP produced prints on silks for Makower under the brand name 'Finora Pure Silk Handprints'. According to the Draper of Australasia:

> …. These prints give a first glimpse of the luxury in store
>
> for Australian women. They have all the wonderful
>
> characteristics of properties of silk plus a magnificent
>
> new brilliance of colour and design. …"Finora" silks can
>
> be frequently laundered without shrinking or losing one
>
> vestige of their vivid colour…[155]

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[155] The Draper of Australasia. 1954. "Australia has Huge Potential Market for Pure Silk Fabrics." 11 October (VIC : 1901-1966) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 22.

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At the time of writing the image was available at:

http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4830147.

Figure 6.44 Sybil Connolly selects Alcorso 'Everglaze' fabrics from Makower McBeath & Co, 1957.[156]

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[156] Makower, McBeath & Company Pty Ltd. 1957. "Sybil Connolly selects Fabrics from Makower McBeath & Co." *The Australian Women's Weekly*. 14 August. Accessed February 20, 2016. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4830147.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing the image was available at:

http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4924298.

Figure 6.45 Alcorso handprint for Makower in an evening frock by Sybil Connolly (bottom right).[157]

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[157] The Australian Women's Weekly. 1957. "Our Irish Parades: Sybil Connolly stars Australian Fabrics." 3 July. Accessed October 8, 2016. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4924298.

A key promotional strategy used by high-end wholesalers such as Makower McBeath was to associate their products with international designers, partnering with fashion magazines and designers to cross-promote products. The Australian Women's Weekly undertook several promotions between 1954 to 1957 to promote visits by internationally acclaimed Irish designer Sybil Connolly to Australia, in collaboration with local and international textile companies. A special supplement to the 14 August 1957 edition of the Women's Weekly was devoted to editorial on Connolly's collection interspersed with full page advertisements for fabrics with banners proclaiming, 'Sybil Connolly Selects' (see Figure 6.44).

The pattern selected by Connolly, printed on a sturdy cotton with the new, no-iron chintz-like 'Everglaze' finish, was part of a new collection of darker handprints by Alcorso that were targeted at a more mature age group. Other Everglaze prints by Alcorso were marketed in an extensive promotion put together by Sheila Scotter, then promotion and fashion director for Everglaze in Australia and New Zealand and made up into dresses by other high-end British fashion houses including Susan Small, Linzi and Frank Usher, for a series of special fashion parades to be held in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane in February 1958.[158] Cotton, like silk, had now become repositioned as a high-end fashion product. The proliferation of cheaper cotton fashion prints ordered by the volume fashion manufacturers from Japan demanded that those printed by STP had a point of difference to justify their higher price.

6.3.10 Sekers Silk

In 1956 Claudio Alcorso embarked on a business collaboration that would have a far-reaching impact on STP for more than a decade. STP began printing fabrics locally for Sekers Silk, the Australian branch of the British firm

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[158] The Draper of Australasia. 1958. "Alcorso "Everglaze" Promotion." 10 January (VIC : 1901-1966) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 34.

Cumberland Silk Mills Pty Ltd, established by Sir Nicholas (Miki) Sekers in 1938.[159] The Australian business was managed by Hungarian migrant Otto Andrew Kaldor (Senior) and his wife Vera. The Kaldors, like the Alcorso family, were nominally Catholic, but of Jewish ancestry. They had escaped the communist regime in Hungary with their young sons John and Andrew, arriving in France in 1948. After living in Paris for a time, the Kaldors arrived in 1952, becoming the sole agents for Sekers' products in Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Hong Kong and South Africa. The connection between Miki Sekers and the Kaldors was clearly very close, as Sekers was the godfather to Andrew and Vera's oldest son John.[160]

Miki Sekers had a reputation in Europe as a textile innovator. He had produced synthetic nylon fabrics as early as 1945 and was the first British textile manufacturer to produce 48-inch-wide dress fabrics, which enabled lower yardages and cost reductions for fashion producers. Sekers textiles had been used in the Paris collections of Christian Dior, Elsa Schiaparelli, the House of Worth and Jean Patou and the Australian licensees used this information to their advantage in promoting textiles in Australasia.[161]
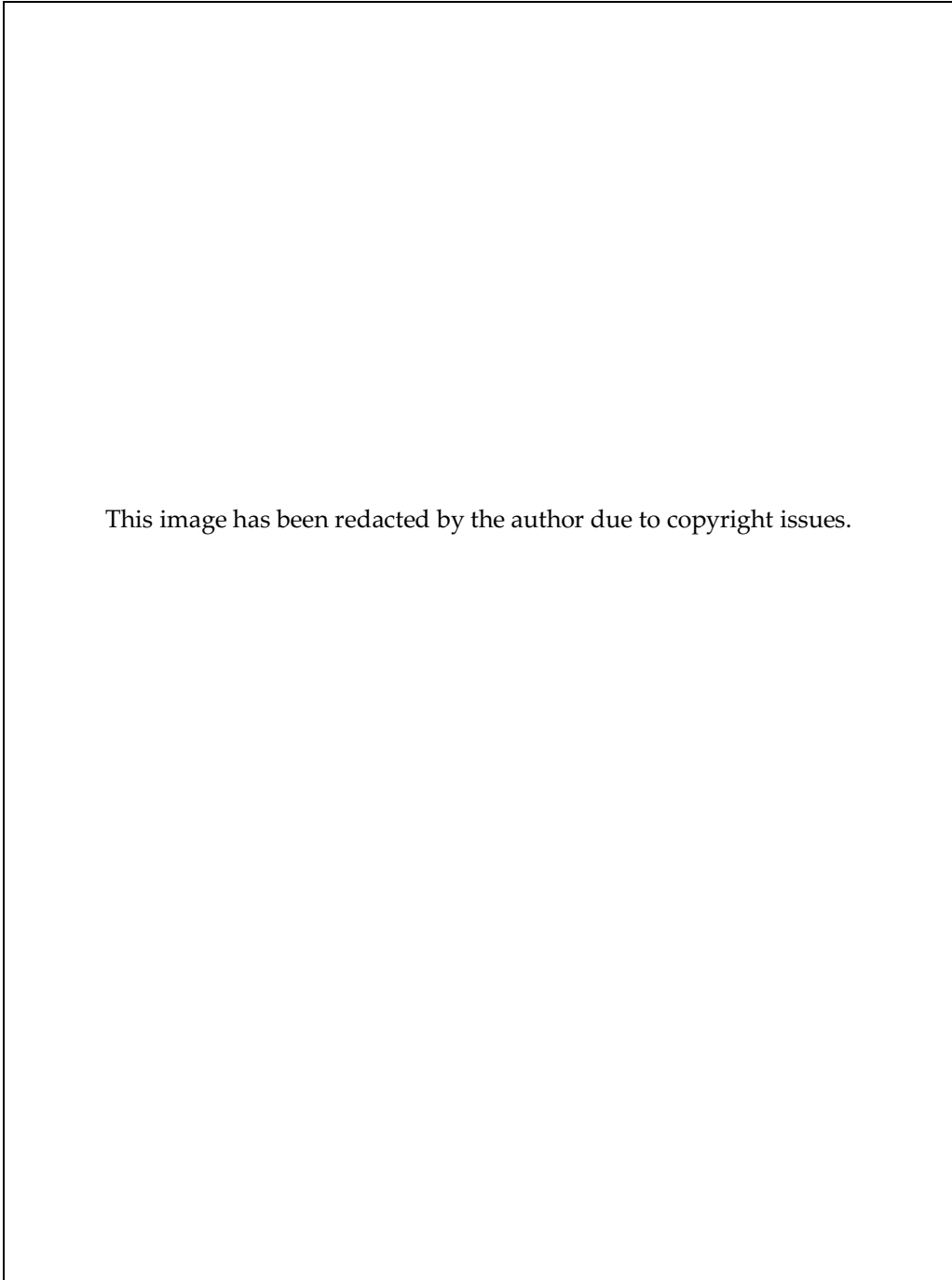
Sekers' prints destined for Australian and Asia-Pacific markets were printed by STP at Derwent Park in Tasmania. Fashion Director Vera Kaldor selected designs from Sekers' European collections and often supplemented them with her own selection of original prints purchased from design studios in Paris during her annual trips overseas. She worked with the design studio at STP to recolour Sekers British prints for the Australasian market. Occasionally, some of the best-selling designs originally created for the

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[159] Sekers (United Kingdom). 2014. Accessed April 21, 2014. http://www.sekersfabrics.co.uk/about-sekers/.

[160] Sally Loane. 1995. "John Kaldor." *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 September.

[161] Gertrude L Coulam. 1953. "Miki Sekers of West Cumberland Silk Mills." *The Draper of Australasia*, 10 March (VIC : 1901-1966): 41-42.

antipodean market made their way into Sekers' European collections, recoloured for northern hemisphere fashion markets.[162]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

Figure 6.46 Advertisement for Sekers Silks handprinted by Alcorso, Flair, 1959.[163]

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[162] Clothing News. 1962. "Sekers Export Australian Range of Silk Design to Britain." February (VIC : Thomson Publications, 1947-1968) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 20; The Draper of Australasia. 1956. "Kaldors to Visit Overseas." 10 February (VIC : 1901-1966) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 38.

[163] Sekers Silk Pty Ltd. 1959. "Sekers Fabulous Pure Silks: Paris designed...and hand-printed by Alcorso." *Flair*, September: 1.

Sekers Australian clients were upmarket manufacturers, couturiers, dressmakers, high end boutique chains and fabric retailers. The Kaldors positioned the Australian business squarely in fashion, promoting their fabrics in fashion parades to benefit charities that would be attended by the ladies from the eastern suburbs of Sydney and from Toorak in Melbourne. In 1953 Sekers ran a series of parades at 'Princes' a popular Sydney luncheon and nightclub venue. Editorial in the Sydney Sun predicted that over 500 people would attend the next parade to benefit 'Torchbearers for Legacy'. One of the model gowns from Hardie Amies, Norman Hartnell, Frederick Starke and Victor Steibel shown in the parade was awarded to a lucky ticket holder, whilst runners up received nylon dress lengths.

Figure 6.46 is an advertisement for Sekers Silk fabrics from Flair magazine, the leading Australian fashion magazine of the 1950s edited by Mary Wilkinson. The woman at the centre of the image gazes out at us confidently, looking chic in what appears to be a frock, but is, in reality, beautifully printed Sekers silk fabric draped artistically across her body. The fabric cascades down to the floor where other beautiful floral prints lay, waiting to be selected. An army of tall, well-dressed businessmen await obediently to carry the fabrics away to madam's dressmaker. Sekers advertised heavily in Flair and later in Vogue Australia, which were purchased regularly by Australian women who both shopped for fashion and made their own clothing. Their advertisements were always interesting and different, with models posed in unusual places, always with stunning, strong looking women gazing out at an admiring audience.

Miki Sekers, like Claudio Alcorso, saw value in commissioning artists to design exclusive prints for his collections. In 1960 he came personally to Australia to promote a travelling of artist-designed textiles by Cecil Beaton, Grahame Sutherland and Oliver Messel. The designs were exhibited in the art galleries of major department stores including David Jones in Sydney and

Buckley & Nunn in Melbourne, attracting publicity from trade and metropolitan daily newspapers. This creative alignment clearly underpinned the business and creative relationship between the two businesses.

Increased competition from newly opened mills on the mainland and a declining customer base of large manufacturers able to order directly from STP led to the company appointing Sekers Silk as the exclusive local and overseas distributors of printed and plain silk fabric ranges in August 1961.[164] As in previous collaborations, advertising continued to be co-branded with both Sekers and Alcorso names in trade and leading fashion magazines.

Otto and Vera Kaldor had expectations that their eldest son John would join the business established by his godparent and parents and they had consciously prepared him for a career in textile design and merchandising. In an article in The Australian, in 1976, John recalled being dragged through the Louvre by his mother "….and liking it" whilst the family lived in Paris.[165] Both John and younger son Andrew attended St Ignatius Riverview in Sydney, a Jesuit school.[166] On weekends John attended art classes at the art school of fellow Hungarian expatriate and Modernage veteran Desiderius Orban.[167]

John had considered studying architecture at Sydney University, however, his parents evidently convinced him to work for a year at his godfather Miki Sekers' textile mill in England after matriculating from Riverview.[168] After this internship, John travelled to Zurich, studying colour and design at the Textile College under Professor Johannes Itten, one of the

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[164] Clothing News. 1961. "No Substitute for Silk." August (VIC : Thomson Publications, 1947-1968) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 17.

[165] Patricia Angly. 1976. "Catalyst for a rag trade prince." *The Australian*, 4 May: 10

[166] Loane 1995.

[167] Angly 1976.

[168] Tim Dare. 1973. "Making good the Australian way - Hungarians in Australia." *The Australian*, 11 September: 9.

instructors at the Bauhaus. He began working for Claudio Alcorso in Tasmania after his graduation in 1957.[169]

John Kaldor spent the next two years in Hobart working for Alcorso, acting as his assistant and working on textile designs and colourations. He returned to Sydney to work with his parents at Sekers Silk until its amalgamation with STP in 1965, when he once again became a direct employee of the Alcorsos.[170] By the time of the merger of STP with Tennyson Textiles in 1967, John Kaldor was the marketing manager of UTA, also managing a Sydney design studio out of the Mark Foys building. His father Andrew had a position on the board of STP and his mother was instrumental in marketing and design direction of the new conglomerate.[171]

Later collaborations with John Kaldor resulted in the Alcorso-Sekers Travelling Sculpture Scholarship, whilst the agency of the Andrew and Vera were responsible for the ALTA quality management initiative. The collaboration also resulted in the development of UTA's most successful product line, Sheridan printed bedlinen in 1967. Chapter 7 further describes these initiatives and the important interrelationship between the Kaldors and Claudio Alcorso.

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[169] Loane 1995.

[170] Dare 1973.

[171] Louise Sonnino, interview by Tracey Sernack-Chee Quee. 2018. *Interview about Claudio Alcorso and the Kaldor family* (10 December).

7 THE RISE OF SHERIDAN

7.1   Globalisation and Australian textile production

7.1.1   Post-war globalisation

Globalisation is a complex subject. It has been driven by colonisation and empire building strategies for thousands of years. According to Andrew Jones, twenty-first century theorists see globalisation as a transformation of both time and space – part of a process by which people and places are linked across planetary space in real time. Interlinkages occur on a local, regional, national and international scale, facilitated by trade and monetary exchange, information and communications technologies and migration - with both positive and negative effects.[1]

Jones claims that the actual term 'globalisation' in its current context was first used in business management circles and schools in the early 1960s. At that time, management experts argued that the scope of a company's operations needed to be global rather than nationally focused. Businesses should try to avoid the replication of national operational strategies across sites existing in multiple countries, reducing duplication of facilities and operations.[2]

For textile companies this meant visualising themselves as players in an international textile industry, rather than a producer of textile products for specified national or regional markets. This was somewhat at odds with Australian government strategies for the textile industry in the 1960s, which viewed the textile and clothing sectors as a national ecosystem that required tariff protection to stimulate growth and preserve full employment.

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[1]   Andrew Jones. 2010. *Globalization: Key Thinkers.* Cambridge, Malden: Polity, 232-233.
[2]   Ibid, 7.

7.1.2 Post-war protection of the Australian textile industry

In the late 1940s and 1950s the Australian textile industry had been insulated from the impact of international competition by import licensing, which restricted the quantity of foreign-made textiles that could be imported and limited importing capability to those who held the special licenses. In a climate of high demand stimulated by deprivation during and immediately after World War II, the Australian textile industry thrived.

By 1960, import licensing had been replaced with tariff protection – a system of punitive customs duties averaging 32% of the landed price of imported goods, paid to the government by their importers.[3] Duties kept the price of most imported textiles higher than the locally manufactured product, enabling Australian textile manufacturers to remain financially viable without shedding jobs.

7.1.3 Foreign investment in Australian textiles

Tariff walls had not prevented transnational textile producers from building new factories in Australia - in fact, the tariff system encouraged it, particularly in regional areas. Government policies of full employment and mass immigration encouraged manufacturing growth and business competition and stimulated foreign investment. As mentioned in Chapter 6, a number of British textile firms established satellite facilities in Australia to circumvent tariff arrangements that made imported fabrics more expensive during the 1950s. These companies included Bradford Cotton Weaving Mills (Vic) Pty Ltd (aka Bradmill) who had significantly expanded their cotton spinning and weaving production during wartime and were commencing manufacture of synthetic fabrics. Courtaulds had begun production of rayon fibre and fabric

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[3] Christopher Wright. 1995. *The Management of Labour: A History of Australian Employers.* Oxford University Press Australia, 40.

in Tomago near Newcastle in 1953 and James Nelson (Australia) Pty Ltd, had established a new rayon works at Mowbray near Launceston in 1949.

Carrington & Dewhurst, a British firm based in Lancashire, established a rayon weaving factory in Victoria in 1951. This, together with James' Nelsons establishment in Tasmania, may have influenced STP's decision to enter into an agreement with them to jointly develop synthetic yarn processing and weaving at Derwent Park in 1956 (see Chapter 5). Carrington & Dewhurst later acquired 60,000 shares in STP and had encouraged skilled staff from their own factories to migrate to Tasmania to work for STP.[4]

By the 1960s transnational companies dominated the textile manufacturing industry in Australia, posing a threat to established Australian mills without any international affiliation or supply chain connections. Between 1962/63 and 1972/3 foreign ownership of all manufacturing in Australia rose from 22% to 28%.[5] By 1964, Bradford Cotton Mills Ltd and its 16 fully-owned subsidiary companies were Australia's largest producers of textile piece-goods, operating six spinning mills, six weaving mills, five dye houses and finishing plants, as well as cabling units and tyre cord weaving plants extending from Toowoomba in Queensland to Bendigo in Victoria.[6]

From 1963 to 1970 Courtaulds diversified their business via a program of mergers and acquisitions with specialised British textiles firms, emerging as a dominant force in most sectors of fibre-textile-clothing manufacturing industries worldwide. By the end of 1963 they had acquired STP affiliate Berne Silk Company, James Nelson and dress manufacturer Susan Small, which was manufactured under license in Australia by the House of Leroy.[7] Apart from

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[4] The Adelaide Advertiser. 1951. "New Rayon Plant." 1 November. Accessed February 20, 2019. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article45773459.

[5] Wright, 1995, 40.

[6] The Sydney Morning Herald, May 18, 1964

[7] Keith Cowling, Paul Stoneman, John Cubbin, John Cable, Graham Hall, Simon Domberger and Patricia Dutton. 1980. "Vertical Integration via merger: Courtaulds and the textile industry." In

having an overall impact on the fashion and textile industry, these transnational companies were to have a significant impact on STP before the decade was over.

7.1.4   Increased competition from Asian imports

In addition to increased competition from transnational British textile companies in the 1960s, local manufacturers had to contend with intense competition from manufacturers in Asia. Imports increased steadily in the 1960s and the high order minimums demanded by Asian producers for each design created an economy of scale whereby fancy textile products could still be landed cheaper in Australia than the local product, despite punitive tariff charges. The ability of Australian textile producers to manufacture products that could compete on price was seriously undermined by the overall improvement in the quality of Asian textiles, the complex and therefore expensive techniques required to manufacture synthetic fashion fabrics, local escalation of wages, fluctuations in exchanges rates and a general economic downturn.[8]

The Japanese textile industry arguably had the most visible presence in the Australian market as suppliers of printed cotton textiles since the early twentieth century.[9] Though this was interrupted by World War II, the Japanese textile industry had recovered significant production capacity by the end of the 1940s, and this had continued to grow. The monthly output of Japanese

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Mergers and Economic Performance, 290-302. London, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

[8]   University of Melbourne 2001 *Technology in Australia 1788-1988* and Wright 1995, 40.

[9]   The Textile Journal of Australia. 1934. "Manchester Merchant Inspects Japanese Cotton Mill." 16 July (VIC : Wilkes and Co Pty Ltd) Canberra, National Library of Australia: 215;
The Textile Journal of Australia. 1935. "New Views on Japanese Competition." 16 September (VIC : Wilkes and Co Pty Ltd) Canberra, National Library of Australia: 319.

cotton fabrics increased from 5,621,000 square yards in February 1948 to 82,363,00 square yards by the end of that year.[10]

Japanese manufacturing industries had adopted the Total Quality Control (TQC) initiatives espoused by the American industrial theorist W. Edwards Deming (1900-1993) after World War II, using techniques such as Quality Circles to resolve manufacturing problems by drawing on the expertise and knowledge of persons working on the production line. Adoption of these principles had influenced both the mind-set and the output of Japanese textile producers toward the continuous cycle of improvement in product quality. Many Australian manufacturers did not adopt these principles seriously until the 1980s, when their ability to compete with Japanese quality had already been severely eroded.[11]

According to Lim, Asian countries including Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea steadily increased their global textile production during the 1950s and 1960s.[12] Whilst Asian nations had an immense capacity to manufacture, they did not necessarily invest in design, preferring to manufacture designs brought to them by their customers – mainly textile wholesalers and the larger fashion houses with their own design studios or access to design studios in Europe. Unscrupulous textile wholesalers and fashion manufacturers from many western nations provided Asian producers with garments made-up in the best-selling textile prints from British, European and American markets to be copied for the forthcoming season in the southern hemisphere. This was a short-cut designed to save money and time and ensure success – based on the

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[10] *The Textile Journal of Australia.* 1949. "Japanese Textiles Output Increases." 20 (VIC : Wilkes & Co Pty Ltd, 1926-1970) Sydney, State Library of NSW May: 231.

[11] Harry Ivan Costin (Ed.). 1994. *Readings in Total Quality Management.* Harecourt Brace & Company, 7–57.

[12] M Lim. 2003. "The Development Pattern of the Global Textile Industry and Trade Part I: Evidence from Textile Exports of the EC, the Far East and Emerging Textile Exporting Countries in the 1980s." *The Journal of The Textile Institute, 94:1-2, 32-52.* Accessed March 3, 2015. DOI: 10.1080/00405000308630618.

notion that a winning print from an overseas market would also succeed in South Africa, Australia, Asia or New Zealand. Even more unscrupulous companies sampled textile prints cloth from Europe and even from Australian producers like STP to produce their indent sample ranges – only to have their bulk fabric for production printed more cheaply in Asia.[13]

Asian mills would often print extra quantity of each client's orders, selling off "parcels" of leftover prints to smaller wholesalers and manufacturers in Asia, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific nations. As a result, several Australian fashion manufacturers could have the same print in their seasonal collections, much to the chagrin of their retail clients who understood the reluctance of the Australian consumer to see someone wearing the same dress or even the same print at a social function or event.

These practices resulted in what Margaret Maynard would describe as "global sameness" – where a textile print would be endlessly repeated in similar garments in markets across the world.[14] These types of appropriation or "knocking off" continue to be widespread in the Australian fashion and textile industry today. As Margaret Maynard has also observed, China had a clothing production output of 9.7 million units in 1998, but had virtually no brand names registered, indicating that their production output was based on design specifications provided by customers from elsewhere.[15]

7.2   STP's responses to global free markets

With the prevalence of experienced and cashed up transnational textile companies and cheap, high quality goods entering the country from Asia

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[13] Many fashion manufacturers would sell their products by producing a representative "sample" garment, which is shown to buyers across different target markets for the purposes of ordering or "indent" for future delivery. Unscrupulous manufacturers will make samples in high quality fabrics and then have their bulk fabric for production copied and manufactured by a cheaper Asian producer.

[14] Margaret Maynard. 2004. *Dress and Globalisation.* Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 30.

[15] Ibid, 38.

despite tariff barriers, textile manufacturing was not a level playing field in Australia in the 1960s. Textile manufacturers were faced with a set of choices – the most obvious of which were to close down, seek investment from transnationals in exchange for shares, or move their spinning and weaving production offshore to Asia.

However, there were strategies that could be undertaken to minimise risk and streamline production. These included diversifying the types of products being manufactured and stepping up export programs to increase sales. Modernising technologies and engineering efficiencies revealed through time and motion studies of production processes reduced labour costs. The Alcorsos, assisted by their able financial controller Paolo Sonnino, initiated a strategic mix of strategies to ensure the ongoing viability of STP during the early 1960s. As one of the premier textile printers in Australia, STP maintained the advantage of being able to turn around print designs much more quickly for the local market than factories in Asia. This capability remained attractive to the more exclusive fashion and furnishing manufacturers and wholesalers who wanted something different to a copy of a best seller from another market.

However, other printers including Tennyson Textiles in Sydney and Colortext Fabric Pty Ltd in Melbourne had now become significant competitors to STP. These companies had invested in the equivalent technology and capability and had the added advantage of being conveniently located on the Australian mainland, close to wholesale and manufacturing centres, rather than in Tasmania, separated from the market by the Bass Strait.

7.2.1 Troubled times

There are several signs that STP began struggling to maintain financial viability in the latter phases of the 1950s. The weaving division in Hobart suffered losses of £95,785 in the 1957-58 financial year and despite the overall organisation's impressive annual profit of £1,429,995 that year, no dividends

were paid to shareholders. In the 1958-59 financial year, STP made a small profit of £26,324 – overall sales had risen to £1,769,551, but no dividends were paid that year either, due to accumulated weaving losses.[16] This trend continued into 1960, when the heavy losses of the weaving division continued to prevent to payment of dividends.[17]

As a public company, STP were answerable to their shareholders, so they were forced to make drastic cost cutting measures to improve their bottom line. By 1958 the company had stopped producing lavish, full colour illustrated annual reports including photos of the factory and garments produced from their fabrics by customers. Instead, they produced simple two-colour, text-based reports of four to six pages with only one or two abstract coloured sketches. Money could no longer be lavished on extravagant production of printed promotional materials.

By 1960 the business had received a brief respite, when a submission they had made to the federal government suggesting a protective tariff on imported printed silks was successful. This would protect 'Alcorso Handprints', the core luxury, high-value silk prints that STP were known for. In an article published by the Sydney Morning Herald about the new tariff, the value of production at the Hobart factory was reported at £2,000,000, suggesting that STP had nevertheless remained a significant player in the Australian textile printing industry during its period of financial instability.[18]

Despite the win implied by the new tariff, by December 1960 Claudio's brother Orlando wrote to the board of STP proposing that the 'Alcorso Handprint' business be closed after the season's production finished in July

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[16] The Draper of Australasia. 1959. "Silk & Textile Back on Profit." 10 September (VIC : 1901-1966) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 43.

[17] The Draper of Australasia. 1960. "No Dividend for STP." 10 March (VIC : 1901-1966) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 26.

[18] The Sydney Morning Herald. 1959. "Silk, Textiles Approves Tariff Move." http://smharchives.smedia.com.au/Olive/APA/smharchive/Print.Article.aspx?mode=image&href=SMH%2F1959%2F05%2F18&id=Ar00906. 18 May. Accessed February 3, 2018.

1961. He suggested that it was possible to keep the weaving, dyeing and machine printing units going at Derwent Park, but the company should consider diversification into retailing – more specifically, the establishment of markets, a discount house along the lines of new American businesses at the time and even supermarkets.[19] This proposal, which was rejected by Claudio and other members of the board, nevertheless created the impetus for finding new printed textile products that would ensure future viability for STP. The incident caused a major chasm between Claudio and Orlando, who left the business and ultimately went to live in America.

In August 1960, business operations were streamlined further with the appointment of Sekers Pty Ltd as the exclusive local and overseas distributors of STP's printed and plain pure silk fabrics.[20] This outsourcing of the sales function to the more than capable Kaldors allowed the business to divest some of their sales staff and concentrate on the manufacture of core products. However, evidently these strategies were not enough to ensure ongoing viability and further hard decisions had to be made. By December 1960 the Draper of Australasia reported that STP had retrenched 300 workers, leaving only 400 workers on payroll.[21]

In March 1963, the Sydney Morning Herald reported that reported that STP had eliminated the tea break for its 493 employees saving £250 per year – a measure required for the business to stay alive in the face of overseas competition.[22] This extreme action demonstrates how costs within the business

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[19] Orlando Alcorso. 1977-1986. "From O. Alcorso for submission to the Board." *NS3001/1/27 Writings and talks by Claudio Alcorso, 1957-1999.*

[20] Clothing News. 1961. "No Substitute for Silk." August (VIC : Thomson Publications, 1947-1968) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 17.

[21] The Draper of Australasia. 1961. "STP Upturn." 11 December (VIC : 1901-1966) Sydney: State Library of NSW: 16.

[22] The Sydney Morning Herald. 1963. "Tea Ban Cuts Silk Costs." 6 March. Accessed March 2, 2018. http://smharchives.smedia.com.au/Olive/APA/smharchive/Print.Article.aspx?mode=image&href=SMH%2F1963%2F03%2F06&id=Ar01004.

had been cut to the bone – £250 per year was a drop in the ocean for a company the size of STP. This was possibly a symbolic act designed to show the company's shareholders that management was serious about getting the business back into profit.

The business absorbed two more textile wholesalers into their business to strengthen national sales. In August 1963 Quality Fabrics Pty Ltd were incorporated into STP Holdings Group to act as distributors and wholesalers of STP produced fabrics in Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania. They joined WA Minton Fabrics Pty Ltd – acquired eight months earlier – to provide sales and service to clients in NSW and Queensland.[23] Together with their arrangement with Sekers to market the high-end silks, these actions rerouted the sales function to wholly owned subsidiaries, allowing for better concentration by the directors on new product development.

According to subsequent reports in the trade press, the company did return a satisfactory profit over the next two years, no doubt because of these hard decisions.[24] During this period Claudio lost his father and mentor Amilcare Alcorso, who died on July 2 1961 at the age of 75. However, Claudio continued to be advised by Paolo Sonnino, who had assumed greater responsibility for financial management. According to Paolo's daughter Louise Sonnino, it was Paolo who made most of the hard decisions, keeping the business going during this difficult period in the early 1960s.[25] Claudio's strength continued to be the management of the creative vision of the company.

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[23] Clothing News. 1963. "Textile Firm's Merger Will Strengthen National Distribution." (VIC : Thompson Publications, 1947-1968) Sydney: State Library of Australia, August: 23.

[24] The Draper of Australasia reported that profits were once again satisfactory in February 1962. *Draper of Australasia.* 1962. "STP Satisfactory." 16 February (VIC : 1947-1966) Sydney, State Library of NSW.

[25] Louise Sonnino, interview by Tracey Sernack-Chee Quee. 2018. *Interview about Claudio Alcorso and the Kaldor family* (10 December).

7.2.2 Factory modernisation

Increased competition prompted most established Australian textile producers to invest their profits in modernising their textile factories to manufacture the new synthetic yarns and fabrics, so they could compete with imports and transnationals moving into the Australian market.[26] Australian textile printers still had the advantage of being onshore and were therefore able to service the local market faster than cheaper Asian providers, providing they could do so at a competitive price.

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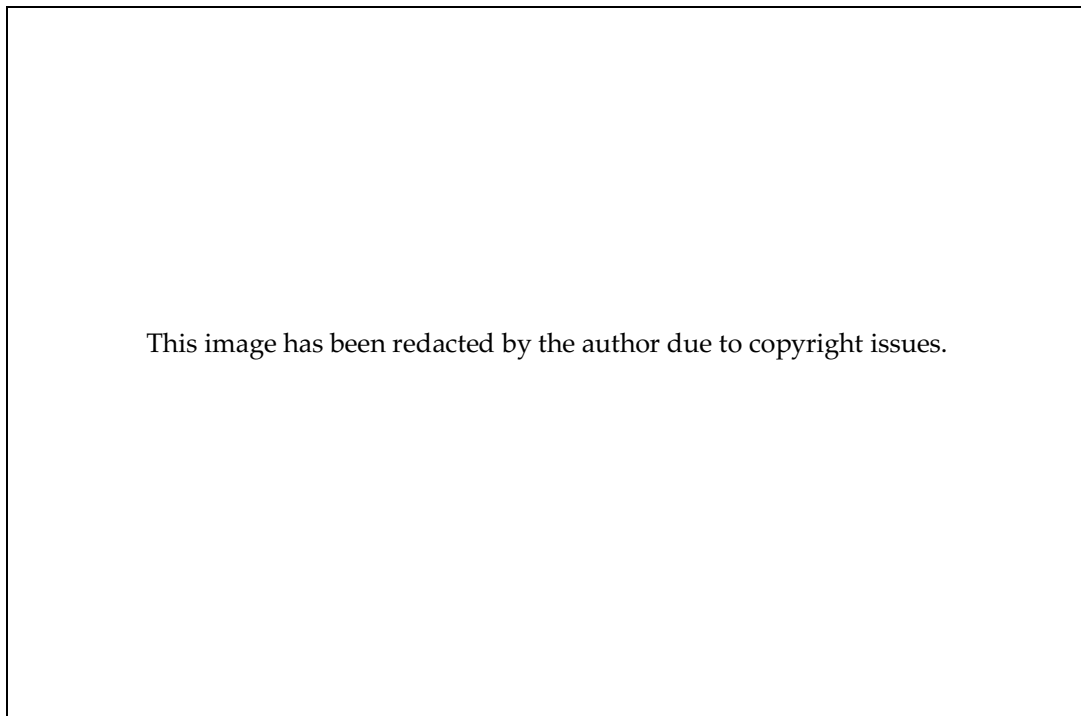
Figure 7.1 Automatic printing machinery at STP, 1964.[27]

Scientific management techniques such as work measurement and wage incentive schemes dominated the textiles, clothing and footwear sectors in Australia in the 1960s. It was hoped that creating more efficient production technologies and work methods would produce enable greater outputs at a better quality for the same salary costs, saving on overheads. There were new

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[26] University of Melbourne 2001, 299.
[27] Silk & Textile Printers Ltd. 1954. *Annual Report 1954.* National Library of Australia.

advances in spinning, weaving and printing technologies, including machinery manufactured in Japan which was gaining wider acceptance in Australia. But there was a price to be paid for these improvements. Unfortunately, by the late 1960 – increased mechanisation of textile production had led to further job losses in the industry.[28]

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At the time of writing the video containing this image could be viewed at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b69NkdZHM-U&t=26s.
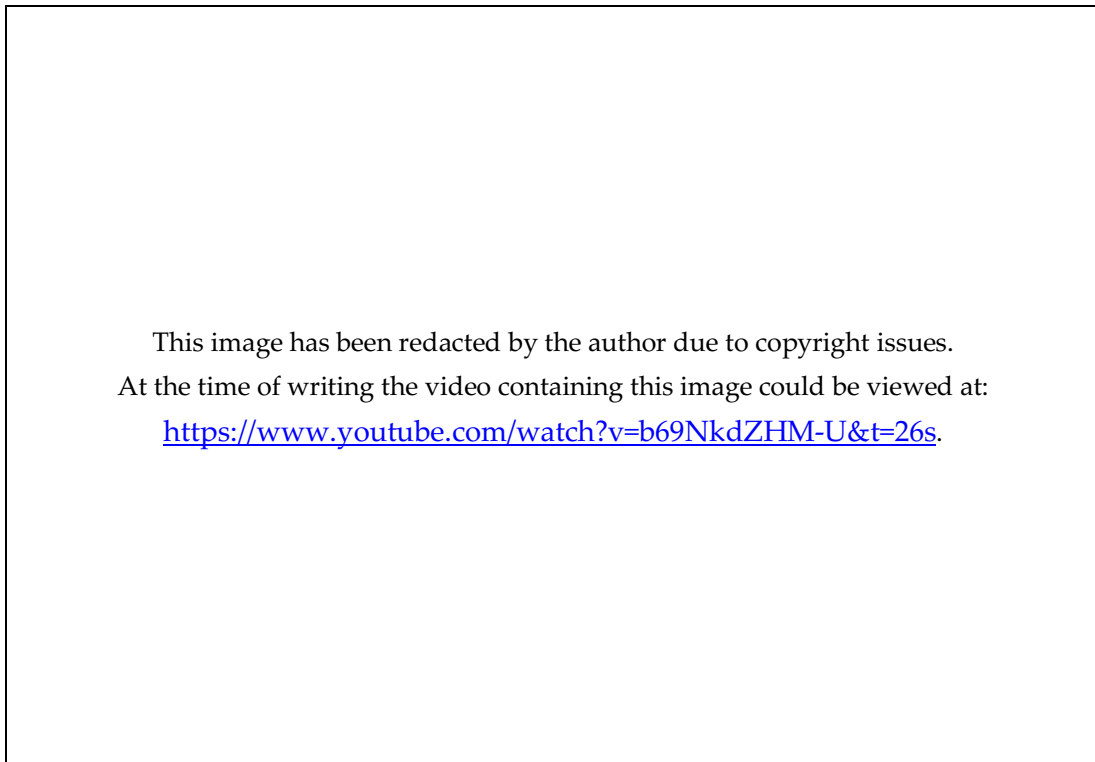
Figure 7.2 Still images from the Commonwealth Film Unit's 1968 film Life in Australia: Hobart.[29]

Mechanised screen-printing had been discussed in trade journals as early as 1949, when it was announced in the Textile Journal of Australia that Pioneer Screen Printers Ltd in Kent had devised a machine that could print 260-300 yards per hour.[30] A feature in the Sydney Morning Herald in May 1964 included pictures of one of Tennyson Textiles' three Swiss Buser automatic

[28] Wright 1995, 155.

[29] Commonwealth Film Unit. 1966. "Life in Australia : Hobart." *National Film & Sound Archive.* Accessed February 3, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b69NkdZHM-U&t=26s.

[30] *The Textile Journal of Australia.* 1949. "New Type Silk Screen Printing Machine." 20 September (VIC : Wilkes & Co Pty Ltd, 1926-1970) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 640.

screen-printing machines, which could print 500 yards per hour, replacing the equivalent labour of up to 25 hand-screen-printers.[31]

Photographs from STP's 1964 Annual Report and film shot by the Commonwealth Film Unit in 1968 shows similar machinery in place at the STP printing factory in Derwent Park. The film 'Life in Australia: Hobart', was made to attract migrants to Tasmania. It used the images of mechanised spinning, weaving and printing to illustrate the modernity that migrants could expect in Australian workplaces.[32]

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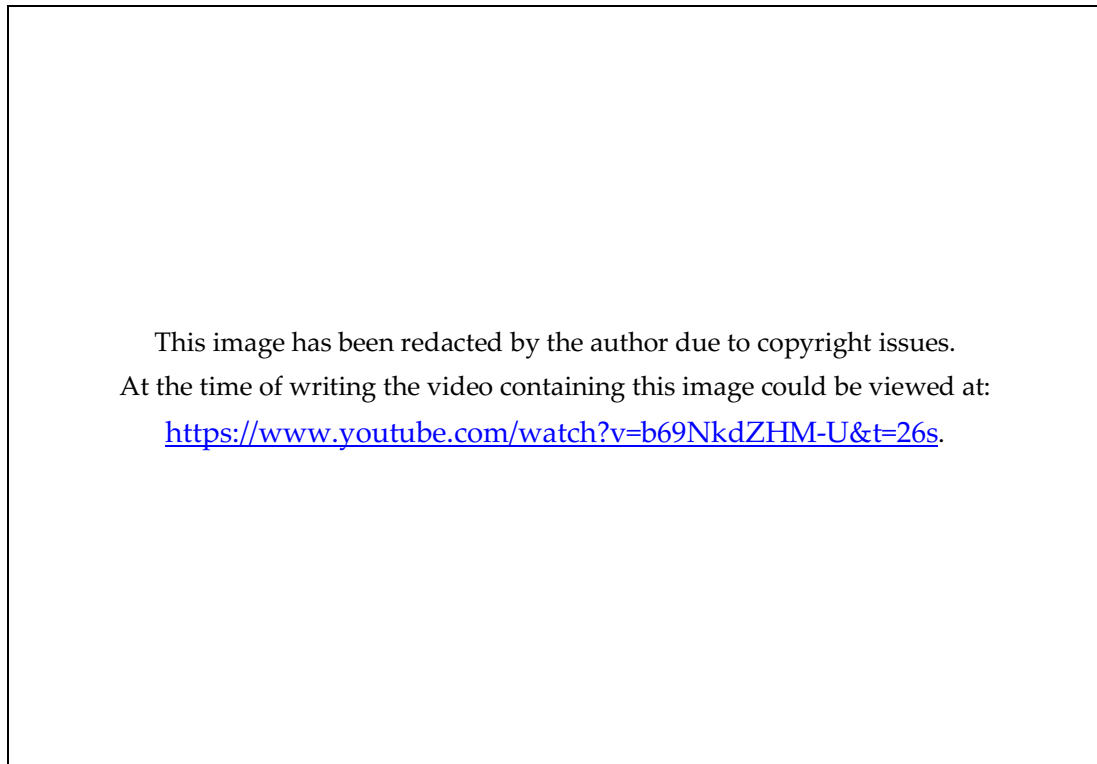
Figure 7.3 Still images from the Commonwealth Film Unit's 1968 film 'Life in Australia: Hobart'.[33]

It is evident from viewing this film that operators in the factory were supervising more than one machine at a time, indicating how the new

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[31] The Sydney Morning Herald, 1964. "Remarkable change in printing." 18 May. Accessed February 3, 2014. http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1301&dat=19640518&id=-gtiAAAAIBAJ&sjid=TuYDAAAAIBAJ&pg=5732,6185948.

[32] Commonwealth Film Unit. 1966. "Life in Australia : Hobart." *National Film & Sound Archive.* Accessed February 3, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b69NkdZHM-U&t=26s.

[33] The Sydney Morning Herald, 1964.

machinery had saved on labour costs. Modernity had come at the cost of workers at STP.

7.2.3   Product diversification

By January 1963 Silk & Textile Printers Ltd officially changed their name to STP Holdings Ltd, possibly to reflect that textile printing was no longer the only focus of the business, which had expanded into spinning and weaving and the production of specialised textiles.[34] By 1964, the twenty-fifth anniversary of its establishment, STP were manufacturing a diverse range of textile products in addition to high-end fashion prints on silk, synthetic and blended fibre fabrics.

Sheridan Furnishing Pty Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of the STP was located in South Melbourne and was selling 'ready-to-hang' printed curtains as early as 1964.[35] 'Teriskool', a specialty fabric for school uniforms, was also woven and printed by STP. Other specialised new products, such as sailcloth woven by STP from Fibremaker's Terylene (polyester) yarn, were a logical progression from the company's entry into the synthetics market.

By 1968, after the company's merger with Tennyson to form Universal Textiles Australia (UTA), the business consolidated its product offerings into six broad groups. The women's apparel group remained the largest division, with the company stating that they held approximately 70% of the market for synthetic fabrics in this segment. Furnishings were the next largest segment and they had enjoyed an increase of sales of 26% in that year. The relatively new menswear division, only in its second year of operation, specialised in manufacture of sportswear, swimwear and shirting.

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[34]   Delisted. 1964. "Change of entity: Silk & Textile Printers Ltd." January. Accessed April 21, 2012. http://www.delisted.com.au/company/stp-holdings-limited.

[35]   Ibid.

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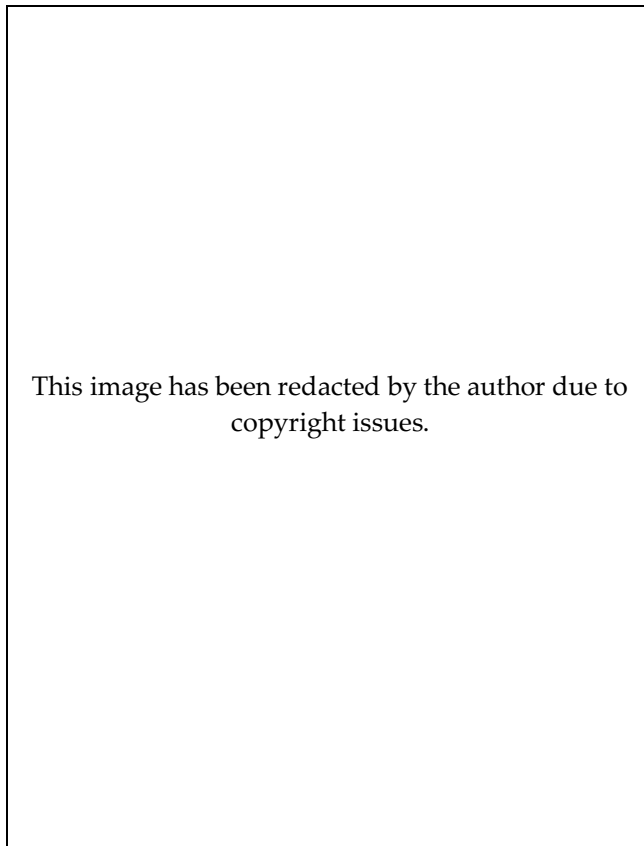
Figure 7.4 'Sundowner', winner of the 1964 505 World Championship, with sails made from STP sailcloth.[36]

The company's sailcloth, marketed under the brand 'Contender', was in use by national sailing champions and by the Australian Olympic Team. A new domestic textiles division producing fashionable, synthetic-blend non-iron sheets and stainproof bedspreads was slated for vigorous growth (see section 7.5 Sheridan). The company had also opened up its dyeing and printing facilities as service providers to the knitting and wholesale textile industry.[37]

7.2.4 Sales and promotion strategies

The nomination of Sekers Silk as sole distributors of 'Alcorso' plain and printed silk products in 1960 was a strategy that enabled the outsourcing of customer management and promotion of STP's high-end silk products and significantly reduced effort and costs within the company. Sekers advertised

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[36] STP Holdings Ltd 1964, np.
[37] Universal Textile Holdings Ltd. 1968. *Annual Report 1968.* National Library of Australia.

heavily in fashion magazines including Flair and the recently introduced Vogue Australia. Their advertisements from the early 1960s show how the Sekers name gradually came to subsume the identity of STP as the product's creator and re-position 'Alcorso Handprints' as a sub-brand.
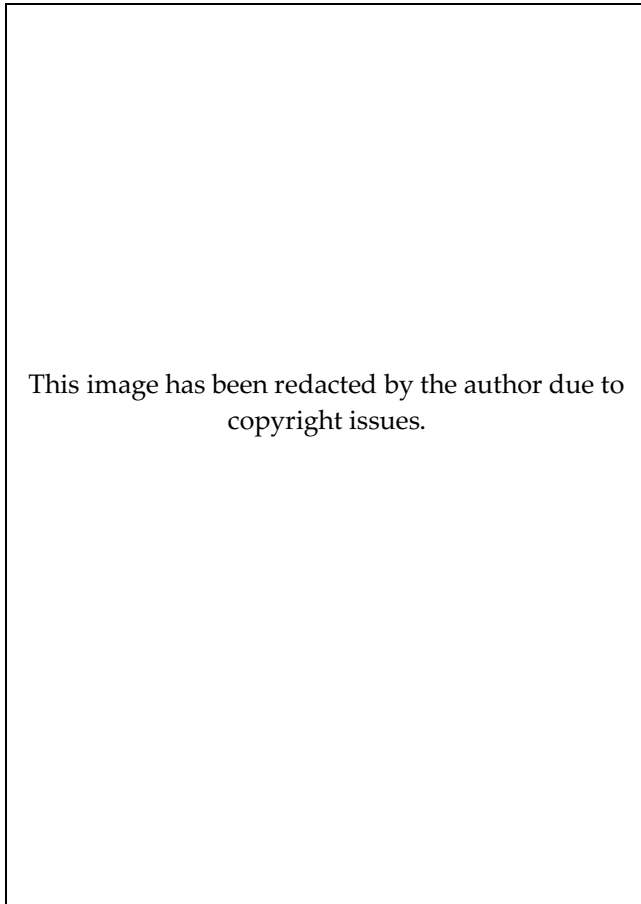
Figure 7.5 All Australian print on Sekers printed silk surah. 1959.[38]

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There was an undeniable logic behind this strategy. Sekers were already an international name in high-end textiles and were associated with some of the biggest names in fashion in Paris and across Europe. It was the name of the company that clients had to contact if they wished to buy 'Alcorso Handprints' and the brand name that customers saw on signage in drapery stores and fabric sections in major department stores. The strategy also allowed the entrepreneurial Vera Kaldor to take on the responsibility for promotion and

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[38] Vogue Australia. 1959. *"Suit in Alcorso fabric from Sekers."* Spring Summer (1957-) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 58.

marketing, an area in which she excelled. According to Louise Sonnino, who worked on publicity and promotions for Sekers during the early 1960s, Vera Kaldor was a shrewd and uncompromising businesswoman who knew how to get things done.[39]

The silk prints produced at the time, given the recent losses experienced by the company, were safe and commercial. Claudio Alcorso had once again taken refuge in floral prints. Figure 7.5 shows a chic woman wearing a jacket made in printed silk surah with a matching, cone shaped hat. The orange, apricot and fiery red flowers on her jacket are possibly gerberas depicted in a watercolour style in orange gelato colours. She is formally dressed for the Spring Racing Carnival. She gazes out at the viewer, inviting us to admire her sophisticated outfit.

Another promotional device to improve the sales of pure silk fabrics was the invention of a product certification system to guarantee the quality and performance of silk fabrics produced by STP and affiliated companies. 'Approved Pure Silk' certification was launched in the Spring 1960 edition of Vogue Australia, which featured a model wearing a floral printed garment in approved pure silk on the cover (Figure 7.6). Fashion parades featuring Simplicity patterns made up in the latest Alcorso-Sekers printed and plain silk fabrics were held in major department stores, receiving editorial in Women's Day and Pix magazines. A gala parade at the recently opened Chevron Hilton Hotel in Sydney was attended by 750 people and a fifteen minute feature on the fashion parade was shown on ABC television in all capital cities. The Draper of Australasia, which covered the campaign for the trade stated:

> Australia is claimed to be the only country in the world which
> produces pure silk with the "Approved" finish (spot proof,

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[39] Sonnino 2018.

uncrushable, hand washable, stabilized, easy iron) at prices less than half they are in Europe and the Unites States.

Silk & Textile Printers Limited have returned pure silk to the lives of women in this country. The year begins with a new era of pure silk in fashion. Not only for the lucky few, but for women in all walks of life.[40]

Mile Terziovski, Danny Samson and Douglas Dow made a study of the business value of certification for businesses in 1996. They found that certification of companies against international quality standards such as ISO9000 provided an assurance to clients that a businesses' systems and processes can ensure delivery of quality products and services. The primary business value of ISO 9000 certification was to open doors to markets which were previously closed.[41] Similarly, the 'Approved Pure Silk' certification was a 'guarantee' of product authenticity, quality and performance. The notion that the silk fabrics had been 'approved' raised customer's perceptions of product quality to a level at which they were willing to pay more. However, unlike the internationally understood ISO9000 quality standard, which has been managed against strict guidelines by the International Standards Organisation since the late 1980s, 'Approved Pure Silk' was simply a construct of Sekers and STP used to sell more silk, justify a higher price-point and deter customers from buying silk fabric from sources that were not approved – that is, their competitors.

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[40] The Draper of Australasia. 1960. ""Approved Pure Silk" Launched Throughout Australia." November (VIC : 1901-1966) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 14-15.

[41] Mile Terziovski, Danny Samson and Douglas Dow. 1991. "The Business Value of Quality Management Systems Certification: Evidence from Australia and New Zealand." *Journal of Operations Management*, 15: 1-18.
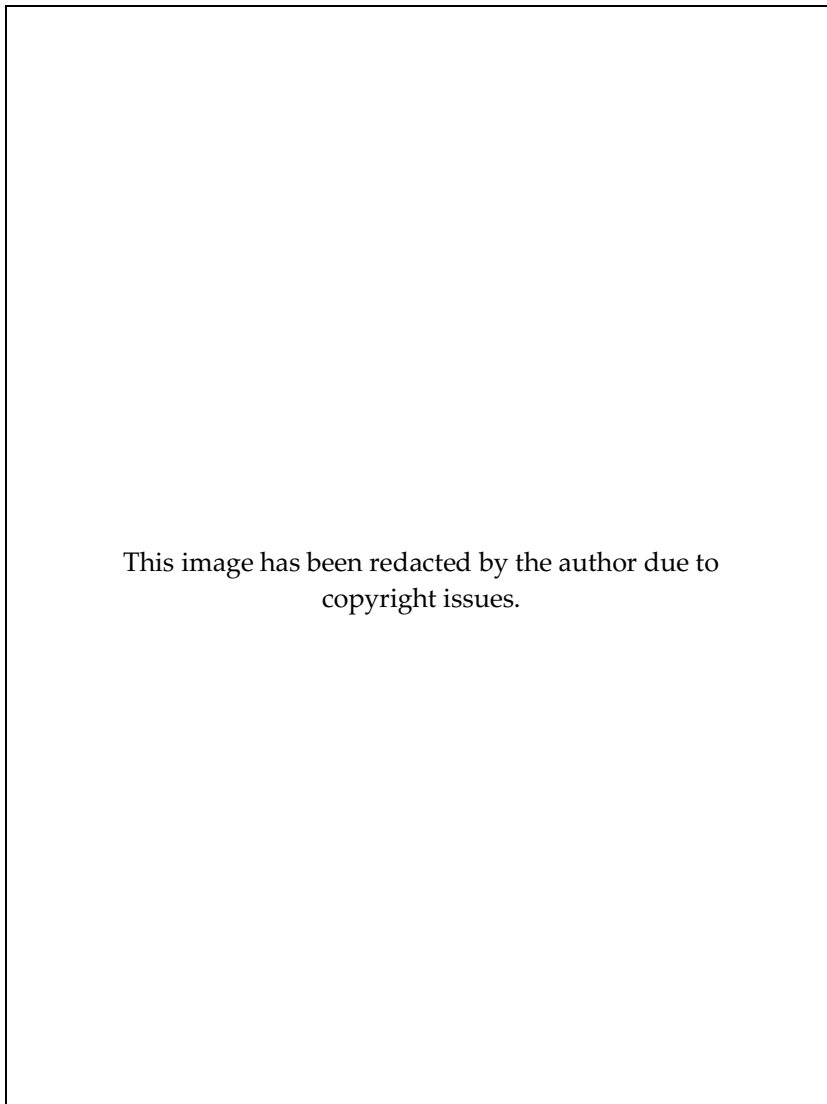
Figure 7.6 Cover of
Vogue Australia,
Spring 1960.[42]

The model is wearing
a dress in an
'Approved Pure Silk'
floral print by Sekers.

This image has been redacted by the author due to
copyright issues.

A stunning series of photographs in Vogue Australia promoted the superior qualities of 'approved' printed silks available from Sekers' 1960 collection. Figure 7.7 shows model Maggie Tabberer in a floral top with a low neck exposing her shoulders and a loose pair of ankle length pants. She enters a garden through a rustic gate, carrying a garland of flowers that are the exact colour of pink flower buds and open blooms that adorn her outfit. She is dressed in the blooms from her garden, ready for the heat of an Australian summer, in her approved pure silk separates.

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[42] Vogue Australia. 1960. "How to dress this Spring." Spring (1957-) Sydney, State Library of NSW: Cover.

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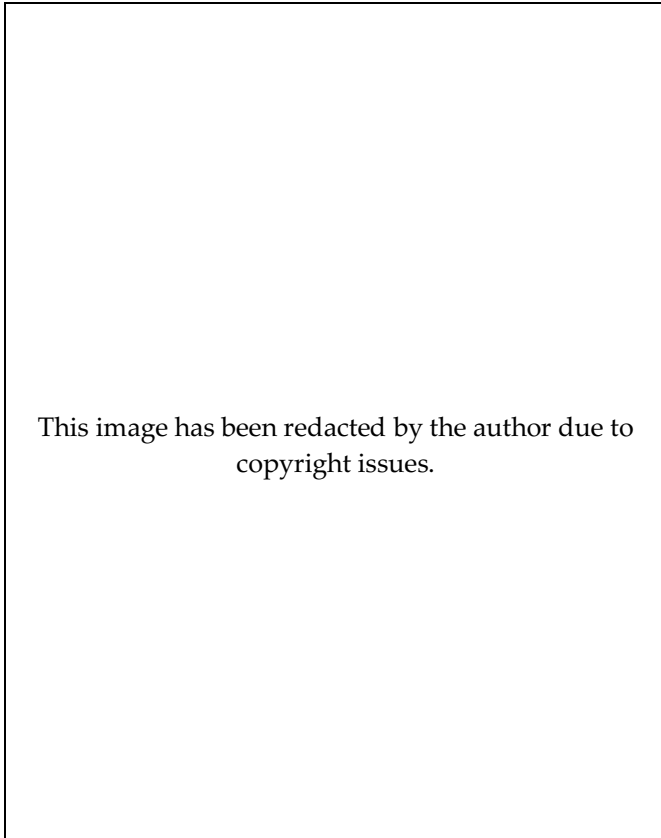
Figure 7.7 Model Maggie Tabberer in an outfit made from printed 'Approved Pure Silk', 1960.[43]

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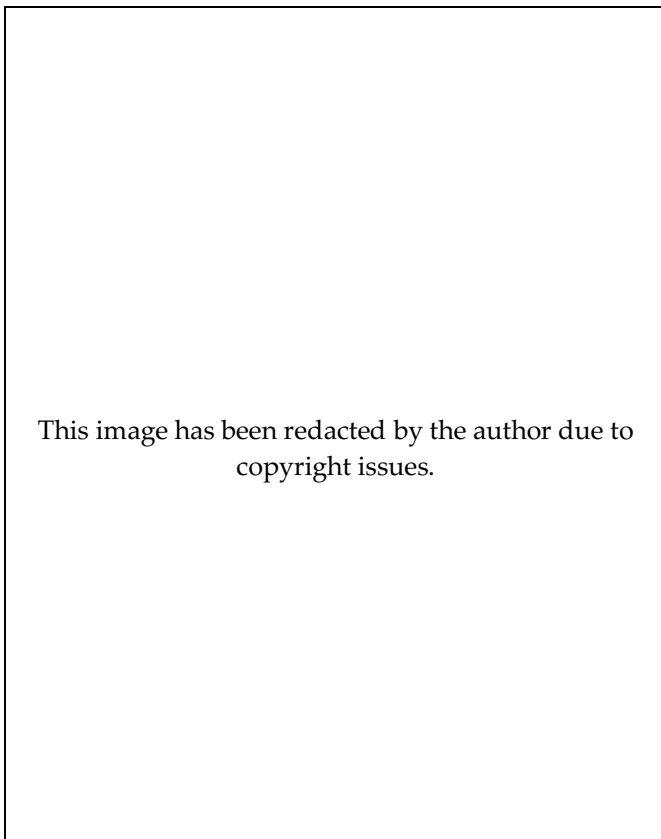
Figure 7.8 Advertisement for Approved Pure Silk, 1960.[44]

Figure 7.8 illustrates how the Approved Pure Silk certification was used to sell the convenience of new, high performance silk fabrics to women. A casually dressed young woman relaxes on a rope hammock eating grapes. She has plenty of time to relax, thanks to the properties of 'Approved Pure Silk' – which is "…Stabilized, Unshrinkable, Spot Proof, Hand Washable, Uncrushable and Dry Cleanable". The advertisement also instructs the customer to look for the 'Approved Pure Silk' ticket, which ensures the authenticity and quality of the product.

7.2.5 Sekers' Australian Artists Originals collection

From 1960, Sekers had provided Alcorso with an important service as the brand custodian and sales distributor for 'Alcorso Handprint' silk collections. But this important connection between the Kaldors and Alcorso did not deter and perhaps may have even encouraged Sekers to develop an Australian, artist-designed collection of cotton furnishing fabrics using principles introduced by Claudio Alcorso for the 1946-47 Modernage collection.

On the one hand, the 'Australian Artists Originals' collection could be regarded as a homage to Alcorso's Modernage initiative. However, unlike Modernage, which was designed to stimulate the Australian textile industry, the collection was not printed in Tasmania by STP. Printing was undertaken by the Kanebo Corporation of Japan, one of the largest producers of printed cottons and one of STP's major competitors for cotton prints in the Australasian market. Sekers' move to offshore production was a major milestone that demonstrated that print houses like STP needed new and innovative ways to compete with Asian producers internationally and locally.

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43 Vogue Australia. 1960. "Attenuated for Evening. Approved Pure Silk in a flower print by Sekers." Spring (1957-) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 95.
44 Vogue Australia. 1960. "Spring Spotlights Silks." Spring (1957-) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 117.

Sekers commissioned designs from James Gleeson and Donald Friend, who had both designed for the original Modernage collection. Other artists receiving commissions included Elaine Haxton, Judy Cassab, John Olsen, Clement Meadmore, John Coburn and Ian Van Wieringen.[45] Claudio Alcorso's reaction to this collection is unknown. It is reasonable to assume that he would have supported the engagement of Australian artists to design the textiles and that he would have wished the artists who did the design work well. However, it would also be reasonable to assume that he would have been less than happy with the Kaldor's decision to place the printing of the collection with Kanebo in Japan.[46]

STP had lost a lot of money as a result of a tariff equalisation agreement between Australia and Japan in 1957. By 1951 Japan was Australia's fourth largest export market and by 1956 it was second only to the United Kingdom, purchasing Australian goods worth £86.5 million. But Australia had imposed its highest level of tariff on Japanese goods, a practice that the Japanese Government rightly saw as unfair. An agreement was reached in 1957 that imposed the same level of tariff on Japanese goods as was imposed on goods from other nations, making Japanese cotton fabrics – both printed and plain – far more economical to import and completely unviable for companies like STP to produce locally.[47]

Sekers' Australian Artists Originals, like Modernage, was intended to promote Australian expertise in art and design. The Kaldors used many of the techniques that had been used to promote Modernage sixteen years earlier.

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[45] The Australian Home Beautiful. 1963. "Fabrics Fresh as Paint." May, Sydney : Caroline Simpson Library, Sydney Living Museums: 26-27.

[46] Michael Lech. n.d. "Sekers Fabrics: 'Australian Artists Originals'." *Caroline Simpson Library, Sydney Living Museums.* Accessed July 22, 2019. https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/stories/sekers-fabrics-australian-artists-originals.

[47] Australian Government. 2002. "Chapter 5: Australia and Japan - a trading tradition." *Parliament of Australia - Senate Standing Committees on Foreign Affairs.* Accessed June 27, 2019. https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/Completed_inquiries/1999-02/japan/report/c05.

The textile designs were launched at an exhibition titled 'Art in Décor' at the Dominion Art Gallery Sydney in January 1963 (Figure 7.9).[48] The artists' paintings were displayed next to the fabrics they inspired,[49] which were made up into curtains so the customer could imagine them in their own home, recalling the display schema used at STP's 'Art and Industry' exhibition at the Hotel Australia in 1946 (see Figure 5.6). The exhibition was later shown at the Museum of Modern Art at Heide in Melbourne. The textiles received extensive editorial in the Australian Home Beautiful in May 1963.[50]

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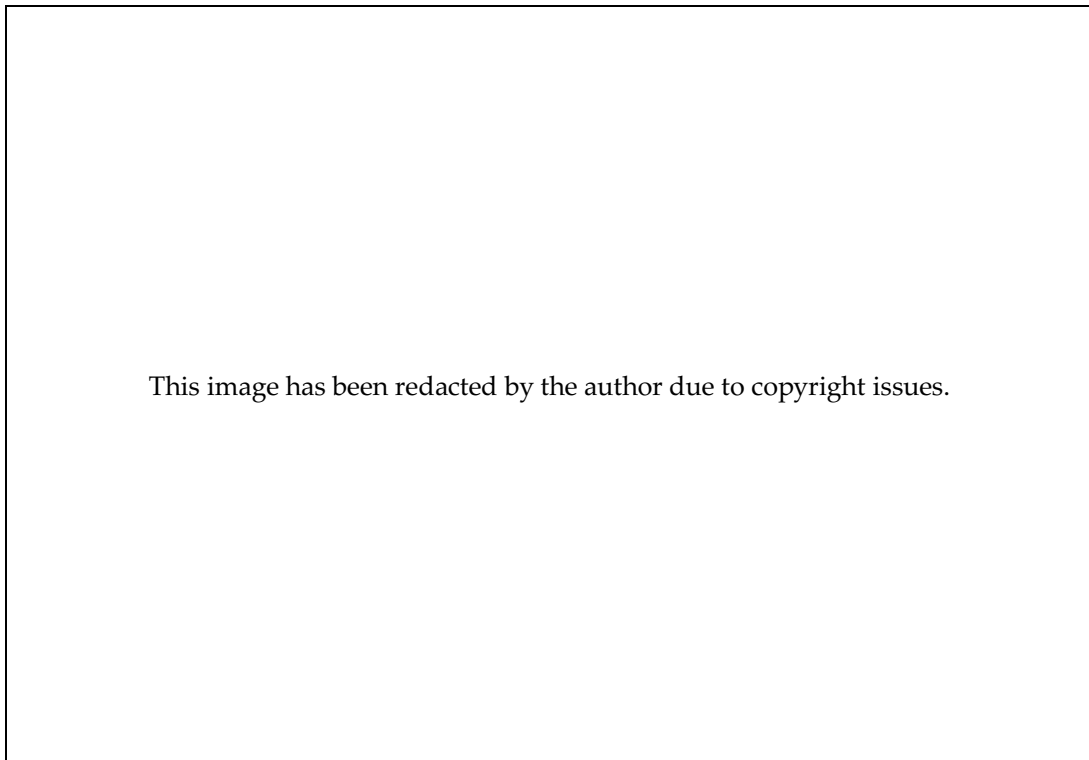
Figure 7.9 Sekers' 'Art in Décor' exhibition, Dominion Art Gallery Sydney,1963. © John Kaldor.[51]

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[48] Michael Lech. n.d. "Sekers Fabrics: 'Australian Artists Originals'." *Caroline Simpson Library, Sydney Living Museums.* Accessed July 22, 2019. https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/stories/sekers-fabrics-australian-artists-originals.

[49] Australian Home Beautiful, "Fabrics Fresh as Paint" 1963; Cochrane 1992, 174–180.

[50] Australian Home Beautiful, "Fabrics Fresh as Paint" 1963.

[51] John Kaldor©. 1963. "View of the 'Art in Décor' exhibition featuring Sekers' Silks new range of Artist-Designed Textiles, Dominion Art Gallery Sydney, January 1963." *Caroline Simpson Museum, Sydney living Museums.* Accessed April 24, 2018. https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/stories/sekers-fabrics-australian-artists-originals 24 April 2018.

A difference between Modernage and the Sekers' Australian Artists Originals collection was that the latter collection was conceived from the beginning as a furnishing collection, rather than as a collection for both fashion and furnishing. Whilst the artists designing for Sekers submitted their design concepts in the form of paintings, the designs were clearly conceived with a pattern repeat in mind, unlike many of the original designs in Modernage, for which there was no design brief. The designs did not necessarily mirror the oeuvre of artist who had created them, as they had in Modernage. Also, unlike Modernage, the Sekers' collection was clearly conceived with a reasonable retail price-point in mind, which would have driven the decision to print the designs in Japan rather than in Australia.

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This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing the image was available at:

https://collection.maas.museum/object/109367.

Figure 7.10 John Coburn, 'Billabong', orange and burnt umber colourway, 1962.[52]

Figure 7.11 John Coburn, 'Billabong', blue colourway, 1962.[53]

'Billabong' (1962) by John Coburn (1925–2006) is a design that bears little relationship to the graphic large, colourful Matisse-like, organic shapes that are typical of his paintings and large tapestries, like those at the Sydney Opera House. Coburn knew the basic principles of screen-printing, as his wife

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[52] John Coburn. 1962. "Billabong." *Caroline Simpson Library, Sydney Living Museums.* Accessed July 22, 2019. https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/stories/sekers-fabrics-australian-artists-originals. Dimensions unknown, screen-printed cotton.

[53] John Coburn. 1962. "Billabong." *Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences.* Accessed July 15, 2019. https://collection.maas.museum/object/109367. 197.5cm x 116cm, screen-printed cotton.

Barbara had been working with him to translate his works into printed editions since the late 1950s.[54] The design of 'Billabong' covers the entire surface of the fabric from edge to edge. Organic shapes are present, but here they are outlined in black, creating the effect of stained glass. When you look closely tables, buckets and figures of people begin to emerge, frolicking through an imaginary landscape. Two colour-ways of Coburn's design have survived in museum collections – an orange and burnt umber colourway (Figure 7.10) and a blue colourway (Figure 7.11).
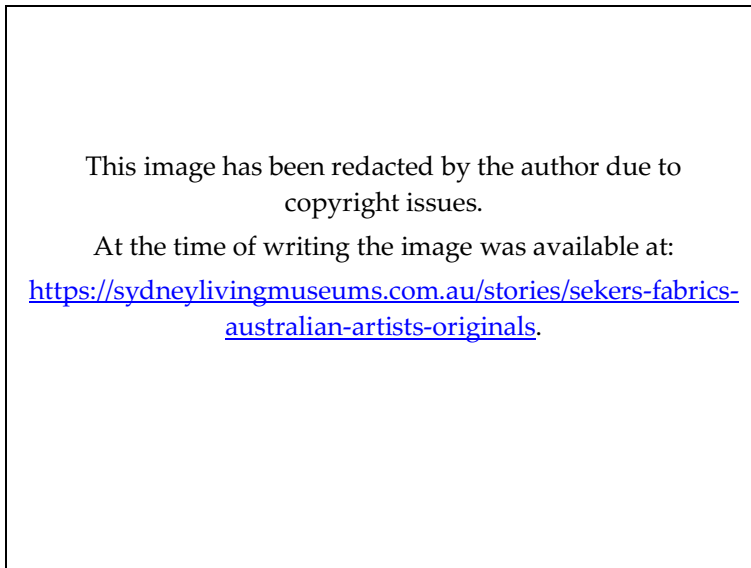
Figure 7.12 Donald Friend, 'Cave Painting', 1962.[55]

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At the time of writing the image was available at:
https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/stories/sekers-fabrics-australian-artists-originals.

Donald Friend's 'Aboriginalia' inspired design 'Cave Painting' (Figure 7.12) attempts to mimic rock paintings by First Nations artists, however the pastel colours and indeterminant forms seen in the surviving cushion are like a palimpsest of a European cave painting, similar to those found in Lascaux in France. According to Michael Lech, the design may have been inspired by Aboriginal artwork seen by Friend during a visit to Yulgibar Station near Grafton in 1962, which occurred soon after his return from five years living in

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[54] John Coburn. 1979. "Interview of John Coburn by James Gleeson." *National Library of Australia.* Accessed July 22, 2019. https://nga.gov.au/research/gleeson/pdf/coburn.pdf.

[55] Donald Friend. 1962. "Cave Painting." *Caroline Simpson Museum, Sydney Living Museums.* Accessed April 24, 2018. https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/stories/sekers-fabrics-australian-artists-originals. Screen-printed cotton, dimensions unknown.

Sri Lanka.[56] The overall effect of the design is decorative, but it lacks the life and animation of Friend's drawings and paintings of the time. The design cannot be seen in its entirety on the cushion that has been fashioned into, suggesting that it may have been more striking when made up into curtains.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues. At the time of writing the image was available at: http://theconversation.com/heres-looking-at-john-olsen-summer-in-the-you-beaut-country-1962-65216.	This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues. At the time of writing the image was available at: https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/stories/sekers-fabrics-australian-artists-originals.

Figure 7.13 John Olsen, 'Summer in the you beaut country', 1962.[57]

Figure 7.14 John Olsen, 'Marine Encounter' 1962.[58]

John Olsen's (1928-) design 'Marine Encounter' (Figure 7.14) is wild and painterly, containing many of the stylistic touches that characterise his paintings from around the same time, such as 'Summer in the you beaut country', 1962 (Figure 7.13) which contains similar star shaped motifs. The line and colour in the textile print are far more sedate than Olsen's painting, which is bursting with life, containing all manner of whimsical creatures rendered in bright colours. The textile print, on the other hand, looks as if Olsen had taken his finger and drawn downward squiggles across one of his paintings, blurring the colours into a mess of taupe. The textile print looks as if it was

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[56] Michael Lech. n.d. "Sekers Fabrics: 'Australian Artists Originals'.

[57] John Olsen. 1962. "Summer in the you beaut country." *The Conversation.* Accessed July 22, 2019. theconversation.com/heres-looking-at-john-olsen-summer-in-the-you-beaut-country-1962-65216. Oil on composition board, 393.4 x 431 cm, collection of the National Gallery of Victoria.

[58] --. 1962. "Marine Encounter." *Caroline Simpson Library, Sydney Living Museums.* Accessed April 24, 2018. https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/stories/sekers-fabrics-australian-artists-originals. Screen-printed cotton, dimensions unknown.

quickly rendered, whereas the painting has taken some time to capture the detail, life and colour of the Australian landscape.
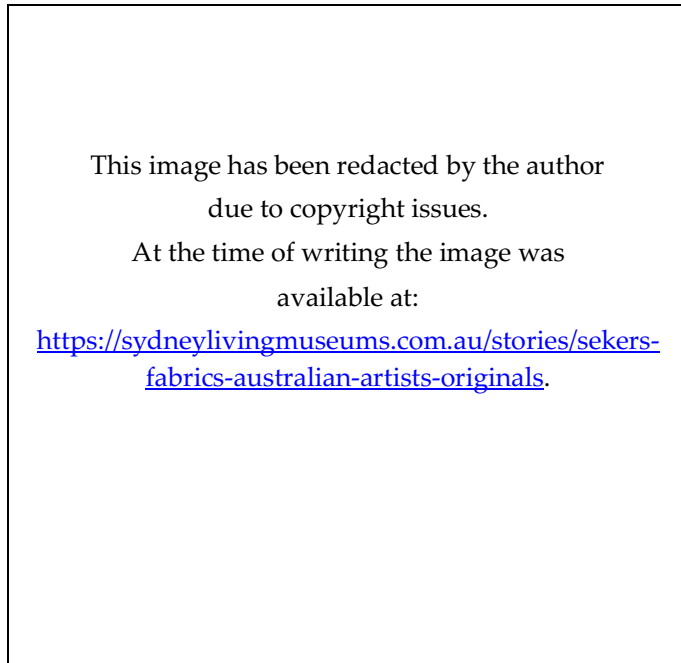
Figure 7.15 Ian van Wieringen, 'Square Moon', 1962.[59]

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due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing the image was
available at:
https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/stories/sekers-fabrics-australian-artists-originals.

Ian van Wieringen (1943-) is a Dutch-born painter who has worked extensively in Europe, America and Indonesia as well as in Australia.[60] Van Wieringen was only 18 years old when he was invited to design for the Sekers' Artists Originals collection, after his artwork was spotted by John Kaldor at the Waratah Festival in Sydney. Art critic Daniel Thomas identified van Wieringen as the first contemporary artist that interested Kaldor, who collected mainly classical and medieval works at the time.[61] His design 'Square Moon' survives as a curtain in the Caroline Simpson Library & Research Collection, Sydney Living Museums. It is a four-colour print of alternating rows of medallions in ochre and beige against an olive green ground stippled with black.

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[59] Ian van Wieringen. 1962. "Square Moon." *Caroline Simpson Library, Sydney Living Museums.* Accessed April 24, 2018. https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/stories/sekers-fabrics-australian-artists-originals. Screen-printed cotton, dimensions unknown.

[60] Ian van Wieringen. 2019. "Biography." *Ian van Wieringen.* Accessed July 17, 2019. https://ianvanwieringen.wordpress.com/about/.

[61] Lech, Sekers Fabrics: 'Australian Artists Originals' n.d.

This image has been redacted by the author
due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing the image was
available at:
https://m.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/8323/.

Above:
Figure 7.16 Russell Drysdale,
'Road with Rocks', 1949.[62]

Left:
Figure 7.17 Russell Drysdale,
'Figures in landscape', 1962.[63]

This image has been redacted by the author
due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing the image was
available at:
https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/stories
/sekers-fabrics-australian-artists-originals.

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[62] Russell Drysdale. 1949. "Road with rocks." *Art Gallery of NSW*. Accessed May 19, 2020. https://m.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/8323/. Oil on canvas. 66.6 x 102 cm.

[63] Russell Drysdale. 1962. "Figures in landscape." *Caroline Simpson Library, Sydney Living Museums*. Accessed April 24, 2018. https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/stories/sekers-fabrics-australian-artists-originals. Dimensions unknown, screen-printed cotton.

Some of the medallions are rendered in fine lines enclosing what appears to be a small creature, whilst the more heavily defined circular forms appear to enclose an embryo. None of this is apparent unless you look closely at the pattern. From a distance it resolves into an asymmetric repeat of irregular spots and circles, which would have been appealing for traditional lounge or dining room drapery.

The approach used by Russell Drysdale in his design 'Figures in landscape' (Figure 7.17) was very similar to the one he used to design for the Modernage collection. His design is a direct translation of one of his visual art works into a pattern repeat. According to Michael Lech, the subject was based on drawings undertaken by Drysdale during his 1958 visit to the Kimberley and Central Desert, which had been published along with text by Jock Marshall as the book 'Journey Among Men' in 1962.[64] It has a visual similarity to his painting "Road with Rocks" (Figure 7.16), with similar looking trees, and figures positioned in foreground of a hilly landscape. As a textile design, 'Figures in landscape' was an excellent advertisement for Drysdale and Marshall's 1962 publication. It is reminiscent in structure of a French 'toile de joie', however, the placement of the key visual motif lacks variety and imagination. Had it the motif been placed in a latticed rather than a vertical repeat, the effect would have been far more interesting. Nevertheless, the design brought gravitas to the collection and provided an accessible means for owning one's own Drysdale. Lorraine Kloppman stated in Woman's Day magazine that "art-loving homemakers, who could never afford to own original paintings by famous artists ... can now turn into fabric connoisseurs. They'll be able to curtain their windows, upholster their furniture and cover their cushions in fabrics designed by these artists."[65]

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[64] Lech, Sekers Fabrics: 'Australian Artists Originals' n.d.

[65] Anne-Marie Van de Ven. n.d. *"John Coburn 'Billabong'"* Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences. Accessed July 15, 2019.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing the image was available at:

https://nag.org.au/NewcastleArtGallery/media/Documents-and-Forms/Learning%20Resources/2012_Art_express_conversation_with_collection.
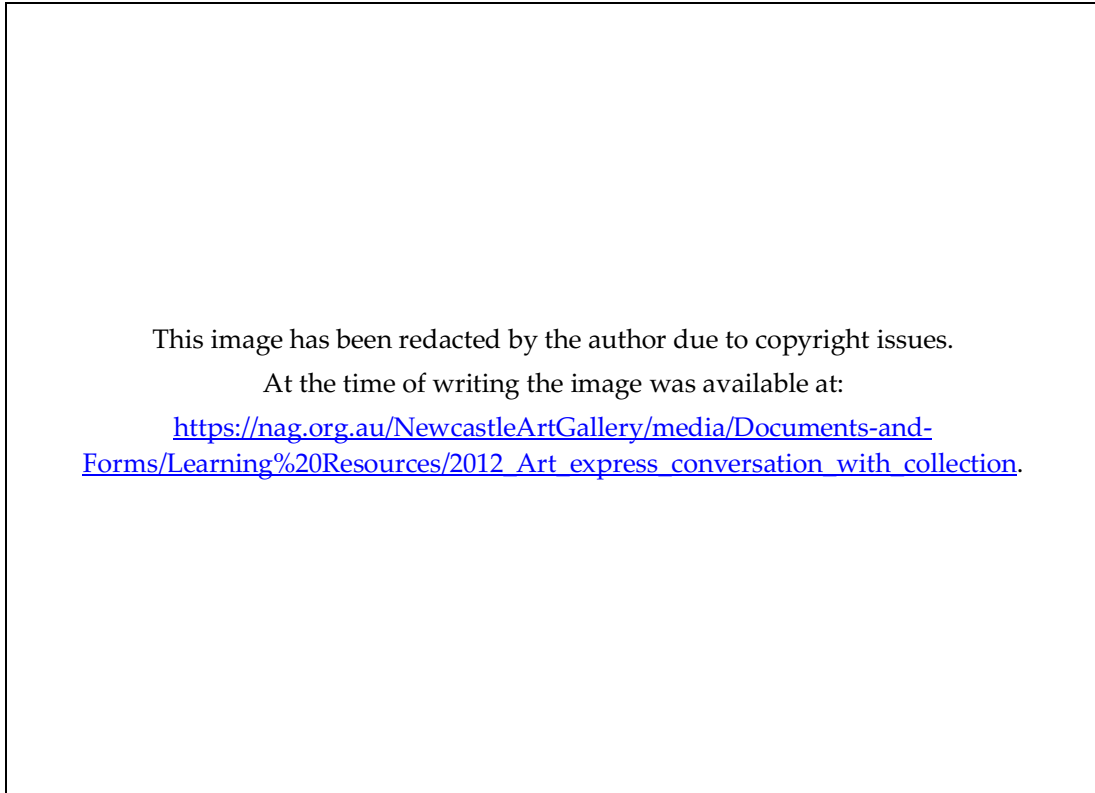
Figure 7.18 Cedric Flower, "Sydney Terrace", 1965.[66]
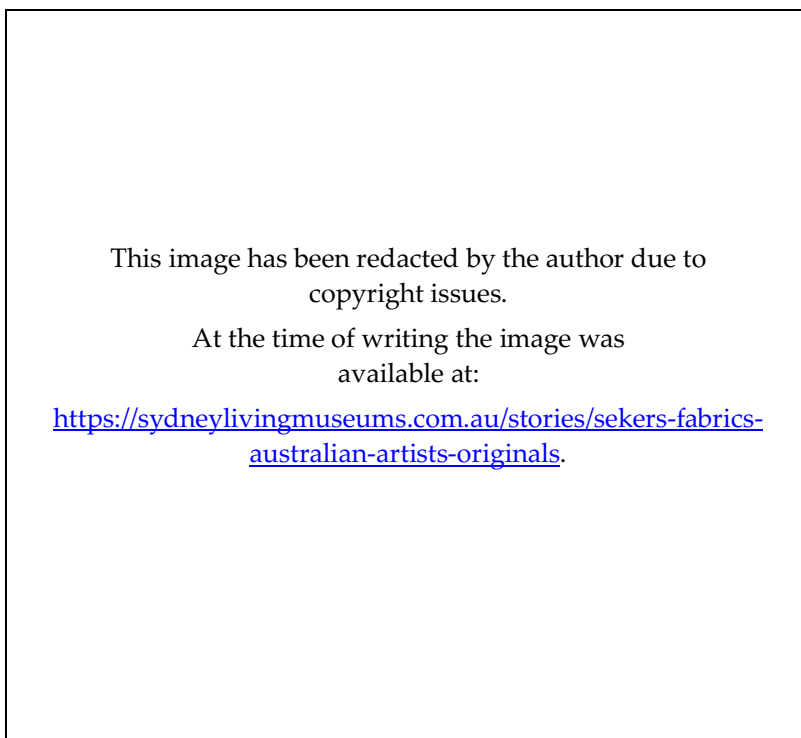
Figure 7.19 Cedric Flower, 'Terrace Houses', 1962.[67]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing the image was available at:

https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/stories/sekers-fabrics-australian-artists-originals.

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[66] Flower, Cedric. 1965. "Sydney Terrace." *Newcastle Art Gallery: Conversations with the Collection.* Accessed May 19, 2020. https://nag.org.au/NewcastleArtGallery/media/Documents-and-Forms/Learning%20Resources/2012_Art_express_conversation_with_collection.pdf.

'Terrace Houses' (Figure 7.19) by Cedric Flower (1920-2000) is a far more successful translation of a visual artwork to a textile design. Flower was a prolific illustrator, set designer and painter, who also wrote several books on Australian art. He was interested in heritage architecture, serving as a councillor and later vice-president of the National Trust of Australia and as chair of their Historic Buildings Committee during the 1960s and 1970s. In 1962 Flower held a solo exhibition titled 'Stage Designs Sydney Terraces' that included interpretations of the terrace houses in Paddington like that seen in Figure 7.18, "Sydney Terraces", an oil painting executed in 1965.[68] His textile design mimics the appearance of rows of terrace houses, each of which is separated by a row of decorative wrought iron work. There are three distinct styles of terrace houses that have been rendered lightly using a watercolour style; the central panel shows houses rendered in a range of pastel colours, just as they appeared in Paddington during the 1960s. Whilst the design resolves into a large check like designs created by Dobell and Preston for Modernage, the images are rendered in detail and close observation will always reveal a new detail. The overall effect of the repeat is reminiscent of a doll's house, making the print eminently suitable for incorporation into an interior design for children – though the design would also work just as well in a sunroom – particularly in a Paddington terrace house.

Elaine Haxton (1909-1999) based her design 'Golden Barks' (Figure 7.20) on her observation of trees in the Australian bush. Haxton was a friend of Claudio Alcorso's and had painted murals at his property Moorilla.[69] This friendship may have brought some tacit knowledge of the principles of textile design. The design has been rendered thoughtfully as a continuous vertical

[67] Flower, Cedric. 1962. "Terrace houses." *Caroline Simpson Library, Sydney Living Museums*. Accessed April 24, 2018. https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/stories/sekers-fabrics-australian-artists-originals. Dimensions unknown, screen-printed cotton.
[68] Lech, Sekers Fabrics: 'Australian Artists Originals' n.d.
[69] Alcorso, Caroline, interview by Tracey Sernack- Chee Quee. 2016. (13 November).

stripe, a design that is very easy to style not only into curtains, but also into furniture upholstery without having to match the pattern, this eliminating waste. The piece held by Sydney Living Museums is in pastel pinks and taupes, showing the different types of native barks as they would appear in the bush on a bright, sunny day. Close examination of the print shows that Haxton has rendered the surface design of scribbly bark, as well as the patination of bark slightly scorched by bushfire. It is a subtle, yet simple and accomplished print that would not have been out of place in any Australian home in the 1960s.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing the image was available at:

https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/stories/sekers-fabrics-australian-artists-originals.
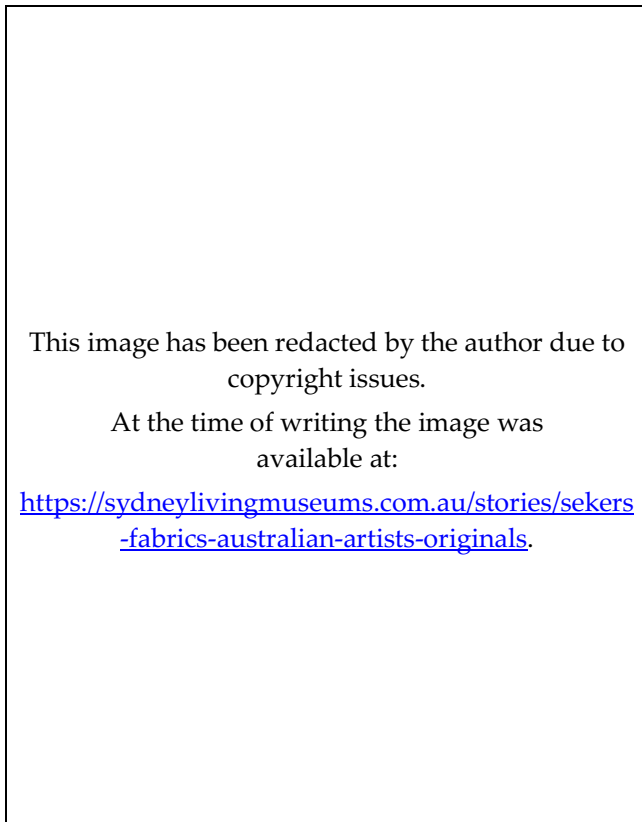
Figure 7.20 Elaine Haxton, Golden Barks, 1962.[70]

The overall commercial success of the Sekers' 'Artists Originals' is undocumented. Apart from curatorial studies undertaken by Michael Lech at Sydney Living Museums and Anne-Marie Van de Ven at the Museum of

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[70] Elaine Haxton. 1962. "Golden Barks." *Caroline Simpson Library, Sydney Living Museums.* Accessed July 9, 2019. https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/stories/sekers-fabrics-australian-artists-originals. Dimensions unknown. Screen-printed cotton, dimensions unknown.

Applied Arts & Sciences, there has been very little academic study of the collection – particularly in connection with the Modernage collection. There are no records of any comments from Claudio Alcorso about the collection. One can only speculate that he would have been quite disappointed that this homage to Modernage could not have been viably printed in his own factory. His business connection with the Kaldors would have undoubtedly influenced him to keep whatever negative feelings he might have had about the collection to himself.

7.2.6 STP's export initiatives

STP made a considerable effort to improve their sales by becoming a global supplier of printed and specialty textiles in the first half of the 1960s. The limitations of Australia's small population and the saturation of imported products at this time meant that new markets had to be found overseas. They developed a successful export program, becoming Tasmania's first winner of the National Award for Outstanding Export Achievement. In December 1961, Claudio Alcorso returned from Europe with contracts to supply £20,000 of silk prints to clients in Italy.[71] In his memoir, he recalled how proud his father and mentor Amilcare would have been, had he known that he had sold 200 rolls of printed silks to Galtrucco in Milan, which the family regarded as the best fabric shop in Italy.[72]
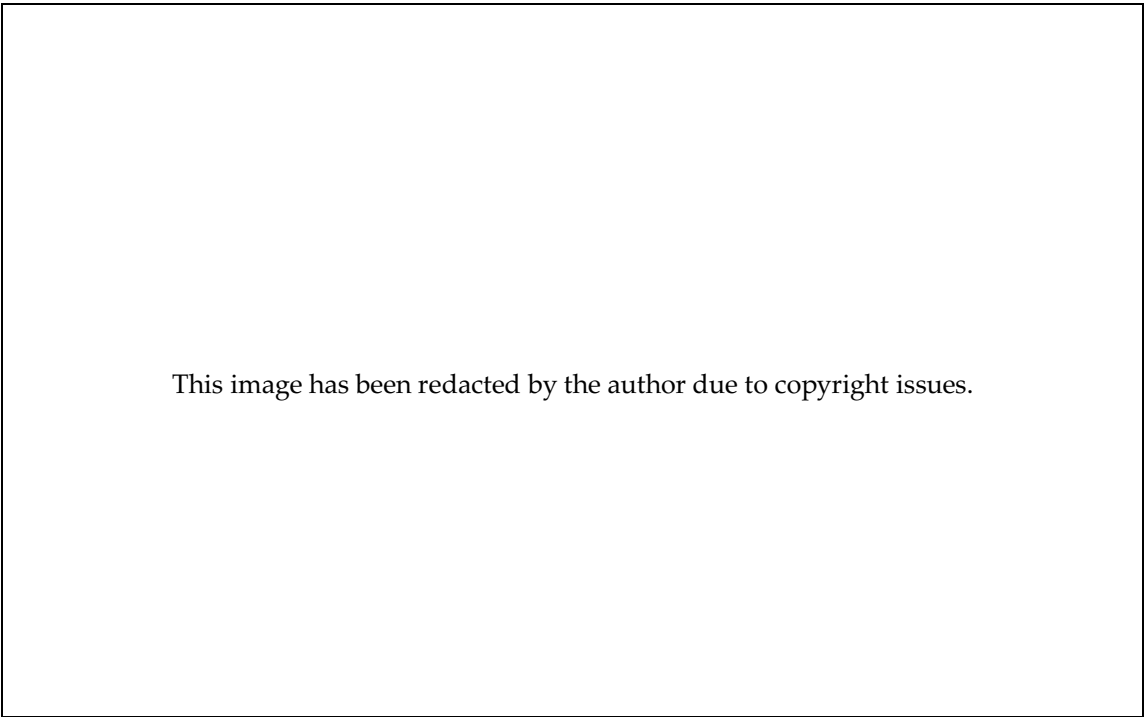
STP's exports to England, Europe, Hong Kong and New Zealand increased significantly from £98,000 in 1961 to £170,000 by the end of the 1963-64 financial year.[73] They had participated in a number of national export marketing strategies, including the voyage of the Australian Trade Ship 'Centaur', which sailed to ports including Singapore, Bangkok, Manila, Hong

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[71] The Draper of Australasia, "STP Upturn", 1961

[72] Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say*, 98.

[73] STP Holdings Ltd. 1964. *Annual Report 1964.* National Library of Australia.

Kong, Osaka and Tokyo as a floating showroom promoting Australian-manufactured products from all industry sectors. The voyage was conducted under the auspices of the Department of Trade and was sponsored by the Australian Chambers of Commerce Export Council.[74] Departing at the beginning of March 1964, the 'Centaur' carried samples and displays of Australian made fibres, fashion and textiles manufactured by all the major brands. Merchandise was displayed in glass showcases on board (Figure 7.21) and in special showrooms where customers could place their orders. Models were also on board to provide subjects for the local press in each port of call, who came on board and took photos for their publications (Figure 7.22)

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

Figure 7.21 Displays of Terylene and Bri-Nylon merchandise by Fibremakers on the 'Centaur', 1964.[75]

In August 1964, STP were part of a delegation that exhibited in the New Zealand International Trade Fair. The delegation included fellow Australians manufacturers Prestige and Colortex and British firm Tootal. STP had

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[74] Clothing News. 1964. "Australian manufacturers out to capture world markets." March (VIC : Thomson Publications, 1947-1968) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 29.

[75] The Draper of Australasia. 1964. "Scenes from the Display by Fibremakers on Trade Ship "Centaur"." 10 April (VIC : 1901-1966) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 13.

developed new synthetic products that they called 'Pertici' and 'Ravelle' – names that sounded Italian – and 'Silklook', a synthetic fabric. These products drew status and credibility from the Alcorso's Italian heritage and expertise with silk fabrics.[76] That same year, STP had won another significant export award …. "for their skill and resourcefulness in developing new markets and new products"…. which entitled them to fly a specially developed flag from their premises in Derwent Park.[77]
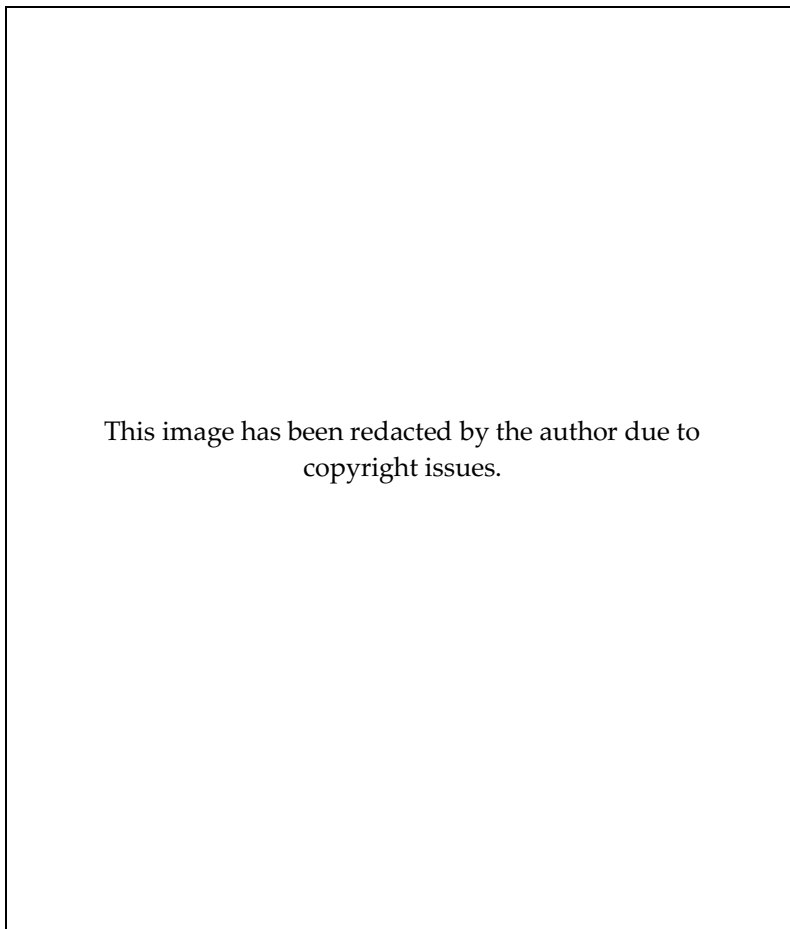
Figure 7.22 Model on the trade ship 'Centaur', 1964.[78]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

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[76] Clothing News. 1964. "Australian Textiles at NZ Fair." August (VIC : Thomson Publications, 1947-1966) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 45.

[77] Clothing News. 1964. "Textile Firm Features in Export Awards." April (VIC : Thomson Publications, 1947-1968): 64.

[78] Henry Talbot. 1964. "Australian Wool Board. Models on the Trade Ship Centaur, Image H36172/1621b." *State Library of Victoria.* Accessed June 27, 2019. http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/402969.

7.3 Consolidation of Australian textiles and fashion

In May of 1964 the Sydney Morning Herald published a survey of the textile manufacturing industry, announcing that it was the fifth largest industry in Australia, producing £100 million worth of product each year. The textile sector employed 70,000 people, 42,000 of whom were women, 15% of all women working in Australian factories. According to this article, if the textile industry's outputs were combined with clothing, total production was exceeded by the Australian motor industry. [79] The textile industry was clearly still valued by government as an export earner and as an employer.

1965 brought a number of changes to STP. In June of that year the Alcorsos would merge their business with the Australian branch of Sekers in a share and cash deal worth more than £210,000, that saw the UK parent company acquire 166,842 shares in the STP.[80] Andrew Kaldor became a director of STP, representing Miki Sekers on the board. Vera and John Kaldor become more involved in the design direction and marketing of STP, whilst Marjorie McGowan, who managed advertising and promotion at Sekers, also took on management of the publicity for the mill in Hobart.

One of the marketing strategies employed from this period was to emphasise the individual brands of products produced by STP. The Alcorso and Sekers brands began to replace the STP name in advertising and editorial in the popular press. The merger of STP and Sekers had clearly been good for business, with Alcorso and the Kaldors trading off their respective strengths in product development and sales and marketing. The company's 1965 annual report listed the export markets of Sekers Silk Pty Ltd as including New Zealand, Hong Kong, Malaysia and South Africa. The annual report also

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[79] The Sydney Morning Herald. 1964. "Fifth Industry In Australia." 18 May. Accessed March 16, 2015. https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1301&dat=19640518&id=-gtiAAAAIBAJ&sjid=TuYDAAAAIBAJ&pg=5732,6185948.

[80] "Sekers takeover 'a natural one' says Managing Director", *Clothing News,* June 1965, 25.

included a photo of a two-piece garment styled by Italian design house Pucci, in a Terylene blend fabric woven by STP in Tasmania.[81]

In January 1966, Clothing News identified STP as … "the largest producers of printed and woven fabrics in the southern hemisphere" with close to £7,000,000 in sales over the past year.[82] In September 1966 national magazine The Bulletin ran an illustrated profile of the 'Sekers Factory' in Derwent Park, that saw models posing in the latest fashion garments in the various production facilities of the factory (Figures 7.21-7.23). The photographs provide an impression of the scale of the business at the time, as well as an idea of the prints that were being produced and the types of garments that were being manufactured by their clients.

In Figure 7.23, a fashion model wearing a pastel pink and white silk patterned dress is positioned amongst two giant rolls of undyed fabric that have just come off the looms. The model leans against one of the rolls in a deliberate contrapposto pose typical of fashion advertising at the time. She wears a matching, pale pink silk headscarf, an essential fashion accessory of the time and just the thing to hide to hide the curlers needed for the bouffant hairstyles of the day and to protect women working in factories from getting their hair caught in machinery. The dress worn by the model is conservative, simple, high necked, with capped sleeves and a hemline just above the kneecap – a style easy enough to run up in an afternoon's sewing at home.

In Figure 7.24, a fashion model 'assists' a technician to mix dyestuffs. The style of her dress is again conservative – 'A-line', knee length and made from a small floral print in pink with a high neck and long sleeves. Small frills add a feminine touch to the neck and the cuff, a direct contrast to the burley technician, his rough work-clothes and the industrial environment.

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[81] STP Holdings Ltd. 1965.

[82] Clothing News (Supplement). 1966. *"Family Name now Household Word - 'Alcorso'."* January: 23.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing the image was available at:

https://nla.gov.au:443/tarkine/nla.obj-688082404.
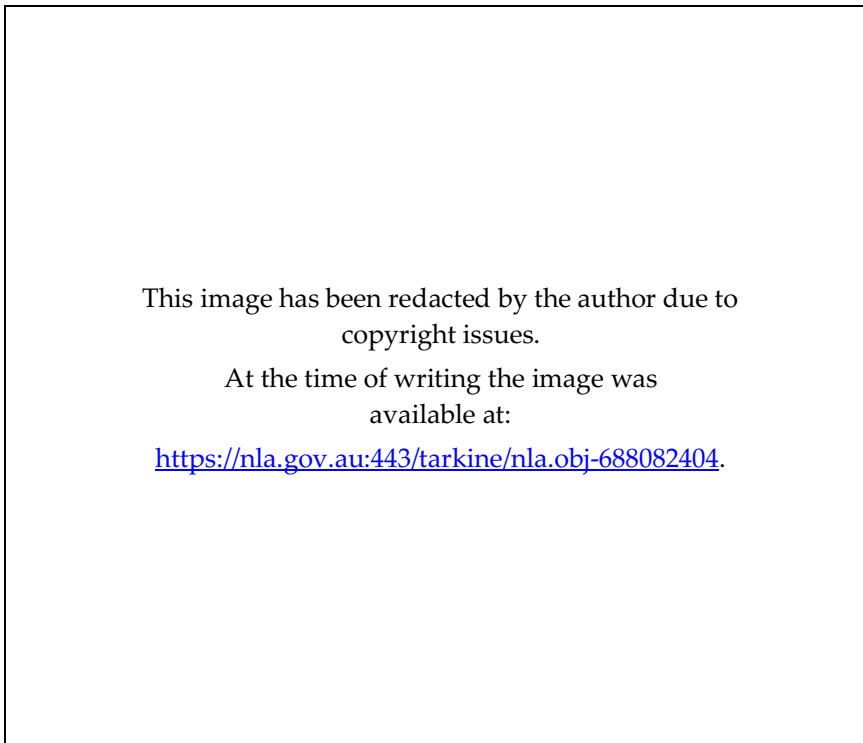
Figure 7.23 Fashion model wearing Sekers product at the company's factory, Glenorchy, Hobart, 1966.[83]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing the image was available at:

https://nla.gov.au:443/tarkine/nla.obj-688082404.
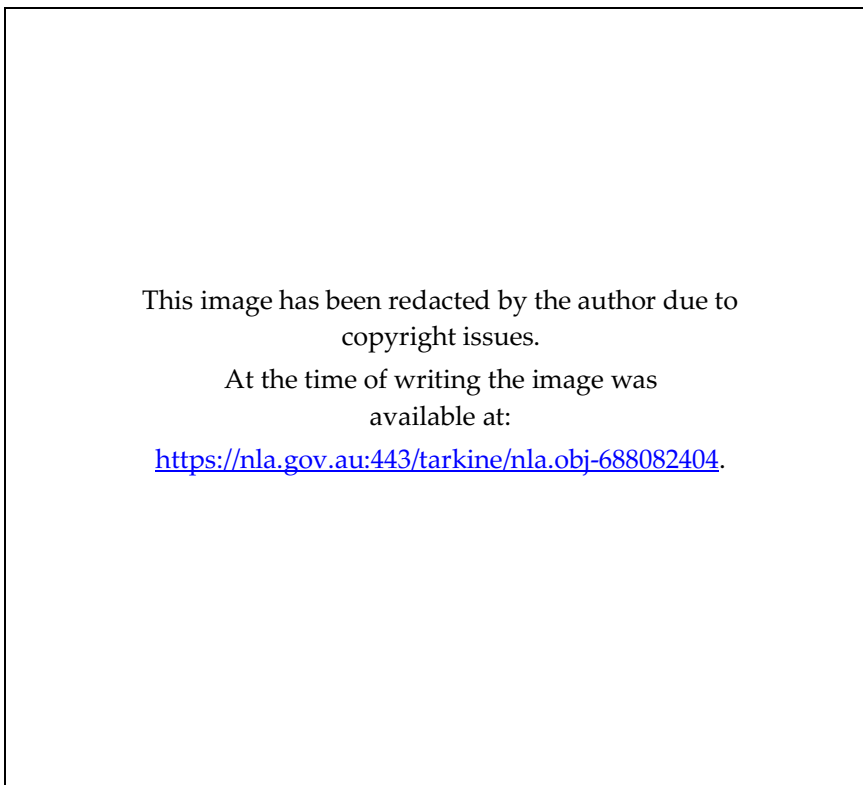
Figure 7.24 The colour mixing section where dyes are mixed, 1966.[84]

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[83] The Bulletin, 1966. "New Life for Textiles : Thriving days for synthetic fabrics." 3 September. Accessed February 5, 2019. https://nla.gov.au:443/tarkine/nla.obj-688082404.

[84] Ibid.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing the image was available at:

https://nla.gov.au:443/tarkine/nla.obj-688082404.

Figure 7.25 'Sekers' factory' at Glenorchy, 1966.[85]

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[85] Ibid.

Figure 7.25 is made up of four separate images of fashion models positioned within different sections of the textile production facility. A model in a two-piece yellow ensemble and her essential, ladylike white gloves pretends to sweep up in the screen room, where she is dwarfed by the size of the enormous silkscreens, designed to extend across the width of forty-five-inch fabric. Rolls of the latest print designs are strategically placed nearby. She is distinctly overdressed for sweeping the floor of a factory. Another model wears a cheeky mini dress teamed with a hot pink turban. She represents the changes in young fashion that are going on at the time. Young women did not want to wear the same clothes that their mothers wore. The 1960s had brought the first wave of young Australian fashion and textile designers riding on the back of the London Look. Young Australians were proud to wear an original Australian design from the likes of John and Merivale Hemmes, Kenneth Pirrie, Mike Treloar, Trent Nathan and Prue Acton.

These designers represented the 'next generation' of Alcorso's customers, young manufacturers who needed to work very closely to the market and were willing to pay a premium price for quick response fashion textiles and more control over quality and production. Not all manufacturers and retailers – especially those catering for the new young niche market – could meet the minimum order quantities required to print fabric in Japan and it was these manufacturers who depended on fashion fabrics from Sekers.[86]

In 1966 the immense printing tables at STP used for printing sample fabrics and short-run orders still utilised ergonomically assisted hand screen-printing technology, compared with the smaller area allocated to print bulk orders, which were equipped with fully automatic machinery (Figures 7.1 and

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[86] During the 1980s the minimum order for our own design to be printed in Japan was 1,000 yards per colour and 3,000 yards per design. Our family chose to buy plain dyed base-cloths from Japan or from local mills or wholesalers and have monotone designs printed on them by Tennyson Textiles. This meant that all base colours could be printed with a monotone design in one batch.

7.2). In the lower left of Figure 7.25, a model sits on top of the table, her flared skirt spread across its width, with her stiletto shoe hanging over the edge of the table, so she does not dirty the printing mat. Our final model on the lower right stands gingerly in her stiletto shoes on a steel ladder in the finishing section of the factory. She wears an 'A-line' silk dress that just covers her knees, with a matching silk bolero and matching scarf around her ponytail. The print is blue and acid green, a classic 1960s colour combination. She also wears the ubiquitous white gloves that women would never be without when going to town or to a special event.

These images were a brilliant promotional device, because they enabled Sekers' products to be showcased alongside the impressive facilities of the STP factory, which would be the primary interest of the business readers of a periodical such as The Bulletin. It demonstrates the entrepreneurial mind-set of Marjorie McGowan, never to miss any opportunity to promote Sekers and its products.

7.3.1 Increased shareholdings by transnational companies

Sekers were not the only international textile company to hold a large share in STP during this period. British firm Carrington & Dewhurst held 60,000 shares, a legacy of the deal to jointly develop synthetic yarn and weaving with STP in the 1950s.[87] James Nelson (Australia) Pty Ltd had acquired 420,000 shares in STP in 1962, which had been taken up by Courtaulds when it had taken over James Nelson in November 1963, acquiring the shares in STP and board representation as a bonus.[88] Courtaulds great rival in the area of synthetic fibre production, Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI), also held 11.5%

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[87] Silk & Textile Printers Ltd, 1959. *Annual Report 1959.* National Library of Australia.
[88] The Sydney Morning Herald. "Courtaulds (U.K.) May Acquire S.T.P. Link."1963

of STP's capital, as well as a seat on STP's board.[89] Bruck Mills (Australia) Ltd, the Australian arm of the Canadian textile conglomerate – also held 61,670 shares.

STP also attracted a great deal of interest from Japanese textile and fibre producers, who, at the time, were keen to lift their image and status by investing in successful Australian companies. The Toyo Rayon Company was the third largest synthetic producer in the world at the time and STP was their biggest customer outside Japan.[90] STP's mainland competitor Tennyson Textiles was also closely associated Toyo Rayon.[91] Both Australian printing firms were also associated with Teijin, another of Japan's large synthetic fibre and fabric manufacturers, who had been producing rayon filament yarn at their factory at Mihara since 1934.[92] It may have been these associations with Japanese firms that convinced STP and Tennyson to consider a merger.

STP and Tennyson had started discussing the possibility of a merger in 1966. Emery Yass, the owner of Tennyson, previously worked at STP prior to setting up his own business and the two companies had maintained contact through their membership of the Federal Council of Textile Printers. Given the increasing unviability of printing basic fabrics in Australia as demonstrated by Sekers' Artists Originals collection, it made sense for the two businesses to band together rather than further splitting the ever-diminishing market for local printing in Australia. In addition to being sensible, the merger was also a business opportunity for both companies, as both Toyo Rayon and Teijin had agreed to invest, contingent on a merger.

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[89] The Sydney Morning Herald. 1965. "Big Changes By STP?" 01 August. Accessed February 3, 2018. http://smharchives.smedia.com.au/Olive/APA/smharchive/Print.Article.aspx?mode=image&href=SMH%2F1965%2F08%2F01&id=Ar11602.

[90] Ibid.

[91] The Sydney Morning Herald. 1964. "Remarkable change in printing." 18 May. Accessed February 3, 2014. http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1301&dat=19640518&id=-gtiAAAAIBAJ&sjid=TuYDAAAAIBAJ&pg=5732,6185948.

[92] Teijin. 2014. Accessed July 6, 2014. http://www.teijin.com.

Figure 7.26 Claudio and his Japanese colleagues at a social gathering, n.d.

Figure 7.27 Claudio and his wife Lesley with an unknown Japanese associate, n.d. [93]

7.4   Universal Textiles Australia (UTA)

The new holding company formed from the merger of STP and Tennyson was called Universal Textiles (Australia) Limited and was incorporated in the Australian Capital Territory in early 1967, with Claudio Alcorso as Managing Director, Andrew Kaldor and Paolo Sonnino as directors, amongst others.[94] The new business name had originally been registered by Tennyson Textiles for their wholesale textile business and was therefore already known in the

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[93]   Photographs courtesy of Caroline Alcorso. Used with permission.
[94]   Universal Textiles (Australia) Ltd. 1967. *Annual Report 1967.* National Library of Australia.

market. In their joint announcement to the industry, the directors of the firm stated:

> The Directors are of the opinion that the successful future of the Textile Industry in Australia lies in rationalisation of production units operating within similar fields. Experience overseas indicates that growth, coupled with economical and successful operations, must be achieved within the industry by its own efforts. In recent reports the Tariff Board issued a warning of the dangers of fragmentation and clearly informed the Textile Industry that in order to obtain a larger share of the available markets it must look to rationalisation and improved efficiency.[95]

The new business also announced its targets, which included the rationalisation of production facilities with the goal achieving better quality, lower prices, greater variety, increased flexibility and improved service to customers. The directors recognised that more efficient production units would strengthen the competitive power of the group's products in world markets, resulting in increased exports. They sought to share executive skill and talent across both organisations and implement "techniques of modern industry such as computerisation, market research, applied research and promotion, which can be utilised economically only when a certain minimum volume of production and sales is achieved." The new company had paid up capital of $2,499,900, assets of $11,814,692. [96]

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[95] Universal Textiles (Australia) Ltd. 1966. Offer by Universal Textiles (Australia) Limited to take over all the issued ordinary and preference shares in Tennyson Textile (Holdings) Limited - NP 338.47677 T312. National Library of Australia.

[96] Ibid.

UTA had a total of 1,200 employees and combined annual sales of $15,500,000. The business, though based in Australia, was mostly owned by the Australian subsidiaries of the following transnational companies:

Carrington & Dewhurst Ltd, UK	420,000 shares
Courtaulds/James Nelson (Australia) Pty Ltd	420,000 shares
Toyo Rayon Co. Ltd, Japan	304,000 shares
Teijin Ltd, Japan	300,000 shares
West Cumberland Silk Mills Ltd, (Sekers) UK	166,842 shares
Bruck Mills (Australia) Ltd	61,670 shares[97]

High levels of foreign ownership were not a phenomenon limited to the textile industry. In the ten years between 1962-63 and 1972-73, foreign ownership had increased across all manufacturing industries from 22 to 28 per cent and was most marked in the electrical, pharmaceutical and chemical industries.[98] Chemical companies had a high stake in textiles, due to the increasing levels of production of synthetic yarns.

7.4.1 The ALTA quality initiative

One of the first initiatives of the new business was the development of a new certification system to promote the image of UTA as a quality provider of Australian-produced textile products. Alcorso often travelled to Japan, taking his wife Lesley with him as his secretary (refer Figure 7.27). His travels took him to the factories of Toyo and Teijin, where he would have seen the application of Total Quality Control (TQC) initiatives introduced in Japanese manufacturing after World War II.[99] These techniques were becoming very

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[97] Universal Textiles (Australia) Ltd. 1967. *Annual Report 1967.* National Library of Australia.

[98] Wright, Christopher. 1995. *The Management of Labour: A History of Australian Employers.* Oxford University Press Australia, 40.

[99] Wright, Christopher. 1995. *The Management of Labour: A History of Australian Employers.* Oxford University Press Australia, 170-171.
Costin 1994, 7–57.

well-known in textile manufacturing by the end of the 1960s, where they were an extension of the principles of time and motion or 'work study'.

Japanese industry had taken quality seriously and had developed new principles such as 'quality circles' to resolve problems in the manufacturing process by drawing on the expertise and knowledge of persons actually working on the production line. Associated concepts such as Just in Time (JIT) were used in manufacturing plants to ensure that capital was tied up only in supplies that were needed for immediate production orders, saving cash and storage space. These concepts were influential, as they were universally promoted as a means of directing consumer attention away from cheap, shoddy overseas imports.[100]
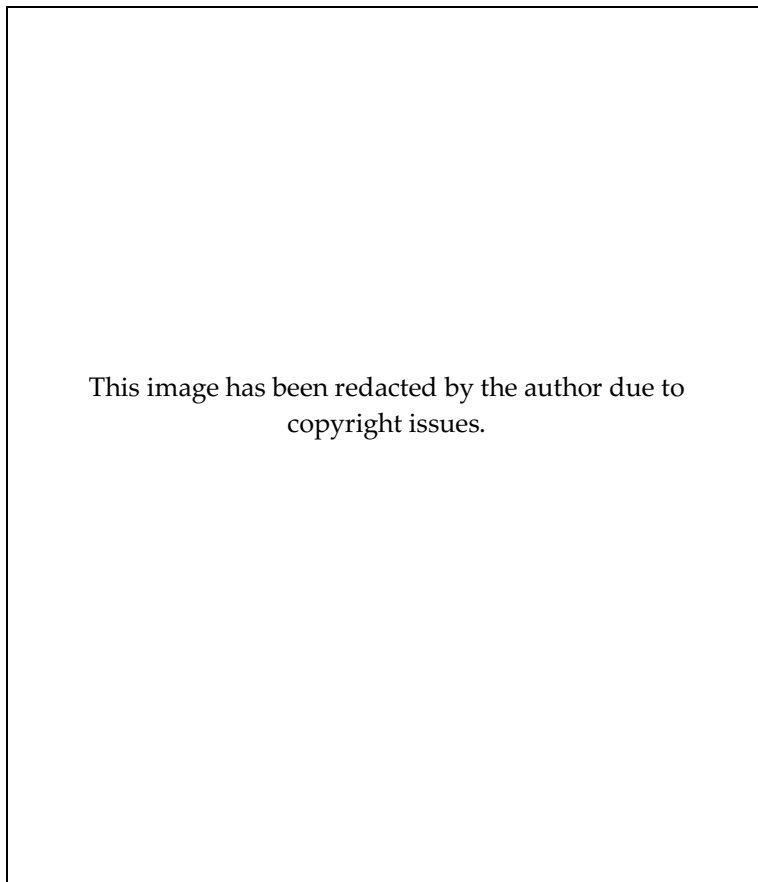
Figure 7.28 Vera Kaldor and John J Hilton, one of the licensees of ALTA.[101]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

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[100] Ibid.

[101] Clothing News. 1967. "Fabric Quality Scheme is launched." March (VIC : Thomson Publications, 1947-1968) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 18.

In March 1967, drawing from theories of Total Quality Management, Universal Textiles Australia launched their 'ALTA' quality system, led by Vera Kaldor. The ALTA brand appears to have been acquired by UTA. Among Claudio Alcorso's papers in the Tasmanian State archive is a lengthy, undated, typewritten business analysis of the 'ALTA Corporation of Brisbane'. According to the document, ALTA were originally textile knitters and weavers, who also undertook dying, printing and finishing for their own men's and women's apparel manufacturing subsidiaries. In early 1967 they were considering future opportunities in the industry and had investigated the development of locally printed bedlinen in response to market indications overseas that women were becoming more fashion conscious in their domestic furnishings.[102] Though Alcorso's papers contain no evidence to indicate any merger with or acquisition of ALTA, it is clear that there was some kind of business amalgamation or licensing agreement.

The ALTA initiative ensured that all products produced by UTA subsidiaries met established standards of quality. A specialised quality control centre was set up at the factory in Glenorchy, which would test and approve all products. Customers who purchased the quality assured textiles became 'licensees' of ALTA, entitling products that they manufactured from approved fabrics to carry an exclusive ALTA swing ticket as a guarantee of quality to the ultimate purchaser of garments.

The promotional campaign for ALTA was launched with much fanfare in the fashion and textile trade press, with Clothing News devoting a whole page to editorial in its March edition, listing its licensees. They included well-known businesses such as John J Hilton Pty Ltd, Prue Acton Pty Ltd, Kenneth Pirrie Creations Pty Ltd – all of whom were established customers of Sekers,

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[102] Claudio Alcorso. c1967. "ALTA Corporation." *NS3001/1/12 Material relating to the Textile Industry and Australia's Future Strategies.* Hobart: Tasmanian State Archive.

working in the better end of Australian women's fashion manufacturing. Vera Kaldor was pictured in Clothing News wearing a stylish floral silk suit, standing alongside her customer John J Hilton holding up the bold, authoritative ALTA logo (Figure 7.28).
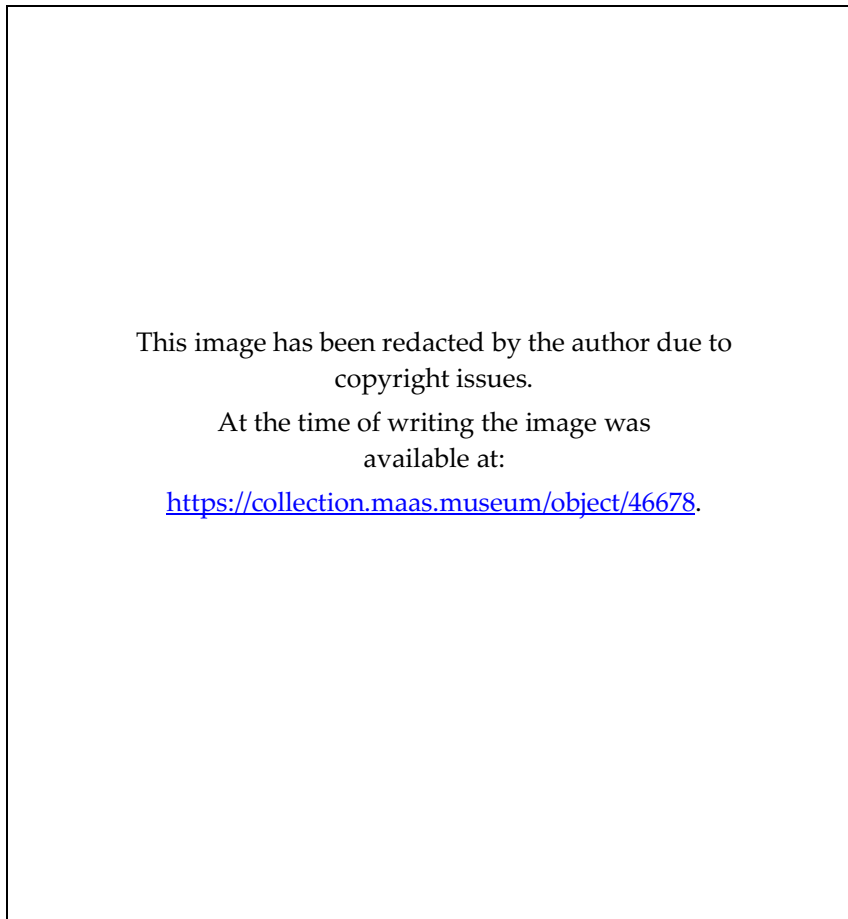
Figure 7.29
'ALTA' tea towel produced by UTA, 1969.[103]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing the image was available at:

https://collection.maas.museum/object/46678.

The editorial announced that an extensive advertising campaign had been planned by Mrs Kaldor for 1967-1968 that would cross promote Sekers, licensed manufacturers and retailers carrying licensed products. The ALTA program continued for several years, with UTA using the ALTA brand in their advertising and producing novelty products such as the printed tea towels to promote the initiative (Figure 7.29). [104]

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[103] Universal Textiles (Australia) Ltd. 1969. "ALTA promotional tea-towel ." *Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences.* Accessed July 22, 2019. https://collection.maas.museum/object/46678.
[104] Clothing News, "Fabric Quality Scheme is Launched". 1967.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

Figure 7.30 Universal Textile (Australia) Limited trademarks, 1967.[105]

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[105] Universal Textiles (Australia) Ltd. 1967.

7.5   Sheridan

STP Holdings had established their original furnishing division in the late 1950s, however, there is no archival evidence that the brand name 'Sheridan' was associated with these products until the publication of its 1964 annual report. The division originally produced furnishing fabrics and some finished products, including printed drapes.[106] When STP merged with Tennyson, the furnishing division inherited the latter's line of printed tablecloths that had been produced since 1964.[107] Furnishing products were not as prone to competition from cheap imported fabrics and had become a profitable part of the new conglomerate's business – one that could be further developed.

The paper outlining the activities of the ALTA Corporation of Brisbane, found amongst Alcorso's papers mentions that they were investigating diversification into production of printed bed-linen.[108] The data included in the ALTA Corporation's business analysis indicated that the total market for bedlinen was then 50 million square yards per year.[109] The analysis also revealed that in the …"USA producers were busily equipping themselves for a substantial switch to colourful permapress bedlinen in a variety of blends which gave…the consumer the look and feel of cotton." ALTA had undertaken consultation with major department stores, who indicated they were looking for a source of printed bedlinen that could retail at a higher price.[110]

In September 1967 Claudio Alcorso embarked on the first draft of a new corporate strategy for UTA's furnishing division. He determined that in order to survive, UTA needed a new, stable product line that took advantage of their extensive vertically integrated textile production operations, incorporating

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[106] STP Holdings Ltd. 1964.

[107] Clothing News. 1964. "Attractive Cloth Range." July (VIC : Thomson Publications, 1947-1968) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 45.

[108] Claudio Alcorso. c1967. "ALTA Corporation."

[109] C. Alcorso, *ALTA Corporation* c1967.

[110] Ibid.

spinning, weaving, dyeing, printing and finishing. It must be a product that was universally needed and would not go out of fashion too quickly. It must be wholly manufactured in Tasmania and pre-packaged so it could be easily handled, stored, transported and sold in high volume.[111] Shortly after the launch of the ALTA quality system initiative, UTA began manufacturing printed sheets under its existing brand name 'Sheridan'.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing the image was available at:

https://www.ebay.com.au/.

Figure 7.31 Vintage Sheridan printed sheet sets from the late 1960s.[112]

Blended synthetic and cotton base cloths woven at UTA weaving mills were used in the production of printed sheets, validating the extensive investment made by UTA into roller-printing technology suitable for large production runs. The floral print, a motif that was understood by everyone, would be the central design theme, with other safe, commercial options such as stripes, checks and foulards also making an appearance as time went on (Figure 7.31). Sheridan sheets, curtains and shower curtains were subsequently produced

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[111] Claudio Alcorso. "Universal Textiles Corporate Strategy." NS3001/1/27 Writings and talks by Claudio Alcorso, 1957-1999. Hobart: State Archive of Tasmania.

[112] EBay. 2012. "Vintage Sheridan sheets." *EBay.* Accessed December 27, 2012. https://www.ebay.com.au/.

and sold as a packaged, finished product to retailers, maximising and multiplying the profit realised at each stage of UTA's production cycle.

7.5.1 The history and development of the printed sheet

According to French luxury sheet brand Porthault, Madeleine Porthault was the first designer to create decorated bedlinen. She had hand-painted sheets coordinated with lingerie for the trousseau of Princess Marina of Greece, for her wedding to Prince George, the Duke of Kent in 1934. Evidently, the trousseau became so famous that the Porthaults began producing block printed sheets inspired by nature and art, including the gardens of Paris and Giverny and works by Impressionist painters. The Porthaults later expanded into embroidered and printed table linens, setting a trend for decorated linens.[113]

By the 1960s, several companies including Fieldcrest and Cannon in the United States and Wabasso in Canada had started producing printed sheets. British firm Laura Ashley also began producing printed sheets after founding their business in the 1960s with printed tea-towels, tablecloths furnishing fabrics.[114] These initiatives would have come to Alcorso's attention through his industry networks, connections with transnational companies and frequent international travel.

At the time, Australia biggest producer of bedlinen was Bradmill, which was also the largest producer of cotton fabrics. Bradmill produced Australia's most popular plain cotton sheets under their registered brand 'Nile'. In Figure 7.32 it is evident that Bradmill's sheets were a uniform white in the early 1960s, though they were available in plain-dyed colours during the latter part of the decade.

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[113] Brian D Coleman. 2017. *Porthault: The Art of Luxury Linens.* Layton, Utah: Gibbs Smith.
Owens, Mitchell. 2017. "The Legacy of D. Porthault." *Architectural Digest.* Accessed December 29, 2018. https://www.architecturaldigest.com/gallery/the-legacy-of-d-porthault#1.

[114] Martin Wood. 2009. *Laura Ashley.* Frances Lincoln Adult.
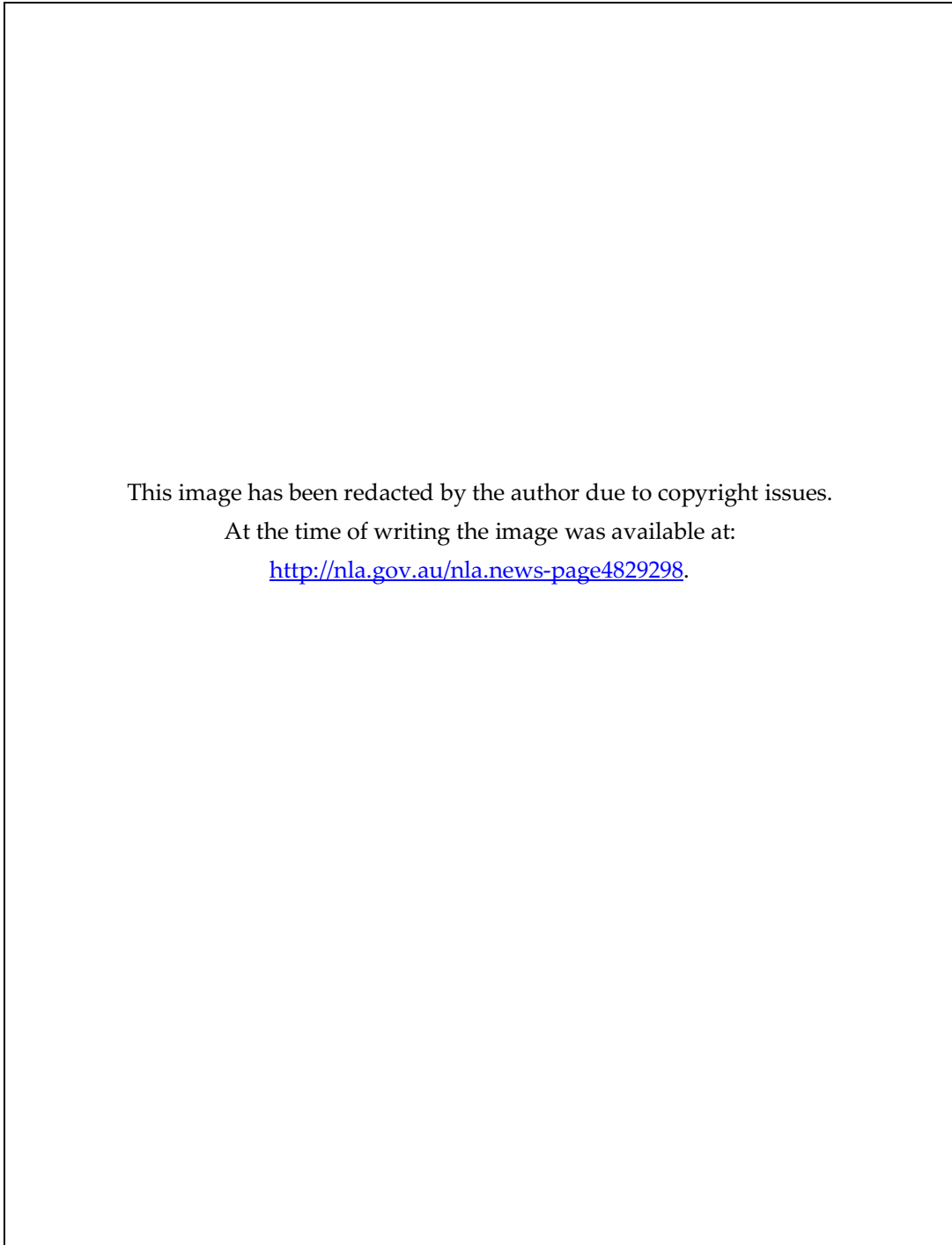
This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing the image was available at:

http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4829298.

Figure 7.32 Advertisement for 'Nile' sheets manufactured by Bradmill, 1961.[115]

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[115] Nile Bradmill. 1961. "Nile Bradmill famous All-Australian sheets with the six year guarantee." *The Australian Women's Weekly.* 29 November. Accessed July 23, 2019. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4829298.

A known issue with cotton sheets is that they crush easily, causing proud home owners to feel obligated to iron sheets and pillowcases on a regular basis. UTA, with their significant track record in producing blended fibre fabrics, immediately saw the potential for producing printed sheets on percale, a fabric made from a mixture of cotton and polyester, that would feel like cotton, but not require ironing like pure cotton sheets. In addition to all the benefits mentioned, printed sheets offered a new opportunity for Alcorso to revisit the principles behind his Modernage collection of creating accessible art and design for the average Australian home.

7.5.2   Design and marketing of Sheridan

UTA had years of experience in print development and realised that production of dependable floral prints like those produced by companies overseas would provide the safest option for the product's launch. The company had a huge archive of floral and other prints that had been developed over the years and their designers were not short of inspiration. Further investment in the design and marketing of the Sheridan brand by UTA ensured that it became and remained one of Australia's best-known value-added textile products. Sheridan production gradually took up all the printing capacity at the Derwent Park factory, becoming the only textile product wholly manufactured by the business.

The success of Sheridan's floral printed sheets attracted a great deal of interest from other companies who had success with producing plain-dyed sheets. Figure 7.31 is a double-page advertisement from the Australian Women's Weekly showing Bradmill's version of the floral sheet. South Australian -based company Actil also started producing printed sheets in the late 1960s. Associating their products with successful artists and designers had been a useful promotional strategy for UTA and its competitors over preceding decades.

These images have been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing the images were available at:
http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4887008 and http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4887009.
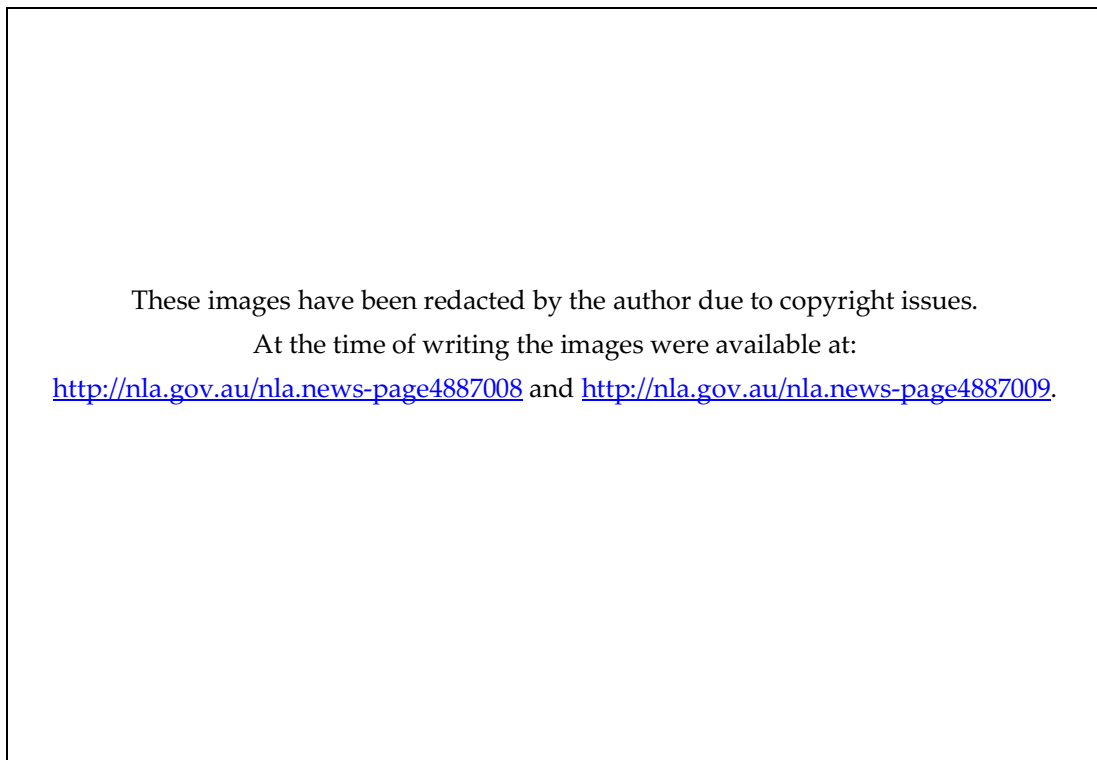
Figure 7.33 Advertisement for Bradmill's 'Flower Power' sheets, 1971.[116]

Advertising agency Ogilvy & Mather once again used it to promote the Sheridan collection, with high-profile fashion designers such as Kenneth Pirrie and Merivale Hemmes endorsing the products in the Australian Woman's Weekly and other women's magazines from the 1970s up to the end of the 1980s (Figure 7.34). The campaign was not only successful, but also controversial, earning Sheridan and Ogilvy & Mather publicity and notoriety. Liberal Party Minister for the Army, Andrew Peacock, offered to resign his ministry over the appearance of his wife Susan in advertising for Sheridan in late 1970 (Figure 7.35). She was paid a fee of less than $100 to appear in the advertisement and had donated the fee to charity. Sanity eventually prevailed and Prime Minister John Gorton rejected Peacock's resignation.[117]

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[116] Bradmill. 1971. "Bradmill flower power sheets." *The Australian Women's Weekly.* 24 November. Accessed February 2013. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4887008 and http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4887009.

[117] The Canberra Times. 1970. "Minister's wife advertises sheets." 21 October. Accessed October 19, 2014. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page11950154. The Canberra Times. 1970. "How a busy man can relax." 21 October. Accessed October 19, 2014. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110467091.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing the image was available at:
http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4896837.

Figure 7.34 Advertisement for Sheridan sheets featuring fashion designer Merivale Hemmes, 1970.[118]

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[118] Sheridan. 1970. "Advertisement for Sheridan sheets." *The Australian Women's Weekly.* 25 November. Accessed August 14, 2014. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4896837.

Ironically, Sheridan not only made UTA successful and profitable, it also positioned the company for a hostile takeover. UTA was a fully rationalised and profitable business with extensive production facilities and a diverse range of textile, furnishing and clothing products. It was the perfect opportunity for any business looking to acquire and invest in a supply chain.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing the image was available at:
http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4903471.
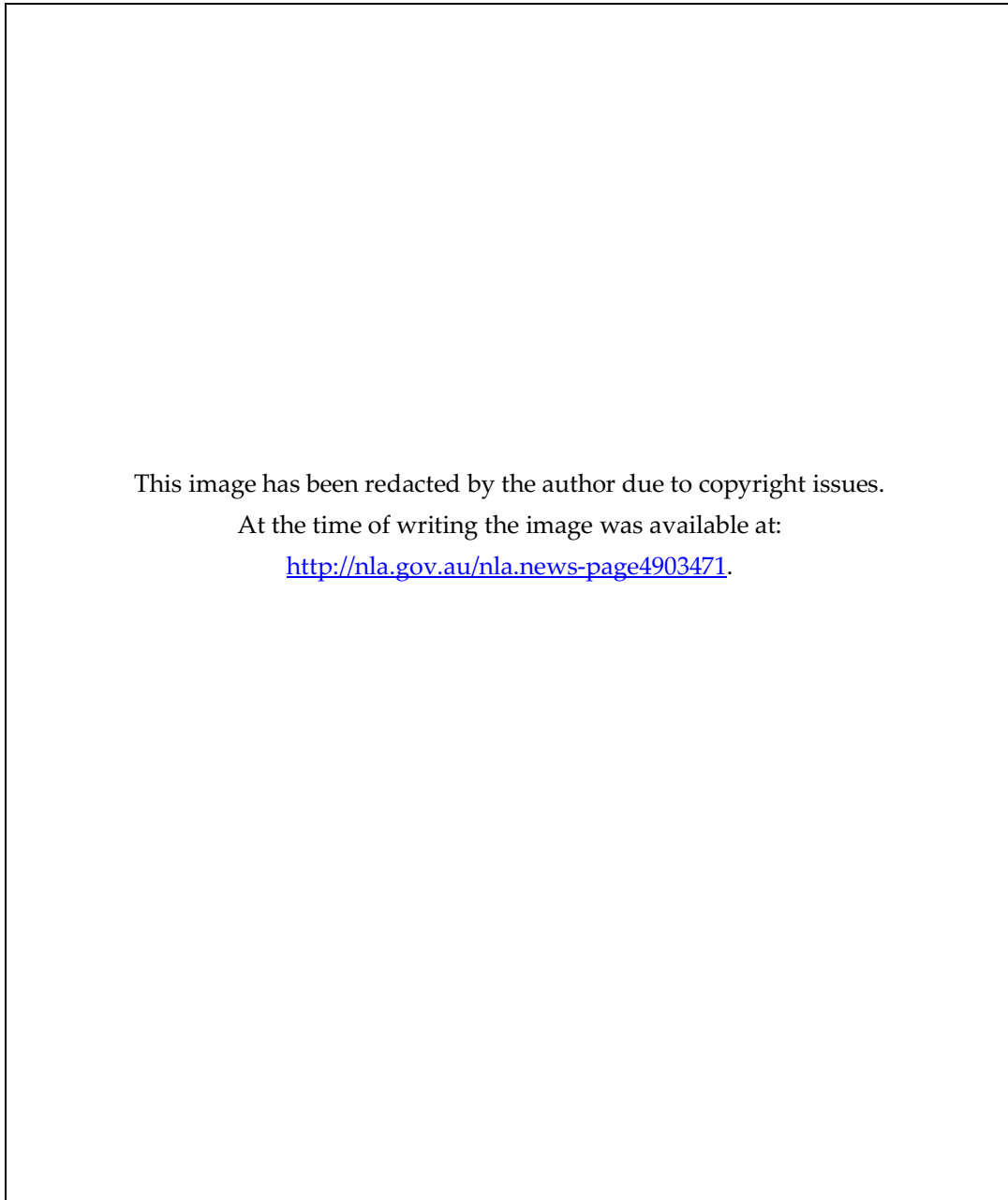
Figure 7.35 Controversial advertising for Sheridan featuring Susan Peacock, 1970.[119]

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[119] Sheridan. 1970. "Advertisement for Sheridan sheets featuring Mrs Andrew Peacock." *The Australian Women's Weekly.* 28 October. Accessed October 9, 2016. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4903471.

7.5.3 Dunlop takes over

Dunlop Limited was founded in Britain in the nineteenth century and had become a transnational company in the twentieth. Beginning with the manufacture of tyres for the automobile industry, they began to diversify their products during the 1920s, manufacturing tennis balls and acquiring the business of Charles Macintosh of Manchester, manufacturers of the eponymous rubber-coated raincoats.[120]

After World War II Dunlop was trading in nearly every country in the world, including Australia. In 1947 they were advertising their weatherproof coats in The Australian Women's Weekly.[121] By the 1960s, Dunlop Ltd Australia had extended their interests into textile and household goods and were acquiring established businesses that could contribute to their local supply chain.[122] Dunlop had already acquired Prestige, a major textile and hosiery manufacturer based in Victoria. Dunlop also became the owner of UTA on 3 September 1969 through a program of shareholder buyouts. The company officially changed its name to Universal Textile Holdings on 16 July 1970.[123]

Alcorso had not opposed the takeover of STP by Dunlop Industries when it had occurred and both he and Paolo Sonnino were subsequently appointed to the Board of Dunlop Australia. However, it was soon obvious that the directors of Dunlop had little time for the social and cultural principles on which the Alcorsos had founded their business. They wanted immediate results from all the product lines in the business and were unsympathetic about the performance of Sheridan, which was at that time a fledgling brand.

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[120] Ansell Ltd. 1985. "Dunlop Company Report / Company History & Listing Details." *Morningstar Data Analysis.* 22 August. Accessed April 19, 2012. www.morningstar.com.au/fsg.asp.

[121] Dunlop. 1947. "Advertisement for Dunlop Weatherproofs." *The Australian Women's Weekly.* 3 May. Accessed April 19, 2014. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4779383.

[122] Ansell Ltd. 1985. "Dunlop Company Report / Company History & Listing Details."

[123] Delisted. 1970. "Universal Textile Australia Limited." 16 July. Accessed October 24, 2018. http://www.delisted.com.au/company/universal-textiles-australia-limited.

Alcorso became disillusioned with their business strategies which centred only on profit, rather than any commitment to making beautiful, high quality textile products.[124]

> There was no latitude for experiments. It was even suggested to close the new domestic textiles division Sheridan started some eighteen months earlier. …….. I was not present at a Board meeting when the representatives of the parent company, after perusal of negative reports from Sheridan, suggested its closure. Fortunately Paul Sonnino was there and he convinced then to temporise. Two years later Sheridan had become the most profitable division in the whole Dunlop Group.[125]

Claudio Alcorso had resigned from the Board of Dunlop Australia by 1970. His life took on a new direction when, at the suggestion of his friend H. C. (Nugget) Coombes, he took up residence in Sydney, becoming the first chairman of The Australian Opera.[126] Despite severing his connection with Dunlop, Alcorso continued to take an interest in textile design, often visiting Dunlop subsidiary Tennyson Textiles in Sydney to see what design work was being produced and talking to the textile designers.[127]

Dunlop retained UTA intact as a textile subsidiary and in the 1970-71 financial year the value of the company's fashion dress fabric exports had reached $1,250,000, rising to $1,500,000 the following financial year.[128]

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[124] Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say*, 91.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Ibid, 111.

[127] This information was provided by Jillian Clarke, former fashion and textile designer and teacher at TAFE NSW East Sydney and Ultimo College, who worked in the design team at Tennyson Textiles in the 1970s. Jillian also worked on many designs that Tennyson developed for the Sernack family business Rain'N'Shine Pty Ltd.

[128] Overseas Trading. 1972. "Fashion Fabrics in Demand." 4 August. Accessed April 29, 2020. https://nla.gov.au:443/tarkine/nla.obj-964693608.

'Alcorso' and 'Sekers Silk' had been retained as distinct textile brands. Both Andrew and Vera Kaldor continued their association with Sekers until 1976,[129] later becoming associated with the Entrad corporation owned by Abe Goldberg, who were shareholders in their son John's eponymous textile business (see section 7.8). Vera Kaldor later worked at John Kaldor Fabricmaker and other divisions of Entrad, including knitwear manufacturer United Clothing.[130] Andrew Kaldor later resumed a sales and marketing role in Sekers' Sydney office in the early 1980s.[131]

7.6   Sheridan after Alcorso

The Australian textile and fashion manufacturing industries moved into the early seventies under a continuing Government policy of tariff protection. The Whitlam Government had made a 25% reduction of tariffs across the board in 1973 in order slow Australia's high inflation rate.[132] The resulting flood of cheap textile and garment imports caused huge losses for local manufacturers. In 1973-74, textile imports grew by 43%, whilst clothing imports increased by 69%. Between 1971 and 1981, some 55,000 jobs had been lost in Australia's textile, clothing and footwear (TCF) industries.[133]

In 1978 a consortium of businessmen including Claudio Alcorso failed to gain assistance from the Tasmanian government to save the jobs of the remaining 343 weavers and screen-printers still employed by Dunlop at Sheridan's Derwent Park production facility. After closing Derwent Park, Dunlop moved some weaving machinery to the Prestige plant in Victoria,

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[129] Ragtrader. 1976. "Sekers Re-Sets its Sails." 15-30 April: 12.

[130] Ragtrader. 1978. "Senior Kaldors take new job." 1-15 May: 2.

[131] Andrew Kaldor managed the sales relationship between Sekers and the writer's family business Rain'N'Shine Pty Ltd's during the early to mid 1980s. Sekers supplied fancy evening wear fabrics for the company's FIA award winning brand 'Tussi' during this period.

[132] Michael Webber and Sally Weller. 2001, 19.
Barry Pestana. 1996. *Textiles and Apparel of Australia.* East Hawthorn, Victoria: Morescope Publishing Pty Ltd, 5.

[133] Ibid.

whilst printing machinery was relocated to Tennyson's factory in Gladesville, Sydney. Tasmanian personnel were offered positions at these locations, however, as this meant relocation to the mainland, few took up the offer.[134]

Australian manufacturers were not alone in facing strong competition from imports – most developed countries experienced similar conditions. Australia's quota arrangements, which limited the amount of textile imports to holders of quota, effectively maintained employment between 1977 and 1981. The Australian Government began to show concern for the future viability of its manufacturing industries given new international trends advocating the imminent dismantling of nearly a century of tariff-based trade protection. The Industries Assistance Commission (IAC) conducted an inquiry into reducing tariff-based assistance in 1980.[135]

This was followed by the formulation of a seven-year industry plan to increase TCF competitiveness in 1982, (ironically) titled 'The Button Plan' after the minister of the day. Quotas were removed from some textile classifications and a bounty was introduced for yarn production. Textile manufacturers were insulated from imported fabrics for some time, however garment manufacturers could import some textiles not manufactured in Australia free of duty.[136]

The importation of synthetic-fibre textiles, bed linen and clothing and footwear remained subject to tariff at that time, protecting business initiatives like Sheridan. Like Universal Textiles Australia, other textile and clothing manufacturing concerns had consolidated into large conglomerates, though a number of smaller enterprises persisted in niche textile production areas such as knitting. Initiatives like the Button Plan provided incentives for both

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[134] Ragtrader. 1978. "Hobart salvage fails." 1-15 May: 2.

[135] Ibid.

[136] Webber, Michael and Sally Weller. 2001. *Refashioning the Ragtrade: Internationalising Australia's Textiles, Clothing and Footwear Industries.* Sydney: University of NSW Press Ltd

clothing and textile manufacturers to export value added products overseas to remain competitive. Many Australian-based TCF businesses both large and small took advantage of assistance offered by Government organisations such as Austrade to create special export ranges.[137]

Sheridan continued its success in the Australasian market into the early 1980s. By then it had been purchased from Pacific Dunlop by Brenmoss, owned by Joseph Brender, who had founded mass market boutique chain Katies in the 1970s, in partnership with the Moss family. Brenmoss also owned other textile producers - Bruck Mills (Australia) and Actil, one of Sheridan's competitors in the Australian printed sheet market.[138] Brender's goal was to consolidate Actil and Sheridan's production pipeline and make Sheridan an international brand, leveraging the assistance available from the federal Government to build export markets. Once again Claudio Alcorso's vision of using Australian artists to design textiles with a unique point of difference was leveraged in a major marketing and design strategy leading up to the bicentennial celebration of Australia's of colonisation, which were planned for 1988.

By this time there was a resurgence of interest in artist-designed textiles, particularly those incorporating Australian motifs. Around the same period, Japanese and American tourists became interested in Aboriginal painting and artworks. New galleries appeared all over Australia, particularly on Queensland's Gold Coast and in Sydney, which were favourite international tourist destinations. In addition to Aboriginal painting and design, other new forms of 'Australiana' were becoming increasingly popular in fashion and graphic design as a means of demonstrating national pride, in the lead-up Australia's Bicentenary of Colonisation in 1988.

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[137] Pestana 1996, 5-6.
[138] Sheridan. 2012. "Our History." Accessed December 2, 2012. http://www.sheridanuk.com/History.

Bright, comic like, almost kitsch interpretations of uniquely Australian symbols such as flora, fauna, 'Aboriginalia' and iconic Australian tourist locations including Ayers Rock, the Sydney Harbour Bridge, Luna Park and the Sydney Opera House were incorporated into an ironic visual art style. Artists and designers working on a small scale began producing paintings, print editions, jewellery and objects such as chess sets, as well as costumes and one-off art clothes. The visual style of these works eventually trickled down into a commercial 'Australiana Pop' derivation that invaded visual communication, interior décor, textile design, fashion and accessory design.

In 1985 Sheridan, riding on the wave of the Australiana trend, invited Desert Designs, Jenny Kee and Ken Done into its design studios to discuss production of personalised sheet ranges that would promote Australian art, design and visual culture to international markets. The resulting Sheridan sheet collections were sold across Australia as well as internationally. Jenny Kee (1947-) had been designing clothes including picture-knit Australiana jumpers and selling textiles and fashion garments designed by her collaborator Linda Jackson (1950 -) in Flamingo Park in Sydney's Strand Arcade since 1973. Kee cited Margaret Preston as a major influence on her design work, expressing a desire to develop visual fashion culture based on Australian themes.[139] Kee's knitted 'Blinky' jumpers (famously worn by Princess Diana in October 1982) and her 'Koala', 'Kooka' and 'Kanga' cardigans had brought her international fame as an Australian fashion designer and were highly sought after by tourists. Internationally renowned Australian-born pop singer Olivia Newton-John saw an opportunity to cash in on a fervour for Australiana design, when she opened her 'Koala Blue' retail store in Los Angeles. Figure 7.34 shows the window display in the Koala Blue

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[139] Art Gallery of NSW. 1980. Project 33: Art Clothes (Exhibition Catalogue). Sydney: Art Gallery of NSW, 3.

store in Los Angeles, which sold knitwear designed by Kee, together with other Australian-designed products such as shoes and handbags (Figure 7.36).
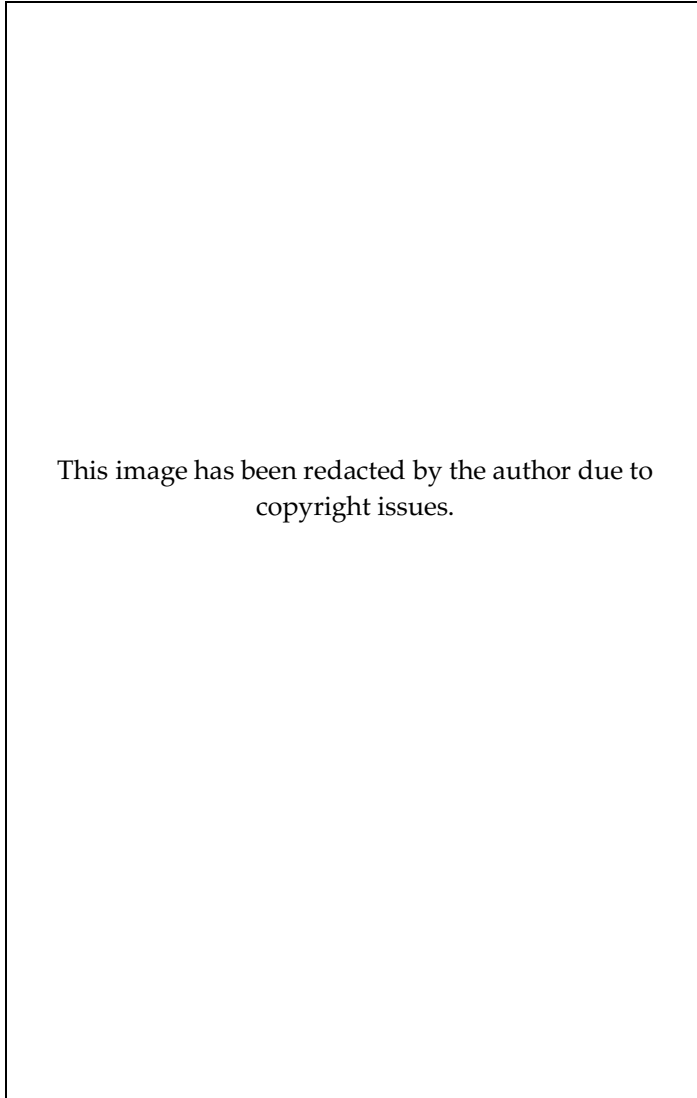
Figure 7.36 Window display in Olivia Newton John's Koala Blue store in Los Angeles, 1984.[140]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

Kee licensed a variation of the graphic of the design of her popular 'Kooka' sweater to Sheridan for production of a doona cover around the same time. Figure 7.37 is an illustration of a slightly faded 'Kooka' doona cover from Etsy, one of the vintage platforms on which eighties-era Sheridan sheet sets are routinely traded, showing that these artist-design bed linen remains popular and highly collectible in the twenty first century.

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[140] Mackay, Elina. 1984. *The Great Aussie Fashion: Australian Fashion Designers 1984-85.* McMahons Point NSW: Kevin Wheldon & Associates Pty Ltd, 256.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing the image was available at:
http://img3.etsystatic.com/008/0/5821067/il_fullxfull. 383335007_hrn1.jpg
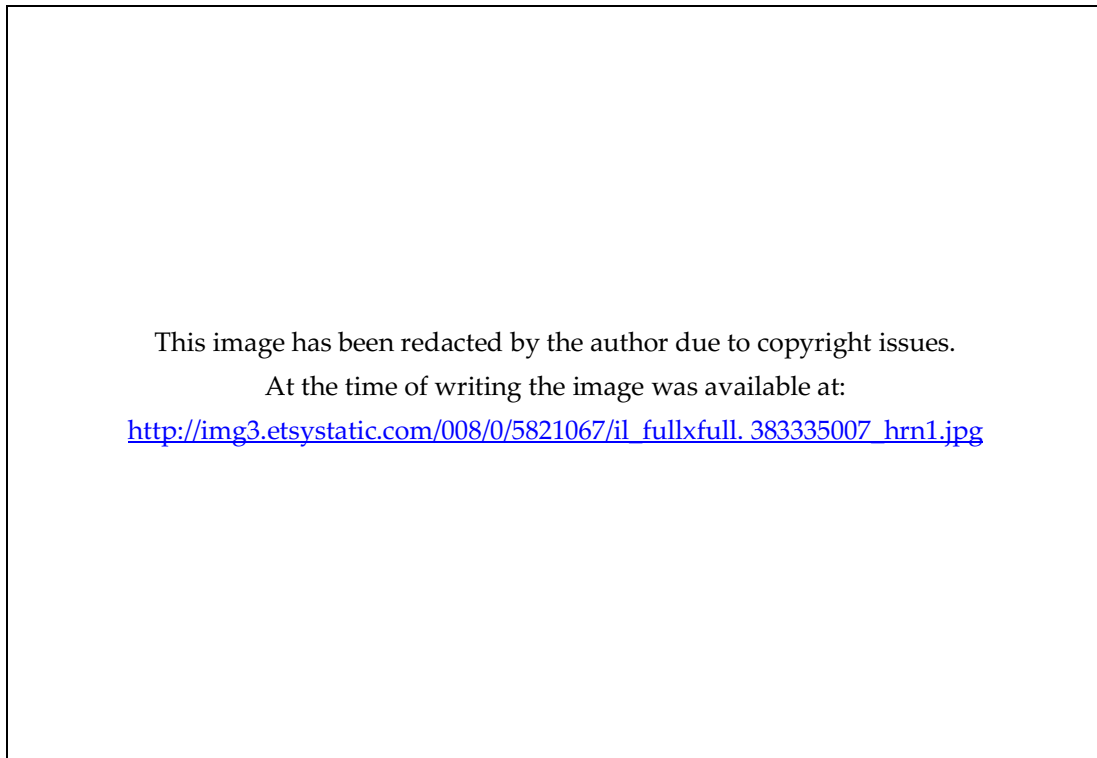
Figure 7.37 Jenny Kee, 'Kooka' doona cover for Sheridan, c1984.[141]

Artist and ex-advertising executive Ken Done's (1940 -) visual interpretation of Australia also incorporated flora and fauna (see Figure 7.38), but his early works were best known for their interpretations of Sydney Harbour, which were used often in advertising to promote Australia as a tourist destination at home and abroad. His colourful, minimalist graphics in bright pastels and strong primary colours had appeared initially on the covers of Sydney magazine Billy Blue and then on calendars, homewares and as placement prints on T-shirts. To capitalise on the popularity of his work and stay one step ahead of his many imitators, Done began a textile design and fashion business during the 1980s, selling printed t-shirts, sarongs and swimwear featuring his colourful, naïve interpretations of Sydney Harbour, Bondi Beach and Australian flora and fauna.[142] Done contributed several designs that were used

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[141] Jenny Kee. 1984. "Kooka doona cover for Sheridan." *Etsy.* Accessed February 3, 2013.
   http://img3.etsystatic.com/008/0/5821067/il_fullxfull. 383335007_hrn1.jpg.
[142] Ken Done. n.d. "Biography." Accessed December 16, 2019. https://kendone.com.au/about.php.
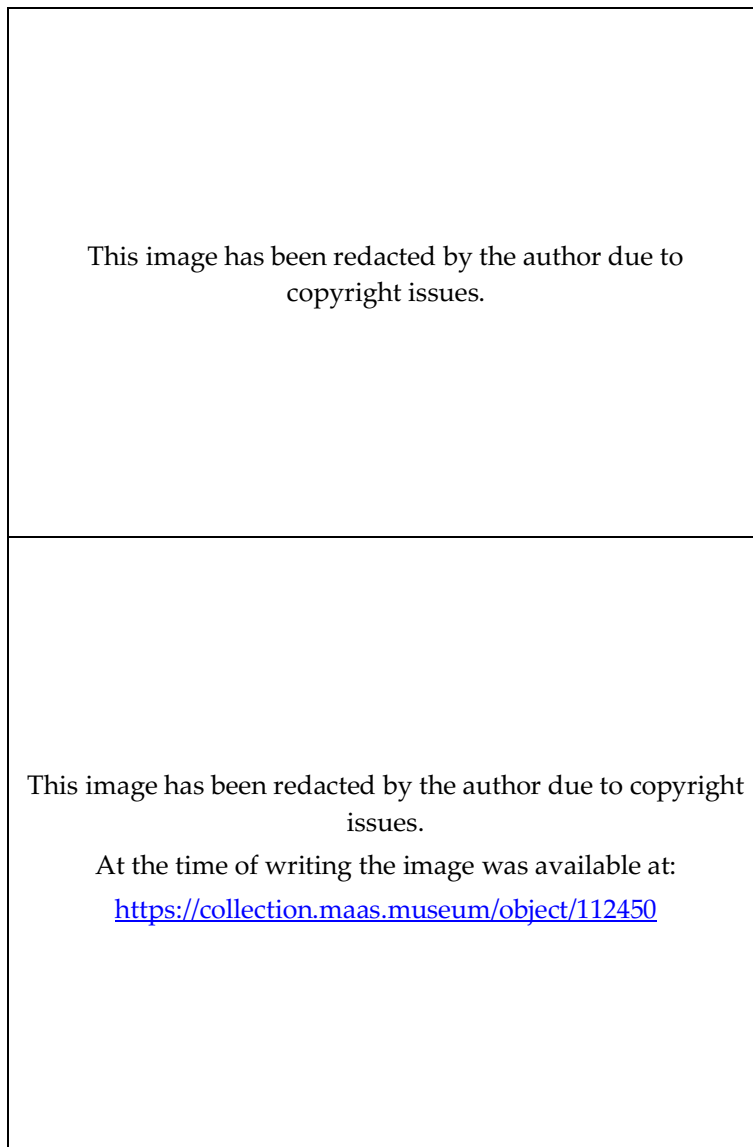
Figure 7.38 Ken Done, 'China Beach Triptych', 1986.[143]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

Figure 7.39 Ken Done, 'Coral Reef' doona cover for Sheridan, 1985.[144]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing the image was available at:
https://collection.maas.museum/object/112450

by Sheridan on doona cover sets, such as "Coral Reef" (Figure 7.39), based on Australia's tropical fish and polychromatic coral from the Great barrier reef of the coast of Queensland.

Interest in authentic works by indigenous artists, together with incentives from the Australian government to start commercial businesses encouraged number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists to design textiles that

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[143] Ken Done. 1986. "China Beach Tripdytch." *Art Brokerage.* Accessed July 23, 2019. https://www.artbrokerage.com/Ken-Done. Original oil painting 37 x 133cm.
[144] Ken Done. 1985. "Coral Reef doona cover for Sheridan." *Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences.* Accessed July 23, 2019. https://collection.maas.museum/object/112450.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

Figure 7.40 Jimmy Pike, 'First Light' doona cover for Sheridan, 1987.[145]

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[145] Jimmy Pike. 1987. "First Light doona cover for Sheridan." *Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences.* Accessed March 24, 2019. https://collection.maas.museum/object/73365. Polyester/cotton, width 140cm.

were produced by cooperatives for retail sale or sold to local clothing manufacturers. Jimmy Pike (c1940-2002), a Walmajarri man from the Great Sandy Desert in Western Australia, established himself as a textile designer in the 1980s. His artworks were first noticed by two art teachers who worked with him whilst he served a jail sentence in Western Australia during the early 1980s. Pike drew initially in texta but began working with lino-cut printing after a printing press was purchased by the jail.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
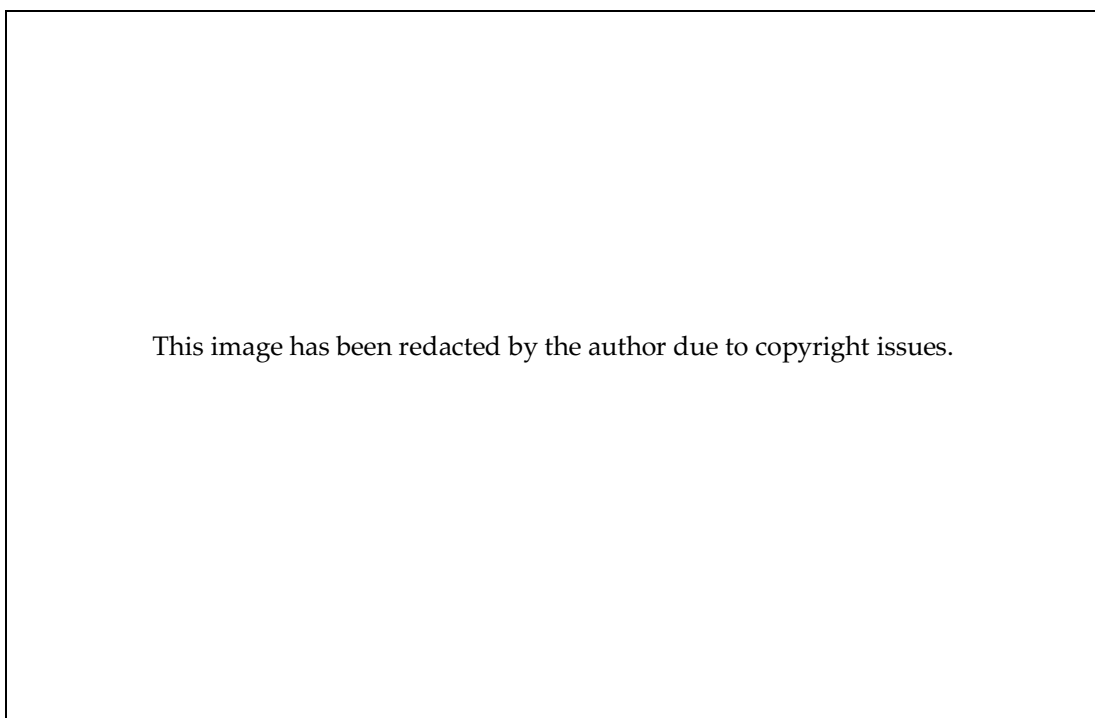
Figure 7.41 Jimmy Pike, Desert Design bedlinen designed for Sheridan, 1986.[146]

Renowned as brilliant colourist, his textile designs (Figures 7.40-7.42) were shown in galleries alongside his paintings. Jimmy Pike collaborated with Peter Skipper and Daisy Napaltjarri to access and learn printing techniques not normally available in remote areas. Works were produced either as pieces of art, or as designs for fabric. Pike's art was so extraordinary that it inspired his former teachers from Fremantle Prison, Stephen Culley and David Wroth, to launch a business called "Desert Designs" in 1985 to showcase Pike's work.

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[146] Art Gallery of Western Australia. 1995. *Jimmy Pike, Desert Designs 1981-1995 (Exhibition Catalogue).* Perth, WA: Art Gallery of Western Australia, 67.

Sheridan first licensed Pike's design 'First Light' in 1987. During the 1990s, Pike's prints appeared on everything from bed linen, to accessories as well as garments ranging from high fashion to sportswear.[147] Sheridan sheet and doona sets featuring designs by Jenny Kee, Ken Done and Desert Designs sold well in Australia, the US and Japan and were sought after by Japanese tourists visiting Australia. Brenmoss' goal for Sheridan to become global brand was finally realised. Its products was distributed across the United States and were sold in a company owned flagship store on Madison Ave and 57th Street in New York City and in major department stores including Macy's and The Federation Group. They also appeared in Japan in department stores such as Daimaru.[148] With sales outlets ranging from South East Asia to the United States, Sheridan was at one time making 110 different sizes of bed linen to comply with every shape and size of beds and pillows worldwide.

Sheridan was subsequently purchased from Brenmoss by CS Brooks of Canada in 1996 and ironically, came full circle to be once again owned by Pacific Brands, a corporation that evolved out of Dunlop Australia.[149] At the time of writing (May, 2020) Sheridan Australia Pty Ltd is now owned by Hanes Australasia Limited, part of the global organisation Hanes Brands Incorporated.[150] In October 2014 Sheridan launched 'The Modern Art Series'(Figures 7.42-7.43) paying homage to Claudio Alcorso as the founder of the company. Sheridan commissioned a collection of new designs from twenty-first century textile artists, honouring the tradition established in the Modernage collection …"to bring artistic flair into your home"[151].

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[147] K. Wells. 2011. "Review: Jimmy Pike and Desert Design in Ningbo." *Craft Australia.* 18 March. Accessed April 6, 2017.
www.craftaustralia.org.au/library/review.php?id=jimmy_pike_desert_designs.

[148] Sheridan. 2012. *About us.* Accessed December 2, 2012. http://www.sheridan.com.au/about-us.

[149] Sheridan. 2012. *Our story.* Accessed December 2, 2012. http://www.sheridan.com.au/our-story.

[150] Hanes Australasia Limited. n.d. "Sheridan." Accessed May 13, 2020.
https://www.hanesaustralasia.com/our-brands/sheridan/.

[151] Sheridan. 2014. Inspired Living: Spring Summer 2014 Catalogue. Sheridan.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

Figure 7.42 Sheridan's Modern Art Series, 2014 – A homage to Claudio Alcorso.[152]

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[152] Ibid, 4.

153 Ibid, 5.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

Figure 7.43 Sheridan's Modern Art Series, 2014 – A homage to Claudio Alcorso.[153]

153 Ibid, 5.

In 2017 Sheridan again recalled their previous success in marketing artist-designed bed-linen during the 1980s by producing a new collection designed by Ken Done, who undertook a series of personal appearances in Sheridan stores during August of that year. It is somewhat ironic that it was not Modernage but Sheridan, a brand created by Claudio Alcorso to utilise the vertically integrated production capacity of UTA, that became and remains a successful vehicle for promoting an Australian art and design idiom both locally and internationally.

Figure 7.44 Ken Done doona cover for Sheridan, 2017.[154]

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[154] Ken Done. 2017. 'Doona cover for Sheridan.' Author's photograph.
   Photograph taken in Westfield Bondi Junction, Sydney on 4 August 2017.

7.7 Claudio Alcorso and John Kaldor

The formation of Universal Textiles Australia in 1967 brought new management capability into the business in the form of Tennyson manager Emery Yass who, together with Andrew, Vera and John Kaldor, provided some release for Claudio to engage with his other interests, including the development of his winery at Moorilla (refer Appendix A) and building his extensive collection of artworks.

One of Alcorso's lifetime interests was the fostering of the visual arts, a factor that had inspired the development of the Modernage collection. He found a like-minded colleague in John Kaldor, son of Vera and Andrew, first employed as his assistant and later as design and marketing manager at UTA. In the late 1960s Alcorso and Kaldor collaborated on two major initiatives that would associate the Alcorso and Sekers brands with Australian visual arts.

7.7.1 *Alcorso-Sekers Travelling Scholarship Award for Sculpture'*

Claudio Alcorso was somewhat of a mentor for John Kaldor and the Modernage collection was undoubtedly an inspiration behind his Sekers' Artists Originals collection of 1963 (See section 7.2.5). In 1966 Alcorso and Kaldor collaborated to establish the 'Alcorso-Sekers Travelling Scholarship Award for Sculpture'. Unlike the 'Leroy Alcorso Signature Print Competition' of the 1950s, this initiative would not result in new products for Alcorso's business. Instead, it would enable the creation and exhibition of new Australian sculptures in Melbourne and Sydney and provide cash prize money for a talented sculptor to travel internationally. On the announcement of the scholarship in July 1965, Claudio was quoted as saying:

> Sculpture is one of the first arts and should be a natural
> medium in this country, yet it has been neglected. We are
> an outdoor nation and sculpture is the medium which is
> meant to be enjoyed outdoors. What this city needs is

> more fountains, more sculptures on our new buildings.
>
> The very wide gap which existed in this country between
>
> the fine arts and applied arts has begun to narrow and
>
> we want to see it close even further.[155]

Alcorso was an avid collector of sculpture. He was photographed on several occasions with sculptural works located on his property at Moorilla. Figure 7.44 shows him proudly gazing on his favourite sculpture, a figurative sculpture by Italian sculptor Pino Conte called 'Pia'. It is a streamlined bronze seated figure, that sat near the shoreline at his property Moorilla, gazing across the Derwent River (Figure 7.45). Moorilla was at one time home to one of Arnaldo Pomodoro's iconic bronze spherical sculptures, bisected by protruding small cubes emerging teeth-like from its centre (Figure 7.47). Neither 'Pia' or the Pomodoro sculpture remain on site of MONA. According to Claudio's daughter Caroline Alcorso, the sculptures were sold to fund investment in Alcorso's winery in the 1990s.[156]

The first exhibition of thirty-seven entries from the Alcorso-Sekers Travelling Scholarship Award was held at the Art Gallery of NSW on 27 July 1966.[157] The prize money of £1,000 had attracted entries from NSW, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia selected by the state's art galleries and was judged by a panel including Eric Westbrook, Tony Tuckson, Sydney Ancher, John Kaldor and Alcorso.

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[155] The Sydney Morning Herald. 1965. "£1,000 AWARD: Scholarship for sculptors." 30 July. Accessed March 24, 2018. http://smharchives.smedia.com.au/Olive/APA/smharchive/Print.Article.aspx?mode=image&href=SMH%2F1965%2F07%2F30&id=Ar00402.

[156] Caroline Alcorso. Interview by Tracey Sernack- Chee Quee. 2016. (13 November).

[157] Steven Scheding. 1966. "Art." *Tharunka.* 9 August. Accessed August 7, 2019. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article230414602.

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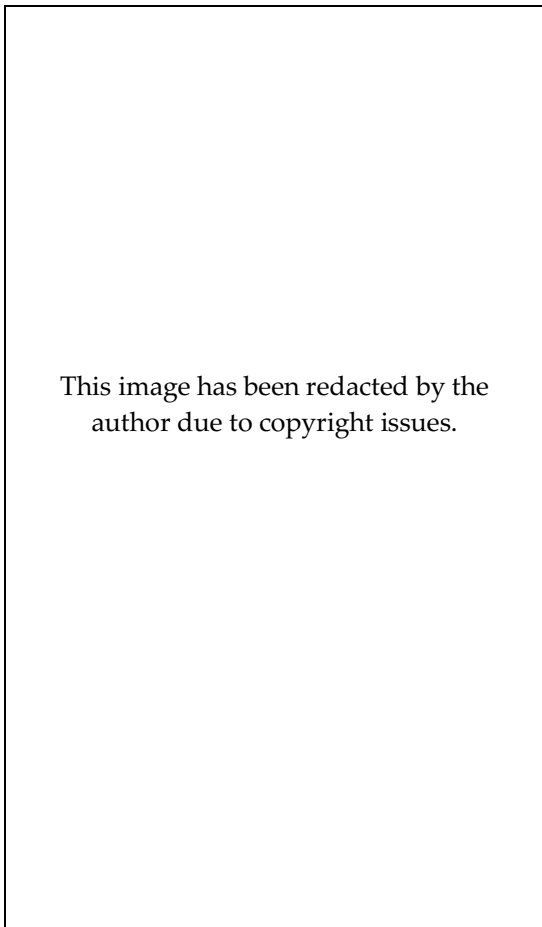
Figure 7.46 Claudio Alcorso with his favourite sculpture, 'Pia', a bronze by Pino Conte, 1974.[159]

Figure 7.45 Pino Conte's 'Pia' gazing across the Derwent from Moorilla.[158]

Figure 7.47 Bronze sculpture by Arnaldo Pomodoro (1926-) at Moorilla.[160]

The entrants in 1966 represented the crème of Australia's sculptors, including Col Jordan, Michael Kitching, Robert Parr, Ken Reinhard and George Baldessin, who won the award that year, choosing to spend the scholarship money on travel to Japan.[161]

The 1967 sculpture competition, with prize money of $2,000 was co-sponsored by the Italian cruise line Flotto Lauro. It was judged at the Art Gallery of NSW by a panel that included Australian sculptor Lyndon Dadswell, gallery director and Modernage veteran Hal Missingham and John

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[158] Photograph courtesy of Caroline Alcorso. Used with permission.

[159] Garry Bailey. 1974. "Making the desert bloom." *The Mercury, Hobart*, 4 April: 16.

[160] Photograph courtesy of Caroline Alcorso. Used with permission.

[161] Jenny Zimmer. 1993. "Baldessin, George Victor Joseph (1939–1978)." *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Accessed August 21, 2019. http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/baldessin-george-victor-joseph-9412.

Kaldor.[162] Arnaldo Pomodoro had originally agreed to judge the award, however, he was unfortunately ill in hospital in Milan and unable to travel to Australia.[163] That year Michael Kitching won the $2,000 prize, travelling on a Flotto Lauro ship to Europe, where he spent two years with his wife Antonia travelling through Greece, Spain, Italy, Germany, France and Denmark.[164]

In 1968 the competition moved from Sydney to Melbourne, where it attracted a record fifty-five entries. It was hosted and judged at the National Gallery of Victoria in an exhibition opened by Dame Zara Holt (wife of Prime Minister Harold Holt, who had disappeared the year before). Judges included Eric Westbrook, then director of the NGV; architect Robin Boyd and John Kaldor. That year the competition was won by Michael Young, an assistant exhibitions officer at the NGV. His $2,000 prize funded a tour of South-East Asian countries sailing with Flotta Lauro.[165] The competition continued once again in 1969, but it was overshadowed by another of John Kaldor's contemporary art initiatives that captured the attention of the entire art world.

7.7.2   *Wrapped Coast, One Million Square Feet*

According to the Sydney Morning Herald, when it was completed in 1969, 'Wrapped Coast', an installation by Christo and Jeanne-Claude at Little Bay in Sydney, was the largest single artwork in the world. More than 100 people, including professional mountain climbers, art teachers and students enabled the realisation of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's artistic vision (Figure 7.48).[166]

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[162] Art Gallery of NSW. 1967. *"Alcorso-Sekers" Travelling Scholarship Award for Sculpture.* Sydney: Art Gallery of NSW, 4.

[163] Elwyn Lynn. 1967. "Stuffed Shirts - The Alcorso-Sekers Sculpture Prize." *The Bulletin.* 25 November. Accessed February 5, 2019. https://nla.gov.au:443/tarkine/nla.obj-688146897.

[164] The Australian Women's Weekly. 1970. "Their Home is a Converted Stable: Antonia and Mike Kitching." 27 June. Accessed August 7, 2019. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4891826 & http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4891827.

[165] The Canberra Times. 1968. "Big Sculpture Prize Awarded." 19 November. Accessed December 17, 2018. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article136956224.

[166] The Sydney Morning Herald. 2013. "Kaldor unwrapped." 22 February. Accessed March 26, 2018. http://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/kaldor-unwrapped-20130218-2emm8.html.

The fabric used by Christo and Jean-Claude to wrap Little Bay was obtained from Universal Textiles Australia.[167] It was a durable, agricultural grade textile designed to suppress weeds, another of the specialised textile products developed by the business to ensure their viability when it became difficult to compete with the lower prices of imported fashion fabrics from Asia (See section 7.2.3 Product diversification). According to Caroline Alcorso, both Claudio and her mother Lesley volunteered their labour to 'Wrapped Coast'.[168]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing the image was available at:
https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/exhibitions/40-years-kaldor-public-art-projects/.
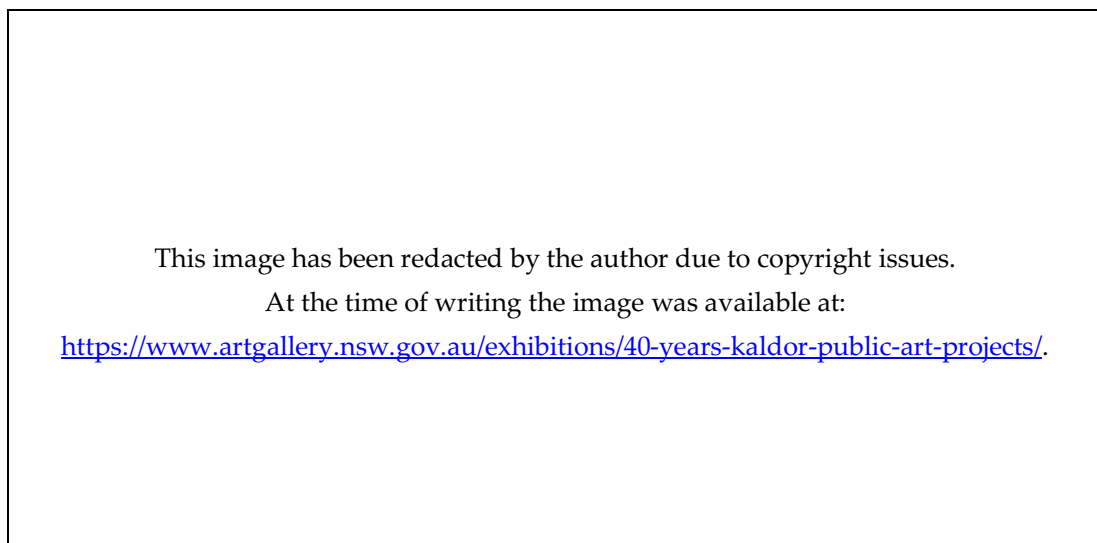
Figure 7.48 Christo and Jeanne-Claude 'Wrapped Coast, One Million Square Feet', Little Bay, Sydney, Australia, 1968-9.[169]

Not long after the completion of 'Wrapped Coast', John Kaldor decided to leave UTA, which had been recently taken over by Dunlop (see section 7.5.3). He decided to establish his own textile business, calling it 'John Kaldor Fabricmaker'. Like Claudio Alcorso, Kaldor had become disillusioned by the management style of Dunlop and was quoted in the Sydney Morning Herald as saying:

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[167] Ibid.

[168] Caroline Alcorso, interview by Tracey Sernack- Chee Quee. 2016. (13 November).

[169] Harry Shunk.© Christo. 1969. "Wrapped Coast, One Million Square Feet, Little Bay, Sydney, Australia." *Art Gallery of NSW.* Accessed March 24, 2019.
https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/exhibitions/40-years-kaldor-public-art-projects/.

> I must say that one of the reasons for starting my own
> company was that the directors of Universal Textiles
> (Dunlop) were so appalled by the Christo thing that they
> really wanted nothing to do with it.[170]

Alcorso was also planning his departure from the board of Dunlop. Despite his support for 'Wrapped Coast', Kaldor completed the Christo project on his own. 'Wrapped Coast' became the first of many Kaldor Public Art projects brought to Australia over the next fifty years.

7.8   John Kaldor Fabricmaker

John Kaldor Fabricmaker was a cutting edge, design-focused fabric house that would go on to supply high-end fashion designers, manufacturers, interior designers, department and retail fabric stores across Australia and New Zealand. In many ways, Kaldor filled the gap in the industry created by the departure of Claudio Alcorso in 1970, the year that Kaldor opened his business. Kaldor expanded into Britain and the United States, and like his godfather Miki Sekers, he succeeded in breaking into the Parisian market, supplying Christian Dior with a strawberry print for the 1973 European summer collection that had been sold in Australia the year before. Kaldor also supplied designer Nina Ricci and had shown several paisley designs to the then first lady of the United States, Mrs Betty Ford.[171]

Kaldor's Sydney offices were located in a converted factory building in Riley Street, in the heart of the rag trade district of Surry Hills. The impressive, all-white interiors and gleaming chrome sculptures were designed by Australian sculptor Mike Kitching, who had won the Alcorso-Sekers Travelling Scholarship in 1967 (Figures 7.49 and 7.50). Kitching described the

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[170] Patricia Angly. 1976. "Catalyst for a rag trade prince." *The Australian*, 4 May: 10.

[171] Helen Hutcheon. 1975. "Australian fabric picked for Paris." *The Australian Women's Weekly.* 30 July. Accessed October 8, 2016. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4467054.

waiting room, made of Perspex, glass and aluminium as "a psychology room". The walls and ceilings were covered with mirrors, creating multiple reflections. Kitching also designed the showrooms for Kaldor's premises in Melbourne. Visiting the John Kaldor showrooms was like visiting and art gallery that sold really great fabrics. Like Alcorso before him, Kaldor continued to draw inspiration from the visual arts for his textile designs. In 1976, The Australian reported that Kaldor had brought out furnishing fabrics inspired by the works of Matisse and American painters Kenneth Noland and Morris Louis.[172]

By 1995 Kaldor's business operated globally, with branch offices in New York, London and Osaka.[173] His interest in contemporary visual arts escalated during this period. In 1973 he brought performance artists Gilbert and George to Australia.[174] He later brought Sol LeWitt, Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik to Australia. In 1984 he curated exhibitions of the work of Mike Parr, Imants Tiller and Ken Unsworth travelling to New York and Washington.[175] Art critic Sandra McGrath described Kaldor in The Australian as "….a one man Medici", noting that the 1984 travelling exhibitions he curated - titled An Australian Accent - were the first major exhibition of Australian contemporary art shown in New York. McGrath also identified Kaldor as an international art identity who was "…an active member of the Museum of Modern Art's International Council.[176] John Kaldor moved the business to Alexandria in the 1980s, scaling down considerably in the early 2000s, when he decided to take his interest and connections with the contemporary art world to a much higher level.

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172 Patricia Angly. 1976. "Catalyst for a rag trade prince." *The Australian*, 4 May: 10.
173 Sally Loane. 1995. "John Kaldor." *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 September: n.p.
174 Angly 1976.
175 Loane 1995.
176 Sandra McGrath. 1984. "Kaldor's 'exports' get a change of direction." *The Australian Weekend Magazine*, 24-25 March: 13.

Figure 7.49 John Kaldor in his showroom with fabrics from his collection, July 1975.

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At the time of writing the image was available at:

http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4467054

Figure 7.50 Naomi Kaldor draped in John Kaldor paisley, near a sculpture by Mike Kitching, July 1975.[177]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

At the time of writing the image was available at:

http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4467054

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[177] Hutcheon, Helen. 1975. "Australian fabric picked for Paris." *The Australian Women's Weekly.* 30 July. Accessed October 8, 2016. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4467054.

In an interview conducted by Christine Edwards for the Australian National Library in 2015-16, Kaldor said that he had begun to lose interest in the textile industry and was determined to concentrate on his passion for visual arts.[178] In 2020 John Kaldor is best known as a patron and collector of contemporary art. Few of the people that attend exhibitions of contemporary art works that he has donated to the Art Gallery of NSW are even aware that he began his career as a textile designer working as the assistant to Claudio Alcorso.

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[178] John Kaldor, interview by Christine Edwards. 2015-2016.

8 CONCLUSION

8.1 Significance of this research

8.1.1 The agency of Claudio Alcorso on Australian textiles

This research demonstrates that Claudio Alcorso and his businesses STP and UTA had a significant agency on the Australian textile industry between 1946 and 1970. Though Alcorso was not the first to commission print designs from Australian artists, he brought the cultural phenomenon of artist-designed textiles into the mainstream of Australian fashion and textile production.

The low levels of Australian textile print production prior to the arrival of the Italian Alcorso family suggest that it was unlikely that any other local commercial textile printer would have taken the risk of speculatively producing a large collection of artist-designed textiles for general consumption.[1] Without the cosmopolitan Alcorso's acceptance of the place of art in textile printing, supported by intelligence from a network of international intermediaries producing artist-designed textiles overseas, Modernage and the subsequent collections that it inspired may not have been produced.

The Modernage collection was the first of a number of commercial, artist-designed textile print collections commissioned by Alcorso, his business clients and associates and his Australian competitors. Without the precedent of Modernage, the Grafton Textile Design Prize, initiated in Australia by its British parent the Calico Printer's Association, may not have been introduced

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[1] Marion Best Fabrics was the first Australian company to commission Australian artists to design textile prints (see Chapter 4), preceding the Modernage collection by approximately ten years. However, the designs she commissioned were for mostly for specific interior design projects for her interior design business. Though it is unclear whether the textiles were also retailed by Best, they were not produced in large quantities for sale in draperies and department stores throughout Australia, as was the intention of the Alcorsos.

in 1951.[2] This British cooperative made up of textile printers and merchants had a huge back catalogue of commercially proven, artist-designed patterns from the UK that could have been transformed and recoloured for Australian audiences, yet they chose to initiate a competition with an attractive cash prize for Australian artists. Modernage had demonstrated that Australia had talented artists and designers capable of developing original textile prints for fashion and furnishing. The Grafton Prize ran successfully in Australia until December 1953, when it was withdrawn due to the introduction that year of the Leroy-Alcorso Signature Print Textile Design Competition, also inspired by Modernage.[3]

Alcorso's enjoyed a successful business partnership with British textile producer Miki Sekers, who also had a significant track record in commissioning artist-designed textiles (see Chapters 5 and 6). Andrew and Vera Kaldor, who managed the Australian franchise of Sekers together with their son John, initiated the Sekers 'Art in Décor' collection designed by Australian artists in February 1963. Styled by John Kaldor, the collection was an idea not only derived from Miki Sekers' track record of commissioning artist-designed textiles, but also an acknowledgement of Alcorso's Modernage. It opened at the Dominion Art Gallery, where, in a direct homage to the display schematics used by STP in 1946, paintings by Australian artists were hung directly next to the printed textiles that they inspired (Figures 8.1 and 8.2).

The revival of artist-designed textiles by Sekers in 1963 may have in turn been the inspiration for RH Taffs and Tennyson Textiles 'Contemporary Art Prize' that same year. Emery Yass of Tennyson had formerly worked for

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[2] The Australian Women's Weekly. 1951. "New contest for fabric designs." 12 September. Accessed December 27, 2018. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4389898.

[3] The Age. 1953. "Industrial Design Standards." Friday December. Accessed December 17, 2018. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article206915058.

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At the time of writing the image was available at:

https://maas.museum/inside-the-collection/2015/07/29/shirley-martin-australian-industrial-designer/.
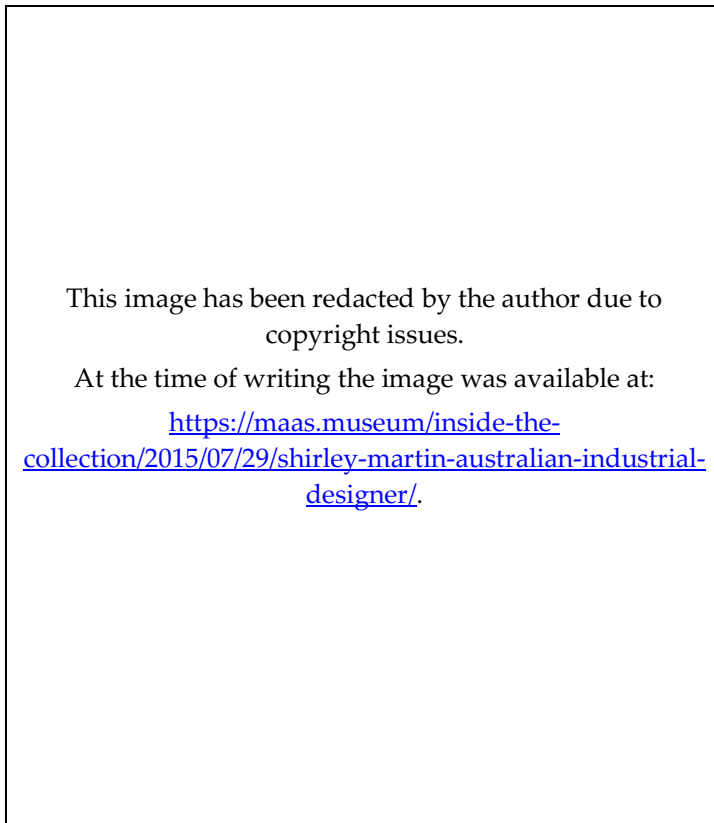
Figure 8.1 Display of textile artwork and fabric designed by Russell Drysdale, Modernage, 1946.[4]

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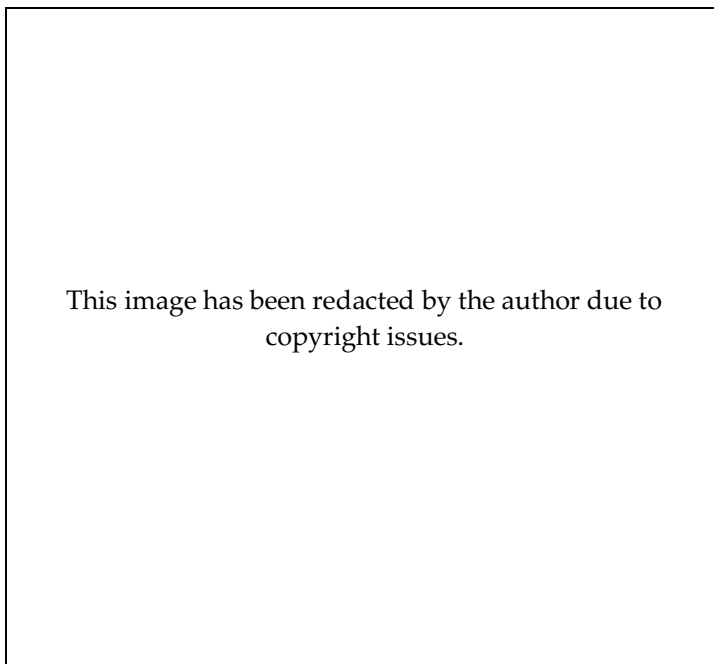
Figure 8.2 Display of textile artwork and fabric designed by James Gleeson, Sekers Art in Décor, 1963.[5]

[4] Van de Ven, Anne-Marie. 2015. "Shirley Martin: Australian industrial designer." *Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences.* 29 July. Accessed July 15, 2019. https://maas.museum/inside-the-collection/2015/07/29/shirley-martin-australian-industrial-designer/.

[5] Clothing News. 1963. "Australian Art in Furnishing Fabrics." February (VIC : Thompson Publications, 1947-1968) Sydney, State Library of NSW: 40-41.

the Alcorso's, helping them to establish STP before World War II and was obviously aware of all of their business initiatives. It is logical to assume that Yass would have seen Sekers' success with artist-designed furnishing fabrics as an indication that a new textile competition along the lines of Leroy-Alcorso Signature Print Textile Design Competition ten years earlier would be well received and that consumers who had bought 'Art in Décor' furnishings for their home would buy fashion garments styled from original artist-designed prints.

Sheridan, arguably Alcorso's most successful brand development, also owes its international success to the strategy of using artist-designed prints. The collection began with sheets printed with graphic sixties floral patterns, later branching out to other conventional print designs such as polka dots, hearts, stripes and checks. Both Bradmill and Actil also produced patterned cotton sheets along similar lines to Sheridan, but neither of these companies commissioned artist designed prints for bed-linen. It may be argued that Sheridan entered this niche area as a direct result of the company's heritage of using artist-designed prints, initiated by Alcorso. 'Australiana' designs by Jenny Kee, Ken Done and Desert Designs became popular in Japan and the United States during the early 1980s, triggering international fame that helped to established Sheridan as a global brand.[6]

It may also be argued that without Alcorso's agency, John Kaldor, who worked as his assistant and later as marketing manager at UTA ,may not have started 'John Kaldor Fabricmaker' if not for his involvement with both Alcorso and Sekers. After the takeover of UTA by Dunlop Industries in 1969, the focus of print development moved away from design and quality to volume-oriented production. Under Dunlop's management he was encouraged:

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[6]   Mackay, Elina. 1984. *The Great Aussie Fashion: Australian Fashion Designers 1984-85.* McMahons Point NSW: Kevin Wheldon & Associates Pty Ltd,

> …to feed a hungry mill with work. If it meant knocking
>
> off somebody else's prints or it even meant printing
>
> designs for markdowns it didn't matter. ….'I learned
>
> how not to do things,' he recalls. 'And when I started the
>
> new company I knew what the goals had to be'.[7]

John Kaldor Fabricmaker filled a gap in the market for high-end original textile prints created when Alcorso left the industry. Kaldor and his internal design team continued to produce original pattern designs at John Kaldor Fabricmaker throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s in the Alcorso tradition. Without the relationship Alcorso and Kaldor, the 'Alcorso Sekers Travelling Scholarship' would not have existed and Christo and Jeanne Claude would have had to look further afield for the textiles to use in 'Wrapped Coast'.[8] In 2019, John Kaldor celebrated fifty years of contemporary art projects that had begun with 'Wrapped Coast', which had begun as a conversation between Kaldor and Christo to participate in the 'Alcorso Sekers Travelling Scholarship'.[9] This competition can be regarded as a key influence on Kaldor's subsequent engagement with international contemporary art projects.

8.1.2   *Claudio Alcorso, culture and commerce*

Claudio Alcorso brought a new focus on the arts and culture to the Australian textile industry. He did not compartmentalise commerce and culture. It was natural for him to incorporate cultural pursuits such as the enjoyment of art into his businesses to improve the personal satisfaction of his workers and further his own business success. He recognised the importance of integrating art and industry at STP and UTA, creating world class original products and

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[7]   Ragtrader. 1980. "A decade with John Kaldor." 1 June (NSW : 1972-1994) Sydney: State Library of NSW: 19

[8]   The Sydney Morning Herald. 2013. "Kaldor unwrapped." 22 February. Accessed March 26, 2018. http://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/kaldor-unwrapped-20130218-2emm8.html.

[9]   Ibid.

fostering an inclusive and supportive corporate culture. As Eric Hearnshaw, STP's accountant and business manager throughout World War II observed:

> The managers of STP have not got radios blazing all day for the "benefit" of the girls; they do not give them permanent waves. They do, however, help them to find their own personality, to have aims in their lives. The result is that they do not feel that they are working on a tread mill, but that they are part of a living organization. They have ambitions and are keenly interested in their jobs. This means much to the girls and to the factory.[10]

Rather than making money from selling cheap, poorly rationalised imitations of top selling textile designs from overseas markets, Alcorso invested in art training to enable his in-house textile designers to create their own original print designs. He made his businesses attractive places to work through initiatives that included providing art training and modern, architect-designed housing at realistic prices. Alcorso's investment in creating a culture of art and design made working for him enjoyable and fulfilling and it enhanced his businesses' capability to develop original textile designs.

In a 1979 interview with Hilary Webster conducted by University of Tasmania, Alcorso observed that a liking or respect for the arts was frowned upon when he arrived in Australia. Those who had respect for the arts were suspected of being depraved. He was astonished. Alcorso regarded art as being ….."the most important in terms of human development. The only thing that remains of a civilization."[11] He wanted to change perceptions about art

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[10] Hearnshaw, Eric. 1947. "The Social Functions of Fashion." In *A New Approach to Textile Designing,* by Claudio Alcorso, 36-37. Sydney: Sydney Ure Smith.

[11] Claudio Alcorso. 1979. "Claudio Alcorso interviewed for the University of Tasmania Oral History Project 1978 - 1983." *University of Tasmania.* 23 June. Accessed May 28, 2014. http://eprints.utas.edu.au/16629/1/alcorso-UT388-2-1.mp3.

and design, and prove that they can have a valuable place in Australian industry.

8.1.3 The interaction of textile and fashion producers

This account of Claudio Alcorso and post-war textile culture reveals new insights into interactions between Australian fashion manufacturers and intermediaries including textile agents, wholesalers and mills producing and printing textile piece-goods worn by or decorating the homes of many middle-class Australians. This area of fashion and textile production in Australia has received limited academic investigation to date.

Australian fashion designers who have been examined from a scholarly perspective were mainly haute couture designers that dressed women in the top echelons of Australian society. This study reveals information about the collaborations between textile producers and mainstream women's fashion houses including Cole of California, The House of Leroy, RH Taffs and John J Hilton. It therefore makes a new contribution to understanding middle-class taste in the post-war era. It explains how textile wholesalers including Sekers, Martin & Savage and Makower McBeath collaborated with mills and converters like STP and Tennyson Textiles to produce their own seasonal collections for niche fashion manufacturers and for retail sale through draperies and department stores to supply home sewers.

This account demonstrates the importance of textile print design in creating fashion. It takes more than good garment design to make a fashion story. Good fashion collections are created by a combination of both good garment and textile design, which are used to differentiate and diversify consumer fashion products. It enables fashion consumers to look distinctive and individual and brings the aesthetic pleasure of good design into everyday life, making wearers of fashion confident and proud.

8.1.4 New opportunities in printed textile production

This research illustrates the integral contribution of original art and design to commercial success in the textile industry during the second half of the twentieth century. Alcorso and other producers of artist-designed textiles including Ascher and Sekers are memorable in the history of textile design because their products were significantly more interesting and visually appealing than those of makers who chose to produce appropriated and poorly resolved designs for short-term financial gain.

Twenty-first century fashion and furnishing producers have an opportunity to revisit strategies used by late twentieth-century textile entrepreneurs, involving artists and designers in creating new patterns that can be easily and quickly realised using sustainable twenty-first century digital inkjet-printing technologies. The application of pattern and surface decoration is no longer limited to wallpaper or textiles used in soft furnishings and clothing. Patterns are increasingly being produced for the surfaces of buildings, interiors, vehicles and packaging. Advances in additive printing technologies sill create further opportunities for the integration of pattern into plastic, metal and other substrates for use in industrial and product design, fashion, interior and architectural products.

Pattern remains an important and cost-effective means for manufacturers to identify and diversify their products without investing in the development of alternative product categories. Digital textile printers can run short jobs at a fraction of the cost and setup time and are making even one-off personalised pieces affordable. While the fashion industry is increasingly interested as it shies away from mass production, interior decoration is another market as curtains, blinds, furniture upholstery and carpets can now be customised with premium patterns. There are also opportunities for the licensing of pattern across product categories to facilitate design collaborations

In 2012, the global textile printing industry alone was valued at a trillion dollars. A study that year by research company 'InfoTrends' found that the digitally printed textile garments, décor and industrial products were responsible for US$10.3 billion of that value in that year. [12] According to industry forum 'Textile World', England-based consultants Smithers Pira forecast a 17.5-percent growth digital textile printing market over the period 2018 to 2021 and beyond.[13]

The history of the Alcorso's involvement in the textile culture of post-war Australia is instructive for future generations of creative practitioners. It demonstrates that art and design were never merely leisure pursuits. They were valuable capabilities that created jobs and export earnings in the past and have the potential do so once again in the twenty-first century. Australian art and design talent can be leveraged to provide jobs in sustainable new industries with the potential to provide well-designed products that will generate aesthetic pleasure, jobs and economic growth.

Australia has an opportunity to develop a manufacturing industry for pattern-based products with the potential to stimulate the local economy and the export of Australian-designed products into global markets. New digital printing and additive manufacturing technologies have created a level playing field where Australian pattern-based products can viably compete with overseas competitors, leveraging established creative capability and channels of distribution that can easily support flexible manufacture, quick turnaround and efficient delivery.

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[12]   Infotrends 2015, *Worldwide Digital Textile Printing Market to Experience Growth of 34% CAGR to 2019 According to InfoTrends Forecast*, Infotrends, viewed 22 August 2017, <http://www.infotrends.com/public/Content/Press/2015/09.02.15.html>.

[13]   Textile World. 2018. "Digital Textile Printing: Explosive Growth Continues." 28 February. Accessed November 11, 2019. https://www.textileworld.com/textile-world/features/2018/02/digital-textile-printing-explosive-growth-continues/.

8.2   Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has resulted in a new history of the textile and fashion industries in Australia after World War II. This account of Claudio Alcorso and his involvement in post-war textile culture has revealed new information about the impact of European migrants on textiles, fashion, art, design and broader Australian culture. The overarching narrative of Alcorsos involvement in both the Italian and Australian textile industries provides an appropriate framework for documenting the interactions of commerce and culture and the business operations of a textile printing enterprise relocated from the old world to white-settler Australia. The diverse array of archival materials documenting Alcorso's business activities have provided extensive evidence supporting this new history of an industry once responsible for the employment of thousands of workers and critical to the successful operation of the Australian fashion industry.

Whilst many previous histories of fashion and textiles in Australia have concentrated on exclusive couture and limited-edition fashion and textile production, this study intentionally examines commercial textile and fashion production designed for a diverse cross-section of consumers. It demonstrates that good design was not just the domain of an elite, cultured class – it had commercial appeal that resonated with many Australians, as well as consumers internationally.

Neither does this investigation seek to canonise Claudio Alcorso as an iconic hero of Australian design. A major intent of this research was to document the efforts of the great number of creative practitioners – many of whom were women – who designed textile prints, printed fabrics, developed marketing campaigns and created fashion and interior decoration schemes that brought Alcorso's textiles into prominence in Australia and overseas. The development of successful businesses does not rely solely on a single person.

Whilst Alcorso was undoubtedly an innovator, the inventive practices and original designs introduced by his businesses were the result of collaboration with many creative individuals. The success of Alcorso's businesses relied in no small part to expert advice from his father Amilcare, his financial advisor Paolo Sonnino and the talents of many artists and designers.

Finally, this investigation into Claudio Alcorso's agency on the textile industry in Australia reveals the importance and integral contribution of innovative art and design to commercial success. The potential for culture to have a positive agency on commerce must never be underestimated. The lesson from Claudio Alcorso's engagement in post-war textile culture in Australia, is, in his own words "gli artisti hanno sempre ragione" - "artists are always right".[14]

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[14] Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say*, 118.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ALCORSO AFTER TEXTILES

This appendix briefly examines Claudio Alcorso's impact on aspects of post-war Australian society and culture outside the textile industry. It summarises Alcorso's transition from textile entrepreneur to an advocate for Australian culture and illustrates how he adapted principles learned from working in the textile industry to his subsequent activities as chairman of the Australian Opera and the Tasmanian Arts Board, champion of the arts, education and the Tasmanian environment, and as a vigneron and winemaker.

A.1.   The Australian Opera

Claudio Alcorso's cultural habitus equipped him to identify the abundance of talent and creativity that existed across a broad spectrum of the arts in Australia. His cultural interests were not limited to the visual arts – he was equally enamoured of performance – particularly of music and opera – the grand tradition of narrative musical performance that had originated in his Italian homeland.

Alcorso and his family had relocated to Sydney for a time in the late 1960s. He had been involved with the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust (AETT) since 1968, having joined as member for Tasmania at the invitation of his friend Herbert 'Nugget' Coombs. Identified because of his entrepreneurial skills, Coombs thought him to be the best qualified board member to lead the Australian Opera to autonomy from the AETT. He was technically still Managing Director of UTA when he was appointed as the chairman of the Australian Opera board. Other members appointed to the board included Sheila Scotter, editor of Vogue Australia, Charles Berg, Colonel Aubrey

Gibson, the husband of model Bambi Tuckwell and the Earl of Harewood; arts patron Sir Ian Potter, Maurice Timbs and Mr N Seddon.[1]

Soon after his appointment he agreed to fill the additional role of chief executive officer of the company. He was able to draw advice from Paolo Sonnino, his former financial advisor from UTA, who had also been appointed to the AETT board.[2] He applied his uncompromising attitudes to quality to shape, lead and promote the new Opera company, making it generate profits by introducing a program of popular Gilbert & Sullivan operettas to create cash flow to fund visiting artists in the future. He drew on the education provided by his art tutor in Rome, Professor Cervelli, visibly conducting operations under the premise that " ...the artist is always right".

> I wrote the slogan 'ARTISTS ARE ALWAYS RIGHT' in big
> letters on the pad on my desk where any member of the staff
> could easily read it—a bit of propaganda, but I wanted to
> stress that I was on their side.[3]

Alcorso recognised that the Opera and Ballet would never succeed without big name artists and a continuous cash flow. Despite the hesitation of other board members, he was instrumental in bringing Joan Sutherland back to Australia to sing at the Sydney Opera House, supported by her husband, conductor Richard Bonynge. Alcorso was an enthusiastic advocate of the Sydney Opera House, both as a venue for company productions and as a cultural destination, devoting an entire chapter of his memoirs to the 'Miracle at Bennelong Point'. He commissioned Peter Sculthorpe to compose a new opera for the opening

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[1] Canberra Times. 1969. "Opera board." 19 September. Accessed June 2, 2018.
    http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article107893285.
[2] Louise Sonnino, interview by Tracey Sernack-Chee Quee. 2018. *Interview about Claudio Alcorso and the Kaldor family* (10 December).
[3] Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say*, 118.

of the Opera House, but when it wasn't ready in time, ensured that audiences could watch the spectacle of Tolstoy's 'War and Peace' in its stead. [4]

Claudio Alcorso retired from his position as chairman of the Australian Opera in 1974, remaining a lifetime member until his death in 2000.[5] Reminiscing on his achievements in 1978, Alcorso said that the Australian Opera had "…. become a company performing at a high international level of artistic quality ….. now recognized as one of the world's leading companies." Not only had Alcorso helped the Australian Opera to become a world class company, he had established a creative direction that resulted in a significant increase in the earnings of the fledgling company, from $232,000 in 1966 to over $3.5 million by 1978.[6]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
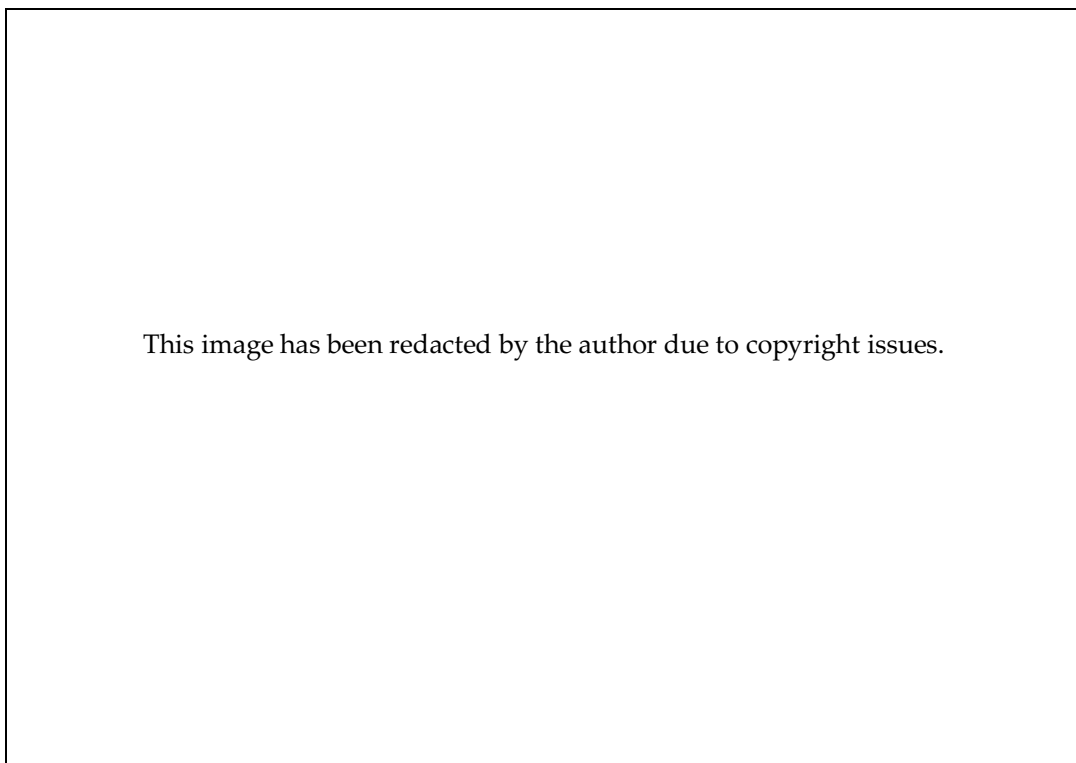
Figure A.1 Joan Sutherland as Antonia in 'The Tales of Hoffmann', Sydney Opera House, 1974.[7]

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[4] John Cargher. 1977. *Opera and Ballet in Australia.* St Leonards, Sydney: Cassell Australia, 72-73.
[5] Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say*, 110-127. *Claudio Alcorso interviewed by Roger Penny* 1994
[6] G. Bailey 1974.
[7] Ibid, 173.

A.2.   Art and wine at Moorilla

By the end of the 1960s, changes in management at UTA allowed Alcorso the opportunity to spend more time developing his property Moorilla at Berriedale, only one mile from the factory at Derwent Park. According to his memoir, the frying-pan shaped peninsula that he purchased in 1947 was a traditional gathering site for First Nations people from the 'Big River' clans during the cold weather. Clean fresh water, edible roots, berries and other native vegetation attracted emus, possums, wombats and wallabies to this land. The location, where salt and fresh water met, was perfect for the development of oysters and mussels and over seventy feasting sites were identifiable at the time the Alcorso's took up residency. Claudio said of the land "It was a case of love at first site, but I did not anticipate that within a few years my roots would go down so deep into that soil."[8]

The property had previously been an orchard without a habitable residence. Alcorso decided to build a traditional Italian-style farmhouse on the property and offer it to a migrant family who were willing to work the land. Two Italian brothers soon took up residence, staying with their families in the farmhouse until they had saved enough money to buy their own land nearby. They left the property restored to fertility and covered with lush green grass. In those early years, Moorilla was a frequent picnic site for Claudio, his sons and his elderly parents who came to live in Tasmania permanently in 1955.[9]

According to Alcorso, it was his friend Ken Myer who suggested that Alcorso approach Roy Grounds to recommend an architect to build his first home at Moorilla.[10] It was a totally round house, built looking over the view of the Derwent. According to Louse Sonnino, the roundhouse was used by the children for sleepovers when the Alcorsos and their friends enjoyed weekend

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[8]   Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say,* 143-147.
[9]   Ibid.
[10] Ibid, 180.

parties at the estate and was the source of many happy memories.[11] The building later became the permanent home of Claudio's elderly parents, once they had made the decision to relocate to Tasmania in the 1950s.

Figure A.2 Delia (Niny) Alcorso, Lazio, hand-painted tiles, n.d. [12]
Figure A.3 Delia (Niny) Alcorso, Tasmania, hand-painted tiles, n.d. [13]

Alcorso's mother Delia (Niny) hand-painted a tile mural of Rome and its environs in the district of Lazio, facing a complementary map of Tasmania. These maps remain visible through windows looking out of the roundhouse at MONA today (Figures A.2 and A.3). In his memoir Alcorso commented on the similarity of the climate in Tasmania to parts of Italy.[14] Clearly his mother also saw the similarity. The genre of the pictorial map, now regarded as quaint and possibly kitsch, was typically used to illustrate the history, culture and products of the lands they depicted. The map of Lazio shows the forests and

[11] Sonnino 2018.
[12] Author's photograph, Monday 27-August-2012 at *Moorilla | MONA*, Berriedale.
[13] Author's photograph, Monday 27-August-2012 at *Moorilla | MONA*, Berriedale.
[14] C. Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say*, 153.

lakes outside Rome. An ancient boat appears off the shore, where shoals of fish also swim.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing the image was available at:
https://mona.net.au/museum/architecture.
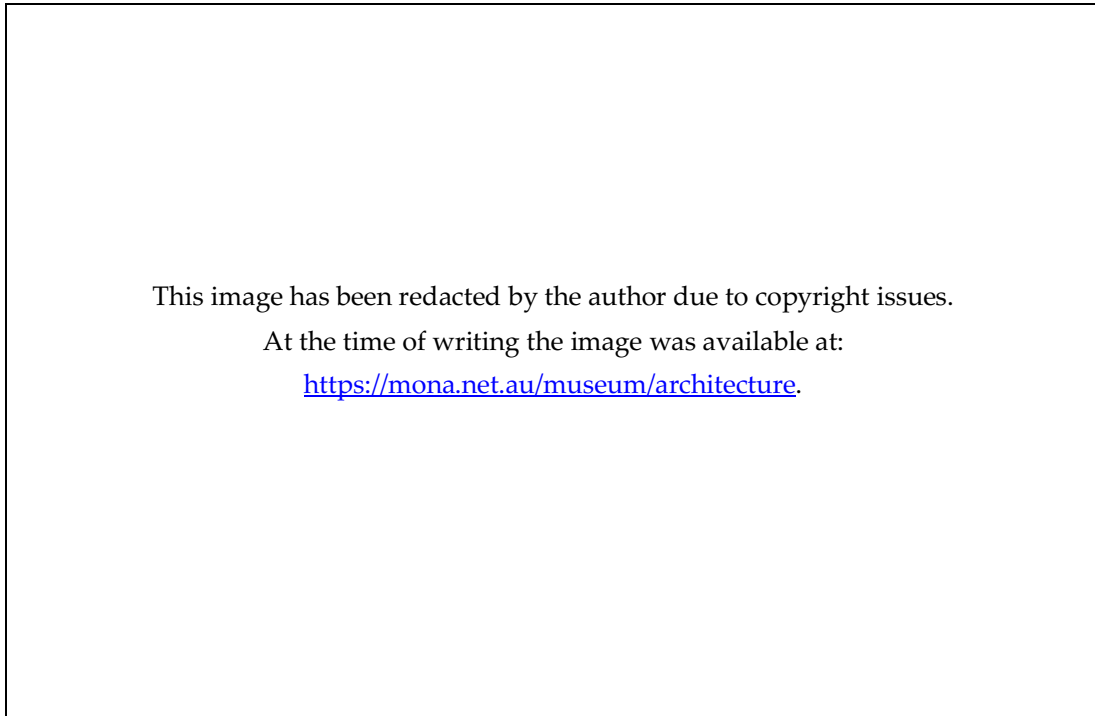
Figure A.4 Moorilla shown from the air, late 1960s.[15]

The Alcorso's new home Tasmania appears even more bountiful in wildlife. Many varieties of fish, crustaceans, birds and mammals including whales appear around the island state. The maps illustrate the nostalgia that the Alcorsos retained for their original homeland of Italy, as well as the reverence that they shared for their new home in Tasmania. The murals draw upon the similarities between these two sites so important to the family. Alcorso went back to Roy Grounds when he decided to build a second home at Moorilla for himself, wife Lesley and his children in 1965. This time Alcorso commissioned a modern, Mediterranean-style home, with a central courtyard typical of ancient Roman houses (Figures A.5 and A6).

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[15] Museum of Old and New Art (MONA). n.d. "Museum Architecture." Accessed August 7, 2019. https://mona.net.au/museum/architecture.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.

Figure A.5 The design in 'Domus' that inspired the design of Alcorso's second house at Moorilla.[16]

Figure A.6 Aerial photo of Alcorso's villa style home at Moorilla, late 1960s.[17]

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[16] Bernard Rudofsky. 1938. "We don't need a new way to build: Design proposal for a courtyard villa on Procida Island, Domus 123, March 1938." In *Domus 1928-1939 (2006),* by Charlotte and Peter Liell, 436-437. Taschen.

[17] Photograph courtesy of Caroline Alcorso. Used with permission.

He had been inspired by a design by Bernard Rudofsky that he had seen in a 1938 issue of Italian architecture magazine Domus in the style of an ancient Roman villa (see Figure A.5).[18] The former central courtyard of the home seen in Figure A.6 now contains the circular lift descending into David Walsh's Museum of Old and New Art (MONA).

Claudio Alcorso established arguably the first vineyards planted in Tasmania since the late nineteenth century, when commercial winemaking literally "dried up" due to a mass exodus to the mainland experienced during the gold rush period. He sought expert advice from the CSIRO, as well as the Wynn's of Coonawarra, who were leaders of winemaking in South Australia, to determine the most appropriate vines to suit Tasmania's cool climate. Skills honed in the textile industry were used in product research and development to ensure the development of a quality Australian product, which later won prizes at the local Hobart Show.[19] He said of the venture:

> If I had tried to produce cheap run-of-the-mill textiles I would have gone broke ten times over. We aimed at the segment of the market that would appreciate and pay for good quality and design and we succeeded both in Australia and in establishing a sizable export trade. This is equally true of our wines and it was true incidentally when I had the privilege of

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[18] Bernard Rudofsky. 1938. "We don't need a new way to build: Design proposal for a courtyard villa on Procida Island, Domus 123, March 1938." In *Domus 1928-1939 (2006)*, by Charlotte and Peter Liell, 436-437. Taschen.

[19] State Archive of Tasmania, Claudio Alcorso, 28 Mar 1965 – 19 July 1979, NS3001/1/21, Correspondence relating to the wine industry and *Moorilla*. Collated by Alcorso in 1992; and Claudio Alcorso. November 1970. 'History of Agricultural development at Moorilla, Berriedale', Paper in NS3001/1/21, 28 Mar 1965 – 19 July 1979 Correspondence relating to the wine industry and Moorilla. Collated by Alcorso in 1992.

being foundation chairman and for a while chief executive of
the Australian Opera.[20]

Alcorso's winemaking business, like his textile business, was infused by his love of the arts. In 1963 he commissioned his artist friend Elaine Haxton to decorate the large vats used to mature wines with murals recalling the artwork of great modernist painters including Mondrian and Picasso (Figure A.9). It was a marketing device that came to distinguish his vineyard. Alcorso's other marketing device for Moorilla's wines was the use of a cloth label printed with metal blocks, paying homage to his family's heritage in the textile industry (Figures A.7 and A.8). To his credit, the current owner of the winery, David Walsh, retains the use of these distinctive labels for Moorilla's wines.

Figure A.7 and Figure A.8 Original cloth labels and printing block for Moorilla wines, 2014.[21]

Alcorso established a small cellar door with his son Julian, who had studied winemaking extensively in South Australia and overseas. Later a restaurant was opened at Moorilla, also decorated with a large mural painted by Elaine Haxton. Alcorso undertook a course at UTAS in Food Microbiology in the 1980s to support his venture into food and wine, so close to his Italian heart,

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[20] Claudio Alcorso. 1989. "Notes for strategy discussion at Adult Ed meeting on 8th November: Tasmania's Preferred Futures." *NS3001/1/3 Personal correspondence - Australia Council - Salamanca Place - Politics*. Hobart: State Archive of Tasmania, November.

[21] Author's photographs, December 2014.

enabling him to better understand and celebrate the wonderful produce of Tasmania.[22]

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright issues.
At the time of writing the image was available at:
http://elainehaxton.com/mural8.html
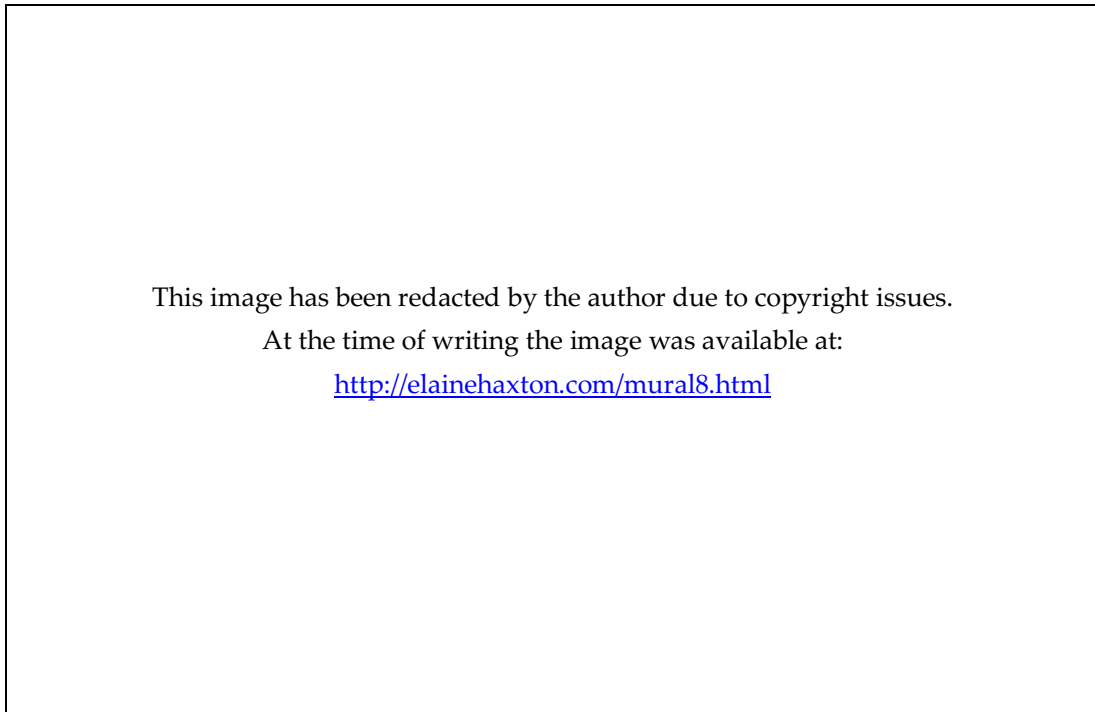
Figure A.9 Murals painted by Elaine Haxton at Moorilla, 1963.[23]

Today Claudio and Julian Alcorso are highly regarded in the Australian wine industry for their contribution to re-establishing the wine-making industry in Tasmania, and for the quality of the wines they produced. Amongst Alcorso's papers at the State Archive of Tasmania is a loose, undated paper which appears to have been detached from another document. It reveals that he made a conscious attempt to apply his knowledge and skills from the textile industry to the unrelated process of creating wines.

> I am prepared to undertake the responsibility for the realisation of this project for a number of reasons. The first is that I have made Tasmania my home and I love it.

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[22] Claudio Alcorso. 1983. "Claudio Alcorso interviewed for the University of Tasmania Oral History Project 1978 - 1983." *University of Tasmania.* Accessed May 28, 2014. http://eprints.utas.edu.au/16629/1/alcorso-UT388-2-1.mp3.

[23] Elaine Haxton. 1963. "Murals." Accessed July 17, 2019. elainehaxton.com/mural8.html.

I want to see it become a place where human beings live in peace and with a sense of fulfilment.

This of course by itself is not enough. However, I am qualified in organisation and in marketing. I have produced and sold textiles at a profit on the concept of good design and good colour, and let me say very quickly that the textiles that were sold from the factory at Derwent Park are a good example of the concepts discussed in this memo in the sense that the designs and colours that we applied to them did not make them any more useful or any warmer to wear or any better to wear, but they made them more attractive and that was enough to give them the value through which we operated for many years at a good profit. …..

It has been my privilege to be the first Chairman of the Australian Opera and to see that the company would be ready for the opening of the Sydney Opera house. In five years we increased the box office ten-fold from roughly $250,000 per year to $2,500,000. ……. The same principles will be applied to my current experiment in wine making. Providing we make good quality, we shall obtain the highest possible prices, and through them, a good return. I am quoting these examples to underline the fact that my proposals are not based on abstract or aesthetic concepts; I would aim at giving return to the State through the fulfilment in the lives of Tasmanians, through the sale of specialised products, through the

development of tourism, through encouraging new

desirable immigration.[24]

Figure A.10 Claudio Alcorso checking the vintage at Moorilla, n.d.[25].

A.3.   Arts Advisory Boards

Alcorso's papers are full of correspondence from his time serving on arts

boards from 1966, when he was appointed to the Australian Elizabethan

Theatre Trust, then chaired by Dr HC (Nugget) Coombs, as the Director for

Tasmania.[26] Clearly membership of these boards was close to his heart, and

close to the hearts of other tastemakers in his social circle at the time, including

Ken Myer and Nugget Coombs. Both the Myer family and Coombs were

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[24] Claudio Alcorso. N.d. 'Common Direction', in Alcorso, Claudio papers, 1 June 1977 – 14 Jan 1986, NS3012/1/1, Hobart: State Archive of Tasmania, 4-5.

[25] Courtesy of Caroline Alcorso, used with permission.

[26] Moss Parker. 1966. "Letter from Moss Parker to Bruce Piggott regarding the appointment of Claudio Alcorso to the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust." *NS3001/1/1 Personal correspondence and associated articles about or by Claudio Alcorso.* Hobart: Tasmanian State Archive, 30 August.

visible supporters of the arts, and influencers of both government and private arts associations and funding bodies. It was the agency of Alcorso's circle, as well as his performance in the textile industry and as the inaugural chairman of the Australian Opera that enabled Alcorso's appointment to these boards.

A profile of Claudio Alcorso appeared in the Mercury in April 1974 to promote his appointment as the chairman of the Tasmanian Theatre and Performing Arts Council. Determined to get results through this appointment, he used the opportunity to lobby the State government for funding. He was quoted as saying "The priorities of living ….. are food, shelter and the arts". He went on to describe Tasmania as a cultural desert, and far behind the other states in development of artistic companies. He proposed a Tasmanian Arts Centre close to the city, able to accommodate a range of cultural activities from visual arts to performance, with seating for at least 1,500 people.

Alcorso implied that the establishment of state arts boards was merely window-dressing without the provision of enough funding. To Alcorso, the $3,000 awarded by the state government to the Tasmanian State Opera that year might as well had been zero, as it enabled very little be done. Alcorso was not short of evidence for the bean counters in government. He cited the revenues of the Australian Opera, which had improved under his leadership from the equivalent of $232,000 in 1956 to $2,500,000 that year (1974).[27] Alcorso presented himself to the government and to the public of Tasmania as a man of action, with his track record in the Australian Opera tabled to show that he was not interested in window-dressing – he was a man who could get things done.

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[27] Garry Bailey. 1974. "Making the desert bloom." *The Mercury, Hobart,* 4 April: 16.

In 1977 Alcorso was appointed to the Music Board of the Australia Council for the Arts.[28] The Australia Council had been formed in 1973 and legislated as a Council in March 1975, the last year of the Whitlam Labor government. That year, the Whitlam government had created other lasting cultural entities including the Australian Film Commission and Australian Heritage Commission.[29] The Australia Council consisted of six separate boards: the Aboriginal Arts Board; the Crafts Board; the Literature Board; the Theatre Board and the Music Board who were collectively responsible "….for developing wide-ranging programs to promote interest and activity in the arts" in cooperation with relevant government departments in each state.[30] Later, an additional board – the Film and Television Board was established.

The council remained as a part of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet until 1977, when it was transferred to Home Affairs under the leadership of Malcolm Fraser, who introduced changes to the autonomy of individual board decisions after an Administrative Review Committee had looked at issues of duplication and waste within Commonwealth departments and agencies.[31] Very little evidence remains of any actions taken by Claudio Alcorso with respect to the Music Board of the Australia Council. There is some anecdotal evidence that Alcorso may have been influential on the move of the Tasmanian Conservatorium to former premises occupied by the ABC in Hobart, but no documentation about this has been located.

Alcorso's final foray on arts boards was as chairman of the Sidney Myer Performing Arts Award, established in 1984 to commemorate the 50th

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[28] Tony Staley. 1977. "Appointments to Australia Council Boards." *Minister for the Capital Territory Press releases database, Australian Parliamentary Library.* 5 August. Accessed December 30, 2017. https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/213720237.

[29] National Archives of Australia. 2019. "Australia's Prime Ministers in office: Gough Whitlam." 15 August. Accessed August 15, 2019. http://primeministers.naa.gov.au/primeministers/whitlam/in-office.aspx.

[30] Staley 1977.

[31] Margaret Sears. 2010. "Cultural policies in Australia." *Australia Council for the Arts.* Accessed June 8, 2014. http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/__data/as, 9-10.

anniversary of Myer's death in 1934. $35,000 was made available - $20,000 awarded to a group, and $15,000 to an individual who had distinguished themselves in any arena of performance. Potential winners were nominated by anyone interested in the performing arts, and no strings were attached to the award of funding. Apart from Alcorso, the judging panel also included Nugget Coombs, politician Don Dunstan, Carrillo Gantner, Director of the Playbox Theatre in Melbourne, Jan McDonald, Director of the West Theatre Company in Melbourne, and Margaret Scott, head of the Australian Ballet. Alcorso said that the award represented another "little step" in the development of Australian culture.[32]

Were Alcorso were alive in 2019 he would be dismayed at the current levels of funding distributed by the Australia Council for the Arts, which are at best, tokenistic. As Pierre Bourdieu observed, economic rationalists see cultural goods …"as a business like any other, and not the most profitable."[33] The funding of the arts in Australia is now based on key performance indicators (KPIs), including the number of attendances at an exhibition or performance. The meagre levels of government funding provided does not prevent politicians and bureaucrats from requesting free tickets to events for corporate hospitality purposes.[34]

The effect of decreasing arts funding is devastating to artists. In 2015 the National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) wrote a submission to a Senate Enquiry into the impact of Government funding decisions on the arts.

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[32] Geraldine O'Brien. 1984. "No strings to Myer prize, but $35,000 a sobering influence." *The Sydney Morning Herald.* 14 March. Accessed June 9, 2018. http://smharchives.smedia.com.au/Olive/APA/smharchive/Print.Article.aspx?mode=image&href=S MH%2F1984%2F03%2F14&id=Ar00202.

[33] Pierre Bourdieu. 1980. "The production of belief." In *Media, Culture and Society,* 261-262. London: Academic Press Inc.

[34] Andrew Taylor. 2019. "Value for money? Public funds thrown at Sydney events that fail visitor targets." *The Sydney Morning Herald.* 18 August. Accessed August 18, 2019. https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/value-for-money-public-funds-thrown-at-sydney-events-that-fail-visitor-targets-20190809-p52fny.html.

As a peak body representing visual artists, NAVA received 40% of its funding from the Australia Council, and would be unable to survive without this support. Citing the contribution made by visual artists and creative producers to tourism and the economy in general, NAVA lamented the threat that diminished funding posed to the sustainability of small to medium arts organisations and opportunities for artists.[35]

Similar submissions were received from other peak bodies representing the art, design, craft and performance sectors in Australia. However, these submissions have done little to influence both state and federal governments to increase funding for the arts, despite the hard and soft benefits they bring to the Australian people, as were recognised by Claudio Alcorso in the 1980s.

A.4. Alcorso's influence on Education and Training

In August 1974 Labor Minister for Education Kim Beazley appointed Claudio Alcorso to the federal Universities Commission for a three-year period. At this time he was still a serving member on many of the Arts Boards discussed in section A.4, as well as being council member of the Tasmanian College of Advanced Education.[36] His membership of educational boards and commissions enabled him to lobby for a curriculum that would be forward thinking, providing skills for the Australia of the future, rather than perpetuating the traditional educational curricula inherited from Britain, Europe, and more increasingly, the United States.

In May 1985 Alcorso wrote to the committee convened to review Australian Studies in Tertiary Education, recommending that a "…. a vigorous

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[35] National Association for the Visual Arts. 2015. "Nava's Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the impact of the 2014 and 2015 Commonwealth Budget Decisions on the Arts." 17 July. Accessed August 15, 2019. https://visualarts.net.au/media/uploads/files/NAVA_Senate_Inquiry_FINALSubmission.pdf.

[36] Kim Beazley. 1974. "Australian Universities commission appointment of new members." *Minister for Education Press releases database, Australian Parliamentary Library.* 8 August. Accessed December 30, 2017. https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/213695454.

initiative to promote Australian Studies within the education system is urgently needed". Alcorso recognised that Australia was about to take its place in a new "economic world" within the Pacific region but had the opportunity to do this either as a producer of raw materials, or as the cultural equal of others in the area. In Alcorso's view, Australia could not take an equal place in the Pacific without the formation of an identifiable culture. Young people needed to understand the heritage of their country, because: "Twenty years hence the young of today will sit on the Councils of the Pacific economic-world; they will determine Australian attitudes."[37]

Alcorso's argument was consistent with that of other thinkers of the period, who recognised that Australia was far closer to Asia than it was to Britain, Europe and the United States. The economic and social future of the country lay in relationships with its closest neighbours. After Britain joined the European Common Market, the survival of Australian primary exports was dependent on good relations with our neighbours in the Pacific. From the early 1970s students in schools began to learn Japanese, Bahasa Indonesia and Mandarin rather than Latin, French and German. Asian Social Studies came into the curriculum, as did a focus on Business Studies and Australian history – though still devoid of any significant mention of First Nations peoples, whose histories arguably remain clouded by the myth of Terra Nullius. Nevertheless, it was a start.

Claudio Alcorso made his penultimate thoughts on education very clear in a speech he made at the University of Tasmania, when he accepted an honorary Doctor of Letters in May 1995. He supported broad-based, liberal tertiary education, praising early universities who …. " aimed at determining cultural orientations, moral and ethical principles, aspirations and political

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[37] Claudio Alcorso. 1985. "Letter to the Executive Officer, Committee to review Australian Studies in Tertiary Education." *NS3001/1/27 Writings and talks by Claudio Alcorso, 1957-1999.* Hobart: State Archive of Tasmania, 28 May.

attitudes. The tuition of students was pervasive. It extended to all of their activities." [38] However, Alcorso recognised that the extension of knowledge necessitated the development of educational specialisations, though he expressed concerns that specialised knowledge, without an underpinning of broad general knowledge, may be malevolent.

> Knowledge, if limited to a narrow area of enquiry might lose its links to wisdom…… The vision of the specialist is narrow: it seldom includes perception of the whole. ……It is the economic, social and political specialists who are dangerous to society. …. Economic rationalists have become influential……..(they) shape the society that we live in. ….For economic rationalists the passions that make humans human,   …all of them irrational feelings, are ignored, or worse, made dependent upon material factors.[39]

Whilst acknowledging that there is no easy solution to these issues, Alcorso proposed that tertiary education programs should include at least two humanist subjects – preferably history and philosophy – though he felt that areas like psychology, the environment or poetry were also worthy of consideration. According to Alcorso, "Cultural orientations, ethical, social and political attitudes…" need to become components of the psyche of young people studying at tertiary level, so that graduates "…… would emerge with something better than a passport to employment or a yearning for wealth."[40]

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[38] Claudio Alcorso. 1995. "Homo Peritus, A Rogue Clone or Homo Sapiens? (Speech transcript)." *NS3001/1/27 Writings and talks by Claudio Alcorso, 1957-1999*. Hobart: State Archive of Tasmania, 20 May.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

Figure A.11 Claudio Alcorso delivering a speech at the University of Tasmania on receiving his honorary Doctor of Letters, 1995.[41]

A.5.   Salamanca and Sullivan's Cove

Alcorso used his position on boards of management strategically to influence the decisions of other institutions that he represented. As chairman of the Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board with support from the state Department of Education, Alcorso was instrumental in ensuring that the Georgian warehouses at Salamanca in Hobart were saved from destruction and/or unsympathetic development in the 1970s. In 1974 he used his connection with the Myer family to write to Baillieu Myer, brother of his friend Ken, to enquire whether the business syndicate he had an interest in who had recently acquired the IXL group of companies, would be interested in selling the warehouses at 65-79 Salamanca Place to the Tasmanian Government for the cut-rate price of $100,000 to enable the establishment of a School of the Arts.[42]

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[41] Photograph courtesy of Caroline Alcorso, used with permission.

[42] Claudio Alcorso. 1974. "Letter to Baillieu Myer: Salamanca Place, Hobart." *NS3005/1/1 Magazine and newspaper articles about or by Claudio Alcorso, 1955-1998.* Hobart: State Archive of Tasmania, 17 September.

Figure A.12
Salamanca Place,
Hobart, 2012

Figure A.13
Salamanca Place,
Hobart, 2012.[43]

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[43] Authors photographs, August 2012.

Baillieu Myer replied that his business syndicate had valued the property at three times the amount that Alcorso proposed to pay, declining Alcorso's offer of purchase. Myer suggested that Alcorso consider a new build as a more economical solution for the Arts School, representing a common view of the time that devalued the significance of historical sites like Salamanca that had fallen into disrepair.[44] Alcorso believed that Salamanca Place was a sacred place for the citizens of Hobart, likening the thirty years of labour that went in to the building of the stone warehouses to the vast times taken by European stonemasons to build the great cathedral at Chartres. He lamented that entrepreneurs engaged in redeveloping the dockland nearby …" will combine with ignorant, misguided politicians to build a conventional, anonymous marina all along the wharf, shutting in Salamanca Place, reducing it to insignificance."[45]

Despite the initial rejection from Myer, and a lack of sympathy from government and developers, Alcorso managed to influence the development ensuring it was sympathetic with significant historic sites. A staged funding plan was set in place for the purchase and redevelopment of Salamanca's warehouses, enabling the realisation of a mixed arts- and retail-based renewal recognising its heritage as a former factory and warehouse site.[46]

However, Alcorso was not to realise the vision of creating a School of the Arts in the historic district of Hobart until he became involved with the development of Sullivan's Cove, on the opposite side of Constitution Dock, a development that was completed in 1988 in time to celebrate the Bicentennial of Australian colonisation.

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[44] Baillieu Myer. 1974. "Letter to Claudio Alcorso." *NS3005/1/1 Magazine and newspaper articles about or by Claudio Alcorso, 1955-1998.* Hobart: State Archive of Tasmania, 4 October.

[45] Claudio Alcorso. 1998. "Salamanca Place - A Sacred Site." *NS3005/1/1 Magazine and newspaper articles about or by Claudio Alcorso, 1955-1998.* Hobart: State Archive of Tasmania, 17 March.

[46] PJ Nelson. 1975. "Letter from PJ Nelson, Chartered Accountant, to PA Game, H Jones & Co Pty Ltd." *NS3005/1/1 Magazine and newspaper articles about or by Claudio Alcorso, 1955-1998.* Hobart: State Archive of Tasmania, 9 July.

The Tasmanian State Government had announced the $75 million development of Sullivan's Cove in January 1986, with the intent of making it a leading tourist destination. It was also a major campaign initiative of the state government leading into the election held in February of that year.[47] Several studies looking at the potential of the precinct had been conducted in the 1970s after the closure of the Henry Jones IXL jam factory, and an urban design study was conducted in 1983 by architects Lester-Firth & Associates Pty Ltd. Claudio Alcorso was appointed into the voluntary role of Chairman of the Sullivan's Cove Development Authority in the late 1970s, a position that was formalised when the commencement of development became imminent in 1985. [48]

However, Alcorso resigned from the position in disgust in 1986 when it became apparent that a covert deal had been made to build a brutalist style international hotel designed by Lester Firth (see Figure A.14), completely out of character with the character of the heritage site comprising the former Henry Jones IXL jam factory. Ever the pragmatist, he later acknowledged that the building was "going to be there for a long time" and suggested softening its appearance (or possibly distracting onlookers from its incongruous appearance) by erecting a major work of sculpture in front of it.[49]

Despite Alcorso's disappointment, the development of Sullivan's Cove resulted in the creation of an arts campus for the University of Tasmania and the creation of a tourist destination. The Henry Jones Hotel, created from the ruins of the jam factory, is a luxury destination for tourists the world over who now stay at Constitution Dock for its convenient location to Salamanca to the ferry to David Walsh's MONA, located on the grounds of Alcorso's former home at Berriedale.

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[47] Andrew Horton. 1986. "$75m Cove Development." *The Sunday Tasmanian*, 12 January: 1.

[48] Bruce L Churchill. 2010. "Sullivan's Cove." *Australian Planner, Vol. 26, no. 1.* 15 December. Accessed April 24, 2013. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07293682.1988.9657363.

[49] The Mercury, Hobart. 1987. "One man's vision of Hobart's civic square." 28 November: 19.

Figure A.14 View of Sullivan's Cove with the brutalist International Hotel, 2012.

Figure A.15 Façade of the Tasmanian Centre for the Arts, Sullivan's Cove, 2012.

Figure A.16 Entrance to the Tasmanian Centre for the Arts, Sullivan's Cove, 2012.[50]

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[50] Author's photographs, August 2012.

A.6.   Alcorso and the Republican debate

Claudio Alcorso was appointed as a member of the Order of Australia in 1984, but he rarely used the honorific post nominal (AM), and stated adamantly that he would not have accepted the award if it had been an award from England. "I do not have anything against England, but we are in Australia…….We are a nation now and we hope to build up an identifiable culture, not a derivative culture", he said, at the time.[51]

Speaking at a Community Seminar on The Concept of National Identity in March 1995, Alcorso expressed his view that the future face of Australia to the rest of the world should be an Australian Head of State. He went on to say:

> There is no antagonism, no anti-monarchical bias in my assertion; indeed I believe that we should never deny our past: we should study and learn from it. Part of the duties of our Head of State will be to travel to other countries…….for the projection of our identity. She or he will be symbols of Australia. In recent times when the Queen of Australia visited Germany, Russia or Japan she was honoured and welcomed as the Queen of England. The Australian image did not appear. …..
>
> I am convinced that an Australian culture is emerging. The work of our artists has an Australian idiom………we eat, dress, speak in out our own way, no longer imitating the English model; we understand, cherish an environment unique to Australia, dramatically different from English or most European landscapes. Aboriginal Australians, although endowed

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[51] Sue Bailey. 1984. "There is no award in Utopia: Life suffices for Claudio Alcorso." *The Mercury, Hobart*, 12 June: 3.

> with their own distinctive culture, will also be a part of
> an encompassing identity; progress in this regard has
> been slow – no wonder when we consider the treatment
> of Aborigines since the arrival of white people – but it is
> happening.[52]

On many occasions, Alcorso recalled that when he first came to Australia people referred to him as a "bloody dago". The standing of migrants had gradually improved, and in the late 1980s the acceptable term was "New Australian".[53] It is ironic that it was Alcorso, the "bloody dago", who became one of the most outspoken advocates for an Australian republic with its own vibrant arts and cultural sector during the 1980s, whilst politicians and bureaucrats still retain outmoded royalist and economic rationalist attitudes to their own cultural profile in the twenty first century.

A.7.   Champion of Tasmanian products

Alcorso recognised that the climate and location of Tasmania, and its separation from the mainland gave its produce a distinct advantage over produce from other parts of Australia. He was an avowed champion of Tasmanian food, wine and produce before others such as internationally renowned chef Tetsuya Wakuda recognised it as truly world class. In 1975 he wrote a paper titled 'Tasmania in the 1980s: A search for quality', predicting what he thought would become important for Tasmania's future viability.

Traditional agricultural pursuits like growing apples and pears and grazing sheep for wool were becoming difficult in Tasmania. Alcorso proposed that the island state needed to focus on quality of life – on providing alternatives to industrial development. He proposed the development of

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[52] Claudio Alcorso. 1995. "Community Seminar 9 March 1995: The Concept of National Identity (Speech Transcript)." *NS3001/1/27 Writings and talks by Claudio Alcorso, 1957-1999.* Hobart: State Archive of Tasmania, 9 March.

[53] S. Bailey 1984.

Tourism as Tasmania's largest industry. Alcorso thought that the efforts toward tourism in 1974 were "pathetically inadequate". In an uncanny prediction of the things that twenty-first century tourists value about Tasmania, Alcorso proposed:

> ……special foods, from berries, cheeses, honeys, fish, special wines: the development of crafts and small specialized industries; they affect the size of the community …. they affect our creative people in music, theatre, the arts…. behind the concept of tourism lies the concept of quality….[54]

Alcorso further recommended that Tasmania pitch itself to the top end of the tourist market:

> …cheap pre-paid bus-tours are not much good to us. That type of tourism, in addition to wearing out our roads, might promote sales of koala bears made in Taiwan but is not likely to lead to sales of our quality products. ….. our efforts should be directed to attract the type of tourist that appreciates quality and has the money to pay for it. Low-impact/high-return tourism.[55]

Tasmania, according to Alcorso, "should be synonymous with quality". Apart from produce, potential products that could be marketed to such audiences included Tasmania's fine leather products.[56] Alcorso also saw a market for Tasmania's hand-crafted wooden furniture, tableware and artworks, and supported another of Tasmania's ex-textile managers, Gary Cleveland, to

[54] Claudio Alcorso. 1975. "Tasmania in the 1980s: a search for quality." *NS3001/1/3 Personal correspondence - Australia Council - Salamanca Place - Politics.* Hobart: State Archive of Tasmania, 29 June.

[55] C. Alcorso, Notes for strategy discussion at Adult Ed meeting on 8th November: Tasmania's Preferred Futures 1989.

[56] Wayne Crawford. 1983. "Quality sells, says Claudio." *The Mercury, Hobart,* 2 August: 7.

establish the Tasmanian Craft Centre in Launceston as a showcase for hand crafted Tasmanian products. The centre remains an important tourist destination in Launceston, and it is known for its beautiful Claudio Alcorso courtyard, built by Cleveland to honour Alcorso.[57]

A.8. Alcorso as an environmental champion

The proposal made in the early 1980s to flood Lake Pedder to support mass-market consumption of energy and resources astounded Claudio Alcorso. He became an outspoken champion of the environmental movement in Tasmania and given his cache as a successful businessman, gave a measure of credence to their protests. Realising the good intentions of the conservationists, but abhorring the actions and language that he perceived to be like that used by pre-war Fascists in Italy, he lent his management skills and expertise to the movement and became outspoken about saving the Gordon below Franklin, contributing to a campaign that was ultimately successful and a milestone in the protection of wilderness areas in this country. Through his involvement with the Tasmanian Wilderness Society, he inspired other Australians from all walks of life to see the importance of retaining natural heritage over destroying it to support the short term wants and needs of industry and consumers.[58]

> But you have to be prepared to stand up and fight. I am making comparison with my friends in Tasmania in the conservation movement. We stood up and fought for the Franklin. We all were ready to stand up and be arrested. If you go along with the conformists, if you keep applauding people that give you bullshit, you will get

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[57] Gary Cleveland. 2006. *A Vision for Design: Thirty years of performing perceptions and practice in Tasmania.* Canberra: Karuda Press.

[58] Alcorso 1993, *The Wind You Say*, 128 – 142.

nowhere. You have a fight on your hands. Go out and
fight. The ground is good. We can produce identifiable
Australian products of good quality both in design and
in execution that will sell all over the world. But the
change in old "colonial" attitudes will not fall from the
sky. It is up to you.[59]

Figure A.17 Claudio and Lesley Alcorso under arrest at the Franklin Dam demonstration, 1982.[60]

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[59] Claudio Alcorso. 1 June 1977 – 14 Jan 1986, NS3001/1/27, Writings and talks by Claudio Alcorso, including the Republic V Monarchy debate, Salamanca Place and visions for Tasmania. Includes letters to the Mercury Editor and newspaper clippings.

[60] Picture courtesy of Caroline Alcorso. Used with permission.

APPENDIX B: TIMELINE OF KEY DATES

1577	The family name Piperno first appears in the Jewish community of the port of Livorno, Tuscany.
1910	Amilcare Piperno Alcorso, son of Giacomo Piperno, establishes his textile business in Milan.
1913	Claudio Piperno Alcorso is born in Milan on 5 October 1913, the eldest son of Amilcare Piperno and his wife Niny (nee Coen)
1914-1918	Amilcare Piperno Alcorso appointed comptroller of woollen cloth for the Italian war effort during World War I, based in Prato.
1923-1925	Amilcare Piperno Alcorso uses postal publicity stamps to promote his textile business at 172 Corso Umberto I.
1930	Italy enacts a law standardizing the legal status of Italian Jewish communities. They must join the Union of Italian-Jewish Communities, the central representative body; election of local leaders is required; mandatory contributions are established; the role of rabbis is defined; and the law decrees that the community is subject to the protection and supervision of the state.
1937	Claudio Alcorso smuggles £60,000 pounds out of Italy with the help of Paolo Sonnino. They travel together to London to plan for relocation of the family business.
1938	Amilcare Piperno Alcorso's business holdings consist of a retail store at 172 Corso Umberto I with 58 employees; a grandi maggazinni (department store) at 53 Piazza Fiume with 76 employees and a retail outlet and factory at 24 Via de Campio Marzio, with 145 employees.
1938	Amilcare Piperno Alcorso and his wife Niny escape Italy and travel to London.
October 1939	Alcorso's Italian businesses placed under supervisory commissioner Michele Tanzini, National Councillor of Corporations and sold to a consortia of employees Societá Anonima Tessuti e Confezioni Eleganti or TECOEL who took over in January 1941.
March 1939	Claudio and Orlando Alcorso arrived in Sydney from England on the vessel Strathallan with their father Amilcare's administration assistant Paolo Sonnino. Textile agency FISMA established in Asbestos House, York St, Sydney.
1939	Silk & Textile Printers (STP) factory built in Barcom Avenue, Rushcutters Bay.

1940	Claudio and Orlando Alcorso and Paolo Sonnino interned by the Australian government as enemy aliens. Amilcare and Niny Alcorso depart Sydney for New York.
1940-1944	STP is managed by Eric Hearnshaw under direction from Amilcare Alcorso from New York. Design direction for the limited fashion and furnishing fabrics produced is undertaken by Mary Curtis, Avis Higgs and Betty Skowronski.
1943	Italy switches sides in World War II and Claudio Alcorso and Paolo Sonnino are released from internment. Paolo joins the Australian Air Force, whilst Claudio takes leave to recover his health after his internment. Orlando remains in custody.
1944	Mary Curtis and Avis Higgs design a collection of Victory fabrics printed by STP. STP exhibit a collection of textiles under the title Art in Industry at the Sedon Gallery in Melbourne.
1945	A second Art in Industry collection by STP is exhibited in Melbourne. Avis Higgs, Betty Skowronski and Mary Curtis appear in publicity photographs.
January 1946	English costume and fashion designer Matilda Etches arrives in Sydney with a collection of Ascher artist-designed textiles from London.
1946	Paolo Sonnino, Claudio and Orlando Alcorso are again actively engaged at STP.
1946	STP's third 'Art in Industry' collection including selected Australian artist-designed textiles opens at the Hotel Australia in Sydney and the Windsor Hotel in Melbourne during September 1946.
November 30, 1946	Silk & Textile Printers Pty Ltd is converted to a public company with nominal capital of £250,000.
1947	STP's artist-designed textile collection is expanded under the name 'Modernage'. Sydney Ure Smith publishes a catalogue of the designs titled 'A New Approach to Textile Designing'.
August 1947	Selected designs from STP's Modernage collection are exhibited at the in the Australian Trade Commission's Display Centre in the Rockefeller Centre, New York. The collection receives complimentary editorial from the fashion writer at the The New York Herald Tribune.
1947	STP relocates its production to a former munitions plant in Derwent Park, Glenorchy, Tasmania. A sales office is maintained at the former factory site in Sydney.

1948-1949	New Zealand architect Brian O'Rorke uses a selection of Modernage fabrics in the interior decoration schemes of the Orient Line's ship RMS Orcades.
1951	STP subsidiary company La Claire Fabrics Pty Ltd ceases operations in November 1950.
1952	Amilcare Alcorso leaves business inteerests in Europe and America to join his family in Hobart, becoming Chairman of the Board at STP.
	Amilcare supervises building of employee housing at Alcorso Village, Moonah, for British migrant workers recruited from Carrington and Dewhurst, STP's British shareholders.
1954	Garments by Cole of California and the House of Leroy made in STP fabrics appear in the STP's annual report.
October 5, 1953	The Leroy-Alcorso Signature Print textile design competition for 1954 is announced.
September 10, 1954	The second Leroy-Alcorso Signature Print textile competition for 1955 is announced.
1956	The first of two homes designed by Australian Architect Roy Grounds - the roundhouse – is built on Alcorso's property Moorilla at Berriedale.
1956	STP makes an agreement with Carrington & Dewhurst to establish synthetic yarn processing and weaving at Derwent Park.
1957	Claudio Alcorso makes first trip to China to source silk fabrics.
1957	STP acquires a license to manufacture Ban-Lon fabrics.
1958	STP acquires a license to produce 'Everglaze' fabrics.
1958	Claudio Alcorso plants the first Pinot Noir vines at his property Moorilla, in order to make wine for his own consumption.
1959	Australian Government proposes tariff on printed silk fabrics to protect STP's production.
July 10, 1961	Death of Amilcare (Hamilcar) Alcorso in Hobart.
August 1961	Sekers Silk becomes the exclusive distributor of printed and plain pure silk fabrics produced by STP.
March 1964	STP Holdings Ltd exhibits products on Australian Trade Ship Centaur, which departed Australia early in March to promote Australian fibres, textiles and fashions in ports including Singapore, Bangkok, Manila, Hong Kong, Osaka and Tokyo.

June 1965	Sekers Silk Pty Ltd is acquired by STP Holdings Ltd in a share and cash deal worth £210,000.
July 1965	The first Alcorso-Sekers Travelling Scholarship for sculptors is announced.
August 1965	STP is described as being the Toyo Rayon's biggest customer outside Japan. Both Courtaulds and Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) each hold 11.5% of STP's stock.
1965	Architect Roy Grounds designs a home in the modernist style for the Alcorsos at Moorilla, based on the design of an ancient Roman villa.
1966	The first Alcorso-Sekers Travelling Scholarship Award for Sculpture is awarded to George Baldessin.
December 1966	Toyo Rayon Co. acquires 320,000 ordinary shares in the capital of Universal Textiles, conditional on the merger of STP and Tennyson. Teijin Ltd acquires 300,000 shares under the same conditions.
March 1967	Merger of STP Holdings Ltd and Tennyson Textiles, creating the conglomerate Universal Textiles Australia (UTA).
March 1967	UTA adopts the ALTA trademark to guarantee the quality of locally made textiles and garments they are manufactured into.
September 1967	Universal Textiles Australia becomes a licensee of Arnel, marketed by the US-based Celanese Corporation.
1967	Universal Textiles Australia first produces printed sheets under the Sheridan brand name.
1967	The second Alcorso-Sekers Travelling Scholarship Award for Sculpture is awarded to Mike Kitching (1940-).
1968	The third Alcorso-Sekers Travelling Scholarship Award for Sculpture is awarded to Michael Young (1945-).
1968	Claudio Alcorso is appointed to the board of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust as the member for Tasmania.
1968-69	Christo and Jeanne-Claude create 'Wrapped Coast, One Million Square Feet', at Little Bay, Sydney, Australia, using agricultural fabric obtained from Universal Textiles Australia.
1969	John Kaldor leaves UTA to establish John Kaldor Fabricmaker.
1969	Claudio Alcorso resigns from the board of Dunlop and becomes the first chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Opera.

1974	Claudio Alcorso resigns from the board of the Australian Opera.
April 1974	Claudio Alcorso appointed as the chairman of the Tasmanian Theatre and Performing Arts Council.
August 1974	Labor Minister for education Kim Beazley appoints Claudio Alcorso to the Universities Commission for a three year period. Claudio is, at the time, also a member of the council of the Tasmanian College of Advanced Education.
1975	Claudio Alcorso writes a paper titled 'Tasmania in the 1980s: A search for quality' extolling the benefits of establishing Tourism as Tasmania's main industry.
1976	Andrew and Vera Kaldor end their association with Sekers Silk, the Australian branch of the British textile company established by Miki Sekers in 1938. Andrew later returns in the 1980s.
1977	Claudio Alcorso appointed to the Music Board of the Australia Council for the Arts.
1982	Claudio Alcorso and his wife Lesley are arrested by the Tasmanian Police after protesting against the building of the proposed Franklin Dam.
1984	Claudio Alcorso appointed as the chairman of the Sidney Myer Performing Arts Award.
1984	Claudio Alcorso appointed as a member of the Order of Australia.
1986	Claudio Alcorso resigns from the honorary position of chairman of the Sullivan's Cove Development Authority in protest of the proposal to build a brutalist International Hotel designed by architect Lester Firth in the heritage precinct.
March 1995	Claudio Alcorso speaks at a community seminar in favour of an Australian Republic.
May 1995	Claudio Alcorso awarded an Honorary Doctor of Letters by the University of Tasmania.
June 1995	A forced sale of Alcorso's property Moorilla occurs after foreclosure of the property instigated by Mrs Diana Schlunk, Claudio's first wife.
	Moorilla is purchased by a syndicate of Hobart businesspeople.
	Moorilla is purchased by professional gambler and art collector David Walsh, who allows Claudio and Lesley Alcorso to remain living on the property until their respective deaths.

1999	David Walsh establishes the Moorilla Museum of Antiquities in the Alcorso's former villa-style house designed by Sir Roy Grounds. Lesley and Claudio Alcorso attend the museum opening.
September 2000	Claudio Alcorso dies from cancer.
2006	The Moorilla Museum of Antiquities is closed to begin the development of a new museum designed by Melbourne architect Nonda Katsalidis, as the home for David Walsh's private art collection.
2009	David Walsh publicly announces his plans to invest $75 million in the Museum of Old and New Art at Moorilla.

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