

Artisan Culture

Rethinking Sustainability through Collaborative Exchange
between Emerging Australian Designers and Indian Artisans
in Fashion and Textiles

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Sustainability, Fashion Design, Heritage textiles, Artisan, Collaboration, Textiles,
Education, Artisanal

Certificate of Original Authorship

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I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Acknowledgements

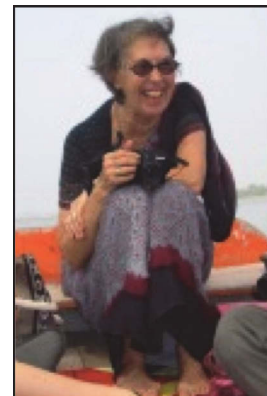
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Robyn Beeche (1945- 2015)

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Abstract

Attentiveness to ethical and ecological sustainable practice is building in the garment industry. However, many researchers still consider the garment-making manufacturing system to be ethically and ecologically unsustainable. There are multiple factors contributing to this view, including overconsumption, waste accumulation, poor working conditions, low wages, and health-and safety issues.

This thesis explores how industry connections between emerging Australian designers and traditional artisans in India can foster new possibilities for ethically sustainable collaborations between Australia and India. Much of the research emanates from a series of curated tours, where Sydney-based tertiary students undertaking undergraduate degrees in fashion and textile design were encouraged to collaborate with individual artisans, ethical manufacturers, and environmentally sustainable producers in Northern India. Simultaneously, Indian textile artisans were encouraged to apply their traditional technical skills to contemporary design, thus enabling new opportunities for these processes to enter the global market.

Using a combination of participant observation strategies and semi-structured interviews, this research draws on data collected from students and industry professionals between July 2012 and September 2013. This data was supported by my own experiences as a fashion practitioner working with Indian manufacturers.

In this thesis I argue that firsthand experience for students working with artisans, suppliers and ethical manufacturing practices will increase awareness of the complexities of a sustainable fashion future. This research offers a sustainable model of collaborative practice for future generations of emerging designers, which will build a deeper understanding for better ways to source and design. For artisans, the significance of this thesis could be to build an economically sustainable practice considering contemporary design. It suggests ways to engage in ethical and sustainable practices working with Indian artisans. The outcome of this research aims to contribute to a growing field of ethical practice in fashion and textiles.

Terms and Definitions

- aari:*** Form of embroidery practiced in various regions such as in Kashmir, Vrindavan, and Kokata.
- ajrak:*** Unique form of block printed shawls and tiles found in Sindh, Pakistan; Kutch, Gujarat; and Barmer, Rajasthan in India. These shawls display special designs and patterns made using block printing by stamps.
- bandhani:*** Type of tie-dye textile decorated primarily by plucking the cloth with the fingernails into many tiny bindings to form a figurative design. Bandhani making centres are situated in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Sindh, Punjab region and in Tamil Nadu.
- Bespoke:** Clothing made to an individual buyer's specification by a tailor. The distinguishing points of bespoke clothing are the buyer's total control over the fabric used, the features and fit, and the way the garment should be made.
- Carbon footprint:** The amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere as a result of the activities of a particular individual, organization, or community.
- chikankari:*** Traditional embroidery style from Lucknow, India. It is one of Lucknow's best-known textile decoration styles.
- Closed-loop system:** system of production that embraces the circularity of materials; the notion that all component parts of a product can and should be broken down at the end of its useful life to be reconstituted into new products.
- Couture:** Design and manufacture of fashionable clothes to a client's specific requirements and measurements.

- Ethical fashion:** An approach to the design, sourcing and manufacture of clothing which maximises benefits to people and communities while minimising impact on the environment.
- Fair trade:** Trade between companies in developed countries and producers in developing countries in which fair prices are paid to the producers.
- Fashion miles:** Distance a garment is tracked during its manufacturing process.
- Fast fashion:** System of production whereby designs quickly move from catwalk to consumer in order to capture current fashion trends. Fast fashion clothing collections are based on the most recent fashion trends presented at Fashion Week in the spring and the autumn of every year.
- GOTS:** Global Organic Textile Standard. An organic certification organisation.
- Greenwash:** Disinformation disseminated by an organisation so as to present an environmentally responsible public image.
- khādi:** Indian homespun cotton cloth.
- Low impact dye:** Dye that has been classified by the Oeko-Tex Standard 100 (an international certification process) as eco-friendly. Generally, low impact dyes do not contain toxic chemicals or mordents (which fix the dye to the fabric), require less rinsing, and have a high absorption rate in the fabric (~70 percent).
- Natural dyes:** Colourants derived from plants, invertebrates, or minerals. The majority of natural dyes are vegetable dyes derived from plant sources—roots, berries, bark, leaves, and wood—and other organic sources such as fungi and lichens.
- Offshore:** Made, situated, or registered abroad, especially in order to take advantage of lower taxes or costs or less stringent regulation.

Organic cotton: Cotton grown from non-genetically modified plants without the use of any synthetic agricultural chemicals such as fertilizers or pesticides.

Outsourcing: To obtain (goods or a service) by contract from an outside supplier.

Peace silk: Form of silk manufacture that allows silkworms to emerge from their cocoons to live out their full life cycle. The silk is degummed and spun like other fibre instead of being reeled. The resulting yarn is soft, fluffy, and light.

Slow fashion: Movement that embraces a slower pace of trend and production.

SME: Small-to-Medium Enterprise.

sujani: Form of embroidery originating from Bhusura village in Bihar, India.

Supply chain: Sequence of processes involved in the production and distribution of a commodity.

Sustainable fashion: Design philosophy which seeks to create a system of fashion production that can be supported indefinitely in terms of environmental and social responsibility.

Transparent supply chain: Information for end users given by companies about their suppliers and sourcing locations.

zari: Type of gold thread used decoratively on Indian clothing.

Zero waste: Practice of pattern making that creates little or no wasted fabric when cutting.

Introduction

Garment-making companies' awareness of ethical and environmental sustainability issues has been on the increase over the past twenty years (Farley Gordon & Hill 2015). However, some researchers, activists, and consumers believe a significant sector of the global fashion industry continues to place economic gain above ethical and environmental considerations (Fletcher & Grose 2012; Black 2012; Siegle 2008). Meanwhile, there is enormous potential for clothing manufacturers to engage in alternate models of practice which reduce environmental concerns and positively affect economic and social conditions, particularly in developing nations (Hoffman 2008; Wood 2011).

This study explores how developing industry connections between emerging Australian designers and traditional artisans in India can foster new possibilities for ethically sustainable collaborations between Australia and India. Through a series of curated fashion and textile tours where Sydney-based tertiary students undertaking undergraduate degrees in fashion and textile design were encouraged to collaborate with individual artisans, ethical manufacturers, and environmentally sustainable producers in Northern India. Simultaneously, Indian textile artisans were encouraged to apply their traditional technical skills to contemporary design, thus enabling new opportunities for these processes to enter the global market.

The research focuses on four separate tours to India by a total of forty-two undergraduate students from the Bachelor of Fashion and Textile Design degree at the University of Technology Sydney, and Fashion and Technology students from the Technical and Further Education (TAFE). The tours took place between 2012 and 2013 with an average of ten students per tour. Students completed a variety of workshops over a period of two to three weeks, collaborating with twenty-one traditional artisans and ethical manufacturers in North India.

The research draws on a combination of ethnographic methods including participant observation and semi-structured interviews, and reflects the experiences of students and artisans. Human Research Ethics approval was

obtained prior to data collection¹. Names were de-identified as outlined in ethics application.

The project encourages students to develop industry links with individual artisans whose practices are based on traditional artistry. These traditional textile techniques - such as hand embroidery, weaving, printing, and dying - offer students a unique proposition that can not be achieved in an industrialised modern industry.

The project also aims to provide a path for sustained economic stability for Indian artisans and encourages alternative contemporary designs that utilise traditional skills. This could potentially provide artisans with a living wage, social sustainability and the ability to be resilient to change in a globalised world.

Such a collaborative practice model, where the focus is on economic sustainability for disadvantaged workers in the garment industry, has become the prevalent choice for ethically informed practitioners seeking to reduce the negative social and environmental impact of the 'fast fashion' business model.

In addition to the tours, I have drawn on twenty-five years of personal experience in the fashion industry as a designer and ethical practitioner. During this period I have had the opportunity to work with artisans in India and conduct numerous textile tours where designers have collaborated with artisans to create contemporary textiles. Over the past five years I have taken over one hundred tertiary fashion and textile students to India, exposing them to traditional artistry and connecting them with ethical manufacturing partners.

Due to increasing tariffs in Australia over the last two decades, nearly all commercial garment manufacture has been offshore (Diviney & Lillywhite 2007; Marshall & Macdonald 2010; Diviney & Lillywhite 2009b). This has decreased the awareness of ethical and environmental compliance from factories in countries such as Bangladesh, Vietnam, or Sri Lanka (Khosla 2013). Many Australian fashion companies have been unaware of ethical misconduct in their supply chain, such as poor working conditions, child labour, or unsustainable

¹ UTS HREC reference is 2011-489A.

wages for garment workers. They have not known if their product is causing contamination of local water supplies from toxic chemicals and dyes or even the amount of water consumed in the production process (Diviney & Lillywhite 2007).

Governing bodies such as *Textile and Fashion Industries of Australia* (TFIA), *Textiles, Clothing, Footwear* (TCF), *Ethical Clothing Australia* (ECA), and non-government organisations such as the *Textile & Fashion Hub* and *Clean Cut Fashion* are working to raise awareness for the Australian industry and consumers through education and certification. The 2015 Australian Fashion Report by Baptist World Aid Australia, *The Truth Behind the Barcode* (Nimbalker, Mawson & Cremen 2015) states that since the 2007 Ethical Threads report there has been a significant improvement to companies increasing their knowledge of supply chain activities. However, some established brands are still struggling to understand their ethical responsibility (Nimbalker, Mawson & Cremen 2015).

It was the potential for creative collaborative partnership that initially led me to India. I first went there in 2001 to have hand worked garment samples produced for my fashion label, Bulb, after unsuccessfully trying to get them produced in Australia. Through this process I found that India, with its significant textile history, has a number of manufacturers working with traditional crafts, which could potentially offer a unique experience for Australian designers seeking offshore partners. This sparked a curiosity in learning more about manufacture in small-scale factories working with traditional artisans. I discovered that India is one of several manufacturing nations experiencing an increased level of environmental and ethical pressure due to many clothing companies' lack of concern with their production processes.

My research looks for ways to preserve traditional artisan practice as many traditional practices are being ignored as they are considered antiquated, unproductive, and unprofitable (Wood 2011; Jongeward 2003). Embroidery techniques are being lost; as digital embroidery takes over new generations of Indian artisans are reluctant learn the traditional skills (Centre for Sustainable Fashion at London College of Fashion 2010). Weavers in Varanasi, a town known

for silk weaving, earn as little as a dollar a day for their craft as power looms are cheaper and considered more commercially efficient (Rao 2004; Gruère & Sengupta 2011). How can this decline in traditional practice be addressed?

Recognising the importance of a sustainable textile industry focussed on quality, design and luxury, some manufacturers are addressing these issues by increasingly developing their ability to use traditional heritage practices in the production of their garments, (Wood 2011; Jongeward 2003; Frater 2003; Boroian & de Poix 2009), while co-ops and NGOs are combining traditional heritage techniques with 21st century innovation to maintain a sustainable profitable future (Wood 2011). Heritage dyeing techniques are being investigated (Bodeker 2001; Fibre2fashion.com 2010), and innovators are also tapping into India's rich resources to create a quadruple bottom line: people, profit, planet, and culture (Wood 2011; Handique 2010). The artisan is slowly becoming an equal partner with industry (Handique 2010; Baxter 2003). This research investigates these claims and examines a variety of opportunities for collaboration between small to medium Australian designers and the Indian clothing industries.

With the student tours the primary focus is exposing students to traditional practices prior to their entering the industry. These firsthand experiences with ethical manufacturers and traditional artisans give students an understanding of the complexities of the skills involved in producing highly skilled work and the ability to setting up more ethical working practices where the rights of artisans and their craft are considered as important as environmental and economic agendas.

The tours have the potential to offer artisans alternate income opportunities through textile workshops and to build contacts for future business. Learning is reciprocal: by working side by side with fashion and textile students, artisans gain knowledge and learn new ways of looking at contemporary design.

In this thesis I argue that firsthand experience for students working with artisans, suppliers and ethical manufacturing practices increase awareness of the complexities of a sustainable fashion future. Chapter one examines literature and

offers a contextual review. Chapter two, outlines discusses the methods used and why it was appropriate. Chapter three looks at existing sustainable business practice while chapter four discusses collaborative exchange between artisan and designer. In this chapter, I propose a six-stage process that outlines key elements for collaboration between artisan and designer. These include;

1. Research before partnership.
2. Engaging with the collaborative partner.
3. Building rapport.
4. Experimenting together.
5. Consider sustainable approaches.
6. Raise awareness to the wider community.

This research offers a sustainable model of collaborative practice for future generations of fashion students and designers and suggests ways to engage in ethical and sustainable practices working with Indian artisans.²

² It is important to acknowledge that Fashion Design education has played an important role in reconceptualising the relationship between the artisan and the designer, such as London College of Fashion and RMIT (Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology). However it is not the role of this research to evaluate and assess the effectiveness of these programs, which are significant and ongoing.

Chapter 1: Literature and Contextual Review

In order to contextualise this project within the broad sweep of fashion research, it is important to examine existing literature. Four areas are of particular importance: as this research is industry-focussed, examination of research into the existing garment manufacturing industry provides context for the manufacturing aspects of this project. This research also considers the literature on sustainable fashion and covers ethical and social issues such as human rights, fair trade and copyright infringement, environmental issues, water usage, and dumping of excess garments and unused materials. Furthermore, as the research also examines traditional manufacturing techniques, literature on traditional artistry within India including craft history, challenges facing Indian artisans, and opportunities available for artisans is considered. Collaborative practice literature is also described in relevance to student and emerging designers seeking exchange with Indian artisans and ethical manufacturers.

In 2012 the worldwide garment industry was worth US\$1.7 trillion and employed about 75 million people (Fashion United 2014). Presently, consumers are buying more garments than ever, but with little notion of the concomitant human and planetary costs (Farley Gordon & Hill 2015; Black 2012; Fletcher & Grose 2012; Gwilt & Rissanen 2011). There is a growing interest in fashion sustainability within garment producers, governments and consumers (Ulasewicz 2015). There is evidence that designers can help lead change within the fashion industry with researchers investigating alternate resources or materials, manufacturing processes and different models of practice, such as collaborative, holistic or individual co-design (Hethorn 2015; Quinn 2015; Fletcher & Grose 2012; Gwilt & Rissanen 2011).

Garment Industry Research

The Indian and Australian garment industries are vastly different; the Australian industry revolves almost entirely around design rather than manufacturing, whereas the Indian garment industry, whilst possessing a growing design culture, is a manufacturing powerhouse. This section discusses the differences between the Australian and Indian garment industries.

The Impact of Offshore Manufacturing on the Australian Industry

The Australian garment manufacturing industry is on the decline (CTFIA, 2012) and is largely becoming a consumer rather than a producer. International fashion houses with Australian retail outlets, and the limited number of locally-designed labels generally have their product manufactured overseas (Diviney & Lillywhite 2007; Marshall & Macdonald 2010; Diviney & Lillywhite 2009b). In 2008 there were 48,000 people employed in the textile, clothing and footwear industry in Australia (TCF) compared with 38,500 in 2011. This twenty percent drop is partly due to imported goods. The average price of imported clothing costs an import manufacturer a landed price of \$4.06 (CTFIA 2012). Local manufacturers, which comprise eighty four percent small to medium business (SME), find it difficult to compete with these imported products (CTFIA 2012; Diviney & Lillywhite 2007).

However, fashion critic Marion Hume argues the Australian SME sector is flourishing and in a unique position, despite what media reports suggest. She notes that the medium-scale businesses working to an old system are struggling, yet the emerging sector of designers keeping their business specialised and local are flourishing by opening their own small retail outlets and online services to develop a new business model (Hume, Marion 2012). Australian small-to-medium innovated fashion businesses have also enjoyed success in export markets, showing at fashion weeks in Paris, London and New York and are now entering the Asian market (English & Pomazan 2010). India also offers opportunity for this sector.

The Rise of the Indian Manufacturing Industry

India has a unique structure within the textile industry due to tax and labour, with garment manufacturers able to deliver product for both small-scale and large-scale businesses. In 2011, the Indian textile and fashion industry (including local and export markets) was worth USD 89 billion. With the introduction of free trade agreements and the upgrade of infrastructure it is expected to be worth USD 221 billion by 2021 (Gugnani, Jain & Prakash 2012). However, the industry struggles with quality and deadlines due to lagging infrastructure

(Gugnani, Jain & Prakash 2012; Jhala 2011), and an upgrade to technology in the garment industry is extremely urgent (Jhala 2011, p.5). Corruption is another issue, also holding back growth in the retail sector (Munroe et al. 2015).

Business Between Australia and India

The relationship between Australia and India has increased significantly over the past decade (Medcalf 2013), and in July 2015 the Indian and Australian governments held the eighth round of negotiations in their pursuit of an equitable trade agreement (DFAT 2015). Education for Indian nationals in Australia is also in great demand (Medcalf 2013). There has also been an increase in SME Australian designers seeking ethical networks with Indian artisans (Sangam 2013). Both governments are financially supportive of Australia/India projects including designer/artisan-based collaborations. The Australia-India Council (AIC) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) have been funding designer-based projects in both countries. The Australian Fashion Chamber (AFC), which signed a memorandum of understanding with DFAT in August 2015, has been working with the Australian government and Indian institutions to explore manufacturing and retail possibilities in India (Skoric 2014). The Australian Department of Education,



Figure 1: The Hon. Julie Bishop, MP (here representing DFAT) and Edwina McCann (AFC) signing the MoU. Photo by AFC.

Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) has also been funding educational based programs in India.

Australia is less significant than India in terms of garment manufacture, however business between the clothing industries of Australia and India is growing and there is enormous potential to build a progressive partnership. Australia currently supplies India with fifty per cent of its wool imports, worth US\$98 million. India is Australia's third largest market, importing US\$239 million of clothing, textiles, and footwear from India in 2008/9. The time is now to ensure it grows organically with ethical, environmental as well as economic considerations.

Sustainable Fashion

In the last decade there has been a significant increase to literature concerning sustainable fashion. Fashion scholars such as Kate Fletcher, (Fletcher 2008; Fletcher & Grose 2012; Fletcher 2012), Sandy Black (2008, 2012) and Timo Rissanen (2008; Rissanen & McQuillan 2015; Gwilt & Rissanen 2011) have become champions of this issue and write forcefully on the concept of fashion sustainability and the necessity of its widespread adoption. Fletcher argues, "The challenge of sustainability – that is, of integrating human well-being and natural integrity – is that we can't go on as before. Business as usual, or more to the point, fashion as usual, is not an option" (Fletcher 2008, p.xii).

Central to these ideas is the 'triple bottom line', a concept first articulated and vigorously advocated by John Elkington, the director of SustainAbility. He describes this as:

An individual company's (or entire value chain's) ability to simultaneously satisfy not just the traditional bottom line of profitability but also two emergent bottom lines; one focusing on environmental quality, the other on social justice. As a result, companies and their boards will need to think in terms of the triple bottom line. (Elkington 1998, p.xi)

This concept underpins much of the theory behind corporate social responsibility (CSR) studies. Carolin Zeller suggests CSR is vital for future of corporate management:

CSR has become an essential tool in corporate risk management. Next to individual self regulation in the form of codes of conduct, collective self regulation regimes are seen as an important tool in minimising the risk of being targeted by NGO campaigns ready to expose any wrong doing (Zeller 2012, p.211).

Fashion designers Vivienne Westwood and Stella McCartney are pioneers in building balanced pillars of sustainability (Black 2012), while in Australia clothing wholesaler 3Fish is working successfully utilizing the ideals of a triple bottom line (Nimbalker, Mawson & Cremen 2015).

Through the opening of markets to imports into Australia and the reduction of trade quotas and tariffs, a global supply business model has emerged. This takes the responsibility off Australian companies to consider the regulated Homeworkers' Code of Practice³ while developing cheaper unregulated products offshore (Marshall & Macdonald 2010). The Australian garment industry is considered to be falling behind other OECD countries in its adoption of corporate responsibility practices (Nimbalker, Mawson & Cremen 2015; Browne 2014; Marshall & Macdonald 2010; Diviney & Lillywhite 2009a, 2007; Payne, Alice 2013).

Research by The Brotherhood of Saint Lawrence, Ethical Threads: Corporate Social Responsibility in the Australian Garment Industry, (Diviney & Lillywhite 2007) suggests there is limited implementation of corporate responsibility practices, particularly amongst the small-to-medium enterprises which comprise 87 percent of the Australian industry. These enterprises are more concerned about their business surviving than corporate responsibility (CTFIA 2012; Diviney & Lillywhite 2007). The issues raised includes the belief customers are unwilling to pay for ethically produced garments, lack of influence due to being small, difficulty in taking responsibilities for workers other than ones directly working for them, and lack of government support (Diviney & Lillywhite 2007, p.11; Marshall & Macdonald 2010, p.155). Indeed, many SME companies find it difficult to connect with a manufacturer for small production runs, without considering a sustainable compliant manufacturer (Diviney & Lillywhite 2007, p.7)

³Now known as Ethical Clothing Australia, this is a joint industry-union initiative protecting outworkers in Australia.

The 2015 Australian Fashion Report, *Behind the Barcode* shows improvement in the industry in regard to ethical responsibilities, however many companies are still lagging (Nimbalkar, Mawson & Cremen 2015). Choice Magazine exposes Australian companies lagging in issues relating to chemicals in clothes that are toxic to users as well as the environment (Browne 2014). However, the article does commend independent senator Nick Xenophon for calling on the ACCC to ban toxic dyes. The Australian government is yet to respond.

Ethical/Social and Cultural Studies

Literature about human rights or issues concerning people can be described in social, ethical, and/or cultural terms. This pillar of fashion sustainability is particularly relevant to this thesis and will be examined using these terms.

Working conditions in the clothing industry, particularly in developing nations, have attracted significant concern, difficult press, and academic research (Khosla 2013; Hickman 2010; Siddiqi 2003). The evolution of fast fashion in the early 1990s necessitated the movement of manufacturing from developed countries (where design and consumption occurs) to developing countries such as India, Bangladesh and China, where wages are lower and government controls less stringent (Cooke 2010; Taplin 2014). The safety and working conditions in these countries is often lax and can produce dangerous working environments.

In 2010, twenty one workers died when a fire raced through a Bangladeshi factory with sub-standard fire equipment as workers worked through the night to fulfil an order for Swedish multi-national H&M (Hickman 2010). Also in Bangladesh, the 2013 collapse of an eight-story garment manufacturing building, Rana Plaza, resulted in 1,129 deaths. Clothing companies such as L.L.Bean, Gymboree, Hanes, Proppor International, Pier 1, Kohl's, Wal-Mart, Abercrombie and Fitch, Nike, and Gap are all mentioned in the International Labour Rights Forum's 'Sweatshop Hall of Shame' (International Labor Rights Forum 2010). Several academic studies have exposed the fashion industry's insistence on using sweatshops (Ross 1997; Green 2003; Ross 2004; Shaw et al. 2006; Davies, Lee & Ahonkhai 2012). However, some studies (Joergens 2006; Davies, Lee & Ahonkhai 2012) find marginal consumer interest in ethical manufacturing implementation,

while Shaw et al. (2006) found barriers even for consumers determined to purchase garments produced outside of the sweatshop model, caused by an opaque supply chain. The working conditions of manufacturing staff continue to be a focus for sustainable fashion research.

The origins of intellectual property dates back to the nineteenth-century, “Unity of Art” debates in France led by Eugène Pouillet. This resulted in the recognition of fashion design as intellectual property in the 1902 amendment to the French copyright law (Reichman 1983, p.1153–8). While the 1948 revision to the Berne Convention⁴ stopped short of similarly applying copyright to industrial art, it

admitted applied art to full standing as copyrightable subject matter but authorised—or indeed invited—members to curb the excesses of the copyright approach by recourse to the kind of subsidiary legal framework that the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property had long recognised. (Reichman 1983, p.1163–4)

This ambiguous situation continues to this day. Article 2.7 of the Berne Convention notes:

it shall be a matter for legislation in the countries of the Union to determine the extent of the application of their laws to works of applied art and industrial designs and models, as well as the conditions under which such works, designs and models shall be protected.

Thus it is up to individual countries to decide to what extent industrial designs should be protected and how much protection foreign governments should reciprocate. India has a copyright act (the Indian Copyright Act [1957]), however there is little incentive for enforcement at the grassroots level. Australia’s copyright act (Copyright Act [1968]) is regularly enforced, however there are difficulties in transnational application. The fundamental illegality of the practice increases the difficulty of research. Further, Hilton et al. (2004) argue that widespread IP infringement within the fashion industry, in the form of the production of counterfeit goods, is the result of the prevalent industry acceptance of design replication.

The cultural implications of incorporating traditional artistry within modern design is a source of debate amongst academics and writers (Suterwalla 2011),

⁴ The Berne Convention is the international agreement covering transnational protection of intellectual property.

who believe commercial partnerships with western design houses have a negative impact upon 'authentic' traditional design, lessening and degrading its roots and subverting processes of authentication (Jaitly 2003; McNeil 2011; Sethi 2012). Sethi (2012) recommends looking to the twenty-first century to sustain dynamic and living crafts. Tyabji argues:

Indian craftsmanship has been a way of life for centuries. In each era most crafts have survived by going under the radar and carrying on for the local population, unnoticed, or by suitably adapting to the times. Region-specific crafts such as woven and printed textiles, embroideries, damascene work and jewelry have gone to all parts of the world through enterprising traders and courtly interventions (Tyabji 2003)

Jaitly compares India with industrialised countries such as USA, Australia, Sweden, and Japan where traditional artisans have become practitioners of studio crafts. While Australian academic Peter McNeil notes:

In going to the 'source' of ethnic textiles and re-commissioning in India fabrics that had not been produced in some cases for decades, their practice raises questions about authenticity, intervention and revival. (McNeil 2009, p.109)

Environmental/Ecology

Literature concerning the planet is described in either environmental or ecological terms. In the last ten years there has been an increase in literature specifically relating to fashion and the ecological strain the garment supply chain is placing on the earth (Dickson, Eckman & Loker 2009; Hethorn 2008; Black 2008; Fletcher 2012; Hethorn 2015; Farley Gordon & Hill 2015; The Sustainable Business Group 2015). Water usage has become a major issue in the apparel sector (The Sustainable Business Group 2015). In India alone, pollution through the use of pesticides and toxic dyes has caused ecological disasters affecting cotton farmers, textile producers and skilled artisans (Tenfold Organic Textiles 2007; Fibre2fashion News Desk 2009).

Economics

In the last few years, alongside concepts of sustainability, alternative models of economics have increased. While some of these are disruptive, others exist alongside established economic models. Over the past fifty years, for example, there has been an increase in micro-finance initiatives, which aim to improve the lives of the disadvantaged. In 1999, Mordoch (1999) asserted that a billion

people worldwide lived in a household of less than a dollar a day, and described microfinance as “a poor households are being given hope and the possibility to improve their lives through their own labor” (p1609). However, as Chliova et al. (Forthcoming) note, the results have been controversial and marked by a lack of empirical evidence. A more recent development is the rise of the collaborative economy, the sharing of physical assets and services among people via services such as Uber, Airbnb, and Craigslist, is gaining in importance and in academic attention (Dillahunt & Malone 2015). Within the fashion industry initiatives such as garment swapping is gaining attraction (Zee 2014).

Economics will leverage culture within Indian societies, where rural communities seek alternative incomes in times of drought or spiralling inflation (Frater 2003). However, there is a decline in the market of artisanal goods (Crafts Revival Trust 2005; Wood 2011). Handmade goods have not been able to compete in a mass produced economy (Crafts Revival Trust 2005). Consumers are ready to pay more for sustainability (Niinimäki 2009). Fletcher and Grose (2012, p.75) argue that alongside an increasing awareness of sustainability targets it is logical to focus on economic goals that shape the fashion industry.

Designing Opportunities with a Sustainability Agenda

Designers influence and shape our material world. They can educate, facilitate and advocate toward a sustainable fashion future. Secondly, education is the incubator for new business models and the safest place to put sustainability into practice quickly (Fletcher & Grose 2012, p.181). Janet Hethorn (Hethorn 2015, p.66) suggests designers should focus on the individual consumer and that design has the power to change perceptions and mindsets. She believes there are opportunities to create fashion that is relevant and develops cultural connections. For sustainability to be recognised, designers need to create holistically within this complex system.

There are opportunities for a sustainable fashion future through alternative models of practice. Literature in this area is increasing, and offers emerging fashion designers new models of practice to design, develop, and distribute. India offers a unique proposition for sustainable manufacture and offers great

opportunities for the global fashion industry. Meanwhile communities in both urban and rural settings rely on this trade for a sustainable livelihood (Baxter 2015; Ghadiali 2010).

Traditional Artistry Within India

The diversity of traditional artistry in India is enormous (Crafts Revival Trust 2005). It is a significant cultural and economic sector in India, contributing USD4.48 billion to the economy in 2010 (Dasra India & Edmond de Rothschild Foundation 2013). Historically, artisans played an important role, especially when crafting for royal and aristocratic clients between the seventh and tenth centuries (Singh 2009). However, since the 1970s, when industrialised production began to usurp traditional craftsmanship, artisans have increasingly struggled to survive. As their social and economic positions have declined, some artisans have given up their craft, whilst others live in penury (Wood 2011). Over the past twenty years, some academics, NGOs and social entrepreneurs have been working toward building ways artisans can restore their status (Sethi 2012; Waterman 2011; Tyabji 2003).

Heritage Textiles In India

Heritage manufacturing techniques utilise pre-industrial, non-industrial, and often historical techniques of manufacture. The earliest extant reliably dated textiles from any culture were found in the Indus valley and date from 3000BCE , long before comparative techniques arose in Europe. The Dravidians of Mohenjodaro in Sind province, Pakistan, had dyeing vats, clay spindles and bronze needles around 2500BCE . Indians wove muslin for Egyptian mummies (Ghosh & Ghosh 1995, p.38) and the Greek geographer Strabo (63BCE -20CE) wrote of the Indian textile industry (Karolia, Buch & others 2008, p.93).

Hand-manufactured textiles and ornamentation hold major cultural significance to Indian society. Indeed, the handloom and local *khādī* fabric was of particular significance to Gandhi and he criticised the cheap export of Indian cotton to Great Britain and the subsequent reimportation of expensive manufactured clothes. During the medieval era, some artisans, such as weavers, played an important role in Indian economy and were considered wealthy, with their rights

and wages secure. Some artisans from this period also achieved international status (Singh 2009, p.201).

The Challenges Facing Indian Artisans

Industry has become what craft used to be (Crafts Revival Trust 2005, p.26). Many traditional Indian artisans find it a challenge to keep up with industrialised standards of the modern world and struggle to find where they fit in and at what price to cost their craft (Crafts Revival Trust 2005, p.25). Social issues such as working conditions, intellectual property theft of designs, lack of education, child labour, exploitation by middlemen, and difficulty to connect with the modern market plague Indian artisans and their children are often reluctant to take on their skills (Dasra India & Edmond de Rothschild Foundation 2013; Liebl & Roy 2004). These problems, compounded with marketing, quality and productivity issues are resulting in major economic challenges for artisans (Dasra India & Edmond de Rothschild Foundation 2013, p.17). Most struggle to earn a living wage from their handworked craft, with many artisans forced to give up heritage skills that may have been in their family for generations (Wood 2011). Artisans often accept employment in large textile mills for as little as one dollar a day (Ravasio 2011).

Academics, NGOs, and industry professionals have been researching the ways in which institutions, social enterprises, and designers can work together to develop opportunities for impoverished artisans in India. The All India Indian Handloom Board, set up in 1952, lobbies for the industry with some success, (Colaiacomo & Caratozzolo 2010) and the Indian government offers support and funding for the sector to counterbalance the issue of industrialization. However much of these funds do not reach the artisan, and Jaitly asserts that the middlemen or manufacturers are reaping the financial rewards (Jaitly 2003). Pamela Ravasio argues for a brand to develop ethical sourcing ties with artisans. Trying to cut out the middleman is pivotal (Ravasio 2011b, p.10).

Leila Tyabji (Tyabji 2003) that for an economic, cultural and social shift for artisans to succeed we need to listen as well as speak. She espouses a shift from patronage to partnership, suggesting that if the voices of artisans remain

unheard, they may not exist in the future. Jasleem Dhamija, agrees and continues with;

It is only when craftspeople are equal partners in the production, marketing of crafts, in deciding the government policy towards crafts can we expect crafts to develop the strength to be sustained as they were throughout history (Dhamija 2003)

The challenges that face Indian artisans should not be dealt with in isolation. If a particular craft dies, a part of history, tradition and cultural identity dies with the artisanal business (Crafts Revival Trust 2005, p.27)

Opportunities for Building Sustainable Livelihoods for Artisans

Although traditional artisans in India are abundant, in an interview with HAND/EYE magazine, Shazia Saleem notes that finding and connecting with artisans can be complicated (Ravasio 2011a). In the last five years, there has been an increase in literature that aims to develop strategies for artisan sustainability. London College of Fashion has developed an online data base for designers to connect with Indian artisans and textile suppliers (Centre for Sustainable Fashion 2009). Pamela Ravasio has developed an introductory guide for start-ups in the industry, offering practical sourcing tips and examples for ethical textile producers, including artisans (Ravasio 2011b).

In 2013, Dasra⁵ and the Edmond De Rothchild Foundations⁶ joined forces to develop a report, *Crafting a Livelihood – Building Sustainability for Indian Artisans* (Dasra India & Edmond de Rothschild Foundation 2013). The same year, the Australia-India Design Platform, Sangam, drafted a Code of Practice for Partnerships in Craft and Design (still to be completed in final format at the time of writing this thesis). Literature and guides such as these play a pivotal role in building links between designers and artisans aiming to improve sustainable livelihoods in artisanal communities. The president of the World Crafts Council, Mrs Usha Krishna notes:

⁵ A foundation based in India that works with NGOs and social businesses helping them to develop successful strategies for people in poverty.

⁶ A foundation that works in education, projects range from arts and culture, social entrepreneurship, intercultural dialogue and health.

Only through dialogue and creative interactions can we begin to understand the vital contribution crafts can make to world economics, and to perpetuate the tenuous link between tradition and modernity. Through these engagements, we can hopefully resuscitate the dignity, economics, and social status of the artisan community (Krishna 2008).

Education plays a significant role in developing creative interaction aiming to restore artisan status (Crafts Revival Trust 2005; Dasra India & Edmond de Rothschild Foundation 2013). Artisan skills need to be upgraded, new raw materials such as non-toxic dyes need to be introduced, and education around production planning, cost effective marketing, and promotional strategies need to be addressed (Crafts Revival Trust 2005, p.18). Crafting a livelihood report suggests stakeholders, such as social entrepreneurs, NGOs and academic institutions should come together to develop strategies for artisan education. Stakeholders could help artisans become more aware of the value in their skill (Dasra India & Edmond de Rothschild Foundation 2013, p.30). Fair trade organisations such as Fair Trade Federation (FTF) and the World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO) are working to educate both artisans and designers to develop fair exchange and could be part of the solution for a sustainable future for artisans (Minney 2011). Through different case studies at a grassroots level these organisations are training artisans on how to build a sustainable business through micro finance and helping them gain an understanding of social- cultural differences. For designers these organisations are helping them to gain awareness of artisan equality while ensuring respect for techniques and traditions are adhered to (Littrell 2015).

Traditional techniques such as indigo dying offer opportunities to lower the environmental impact of the fashion industry (Farley Gordon & Hill 2015, p.99). Literature concerning environmental sustainability opportunities in India for designers and artisans is on the increase. Lucy Norris has written extensively on recycling in India (Norris 2012, 2010).

The Crafts Revival Trust (2005, p.144) argues that the designer needs to find a market for products developed with artisans before engaging in the sampling process, as it is the artisans' livelihood at stake. Local and international designers working with artisans should also try to develop for multiple markets such as local Indian markets as well as export markets. However, the importance of

traditional artisans is variously recognised in India and in the west. Wood (2011, p.6) contends that it is a broad responsibility of Indians to be consumers of artisanal products not simply because they are inexpensive or arty but because sustaining craft means sustaining health, education, self-value, and cultural diversity within the sector.

Collaborative Exchange Between Artisans and Designers

In the twenty first century alternative models of practice for fashion design are being reviewed. One of the global leading fashion trend forecasters, Li Edelkoort, suggests fashion as we know it is dead (Edelkoort qtd. Fairs 2015). She argues that fashion institutions still educate our young people to become catwalk designers, whereas this society is now about exchange, the new economy, and working together in teams and groups. She also suggests it is time to return to handmade garments and embrace new opportunities.

Fashion collaborations are not new, however the rise of corporate social responsibility has created a new type of collaboration (Ethical Fashion Forum 2013). In the report *Big Business: Making it work with small-scale artisans*, it is argued successful collaborations can be truly inspiring and a way for artisans to gain sustained employment (Ethical Fashion Forum 2013, p.13). The Crafts Revival Trust suggests students who have the opportunity to collaborate with Indian artisans gain a far greater learning experience (Crafts Revival Trust 2005). The approach for fashion students to work with Indian artisans should be collaborative, and the artisan considered as an equal partner (Crafts Revival Trust 2005, p.136):

The exposure to traditional artisan design creates the foundations for contemporary design. By offering the students a field work experience they gained an understanding of issues, processes and time it takes to develop samples. It can be a catalyst that develops linkages and connections throughout their career (Crafts Revival Trust 2005, p.89).

For students or emerging designers to understand the types of collaboration and understanding their own knowledge as well as that of Indian artisans, it is worth mentioning literature concerned with design-oriented collaboration. Scholars such as Sennett (2012) and Schön (2005) discuss the variables in collaborative

practice. Sennett (2012, p.72) discusses the processes of cooperative processes and classifies them the following way:

- self-sacrifice or altruistic exchange
- win-win, where one party receives product/service and the other a fair financial reward
- differentiating exchange, where all parties are aware of their differences
- zero-sum exchange, on which one party succeeds at the expense of the other
- winner-takes-all, in which one part wipes out the other.

This thesis is interested in a win-win scenario where all parties are fairly compensated and acknowledged.

Understanding the embodied knowledge of a designer, where the practitioner operates on a level of creation with an inherent knowing from experience rather than the science of reflection is key to artisanal skill (Schön 2005). According to Schön, there are three ways to gain this knowledge: self instruction, online learning or practicum. Through the practical experience, the student is learning under close supervision of the master, not just about the skill, but industry communication and problem solving through reflection-in-action (Waks 2001, p.42). Collaborative partners gain knowledge of each other's mastery. Through this style of open dialogue and shared skill set learning, a student designer will gain a deeper technical knowledge of the processes for future collaborations. This new insider knowledge will help develop and communicate new concepts and ideas beyond a fashion student or artisan's imagination. A fashion student sitting alongside a textile master and sharing ideas can only broaden the possibilities of contemporary collaborative design.

Scholars such Kevin Murray suggest the balance of contemporary collaboration has not reached a fair equitable balance. There are barriers such as differences in educational levels between artisan and designer. Generally the designer will initiate collaboration, while the artisan feels they do not have the authority to engage in direction of the collaboration. Murray suggesting;

As world craft production becomes increasingly collaborative, there is increasing need for tools by which such collaboration can be verified (Murray 2010)

Some of these increased collaborative projects have been documenting the positive aspects for artisans. Tung Fang Wu discusses the mutual benefits of collaborative exchange and highlights how the association of craft and design can empower the artisan to develop their own innovations and professional expertise (Tung 2012). Through the increase of awareness and collaborative projects being analysed and documented, the exchange between designer and artisan could have potential to become more equitable.

Chapter 2: Methodology and Project Description

Methodology

This thesis employs ethnographic participatory observation methodology. Using this methodology enabled a direct relationship with participants as a means to analyse and document collaboration, it allowed freedom to participate and observe members through the collaboration of an emerging generation of new Australian designers and traditional Indian artisans (Gobo 2008). The research also acknowledges the significant expertise of Indian artisans exploring traditional textile techniques. Research canvassed:

- ability of students to produce original couture textiles in collaboration with Indian artisans
- establishment of contact between artisans and students for students to utilise after graduation
- development of financial sustainability of collaborating artisans through textile tourism and ongoing business with student/emerging designers
- formation of a core body of UTS and TAFE graduates who have undertaken the tours who can become advocates for ethical collaboration with Indian artisans
- development of context, respect, and cultural sensitivity by students for the knowledge, technical facility, business, cultural practice, and expertise of Indian artisans

Qualitative data methodology uses a small selection of participants and is a relevant method for this research (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey 2010; Alasuutari 2000). Data has been collected and analysed through face-to-face interviews with selected artisans, students, industry participants, and industry professionals. Further data has been drawn from student journals, and blogs of forty-two students and twenty-one Indian artisans and suppliers. Analysis of this data, together with my own participatory observations and data collection, has enabled me to participate and reflect in a unique research opportunity that could

not have been accessed through the usual research avenues. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Through this qualitative data collection method I was able to extract the required information.

The Field Work Project

Project Description

Four study tours were arranged through Artisan Culture. This is an initiative developed by myself in 2010 to create alternate income for textile artisans in India by bridging the gap between artisans, designers, and consumers through education and design. These tours encompass the fieldwork of this study and were undertaken from July 2012 to September 2013. They involved academics⁷ from the UTS Bachelor of Design in Fashion and Textile course and staff⁸ from the TAFE Fashion Technology course.

The tours permitted students to travel to India, visiting and collaborating with traditional textile artisans and ethical manufacturers from Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan (see fig 3). Selected students were interviewed as key participants to form a narrative of their collective tour experiences, and to ascertain how they might incorporate their newfound knowledge of traditional artistry and sustainable techniques into future contemporary design practice.

The tours involved a combination of students from varying courses. Students from the University of Technology Sydney are fashion and textile focussed. There is an emphasis on design in their education, underpinned by cultural and social theory. The second group of students was from a technical institution, TAFE, and their focus is primarily production.

The objective remained consistent throughout each of the tours: to learn skills, including communication, sustainable sourcing methods, traditional textile artisan techniques, and to gain knowledge and contacts in the Indian garment

⁷ Ms Alana Clifton-Cunningham, Fashion and Textile Design Lecturer within the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building (DAB) at UTS, and Ms Cecilia Heffer, a Senior Lecturer and Director of the UTS Fashion and Textile Course.

⁸ This included Sandy Barnett, design teacher with TAFE.

industry. The UTS tours focussed on slower techniques such as individual traditional artisan workshops, including block printing, dyeing, and a variety of embroidery techniques. The TAFE tour focussed on fashion production such as sourcing fabrics, trims, hand embellishments, garment making, and learning to communicate with ethical manufacturers in Northern Delhi.

Artisan Culture Role

The research project draws from my twenty-five year fashion practice, fifteen of which were spent running an ethical export business that engaged in hand textile work and garment manufacture. From this experience, I recognised a gap in knowledge and developed opportunities for Australian emerging designers, creating sustainable and ethical engagement between designers and artisans. As a means to enable this research I shared my knowledge as a consultant in sustainable and ethical practice. This included sourcing organic cottons, natural dyed materials, recycled trims, and hand crafted embroideries and prints as well as ethical manufacturing. In the role of Artisan Culture co-ordinator I drew from my knowledge and experience to organise specialised excursions to specific factories that work with mass manufacture, ethical design studios, sustainable textile, and accessory merchants.

Specialist Collaborators

Prior to this research my experience working with artisans in India was through factory associates, so an important aspect of these tours involved developing collaborations with those specialising in Indian artisanship. These specialists needed to have a deep engagement with artisanal practice and knowledge of the Australian garment industry. They also needed to have an interest in providing pathways for the next generation of designers and share a vision to develop future sustainable links with artisans. Primary collaborators included:

- **Swati Jain** - twenty years' experience in the Indian garment industry working with both large-scale exporters and her own small-scale ethical factory. She has won UNESCO awards for her textile designs. For this research her experience with artisanal craft and ethical manufacturing, and

her profound knowledge of local Indian markets helped guide students in and around Delhi as well as executing samples for collections.

- **Medhavi Gandhi** - founded Delhi-based NGO Happy Hands Foundation⁹ in 2010. She has extensive knowledge of various crafts and previously worked with Indian artisans at UNESCO. For this research Medhavi shared her knowledge of artisanal craft and connected the students with five textile artisans.
- **Robyn Beeche** - an Australian photographer famous for her fashion work in London, where she collaborated with Zandra Rhodes and Vivienne Westwood on many campaigns. She lived in Vrindavan and worked closely with traditional *aari* embroidery artisans to develop products for fashion clients in Australia and London. For this research she shared her knowledge as an Australian fashion photographer living in India and connected students to *aari* embroidery artisans in Vrindavan.
- **Rajat Jain** - designer based in Delhi. His role in this research was to introduce fashion students to contemporary design of handcrafted textiles. Students visited his studio for inspiration and observed embroidery artisans creating intricate handwork for fashion garments. Rajat facilitated textile and garment samples for students looking to develop product for their collections, such as block printing, pattern making, garment making, and hand embroidery
- **Fiona Wright** - Australian textile artist based in Pushkar. Her experience operating an ethical manufacturing unit, The Stitching Project, co-ordinating artisan workshops through Creative Arts Safari, and designing ethically produced garments through her label Watt Wright Designs made her an important partner for this research

⁹ Happy Hands Foundation recently won the British Council Award for innovation in reviving traditional Indian craft and is building a strong reputation for its sustainable approach to business in Delhi.



Figure 2: Rajat Jain and team. Photo by Julie Lantry

Industry Connections

Industry contacts played a major role in the thesis and the student experience.

They are as follows:

- **Superna Sapru** - from MTI clothing. Runs two successful commercial factories, one large-scale and the other a small-scale sampling unit, supplying many SME Australian fashion companies such as George and Rachel Gilbert. Superna's role was to share her knowledge of both the Australian and Indian industries and expose students to how large-scale manufacturing operates.
- **Rajeev Sethi** - founder of Asian Heritage Foundation. Rajeev is an award winning Indian designer and at the forefront of craft revival. Rajeev shared with students his thirty five years experience in the industry, inspiring them to respect, acknowledge, and collaborate with Indian textile artisans.

- **Kamal and Kanishk Kishore** - from Kullu Karishma, and suppliers of hand-loomed hand fabrics and knitwear. Their role was to offer expertise in natural dying techniques, hand weaving, and ethical knitting manufacture.
- **Jyotsna Gokhale** - knitwear designer and artisan based in Delhi. Her role was to offer expertise in knitting and crochet of contemporary handcrafted Australian merino wool products.

The recruitment of student designers was done in consultation with TAFE¹⁰ and UTS¹¹ staff. This ensured that students selected to participate on the tours were committed to the specialised sustainable focus of each of the projects. They were also briefed on ethical practice as a means to increase an awareness of social and cultural differences.

¹⁰ This program was offered to all Advanced Diploma students as a way to complete final year collections in India.

¹¹ This was via an application process for their fashion and textile students, imbedding each tour into a particular subject.

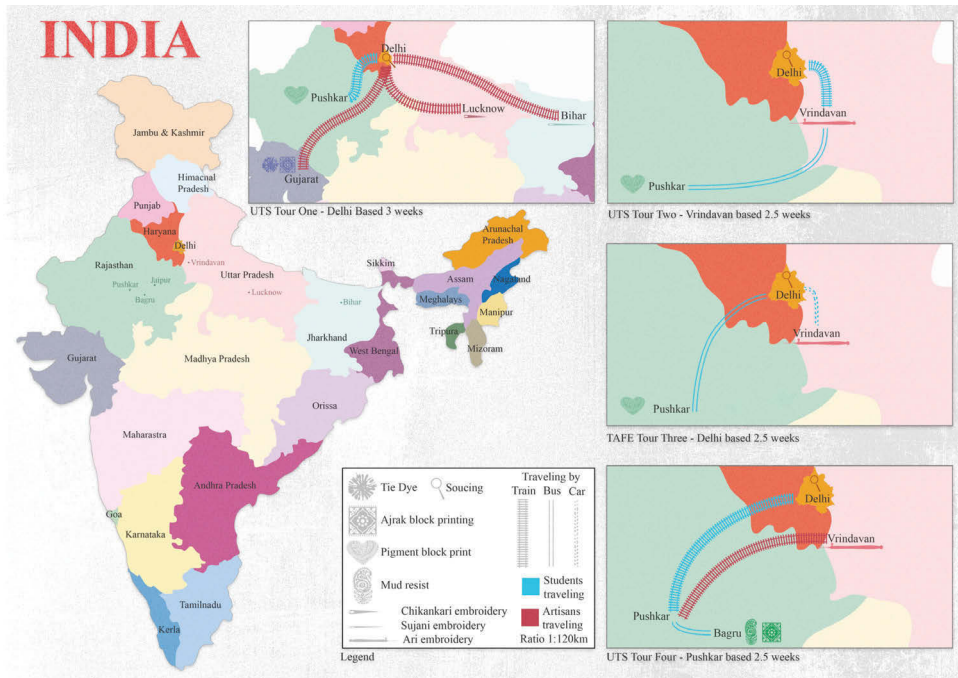


Figure 3: The Fashion Tours

The Tours as Research Enquiry

The unique contribution my experience makes in this research area is to connect Australian fashion and textile students with sustainable suppliers and ethical manufacturers in India. This research encouraged an alternate model of practice within the current fast fashion model that operates in the Australian fashion industry. Collaborative practice has the potential for both parties to share skills and exchange ideas to develop contemporary designs. Through the tours students were exposed to a different way of working with skilled artisans who offer expertise not readily available to designers in Australia.

The fieldwork for this thesis consisted of four tours (Figure 3). Students were exposed to a variety of traditional textile techniques, including embroidery, printing, dyeing, weaving, and knitting. Students were given the opportunity to experience practice models and cultural differences in different scenarios such as traditional village life, working with Delhi based NGOs, and collaborating with small-scale ethical manufacturing partners. Each tour focussed on one main workshop with visits to surrounding areas/village settings on weekend breaks to experience cultural activities. These included visits to textile museums such as the Craft Museum in Delhi, the Anoki Museum in Jaipur, and the Taj Mahal in Agra.

Tour One – Introducing Traditional Crafts

In Tour One nine second year UTS fashion and textile students were selected to participate as part of a subject titled New Textiles and Technologies. Delhi-based Happy Hands Foundation (HHF) collaborated to enable the program, which was twenty-one days in duration. Students were exposed to traditional textile techniques, including *ajrak* block printing, tie-dye, *chikankari*, and *sujani* embroidery, with five regional artisans travelling to Delhi to instruct students. The weekend cultural experiences included a day trip to Vrindavan to visit Robyn Beeche, who introduced the students to *aari* embroidery and photography, followed by a visit to the Taj Mahal in Agra. The second weekend students travelled to Pushkar to experience block printing in a village environment.

Medhavi and her team at Happy Hands Foundation (in consultation with me) chose the artisans for the main workshop. These included:

- **Nazeem:** *chikankari* artisan who has won a UNESCO award. Nazeem is from a family of embroiderers.
- **Sanju Devi:** *sujani* artisan from Bihar, who runs her own women's co-op producing textiles for commercial sales. She was keen to work with international students.
- **Akib Khatri:** *ajrak* block printing artisan. Akib is from a family of printers in Gujarat and recently graduated from Kala Raksha¹².
- **Hanif Khatri:** *bandani* tie dye artisan from Gujarat and also a recent graduate from Kala Raksha.

The decision to work with Hanif and Akib was not just for their talent but also because of cultural considerations: they already knew each other, spoke the same language and came from the same religious background. These factors helped the young artisans settle into Delhi and feel more comfortable out of their regular surroundings.

The first week of this tour was about building knowledge, relationships, and cultural exchange. The second week, focussed on experimenting with a selected technique and working one-to-one with the collaborative partners. The third week allowed students to finalise their designs to a finished product. At the commencement of the residency, all participants, including the coordinator and staff gave presentations. Medhavi (Figure 4) introduced the session and shared her experiences of the craft sector in India. Through informative demonstrations each artisan discussed their individual craft and techniques employed. Cecilia Heffer and I discussed other relevant contemporary fashion and textile industry examples relating to sustainable practice, business model alternatives, and how to develop networks within the garment industry. Each student presented their research of contemporary western embroidery, dying, and printing trends to the local artisans as a way of framing and contextualising their work.

¹² A design school in India for traditional artisans.



Figure 4: Medhavi and Akib explaining about *ajrak* printing. Photo by student designer Joanna

The next step was to conduct simultaneous two-hour sessions of the four different crafts, breaking up the students into smaller groups. These sessions offered students a chance to experience all craft and textile technique variations on offer before choosing one specific technique for the collaboration. During this time, Cecilia and myself presented a workshop to the artisans on international commercial opportunities. At the end of the first week, all students had experienced each craft and were ready to select collaborative partners and techniques for their main project.

Students engaged in two styles of hand embroidery, one print method, and one dye technique. During the textile workshop, students learned the processes, potentials and limitations of individual traditional crafts. The artisans, in turn, learned about contemporary Australian design and how to adapt their craft skills in different cultural contexts, considering the boundaries of their craft without disrespecting traditional design.

Tour Two – Visiting Rural Embroidery Artisans

Ten UTS fashion and textile students from various years¹³ taking the subject, *Couture Techniques* were selected to participate in Tour Two. The ten-day

¹³ Five second year, three third year, and two fourth year students.

workshop was based in Vrindavan, Uttar Pradesh. Students collaborated with ten *aari* embroidery artisans. The tour started with three days in Delhi where students were given an opportunity to source materials for the embroidery workshops. Students also visited specific factories and fashion stores to see contemporary Indian embroidery before travelling to Vrindavan to experience and learn *aari* embroidery. The tour included a three-day weekend in the village of Pushkar, Rajasthan to learn traditional block printing and *sujani* styles of embroidery.

The primary workshop *aari* embroidery artisans included:

- **Ashok Ladiwal:** Fifth generation *aari* embroiderer and chosen for this workshop as he worked closely with Robyn Beeche.
- **Riyajuddin:** Has been in Ashok's employ for thirty years.
- **Abdul Valid Khan:** Worked in Ashok's studio for over forty years.
- **Anais:** Worked for twenty years in Ashok's studio.
- **Chan Khan:** Worked in Ashok's studio for twelve years.
- **Harun:** Worked for twenty years in Ashok's Studio.
- **Raja:** Worked in Ashok's studio on a part time basis for eight years.

Harun, Anais, Chan and Riyajuddin are long needle artisans while Abdul and Raja are short needle artisans. For this workshop Ashok also attempted to employ artisans from other villages to make up the one-on-one student to artisan ratio. By the end of the workshop there were ten artisans working alongside the students.

A vital component of these tours were to increase social and cultural awareness through exposure to local traditions. On this particular tour, students had the opportunity to learn and experience religious and cultural rituals vital to village life. At the opening of the Ashok School of Embroidery in Vrindavan the local Hindu priest performed a *puja* (blessing) (Figure 5). This unique experience served to open cultural understanding of design practice in a broader social context.

The first two days of the workshop involved students learning the long needle technique. This involves spinning the needle around the fingers to develop the motion involved in picking thread and sequins simultaneously. The following days the students collaborated with an artisan to develop ideas. The final week, students worked on one final project or a few small projects to learn various stitch methods involving various threads and sequins.



Figure 5: Cecilia and Ashok accepting the blessing from the Priest. Photo by student designer Felicity

This tour immersed students in a traditional craft with a view to developing a deeper understanding of this slower method of embroidery and to consider its potential in couture design. Familiarising students with these techniques showed them the various stitches that can be developed and in some cases revived. The students were also made aware of the impediments associated with working in village environments, such as not having alternate materials at one's disposal should a design falter, or issues of power cuts and water contamination that may affect quality and delivery times. For the artisans it was an opportunity to collaborate with students from Australia to develop new ideas and contemporary outcomes.



Figure 6: Students and artisans working side by side. Photo by student designer, Bonney

Tour Three – Building an Ethical Supply Chain

Fifteen students from the Fashion and Technology courses at TAFE, Ultimo participated in Tour Three. These included eleven advanced diploma and four diploma students. These students toured Delhi to source raw materials, sample manufacturers and visited artisans to consult and help develop their garment collection for final course assessments.

The aim of this tour was to build an awareness of the working realities for an emerging designer who choosing to work with both traditional and contemporary methods of fabric/garment production in India. It considered the pressures of designer deadlines and the frustrations of artisan production delays. It examined the costing versus a fair exchange and ways to build a commercial framework. The students engaged with traditional artisans and small-scale ethical manufacturing units to consider a collaborative model of practice. These included:

- **Ashok Ladiwal and his team** - all fifteen students engaged directly with these *aari* artisans in an embroidery workshop during a weekend visit to

Vrindavan. Samples were also developed by Ashok's team and sent to Delhi.

- **Rajat Jain and his team** - students employed Rajat to develop samples fabrics and garments.

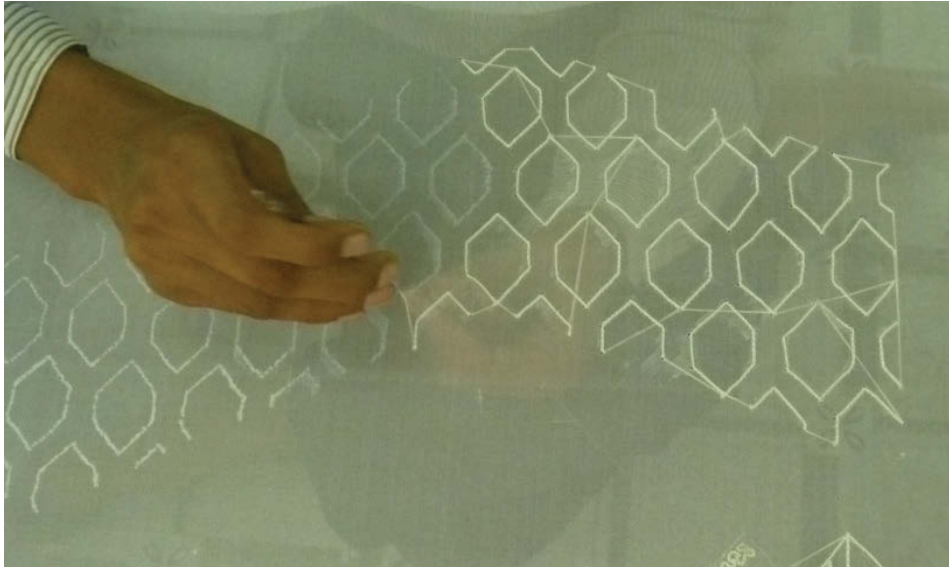


Figure 7: Student design based on graphic found in Sydney. Photo by Julie Lantry

- **Swati Jain and her team** - students employed Swati to develop fabric and garment samples.
- **Fiona Wright and her team** - students employed Fiona to develop fabric and garment samples.
- **Nandu Kanwar** - with this block print artisan, students engaged in a four-hour workshop to develop a personal scarf
- **Kamal Kishore and his team at Kulla Karishma**- students developed crochet beanies and jumpers.
- **Jyotsna Goyhale and her team** - students employed Jyotsna to develop knit samples for their collections including hats, jumpers and scarves.

The students were exposed to numerous markets, such as Seelampur Market (Figure 9) and raw material suppliers that work with the garment industry. The intention was to introduce the students to alternative industry merchants and individual artisans as a means of building ongoing relationships and using traditional methods that can potentially be used in a commercial environment.



Figure 8: Student discussing knit sample with Jyotsna. Photo by Julie Lantry

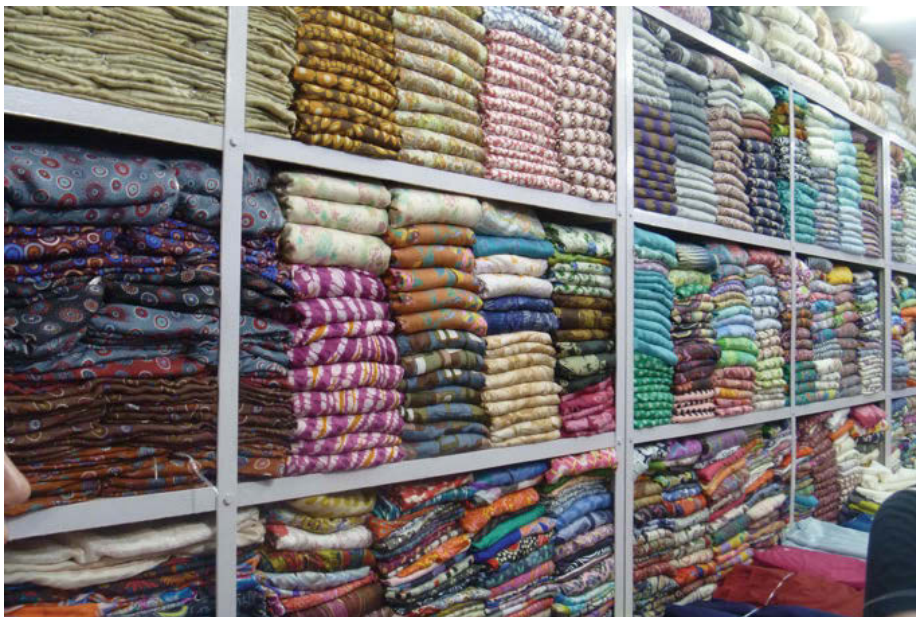


Figure 9: Surplus fabric store in Seelampur recycle market. New Delhi. Photo by student designer Natalie

Tour Four – Combining Traditional Techniques

Tour Four was a seventeen-day tour involving eight UTS fashion and textile students¹⁴ from second, third and fourth year. They were selected to participate in Global Studio, a UTS undergraduate subject. Tour Four engaged students with multiple textile crafts in order to develop contemporary fashion and textile

¹⁴ Four second year students, three third year students and one fourth year student.

products. The objective was to build knowledge of different crafts and how they may work in a contemporary context by working with different artisans.

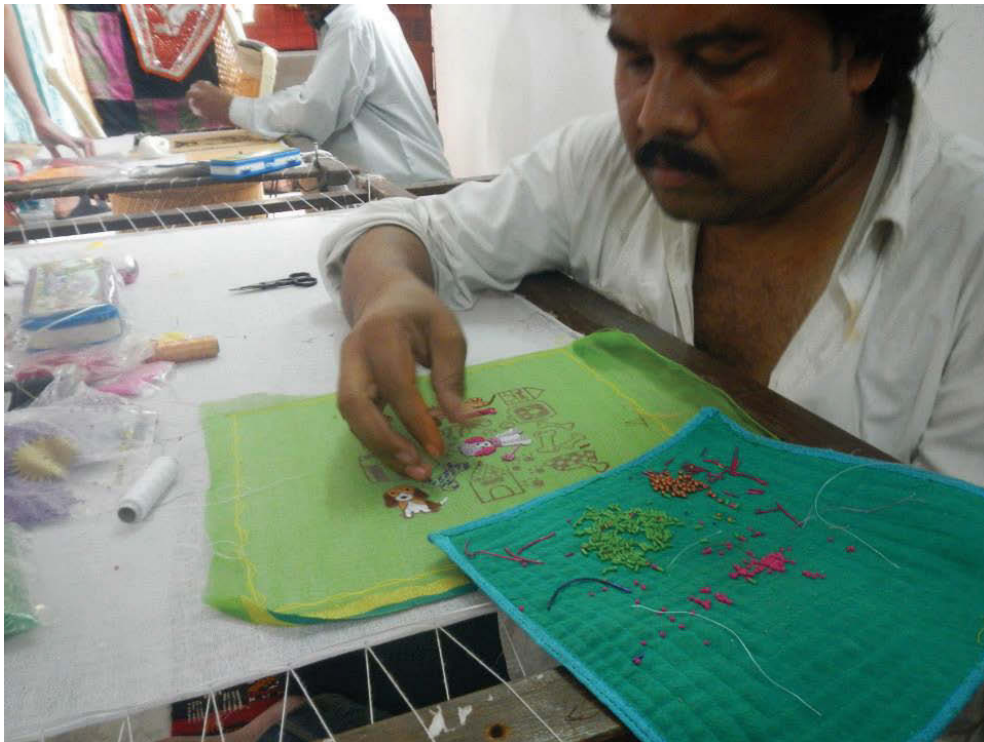


Figure 10: Raju working on student block print design. Photo by UTS Lecturer, Donna Sgro

Arriving in Delhi, the students spent three days visiting textile and accessory markets to purchase fabrics, sequins and threads before travelling to Pushkar for a ten-day workshop. For this main workshop four embroidery artisans travelled to Pushkar to collaborate with the students. The tour included a trip to Jaipur and Bagru for three days to visit the Anokhi Block Print museum and to participate in one-day workshops with mud resist block print and indigo dye artisans. Before returning to Pushkar students witnessed hand weaving at Barefoot College¹⁵. Creative Arts Safari co-ordinators, Fiona Wright and Praveen Nayak arranged travel for these students. Together the artisans and designers worked to develop textiles that could be transformed into a finished garment.

Part of the ethical aspect of this setting was to expose students not only to the stitching project, which works with local village women in Pushkar that is managed by Fiona, but to witness other NGOs working to build more than a fair living wage for regional artisans and in particular disadvantaged women.

¹⁵ A social work and research centre dedicated to empowering women in rural communities.



Figure 11: Student Kantha stitch on recycled fabric. Photo by student designer Traci

All eight students pre-ordered block designs one month before arriving in India and visited the block maker, Mr Renu Khan in Bagru on the weekend visit to Jaipur to witness the process. Students divided into two groups. Each group spent four hours a day at the print studio for a total of ten days. They used a mixture of existing blocks and one pre-designed block created by individual students. An example of student contemporary block design is given in Figure 12.

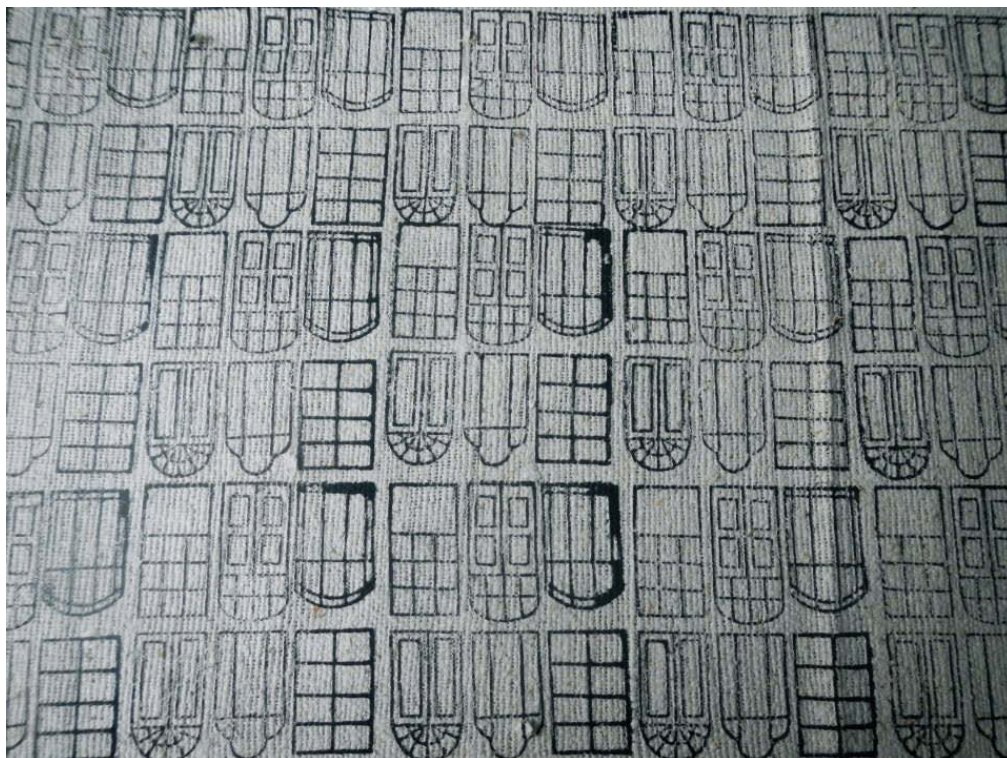


Figure 12: Student block print design. Photo by Julie Lantry

For the main workshop students worked with the following artisans:

- **Nandu Kanwar:** students engaged in four-hour daily sessions of pigment ink block printing.
- **Ashok Ladiwal and team members Harun and Raju:** students engaged in two to four hour daily sessions of *aari* embroidery.
- **Sanju Devi:** students engaged in two four-hour daily workshops in *sujani* embroidery. Sanju travelled from Bihar to collaborate with the students to develop *sujani* stitch that complimented their block print designs.



Figure 13: Sanju preparing a design for a student. Photo by Julie Lantry

The aim of students interacting with the women's groups working with Fiona and Praveen was to illustrate how the production of textiles can be a catalyst for social change in poor communities.

Despite occurring over a period of fifteen months and covering different geographic areas and techniques, the tours had some common features. These

commonalities were purposefully designed and form a core philosophy underpinning the research. One such core philosophy or value was the ethical and moral superiority of traditional artistry and production techniques to fast fashion production methods. Traditional artistry is unique, while fast fashion is mass-produced. Traditional artistry offers a sustainable and dignified lifestyle for practitioners. Fast fashion offers low wages and living conditions. Sustainable sourcing too is regarded as ethical. Methods of production that do not damage the environment, but which may cost marginally more are preferable to methods that are cheap and dirty. Thirdly, a method of encouraging understanding between designers and artisans was shared cultural experiences. Despite the varying experiences of each participant and the different traditions and practices studied, participants had a remarkably standardised experience in these common areas. It is the hope that one day these artisans and ethical suppliers could become commercial contacts for these future designers. These three factors underpinned all tours, and contributed in no small measure to their ultimate success.

Tour Interviews

At the conclusion of each tour I conducted thirty-minute interviews with selected volunteers regarding their experiences. Interviewees were drawn from TAFE and UTS staff, Indian tour partners, artisans, and students. These interviews offered insights into the experiences of an emerging designer collaborating in India for the first time, something that is in the distant past for me. These semi-structured interviews ranged over discussions of techniques, 'fibre to finished product', sourcing, buying sustainably and building a collaborative practice in India.

To explore the issues surrounding study tours within the Indian textile context this project posed a variety of questions to highlight opportunities and discuss impediments when working with Indian artisans and suppliers sustainably for collaborative practice. The aim was to make the interviews as open-ended as possible to allow relevant aspects of the interviewees to emerge. Individual questions were proposed to the different groups. A broad outline of the

questions (provided in Appendix A) indicate aspects of sustainability; ethics, environment, economic, and cultural. Each questions was designed to explore different issues in manufacturing in India through the perspective of the four groups: including fashion students, Indian artisans, education facilitators, and industry representatives.



Figure 14: Julie interviewing tie-dye artisan. Photo by UTS lecturer, Alana Clifton Cunningham

Interview aims varied by group. With fashion education staff it was helpful to gain an understanding about current practices and to glean from a teaching and learning perspective how to develop a toolkit for student designers wanting to collaborate with artisans internationally. With the artisans it was to gain an understanding of the working situations and the heritage textile environment in India. The focus of the student interviews students was to gain an understanding from an emerging designer perspective visiting India to source for the first time. Interviewing industry experts who have an experience with both the Indian and Australian market was insightful to gain a broader understanding of issues that may arise between designers and artisans.

Interviews played a vitally important role in the collection of primary data. By hearing firsthand the experiences and opinions of the garment industry in both Australia and India it added to my understanding, observations, and own experiences examining the possibilities and realities of collaborative practice.

Post Tour Interviews

To gain an understanding of the possible impact the fieldwork from this thesis could have on emerging designers, I interviewed a small selection of student graduates two years after the first two tours. Asking identical questions from their initial interview, these interviews played an important role in collecting data from emerging designers new to the industry. The aim of these interviews was to see if their perspective of India had changed and if international sourcing or working directly with artisans in a collaborative environment has made an impact to their career outcomes.

Student Blogs

As this thesis is primarily looking at the possibilities and impediments an Australian emerging designer can develop with artisans and production systems in India, it was important to extract as much information from the students experience. Although the thirty-minute interviews were effective, the daily reflections in the student blogs were even more insightful. The blogs played a unique role in this thesis to gain thoughts and observations above and beyond the thirty-minute interviews. Students from UTS were required to write regular blogs during their travels as part of the subject criteria, while students from TAFE were encouraged to write about their experience for their own benefit. While some students kept these blogs private, other students made their experiences public and gave me permission to access and utilise the information.

Personal Observations

My observations played a significant role in the method of data extraction. By watching and listening each day on the four field trips, I observed relevant comments and actions. This data helped reflect on my previous experiences of different models of practice compared with the proposed collaborative model,

where each party is an equal partner and not just involved in an exchange of money for goods.

Choosing ethnography participatory observation method for this research helped gain information beyond my own experience but limited my data interpretations. The observations during the field work helped to expose opportunities as well as impediments I had not considered, resulting in a toolkit for Australian emerging designers wishing to tap into India's resources for an alternate model of practice.

Chapter 3: Sustainable in Business Practice

Immersive educational experiences have enormous capacity to engage students, encourage reflection on existing practice, and challenge student assumptions about their chosen field. The tours under discussion are examples of such experiences. Participants are given a 'real life' experience of alternate business practices in the field. They are encouraged to engage with traditional artisans in India and develop an alternative to fast fashion practices. Given an opportunity to work directly with artisans in their local environs, undergraduate fashion students emerging as fashion designers can potentially develop a collaborative relationship with the artisan. In order to foster a greater ethical and ecologically sustainable practice between India and Australia for future design models of practice this form of collaborative relationship is essential.

In Australia, concepts of environmental sustainability and ethical production are core to many university degree programs in fashion and textile design¹⁶.

However, practical skills in international sourcing and alternate manufacturing processes that focus on the physical and emotional wellbeing and labour rights of the artisan – two of the topics covered in this thesis – are not as strongly discussed within many university programs, despite their priority within the industry (Parker 2009; Lantry 2012).

When I entered the workforce after three years of fashion education, I had little understanding of how to source and build ethical and ecologically sustainable international relationships with fashion and textile suppliers, nor any real idea of their importance. It was only after my own experiences in India that I came to regard them as significant. Many researchers argue that access to sustainable methods of production can lead to more ethical practices that prioritise relationships over profits (Fletcher 2008; Joy et al. 2012; Caniato et al. 2012; Quinn 2015). These tours offered UTS and TAFE students the opportunity to engage in sustainable sourcing and experience the positive outcomes of working collaboratively with local communities to build ethical and sustainable relations where the rights of the artisan are emphasised above and beyond profit margins.

¹⁶ Such programs include those at UTS, RMIT, COFA, and QUT.

The inclusion of such significant factors within fashion education builds awareness of the issues around sustainable and ethical practice, preparing emerging designers for the industry and contributing to changes of practice within the fashion system.

These tours offered a challenge to students, as well as the broader industry. Students experienced alternate models of practice that focussed on building collaborative working partnerships. They confronted assumptions about the way the industry works and were encouraged out of their mental 'safety zone' to consider other methods of fashion design, production, and consumption. By exposing students to the possibilities that exist outside the conventional pathways to production, the next generation of designers and industry leaders might lead, create, source, and deliver sustainable outcomes that not only consider the health, wealth and wellbeing of the practitioner, but also the ecological impact of the industry.

Sustainability within the Industry

Over the past fifty years the concept of sustainability has gained credibility within the worldwide industry. Companies are increasingly recognising the importance of ethical and ecological considerations for a profitable fashion future. Through the commitment of individual designers, a groundswell of change is slowly occurring.

Background to the Emergence of Sustainability in the Industry

The concept of fashion resource conservation can be traced back through the decades. The trade of second-hand clothing appears in history texts as far back as 1400 in Italy. There was a growing abundance of goods during the 1700 and 1800s due to the cheap supply of Indian cotton (Farrer 2010, p.22). By the time of the Second World War, conservation was back in fashion and garments were mended and recycled due to the scarcity of materials.

The first fashion sustainability movement began in the 1960s in France and Switzerland when protests against social issues led to anti-sweatshop campaigns

(Balsiger 2014). In the late 1970s Traid Aid¹⁷ was established, which aimed to end poverty through garment production. Oxfam started selling handicrafts sourced from small producers, while chemical free dyes and natural fibres were being marketed mostly through the residual counterculture movement (Eagan 2014). In 1980 PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) was founded on the principle that animals should not be used as a source of food and clothing. By 1983 Katharine Hamnett released the first collection of politically motivated T-shirts that aimed to raise awareness around the social issues of drug abuse, suicide, and war.

The 1990s fast fashion practice was embraced, with mass consumers increasing garment purchases, and by the new millennium, increasing numbers of consumers, bloggers, and fashion labels were creating sustainable awareness through marketing. In 2001, English designer, Stella McCartney launched her label using animal and eco-friendly materials. In 2005, rock star Bono and his wife, Ali Hewson, developed Edun¹⁸, a global fashion brand aiming to generate long-term opportunities for community-based initiatives with African artisans. Top designers like Vivienne Westwood and Katherine Hamnett continue to raise awareness about the effect fast fashion has on the environment (Hethorn 2015).

Today fashion brands face increasing pressure to adopt similar principles from the mainstream media, consumer boycotts, and activist groups such as Greenpeace (Quinn 2015). For example, through the support of over half a million designers, bloggers and fashion activists, twenty fashion labels, including Zara, Puma and H&M, have signed the Greenpeace commitment to achieving a toxic-free supply chain by 2020 (Greenpeace 2012). To develop a more holistic approach to garment production companies such as Marks and Spencer and Eileen Fisher employ sustainability leaders in their core team to re-educate their designers, sourcing executives and manufacturing engineers (Quinn 2015). From large-scale to small-scale business more and more examples are emerging of new ways to conduct fashion business for a sustainable future.

¹⁷ In 1973 a small not for profit organisation began after its New Zealand founders travelled to India to support Tibetan refugees. This later became Traid Aid.

¹⁸ LVMH purchased Edun in 2009.

Australian and Indian Case Studies

Designers such as Rajesh Pratap Singh, Rahul Mishra, and Manish Arora seek to develop an ethical and environmentally sustainable agenda using traditional craft and techniques. Rajesh Pratap Singh, known as the ‘Balenciaga of India’, runs his business based on a platform of sourcing organic, renewable, and recycled resources to ensure he does not overuse natural supplies and that as much as possible the environment is undamaged by his business practices. Rahul Mishra (Figure 15), winner of the 2014 International Woolmark Prize, credits his win to the artisans with whom he works. Mishra believes craft is the saviour of fashion due to the unique nature of these techniques: “the world is very uniform, but it is variety of language, culture and human behaviour that makes us alive and believes it is craft that can bring the energy back” (Lobban 2014).

Manish Arora is another designer who creates his unique style with the help of traditional artisans. He agrees his signature style would not be the same without the input of Indian artisanal craft. These business practices are a good example of Indian designers working with many artisans, from weavers to embroiderers, for a sustainable future for both artisan and designer. In examining their business practices I propose we can learn new methodologies to move forward with our own methods of practice.



Figure 15: Rahul Mishra with his 2014 collection for David Jones. Photo by Woolmark

Successful examples of Australian/Indian collaborations that hold sustainability and ethical fashion as core values include Tree of Life, Akira Isagowa, and Easton Pearson. Tree of Life has developed into a medium-scale business while delivering an alternative to the fast fashion model. Over the past twenty-five years, it has expanded from a small-scale operation to now operating forty-four stores around Australia. They are advocates of traditional artisanal practice and trade as aid. Noteworthy is that throughout their early history, they primarily worked with two family-run artisan businesses in Jaipur that worked to international quality expectations. Tree of Life's loyalty to these businesses has ensured that they remain ethically responsible to both proprietors and artisans whilst building economic success. Their 'Global Love Initiative' supports many socially responsible projects in India, including a medical clinic in Ahmednager, education for 110 children in Maharashtra state in any given year, a mango-farming project, and a music program in Rahuri.



Figure 16: Tree of Life advertisement with Bird block print. Photo by Tree of Life.

In these examples, education through marketing has been key for developing successful sustainable business practice, and the fashion industry needs to continue to be creative in its approach to attract a broader audience for its ethical and environmentally considered business.

Transformative Learning Experiences for Emerging Fashion and Textile Designers

Undergraduate programs in fashion and textile design have a responsibility to prepare their graduates for an ever-changing industry. While degree programs deliver subjects rooted in critical thinking like design ethics and environmental limits, the industry suggests graduates are not well prepared for practical requirements such as international sourcing or building networks (Levy 1995). This research demonstrates that an immersive educational experience that introduces students to ecologically and socially sustainable practices early in their education has the potential to build genuine transformative possibilities that could enable artisans to continue to produce traditional work in the context of contemporary fashion. Options outside traditional practice exist for undergraduate students who seek to efficiently source raw materials and manufacturing processes from India in a manner respectful of labour issues, women's rights, and environmental issues. These programs acknowledge the importance of skill development and considering the intellectual property rights of artisans and designers.

Sustainable future models of practice for emerging designers

Fashion design students in Australia have significant resources available to them, such as widespread internet availability, university libraries, and world-class study and studio facilities. However, in my observation as a consultant and practitioner, students could be exposed to more industry-based learning possibilities, particularly alternative sustainable models of practice such as traditional artistry. Indeed, a key point of these tours was to expose students to artisans to encourage a reappraisal of their skills and work. One student commented:

I went to India quite uncertain about using embroidery in my final year. In my mind it seemed ill-suited to my collection concept and aesthetic. I think this attitude came primarily from my narrow understanding of embroidery. Once I got to India I was wowed by the possibilities of what it could look like, the textures, materials and motifs. I quickly came to see the possibilities for contemporary and unusual embroideries that came from the collaboration between a skilled artisan and myself. (Student Interview, 2013)

Another commented on the finer details of using different threads:

I'm realising that the silk thread is maybe a little too shiny for use in my menswear collection but this piece is really giving me lots of ideas. There are so many beautiful textures created just through simple thread work that I can apply to my next design, very exciting! (Student Blog, 2013)



Figure 17: Thread work variations. Photo by student designer, Felicity

Through early exposure to working with Indian artisans, these students are witnessing a broad range of traditional techniques and practices that will contribute to widening their skill set. The tour experience offers them an alternative way of modelling their practice based on mutual respect for their business partners and a consideration of ethical and environmental issues.

An open attitude to alternative practices was evident amongst students and teachers during the interviews for this thesis. I found that for some participants, exposure to traditional crafts led to fundamental change in their own thinking. Some may adopt the practice and continue to work with the contacts they have made, while others may take elements of their experience to develop ideas into their practice:

The fact that not one of the textiles is the same is what I came to love about tie dye, it means that each piece is a unique one-off, showing the true depth of this traditional craft. I can also see the potential for these textiles to be scanned and digitally manipulated to create something else entirely. But this is for another day, and another adventure (Student Blog, 2012).

In an interview with a student over two years after her Indian experience she explained:

While my final collection had no traditional artisans involved, the design process was certainly influenced by my experiencing handwork in India. (Student Interview, 2015)

It was not only students who returned with new skills. Teachers and lecturers returned to their classrooms with a new appreciation of possibilities. As one teacher noted:

The trip exposed me to a whole new world of available fabrications and unique trims as well as services like digital printing, knitting, and laser cutting. These services are especially relevant technologies that are used by so many Australian designers throughout our fashion industry. I now have an even bigger appreciation of ethical and sustainable clothing, all new knowledge that I can take to the classroom environment (Teacher Interview, 2013)

The immersive experience of these unique tours, whereby teachers and students were exposed to a broader knowledge of sustainable manufacturing in India have already started to influence new ways of sharing knowledge. Teachers who had participated in the tours found that the experience of learning directly from artisans had significantly influenced the way they taught upon their return to Australia. By sharing with students their experience of working with traditional artisans, teachers can impart new knowledge of production and alternate models of practice, thereby influencing new opportunities in sustainable thinking.

Skill Development

The industry increasingly requires talented graduates possessing a broad knowledge base from design, sourcing and sustainable manufacturing methods. The model of practice I am proposing exposes students to practical learning environments, thus developing skills in craft and production management with an ecologically sustainable ethical focus.

During the workshops undertaken between July 2012 and September 2013, students were required to consider their designs more holistically, imagining the people wearing the finished garment enjoying both aesthetic and functional

design. Janet Hethorn argues designers need to shift their thinking from the garment to “simply visualise the end result in a new way, this way sustainability can begin” (2015).

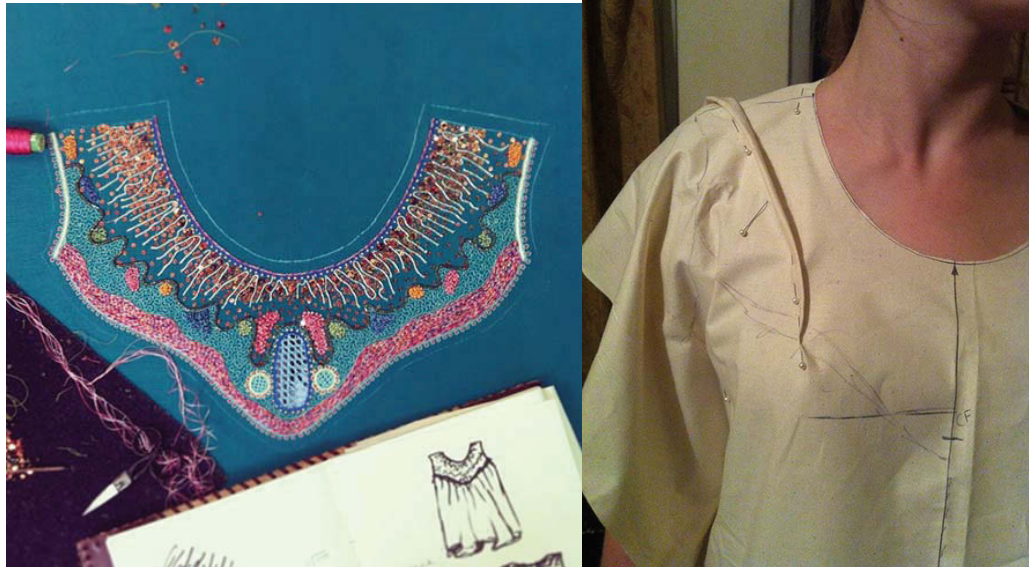


Figure 18: Student initial sketch with finished embroidery and body placement. Photo by student designer, Scarlett.

Through draping techniques, students considered their textile samples through the eye of an individual user and how the unique handwork can be both beautiful and functional. This approach not only considered the person wearing the garment but the person creating the garment. Students broadened their knowledge seeing their ideas coming together, with some having the opportunity to finish their designs in garment-form by working with our ethical factory partners:

When we got the garments back from the *samarpan* stitching school (after having dealt with the possibility they may not turn out as we would hope) Vanessa and I screamed so loudly. The quality of the stitching far exceeded our expectations, and they definitely did a better job than I could ever do! (Student Blog, 2012)

Not all students experienced garment making, however they all saw examples of what they learn at university set into practice on different levels of the industry:

We visited the workshop and saw some of the products they are making. It was interesting to see how skills that we have learnt at uni have been applied in another setting to people with limited education and facilities. (Student Interview, 2013)

After returning to Australia from their Indian experience, many students commented how they looked at designers’ work in a new way. They had a new

appreciation and understanding of traditional handwork and garment manufacture. When comparing embellished work in the Australian market place they could see the differences between machine embroidery and handwork noticing price differences and quality.



Figure 19: Akira Isagowa hand-embroidered garment. Photo by Akira Isagowa.

Furthermore, teachers felt they had a new understanding of ways to develop relationships with artisans. One teacher mentioned how she looked forward to sharing this knowledge of alternate processes and ways to build offshore contacts with future students (Teacher Interview, 2013)

International sourcing

As the costs of local production have ceased to become viable, industry supply chains have increasingly looked to such places as Bangladesh, India and Vietnam to source raw materials as well as finished product (Levy 1995). In Australia the local industry has declined over the past twenty years, making international sourcing a significant process within fashion consumption. This shift in industry practice is often not reflected in fashion education. To prepare students for this ever-changing business, I designed a series of workshops that would expose

them to a range of practical international sourcing options in India. These options were framed by ecological and ethical industry concerns.

Developing nations such as India offer enormous opportunities for Australian emerging designers. These manufacturing countries offer a variety of materials and skills at a competitive price (Lantry 2012; Ravasio 2011b). However, for countries such as Australia, finding reliable contacts that consider deadlines *and* sustainable quantities can be a challenge. In comparison to the vast European and American fashion houses, Australian design houses struggle to build viable partnerships with Indian manufacturers due to smaller buying capacity.

Australian orders can often be placed back in the production queue when a larger European or American order becomes more urgent, delaying delivery and in turn often destroying the working relationship.

The process is extra difficult for a small-scale supplier seeking tiny production runs and only placing infrequent orders. In my experience as a designer setting up a small-scale fashion label from Australia, I encountered issues in initially finding suppliers as my previous industry experience was restricted to large-scale manufacturers. My local and offshore contacts were not interested in a new business, which required only small quantities. At the time I was collaborating with British illustrator, Niki Groom, on a separate project and she connected me to offshore manufactures in India. Without such connections, international sourcing can be very daunting and difficult to obtain.

Building contacts

Building commercial industry contacts is key for a designer seeking to manufacture elsewhere, or *outsourcing* as it is commonly known in the industry. This process eliminates the need for a new business to set up a large infrastructure to develop its own product, however it also reduces the control of ensuring quality and deadlines being met. Yet there are many hurdles for designers seeking to outsource manufacturing and remain ethically and environmentally compliant. Over the past few years there has been an increase in guides to connect small to medium business to sustainable fashion manufacturers. Resources such as *Shared Talent India*, London's *Fashion Forum*

and Australia's *Fashion and Textile Hub* offer a starting base for newcomers, however recommendations from peers or colleagues are the most reliable (Ravasio 2011b).

Building a strong personal working connection with artisans and ethical manufacturers in India was an important part of the experience of the student tours and the alternate model of practice being proposed. It enabled these emerging designers to potentially develop working relationships with Indian counterparts where both the students and the ethical facilitator began to understand and identify potential partnerships with artisans, organisations, and fabric suppliers. One graduate commented that even though her trip was two and a half years back, she keeps her journal containing the many business cards she collected while in India close at hand. She maintains contact with the artisans she worked with, hoping one day to collaborate again.

A designer's contacts can be as important as their design portfolio. Ethical, reliable contacts both offshore and onshore are vital. By exposing students to a variety of industry professionals the aim is to add value in terms of providing alternate and sustainable options:

The recent sourcing trip to India has broadened my perspective on my future designs and ideas. There are so many people of different trades who are willing to share with you their skills to realise your designs and they are more than happy to offer advice, opinions and their own services. (Student Blog, 2013)

The recent trip to India with the TAFE group was an unforgettable experience. It has broadened my perspective of the industry in which I have gained valuable relationships with different people and have acknowledged what can be achievable for future designs. It was amazing to learn traditional techniques such as block printing, fabric dyeing, embroidery etc. which has enhanced my appreciation for the industry. (Student Blog, 2013)

Students entering the workforce with a network of reliable and viable contacts will become an asset to any employer, and it is a significant advantage if they intend to establish their own practice. More importantly, this experience builds awareness of sustainable and cultural practices. It opens new possibilities to approach design that encompass a holistic view considering people, profit, and the planet.

Intellectual Property Rights

The internationalised, global, and highly competitive nature of the garment manufacturing industry can result in the theft of designs. Theft can occur in both directions: cultural theft of heritage manufacturing techniques, or manufacturers selling original designs from one client to another. The policing of Indian adoptions of western designs are limited and Indian manufacturers have little recourse if western companies appropriate their designs.

Designs

Almost any type of original manufactured product or design can be considered intellectual property. Whether it is a shape, a pattern, or ornament, it can range from arts design and industrial design to fashion and textile design. Such intellectual property is a valuable asset to any business and it is important to know what protections are available under existing legislation.

When I first started in the Australian fashion industry, it was common practice for commercial medium to large-scale fashion companies to travel around the world and use international designers' ideas for their own collections. It was rare to hear of companies being prosecuted for infringement of intellectual property, and if they were, it was an insignificant penalty. More recently things have changed. Although design theft still exists in the industry, the courts are beginning to place harsher punishments on offenders. In April 2014, Seafolly won a copyright infringement lawsuit against City Beach for their design copy (Cave 2014). Such decisions send a clear warning to the industry not to utilise the unrecompensed talent of others for personal corporate gain.

The enforcement of intellectual property rights in regard to the garment industry and theft of Indigenous Australian artisan designs has been enforced as far back as 1974 when a painting by Bulan Bulan was copied onto a t-shirt. This incurred a penalty of \$150,000. Designers seeking collaborations with Aboriginal artisans are legally bound to pay royalties and recognition of their partners. Melbourne-based Indian designer Roopa Pemmeraju has built an ethical and respectful partnership with her collaborative partners, marketing them and paying royalties, while Kevin Murray, founder of the SANGAM Project, suggests

Australia has a lot to offer in Indian relations. While Australia is smaller in population than the UK and United States, it

has the unique experience of reconciliation with its indigenous population. This has entailed growing sensitivity to cultural difference, and the importance of respect in dealings between indigenous and settler peoples. Protocols and standards have provided important infrastructure for re-building trust after the depredations of colonization. (Murray 2011)

Educating students about ways to protect their own designs and in turn be respectful of others' intellectual property is imperative for an ethical fashion industry. By introducing students to artisans and establishing mutual respect, the potential to build a relationship based on collaborative co-authorship increases.

Contact Lists

Many companies consider the protection of contact information of the businesses and people they work with as intellectual property. They treat this information as they would other intellectual property and guard it from public access. Designers reason that if their contacts become widely known, they may jeopardise future orders, causing delays if a competitor places a larger or more lucrative order. Similarly, the designer's reputation may suffer if she or he is associated with a client who considers only their needs and not that of the artisan/ethical supplier. Worse, the designer's aesthetic may be copied or diluted. The alternate model of practice I am proposing requires an open supply chain.

Industry contacts are an invaluable commodity and this intellectual property right must be respected and acknowledged. Education around building respectful partnerships is important to ensure a sustainable relationship between international designers and Indian artisans is developed and intellectual property is protected.

Intellectual Property Protection within India

There are well-developed intellectual property protection laws in India, including patents, trademarks, copyrights, and industrial design acts. However, as is the case with many other laws in India, there is a stark difference between making and enforcing a law (Liebl & Roy 2004). The code of practice established

by the SANGAM Project recognises this issue of legal protection for artisans and their traditional craft while some artisans are not loyal to designers and copy designs without permission (Sangam 2013).

The theft of intellectual property often occurs within India. Innovative and striking designs are regularly stolen and produced by competing brands. Several legal impediments exist towards successful prosecution of such infringements, and limited legal intellectual property rights protection present many legal issues in Indian design. An artisan collaborating with a designer may not be in the financial position to contribute to a legal battle. Furthermore, many artisans are functionally illiterate, and even the best intentions of a designer and a proposed legal contract protecting the artisan can engender distrust in the artisan.

The definition of ownership between artisan and designer of the original design is a key legal issue if both parties are to protect themselves against intellectual property theft, however it is not a solution for legal protection of a design. One trend has been for buyers to have samples designed and produced in India but mass-manufactured elsewhere. For example, in 2008 a Chinese manufacturer invited a group of Indian artisans from Varanasi to visit China to educate and share their knowledge on the design and colour of Varanasi silk saris. Shortly afterwards these Chinese manufacturers were flooding the Indian market with cheap power loomed copies. Such a process excludes the original producer, who receives no financial or other benefit (Liebl & Roy 2004). This theft of a traditional manufacturing process contributed to a collapse of the local Indian production, with the income of many Varanasi weavers declining quickly, often below the poverty line (Dogra 2008). There was no legal recourse for the artisans to gain compensation from the Chinese manufacturers.

Another common intellectual property issue in India is the theft of designs from traditional artisans by Indian manufacturers. In Bagru, Rajasthan, for example, traditional block print artisans can print up to 100 metres per day with an average size block or twenty-five metres a day for a four colour design. In recent years, local screen printers have been copying their designs and selling them to

unknown consumers as handwork. These printers can print up to 800 metres per day. (industry participant interview, 2013)

Artisans, who are often designers in their own right, find it difficult to protect their designs. Often they themselves sell off unique designs belonging to their clients to the highest bidder (Liebl & Roy 2004). The artisans on the tours echoed this concern. One artisan explained that many of his original designs have been copied, requiring him to protect his designs by producing his own print blocks rather than outsourcing this tool.

Enforcing intellectual property on a global level is complex and difficult to mandate, particularly in developing nations. Nevertheless, building a sustainable working partnership with honesty and respect are core elements (Sangam 2013). By building working relationships based on these principles, permission to use designs could be negotiated and carefully considered in regard to acknowledgements and financial rewards such as royalties (Sangam 2013).

Developing Sustainable Business Practice

Preparing fashion students with sustainable options means sourcing environmentally friendly raw materials and ethical manufacturing processes that will be at the core of sustainable fashion production. If designers can source ethically and consider the ecological impact, the issues of wage inequity and waste and the contamination of local waterways and food supplies can be significantly reduced. However difficult it might be, it is important to be able to source ethical suppliers that can supply in small enough quantities to be of value to Australian SMEs. Through the tours, I offered a sustainable sourcing experience to undergraduate students in an attempt to develop knowledge of how to source international suppliers, learn how the development of skills can influence a design career, and how to implement ways to protect intellectual property for an ethical fashion future.

Social and Ethical Sustainability

Fair Working Conditions

Enforcing labour rights in garment factories in both the formal and informal sectors of the industry is difficult in developing countries (Siegle 2008). In India, factory employees, including traditional textile artisans, can be expected to work twelve-hour days for six days a week with few breaks¹⁹. This results in worker exhaustion and increased safety risks. Workers may be crowded into unsafe factories with little light or air. Conversely, Australian working conditions are regulated by the Workplace Regulation Act (1996), ensuring employers – particularly within the formal sector of the garment industry – comply with legislated hours, conditions, and salary.

For a sustainable business to remain ethically consistent with the tenets of sustainability, it is important that all parties are aware of best practice working conditions. Experiencing working conditions in a developing country offered students insight to the questions they can raise when building relationships with factories and artisans.

Raising Gender Equality

Social sustainability within the garment industry also extends to questions of gender equality which affect the long-term social and ethical sustainability of the industry. Women make up two thirds of the garment industry in India, but only eight per cent of its formal unionised workforce (Ratnam & Jain 2002). Female workers on the subcontinent often earn less and work longer hours compared with their male counterparts and within poorer and more dangerous industrial environments (Delahanty 1999). They may also experience sexual harassment (Khosla 2013):

The majority of garment workers readily acknowledge that their most pressing problems concern low or irregular wage payment, 'stolen' wages and arbitrary dismissals. From the perspective of a worker barely able to make a livelihood, holding on to a job is certainly more pressing than demanding the elimination of all workplace exploitation. (Siddiqi 2003, p.2)

¹⁹ Such issues were paramount for artisans employed for the tours. During the tours, we ensured the workshops were six to eight hours long with regular chai or tea breaks and a minimum one hour lunch break. This contrasts with a regular ten hour working day.

Those in the informal unregulated sector often encounter the worst conditions (Mezzadri 2012). However, within the informal sector, organisations such as SEWA²⁰ (Self Employed Women's Association) and Samarpan foundation²¹ work to ensure the rights of female workers, assisting them to become economically self-reliant within a safe and secure environment (Ratnam & Jain 2002).¹ An interview with the self-employed women's group Sadhna²² in Udaipur, exposed me initially to these style of not for profit organization (NGO). The women all recounted similar situations of their husbands being out of work and not being sure where their next meal was coming from. However, through joining this co-op they have now been able to send their children to private school and ensure food is on the table. The Sadhna co-op has over 400 members, who embroider and manufacturer clothes and homewares for both the local and international market including FabIndia and Monsoon of London with increasing success.

During this project, most students were invited to visit at least one of the NGOs forging new careers for disadvantaged women. During one tour the students visited the Samarpan foundation. One student mentioned that she:

also loved the fact that the money I was giving to the Samarpan Stitching School was directly impacting a local community by supporting these women and their skills. It was such an amazing feeling to have also met the woman who sewed the garments; it adds a whole extra level of meaning to the clothes. (Student Interview, 2012)

The Samarpan Foundation is known for its work with women in the rag picking caste. It teaches women new skills and offers job possibilities while educating their children. Until this program existed, some of the women lacked self-esteem and confidence, some unaware of how to escape the torture of their drunken, violent husbands (industry participant interview, 2012) At the time of this research there were twenty-five women artisans employed in this sewing project. By meeting everyday to learn new techniques and fulfil local and international orders they have an exclusive opportunity to chat amongst themselves without husbands present.

²⁰ <http://sewadelhi.org/>

²¹ <https://samarpanfoundation.org/>

²² <http://www.sadhna.org/>



Figure 20: Sewing centre at Samarpan Foundation. Photo by student designer, Maureen

Clients such as Monsoon of London, consider this collaboration an important part of their corporate social responsibility. The Stitching Project²³, founded by Fiona Wright, is another successful example of empowering women through commercial possibilities. Fiona is very discouraging of husbands hanging around; it is the women's work and they deserve to be paid accordingly. Some women hide their money in their bra to ensure their husbands do not use it to purchase alcohol.

²³ <http://www.the-stitching-project.com>



Figure 21: Women from The Stitching Project with UTS students. Photo by student designer, Scarlett

Students from all tours got to witness this form of female empowerment. Liaisons between such NGOs and students offer an unparalleled opportunity for emerging designers to connect with entrepreneurial women around the globe. This business model has the possibility to change people's lives for a positive future.

Raising Artisan Rights

One of the significant issues for textile artisans in India is caste (Wood 2011; Jaitly 2003; Tyabji 2003). Craftspeople are often grouped together from the working class without considering individual people. Layla Tyabji describes a scene at a seminar devoted to particular set of artisans who were only recognised as a group:

It seemed significant that when they did break out and express their (sometimes critical) views, and tell their (often sad) stories, the wish list of these extraordinary, fast vanishing repositories of creativity and culture was not some transcendental new millennium for craftspeople, but such small things – railway passes, a pension, respect (rather than requests for bribes) from clerks in government offices, free entry to the museums that store their work... that what they most remembered in their lives was not some landmark leap of craftsmanship or international recognition as it was fifty years ago. It tells us so much about their current status – their perceived value of themselves. 'I have received many awards, but I still work on the footpath,' said one. (Tyabji 2003, p.1)

During the tours, students built personal connections with individual artisans and treated them as equal partners. The lead artisans were paid the same as tour

leaders, and the team artisans' creative output was recognised with fair recompense.

Health and Safety

The implementation of Indian Occupational Health and Safety practices varies significantly from Australia (Mezzadri 2012). The enforcement of safety equipment such as using gloves while dyeing fabric, or ensuring fire exits are not blocked in factories are often not enforced. For fashion students beginning to build sustainable relationships abroad the consideration of their own safety and the safety of artisans is a crucial one. This includes building better work practices and environments that do not expose the artisan or student to danger. Hazardous working environments can expose workers to toxic chemicals, causing irreversible health damage, even death.

During the tours artisans were encouraged to use natural or azo free dyes²⁴ where possible. However, during some workshops there was little control over what was used, making it difficult to ascertain if the dye colours used were of low impact quality, or cheap azo free quality that can consist of only five percent azo. During each tour, the artisans advised that the dyestuffs were safe and not harmful to their skin or environment. However, due to lower regulatory standards pertaining to handling of hazardous material in India, I could not confirm the veracity of this statement. Nor could I be guaranteed the artisans' awareness of hazardous materials. Generally, the dye artisans we worked with did use gloves and were quite careful, however there was one who told me he did not like wearing gloves. Some students raised their concerns to this artisan but were told by the artisan there was no risk. During these discussions, dyestuff health hazards were discussed, from lung disease to cancer. Although the artisan did not show much concern, it was hoped a seed was planted to consider the use of gloves and investigation the dyes used.

²⁴ Dyes free of the azo compound used in dyestuffs. Some azo dyes have been associated with potential carcinogens.

Child Education

Parents in India often face a very real dilemma: whether to send their children to school, or to work. While schooling in India is compulsory and free for children up to the age of fourteen, many parents cannot afford the books or uniforms. Instead, children from a very young age are sent to work in fields or factories. This causes ethical quandaries for the fashion industry, which has been criticized for not ensuring factories with which they partner do not employ child labour. Although companies such as Nike and Zara claim to only work with child-free approved manufacturers, while the demands for cheap goods exist, child labour will too.

Sheotaj Singh, cofounder of Dayanand Shilpa Vidyalaya, an NGO working with victims of child labour, argues that “as long as cut priced embroidery goods were sold in the west, there would be a problem with unscrupulous subcontractors using children” (Kalami 2014, p.34). In Gujarat alone it is claimed there are up to 50,000 child labourers in the garment industry, particularly in the sectors of power looms, dying, and textile markets (Khare, 2013). All three sectors are not necessarily accounted for when considering a compliant garment manufacturer. Children are hand-embroidering for less than two Australian cents per day (Khare 2013). Compounding the problem, some techniques need to be taught in formative years. Ashok Ladiwal, the *aari* embroidery artisan I interviewed, observed that the years of training required to create the highly complex techniques needs to be undertaken with the small, nimble fingers of a child. That said, many of the male embroiderers were not passing down the tradition to their children. This was not because of legal matters, but to encourage their children to adopt a more lucrative career. Some also mentioned they were teaching their children the craft before and after school. Unfortunately it is difficult to really know (or regulate) if a young apprentice is employed full time or part time and for what wage.

There was one incident during a tour where a child was working in the studio during school time. This raised concern with the western team. The head artisan’s response was that they were asked to take on the young apprentice, as his parents could not afford to send him to school. The artisan explained the

difficulty in helping local village people as well as continuing the traditional *aari* work while helping the child. This is a difficult issue where there are very few legislative checks in place. As an international education provider, we can assist with school funding and insist no children work on site, but it is difficult to put checks in place when not permanently residing in the village. Balancing the needs of the individual child and the family unit causes real quandaries for Indian parents and the industry. These need to be recognised and discussed.

In the west, it is a simple choice to enforce child labour laws, but in India it can be more complicated. In the collaborative model I am suggesting, the whole supply chain is considered but it is still very difficult to enforce no child labour policies in places like recycle textile markets. We can, however, ensure artisans are paid above the living wage. This offers an opportunity for the next generation of artisans to be formally educated, including a variety of subjects, including maths, English, and Hindi, as well as their chosen craft.

Building Ethical partners

Individuals known as “middlemen” who take artisans’ products in the promise of sales have exploited many traditional artisans in India (Wood 2011). These sales representatives often pay artisans a minimum price for their products and resell them for a much higher value. However, increasingly designers are working directly with artisans to engage in a responsible partnership where the artisan is paid a higher price for his craft (Finger & Schuler 2004). This is an ideal situation, however a designer new to India will often find it difficult to connect directly with an artisan. If they do, there can be many inhibiting factors such as language, geographic distance, or cultural differences. This can be difficult to overcome unless they have time to spend months in a village with an interpreter. An Australian designer with no knowledge of Hindi or the local village language would not be able to communicate and would find it difficult to develop a product with full satisfaction.

Working with an ethical middleman or facilitator is one solution to this difficult problem. By partnering with such ethical organisations such as the Stitching

Project or Anya Designs, an emerging designer has a better chance of finding their way in a complex industry.

Considering Certified Partners

In western countries, to ensure compliance with ethical and environmental standards, an organisation that conducts inspections and maintains environmental standards certifies businesses. Companies that deal with such organisations inherit these standards and are able to advertise them. However, certification pertaining to garment manufacture in countries such as India can be difficult to implement (Centre for Sustainable Fashion at London College of Fashion 2010). Insufficient inspections or corrupt inspectors can result in certification becoming meaningless, with consequent ethical ramifications for designers wishing to adopt more sustainable practices. Standards themselves can also represent a bewildering array of claims. It can also be costly for small-scale fashion companies; manufacturing certification can be difficult to afford.

To overcome this issue myself, as a small-scale designer partnering with a select few small manufacturers, no party was in a financial position to invest in certification. Instead we relied on trust built over time. At the beginning of our working relationships, discussions on expectations were negotiated, regular fabric testing was undertaken, and surprise visits conducted to ensure everyone was working to plan.

During the research for this thesis we worked with NGOs and small-scale business that were mostly not certified. At the start of the project the Kayef Stitching Project attempted certification from Fairtrade, however found it too expensive to follow through. It now holds a Craftmark certification for its *kantah* embroidery.

I recommend emerging designers spend time with their suppliers, building relationships and discussions expectations. Outcomes and images can then be shared on social media platforms. An open dialogue and supply chain makes the consumer confident they are supporting a sustainability-focused business.



Figure 22: The Stitching Project Craftmark label. Photo by Fiona Wright

Respecting Intellectual Property

The key to ensuring intellectual property protection is open negotiation and the establishment of a trusting professional relationship between artisan, designer and manufacturer. This is known as collaborative practice (Sangam 2013). The workshops within this project centred on collaborative knowledge and skills. Students shared their skills in trend forecasting and offered new ways to look at craft design. Artisans shared their techniques, not for students to mimic, but so they could use the technical knowledge of the processes in future collaborations, and combine the practical aspect of their design with insider knowledge.

My own collaborative practice involves a negotiation, prior to production, regarding the amount of time my suppliers in Delhi should keep my designs private before showing them to potential clients. Manish Arora also follows this philosophy: he has worked with a group of Varansi weavers for many years. Together they create unique designs that remain industrial secrets for a period of two years after release. After this, the artisan can then show potential clients design possibilities.

Consideration of intellectual property rights is essential to the development of the heritage textile industry. The protection of designs can be difficult to police. Building respectful and trusting relationships amongst suppliers, artisans, and designers is essential. I recommend that from initial contact designers should engage in open conversation regarding confidentiality and commitment to each other. They should explain the importance of protecting original designs and terms and conditions should be discussed. Clarity in the ownership of design and what procedures should be in place should a third party incorrectly use the design will help alleviate post-collaborative issues.

To have complete control of an original contemporary design, one can produce in-house or outsource separate components that are returned to the studio for completion. This recommendation will often prevent a design from being copied before a release date, but does not stop copiers from stealing after that time. There is no real thief-proof system for an industry based on collaborative concepts, however open communication and transparent working relationships that build trust and loyalty will help protect intellectual property.

The development of ethical and social sustainability through collaborative practice is one way to develop a sustainable future for Indian artisans. It also offers unique opportunities for Australian fashion students and emerging fashion designers to build a sustainable fashion practice.

Developing Ecologically Friendly Alternatives for Textile Manufacture

To develop a sustainable brand which considers people and the planet whilst generating profit, fashion houses need to create solutions to counterbalance ecological issues (Fletcher 2012; Gwilt & Rissanen 2011). Increasingly, designers are becoming aware of more sustainably produced textiles and methods and are beginning to incorporate them into their sourcing (Black 2012). However, small to medium fashion houses find affording sustainably produced fabrics and trims a challenge (Diviney & Lillywhite 2007). Many fabrics and trims considered sustainable are often expensive and may not be readily available.

By offering alternative models to the way fashion students source raw materials, these potential emerging designers can consider recycled components and certified organic product, as well as traditional methods such as hand embroidery, printing, or weaving, which uses minimal electricity to develop. This collaborative model puts the designer and artisan in one area and together, resulting in efficient methods of waste reduction and minimising transportation pollution. Students being aware of these issues are more likely to design with the environment in mind and consider ways to offset carbon omissions.

Seasonal difficulties

Western designers often have limited understanding of the seasonal issues facing garment production in countries such as India. These are frequently beyond a manufacturers' control (Ravasio 2011b). When placing orders in India, delivery times can be affected by the weather (Ravasio 2011b). The heat can be harsh and relentless during the summer months, causing water restrictions, heat exhaustion, and power cuts. Conversely, the monsoon can delay the production of dyed or printed fabric due to the incessant rain. Pre-monsoon conditions, when water is at its scarcest can present also as an issue.

These factors produce a knock-on effect with garment production. To develop sustainable partnerships, empathy toward weather issues must be adopted. During the tours, some students experienced delays in final product as well as quality issues due to weather conditions. During Tour Three, many students were feeling the pressure of their end of year collections pending and found it difficult to understand why their products were not ready at the time the artisan had advised. In one workshop, the studio

had not had flowing water for that past week, making dyeing fabric and flushing toilets difficult. Our artisan so kindly boiled me up a pot of orange, allowing me to dip a sample into the dye, letting the colour penetrate through whilst concentrating on the bottom area of the piece. What resulted was really a surprise – the sample turned out orange, fading to yellow, then purple?! I eventually realised that the bucket I had used to soak the fabric in water prior to dyeing, had a bit of purple residue in it due to the inaccessibility to water at the workshop (Student Interview, 2012)

Another uncontrollable issue affecting production is the inconsistency of electricity supply. During the summer months, regular blackouts result from an aging power grid system straining from the overuse of air conditioning. In 2012, Delhi experienced extreme heat conditions and power cuts with over 300 million people in North India left in the dark (Ghosh 2012). Tour One was exposed to these conditions, and the first day was delayed in starting due to blackouts. Students sat in the dark fanning themselves with notebooks waiting patiently for the electricity to be restored.

Water and water treatment plants are also affected by power cuts and overuse of resources. The Ganges River, which supplies over forty per cent of the Indian population with drinking and irrigation water, is at crisis point due to pollution

and the mismanagement of power supply for the water pumps (Acciavatti 2015). This issue is heightened pre-monsoon when the heat and lack of water is at its worst.

Weather constraints such as the effects of the monsoon, and a variable power supply in the Indian heat will always be an issue for manufacturers. Knowledge of the seasonal difficulties is essential in maintaining realistic delivery times of production orders. By visiting and experiencing such difficulties emerging designers learn to place orders accordingly.

Reducing Environmentally Harmful Chemicals

Chemicals used to grow cotton, tan leather or dye fabric are harmful for the people using them as well as for the environment (Siegle 2008). India is unlike most western countries, where there are strictly enforced regulations in regard to chemical waste. Dyeing fabrics using chemical processes in commercial quantities inevitably leads to contamination of Indian waterways.

Several studies have noted such contamination. Shyamala et al. (2008) found effluents from dyeing units in Coimbatore City in central India played a major role in the toxification of local groundwater. Ranganathan et al. (2007) found that textile dyeing industries in Tirupur and Karur of Tamil Nadu discharged between 80 and 200 m³/t of effluent. According to Mathur and Bhatnagar (2007), in this region chemicals from dyeing seep into the local drainage systems and then into the groundwater and surface water of the area. Eleven of the twelve dyes they tested were found to be toxic and harmful. This is not an isolated incident. Sanganer, a town in Jaipur famous for its blockprinting, has similar issues.

But such unregulated pollution is beginning to change. Valeur (2013) describes how in 2010, the Madras High Court ordered all 754 dyeing plants in Tirupur to be closed, and instituted a zero liquid discharge (ZLD) policy. This initially devastated the industry, known for its knitwear production, but by 2013 there were signs of recovery as such plants “realise that they can save money by reusing water instead of purchasing new water. In addition, the more visionary companies have started to invest in alternative energy sources such as wind

energy and other green initiatives” (Valeur 2013, p.11). In 2015 the local government in Sanganeer followed Tirrupur and placed a similar ban with results yet to be recorded. A small number of artisans there already using environmentally sustainable dyeing techniques, including delicate mud resist block printing, indigo dyeing, and iron black have been allowed to continue work with limited water supply.

Through the tours, students became aware of other industry examples, such as Aura Herbal in Gujarat, which promotes the use of natural dyes. It has addressed the chemical issue of dyes by introducing a “closed circuit” system for its fabric and garment manufacture. It grows the plants to use in its natural dyes and reuses the water from the dyeing process to water the plants. Pesticides are not used. Aura Herbal is safe in the knowledge that their dyes are not destroying waterways and there is no mass-dumping of unwanted waste (Bhuva 2010). Using this five thousand year old tradition of fabric dyeing has positive effects on the environment, not to mention the skin (Fibre2fashion.com 2010).



Figure 23: Drying ayurvedic fabric for Soulmate Intimates. Photo by Ayurvastra

The dedication of such environmentally focussed business to environmental manufacturing processes ensures manufacturers reap financial rewards through their system whilst implementing ethical and moral business practices.

Sourcing Ecologically Friendly Raw Materials

The sheer amount of fabric and accessories in India considered unsustainable can be overwhelming (Ravasio 2011b). To cater for the fast fashion industry, accessory markets have grown to vast proportions. For a student designer with

little experience in sourcing, the degree of choice in India is staggering, particularly coming from a nation such as Australia:

We visited a number of different stores where we purchased everything from skull beads to hot pink and red woven ribbons and iridescent sequins! It is amazing how much variety there is in comparison to Australia. It seems that I have only ever been shopping in a small corner store and I've just walked into my first fully stocked supermarket! (Student Blog, 2013)

During the tours, students had the opportunity to observe the largest accessories market in India. Kanari Bazaar in Old Delhi is the main place in India to buy sequins, beads and trims. Sequins are sold in multitudes of shapes, sizes and colours. Unusual embroideries and trims are stocked seasonally to compliment fashion trends. Beads are sold in glass and plastic in all colours, sizes, and shapes. Bombay Beads, for example, colour code their stock on shelves and offer a personalised service should you be looking for something in particular.

Students could purchase 100g sequin sample packs for around AU\$2. 50g bead and stone packs sold for between AU\$2 and \$20, depending on quality. Embroideries could be bought on nine metre rolls for just a few dollars. While I encourage sustainable sourcing, it is difficult for any designer not to splurge when confronted with such extravagance of choice. As a designer I too have had to learn to overcome the temptation of over-purchasing, many times having walked away with bags and bags of sequins that offered a sparkle of inspiration but ended up on my accessory shelves storing dust. To discourage overconsumption and encourage a more sustainable approach to sourcing, we requested each student carefully consider their colour palette and theme from their storyboards to remain focussed. One student purchased the waste product from sequin production to develop interesting embroideries and jewellery pieces. At the end of the workshops any unused trims, fabrics, and accessories were donated to NGOs for craft workshops or taken home as inspiration for future projects.



Figure 24: Bombay Beads, Kanari Bazaar. Photo by student designer, Marissa

Recycled Materials

Although international designers sourcing in India can find it difficult to discover recycling markets, India does have a very significant recycling culture. It is a way of life and a business for many and is particularly significant for the fashion industry (Hawley 2006; Ranganathan, Karunagaran & Sharma 2007; Norris 2010; Radha 2011; Norris 2012). Fashion factories will sell surplus stock, offcuts, and trims to second-hand vendors. Seelampur Market in Old Delhi is well known for fabric offcuts, recycled garment trims, and surplus fabric.



Figure 25: Embroidery made from sequin waste. Photo by student designer, Mandish

During the Tours most students had the opportunity to visit this area. Some were daunted by the dirty streets and narrow lanes, but most enjoyed the quality fabric they acquired at cheap prices. Several students particularly recognised the sustainable advantage:

Seelampur, New Delhi abounds in stores selling bundles of fabric remnants from the apparel industry. The streets outside the stores contain evidence of years of trade in fabric offcuts. These markets fit with the philosophy I've been guided by in Sydney: to reduce the amount of fabric sent to landfill by repurposing difficult-to-use offcuts. (Student Blog, 2013)



Figure 26: Seelampur Markets. Photo by Julie Lantry



Figure 27: Stack of fabric remnant in Seelampur. Photo by student designer, Traci

Certified Materials

Certified materials offer one solution to professionally guaranteeing the safety of workers and their environment. Yet some suppliers in India have been known to mislead clients in the authenticity of renewable and non-toxic materials as well as ethical manufacture. Unless a governing body certifies a supplier, it is difficult for a designer to truly know if they are environmentally and ethically compliant (Ravasio 2011b).

During Tour One, due to ordering time frames, we could not gain access to certified organic fabrics. One store advised that the minimum for an organic certificate would be 1000 metres of cloth and a sixty day turnaround, far more material and time than we could afford. By Tour Three we were working with different suppliers who offered samples from their own supply stocks. Generally, the students sourced readily available hand-loomed cloth in natural fibres as well as fabric from surplus markets. A possible solution for emerging designers is to collaborate with other like-minded labels to create stronger purchasing power. This allows SME labels to compete with larger brands by combining orders.

Waste Emissions

Manufacturing processes that increase profits are attractive to fashion companies dedicated to increasing profitability. Pattern cutting techniques such as zero waste, or selling offcut fabrics not only saves material resources but money (Rissanen 2008). In Delhi students witnessed areas dedicated to selling offcuts and worked with organisations such as Samarpan to develop patterns from recycled paper. Organisations in Tirupur have adopted alternative forms of practice to recycle, reducing consumption and in turn saving costs.

A sustainably focussed business considers all aspects of its business to reduce its carbon footprint. Collaborating in India and selling in Australia inevitably increases a brand's fashion miles, and some researchers (Fletcher 2012; Finn 2011) argue fashion houses should source, manufacture and distribute locally to reduce carbon emissions associated with international product transport. But such a model is difficult to achieve. Firstly, the high cost of manufacturing in

western countries would affect profitability. No matter how sustainable a fashion house is, if it does not make profits, it is a failure. Secondly, fashion is a globalised industry with international trends and established patterns of production, even if they are bad patterns of production. My own attempts to source locally resulted in a thousand dollar cost for five embroidery samples with a 300 unit minimum run. Sadly, my sales did not match the minimums and the whole exercise was a waste. It was this experience that led me to start importing from India.

Between 2002 and 2007 my label, Bulb, was selling through Fenwick's in London as well as through my own outlets in Sydney. To effect this, it was necessary to have product shipped from India to Australia and then onward to the UK. The product effectively made the trip from Australia to India twice, but without a permanent presence in India to deal with matters such as quality control there was no other option. To address this issue, I spent a year in India in 2007, which enabled me to be on hand to deal with such problems. At the time, High Street brand Top Shop had begun stocking my product. At this point my model changed, as I was able to ship directly from India to Australia and the UK. While not a perfect model, at least it reduced the fashion miles undertaken by the product, as well as the associated pollution.

Innovative companies recognise the intrinsic globalised nature of the industry. 3Fish, for example have found a way to offset their emissions while still collaborating with ethical factories in India. By contributing to various organisations, such as the Karnataka Renewable Energy Project, this certified Low Carbon Economy company benefits from the reduced Indian labour costs while paying back the planet for emissions. During the Tours, the concepts of fashion miles and carbon-offset initiatives were discussed, with the 3Fish example given as well as other possibilities. These included concepts of collaborating to share freight containers for deliveries to ensure space and financial savings. Creative approaches to the problem of fashion miles are the key here, rather than boycotting the international trade of fashion.

Developing environmentally considerate alternatives for fashion materials and production is not an easy task. Guiding the next generation of fashion designers and offering alternate resource methods as explored in the above examples is the first step to an environmentally sustainable future.

Developing Economic Sustainability

On the surface the garment manufacturing industry in India can boast a strong economy. Second to China, it is considered one of the largest garment manufacturing economies (Corporate Catalyst India 2012). In 2010, India produced US\$75 billion in garments for both local and export trade and expected to produce US\$220 billion by 2020 (Sankar 2012, p.3). However, behind the official figures an array of issues exist, including low wages, the desire of designers to get the cheapest goods within an unfamiliar culture, and the desire of manufacturers to get the highest price while dealing with foreigners.

The mandated minimum wage for artisans in India is below what it takes to live (Jaitly 2003). Most Indian artisans are grossly underpaid, earning as little as a dollar a day for their craft (Ameta 2003), particularly those working in factories where their handcrafted skill is considered low labour.

An inexperienced international buyer can be unsure if they are being charged a fair price (Centre for Sustainable Fashion 2009) and some designers with shrewd financial skills can over-negotiate with artisans and suppliers, in turn developing an unfair and unsustainable price for their product. Some artisan entrepreneurs (or their middlemen) find it tempting to charge foreigners a higher price for goods. Finding balance and developing a fair exchange between artisan and designer in a collaborative environment can be complex.

Fair Exchange

One of the principles of ethical and economic sustainability is fair exchange. Working out what constitutes a fair financial exchange between collaborative partners from different countries is a difficult process. The standard of living fluctuates, exchange rates are variable, and employment possibilities for the workforce contrast between nations. For Australian designers engaging in the practice model I propose, it is important to understand what represents a fair

living wage and working conditions in the country in which one is manufacturing. In India the industry commodification of the craft often results in the awarding of an unfair low dollar value for artisanal knowledge. One of the aims of this project is to raise student awareness of the value which handcrafted work adds to their designs. Students learn how much time is invested in these unique treatments and as a result gain an appreciation of how to cost this value into their pricing.

An example of the complexity of financial negotiations between artisan and designer can be illustrated in the following experience: my intention behind the tours was to nurture relationships between students and artisans so they could develop future working collaborations, but this did not always go according to plan. After one of the workshops, a student wanted to build her collection and continue work with an artisan. After the initial quote the artisan increased the costing by four times the original negotiated price. This meant the piece was priced out of her target market. The samples were delivered months past her deadline, deeming them unusable. The artisan was questioned about this, and his response was that he felt he could increase the price when it was converted to Australian dollars. He also mentioned that he was busy with commercial orders at the time so could not complete as promised.

One of the recurring issues with these relations is that the artisan commits to an order then other jobs come in that take preference. However, they do not always communicate this in time or feel they can be honest about the matter. Another example occurred when one of the student participants gained employment with a fashion company after graduating. The new company wanted to place an order with the artisan using an existing design from the student's collection but encountered a similar experience. Unfortunately this deemed it impossible to continue with future commissions from the artisan.

Comparing handwork to machine embroidery in the market place is also problematic. While machine embroidery may be cheap and the average consumer may not understand the differences, it is up to the student designer or fashion business to market the handcrafted product accordingly. Increasingly,

informed consumers are interested in background stories and unique product made with care and quality. Secondly, a student designer or small fashion houses can take advantage of being able to develop unique product without the large minimums a factory would expect for machine embroidery. The cost saving in this would balance out the loss of unsold items on a larger production run.

A fair exchange is important for both designer and artisan. Artisan customers can compare product online or in the market place and if discrepancies are discovered this can cause distrust of their artisan supplier. During these workshops some artisans were new to the team and relationships were not developed. During Tour One, an artisan brought in finished products to sell. One item, a hand embroidered quilt was sold for Rs23000 (c.A\$400). The student buyer later went to a local market and discovered a similar quilt for Rs16000 (c.A\$280). This was discussed amongst the students, which created distrust and a reluctance to offer further business to that artisan.

While an entrepreneurial artisan or a potentially unethical middleman can charge an inexperienced buyer more than the local commercial value, other artisans, who are not aware of their work's value may not be charging enough. An experience buyer or educational group can recognise this and negotiate a higher price in exchange for loyalty and longevity. This approach of working with an ethical middleman to negotiate a fair wage proved a success on the Tours. Australian designer Joan Bowers, for example, negotiated with her block print artisans four times higher than their suggested fee, which she felt, was unfair when compared with the prices she was demanding in her wholesale business in Australia.

Through my own industry experience and observing these scenarios I have found that there is no single formula with which to build a successful economical partnership between emerging designers and Indian artisans. Students who have had the experience of dealing directly with artisans will have a better understanding of how to cost a garment. Being aware of how many hours a single piece may take to make, and learning to cost this into their target price is a step towards building sustainable business relations for both artisan and

designer. The quality of work as well as commercial realisation for a target market will determine how future emerging designers collaborate and negotiate with artisans and textile merchants. Students who have not had this experience are shut off from this process and will lack the empathy and awareness of the realities of these costings in hand crafted work. They will consequently be more likely, even if unknowingly, to exploit artisans. This runs counter to my vision.

Comprehending Deadlines and Quality

Meeting deadlines and quality control are the two biggest challenges in working relations between Indian manufacturing/artisans and western designers. What systems can be put into place to ensure successful delivery time frames and quality of the final product? Over time I have developed relationships with open communication that has delivered satisfactory quality and met deadlines. But the productivity of Indian SME garment manufacturers (including traditional artisans) is lagging in comparison to the same sectors in competing countries (Fashion United 2013). Delays and quality control issues cost time, money, and loss of trust in working relationships and remain a concern in India. They must be addressed in order to build economic sustainability for designers and artisans seeking transnational partnerships.

During Tour Three, which emphasised product sourcing, students experienced these issues. For example, some students required digital printing for their collections, and after discovering my regular printer's factory had burnt down we engaged a new SME digital printer for the job. However, supply took more than a week longer than promised and the quality of the print did not match the requested colours. This cost the students money and time, causing unnecessary stress. One student reordered her print from the United States and was discouraged from ordering from India again. The samples of another student were not complete before we left India and, despite promises of rapid delivery, were not sent for six weeks. Had the student been working on a tighter deadline such delays could have cost her marks, or if in industry, the loss of business. 'Indian time', as students put it, coupled with inconsistencies of product prove to be serious issues in dealing with Indian suppliers. Although deadlines were not a

crucial part of the other tours (as we planned workshop requirements well in advance), delays did occur. One student commented:

leniency and flexibility is a must when in India. If someone says something will be done or delivered at a certain time, you have to plan for a few more days after that. This is what happened with my wood block, it came a week late. In saying this, I honestly didn't feel any animosity or resentment towards anyone involved in the block making/delivery process, I was having so much fun in India, and in the end I got my own block carved! It was just great to have such a special souvenir to take home with me, which encompassed so many aspects of my time in India. Just wanted to give a heads up to anyone travelling to India about how time and deadlines work over there (Student Blog, 2013).

Some inconsistencies in the final product can be put down to hand manufacturing processes. These include unwanted stains on fabric, unravelling thread work in embroidery, or shrinkage of cloth after washing, all of which can be detrimental to a range. A damaged item can cost both reputation and outlay of yet further funds. As some students discovered, ensuring quality control in traditionally produced textile context brings its own challenges:

There was good teamwork happening to get my pre-stitched pieces dyed. While we were dyeing the final pieces, the ones already dyed were drying on the dirt road. In Bagru it's quite a usual thing to have fabric pieces drying on the road, so a passing motorbike ran over the pieces. No harm done, just something to add to the narrative of where they've come from. (Student blog, 2013)

While this worked in the narrative of this student's hand crafted collection, if a western design house received goods soiled by mud or even cow dung stains, the quality control department would simply reject these pieces. Artisans



Figure 28: Cow walking over dyed fabric on the road. Photo by Julie Lantry

collaborating with western design companies need to be aware of quality standards and work towards improving quality control, such as better washing and a system to ensure no cows, cars, tractors, or motorbikes will destroy the work.

Transparent Communication

Deadlines and quality control are crucial factors for fashion garment delivery. Open, transparent communication is essential to realise realistic deadlines from artisan and designer (Sangam 2013). Mistakes happen and uncontrollable events occur, but by working together in a collaborative environment, a team can develop strategies to acquire the best quality for the time allowed considering the target market.

One student commented in her blog how she intended to negotiate going forward for her small unique run of production:

I asked the artisan for a quote for my piece and make sure to write it down and get him to sign it. I then took it a way, considered the price and worked out what I could manage with my budget. I then went back to the artisan and we broke down the price and negotiated what would be reasonable if I were to do several pieces [...] He and I agreed on confirming a final quote before I send any work over, to make allowance for slight changes in the exchange rate and artisan rates per hour. Payment would be a fifty percent deposit before the work is started and 50 percent upon completion and would be done by international transfer (Student Blog, 2013)

Such issues can be ameliorated by honest communication with the artisan. It is recommended to have discussions around the importance of quality, delivery, and price. Cost of freight, publicity, taxes, and sales cost must also be discussed. In turn, this allows an artisan to be open about their costs and has the potential to develop amicable compromises such as smaller amounts of embroidery, alternate materials, and payment and freight options.

Opportunities Between Australia and India

If and when the free trade agreement is signed, it will offer many opportunities between Australian and Indian garment businesses. In India, the Australian High Commissioner, his Excellency Patrick Suckling, has been promoting Australian businesses to Indian consumers through programs such as Oz Fest. He announced to the press, "it's the right time to accelerate collaborations and

exchange between Australian and Indian designers” (Indian Express 2013), while Sunil Sethi, president of the Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI) added;

The Australian and Indian fashion diplomacy works two ways and has been fruitful. While the Australian designers worked on textiles woven by Indian weavers, we will also encourage Indian designers to be promoted in Australia (Indian Express 2013).

Brisbane-based designer label Easton Pearson has been working with Indian artisans for over two decades, but is now selling their finished product in India with the assistance of DFAT funding. At the launch of Delhi’s Australian High Commission, Patrick Suckling commented, “Easton Pearson is a premiere Australian designer label with a loyal international customer base. I’m confident it will enjoy great success in the Indian market” (Indian Express 2013)



Figure 29: Pamela Easton (second from left) and Lydia Pearson (third from right) of Easton Pearson with Patrick Suckling (middle) at the Australian High Commission in New Delhi. Photo by ANI News

Australian social enterprise, Artisans of Fashion, has taken advantage of the DFAT and AIC opportunities by securing funding to showcase Australian label Romance Was Born at Delhi’s Fashion Week in 2014, and for Indian designer, Manish Arora, to showcase his work in Australia. Financial gain for designers involved has been limited to date but there are hopes for the future. Also, Rahul Mishra has gained financial reward after winning the Australian Wool Award and

now sells to stores such as Becker Minty in Sydney and David Jones around Australia.

There has never been a better time for opportunities between Australia and India. Fashion students seeking to build networks with Indian artisans should be aware of these opportunities and research both previous designer collaborations and funds available for transnational collaborations.

For Australia-India relations, although sustainable business practice may have different priorities for different design houses, they all share certain features when working with their partners: respect, communication, and long-term commitment. In return, the artisans/manufacturers produce quality work, fair priced and are committed to meeting delivery deadlines whenever possible. The concepts of honesty, fairness, and loyalty enable the new generation of designers and artisans to work together, building a transparent, cultural, ethical, environmental, and economically rich future.

Chapter 4: Collaborative Exchange

Within the fashion industry collaboration can range from unethical fast fashion practice, where low-paid workers toil in sweatshops to produce beautiful garments for western retail establishments, to ethical and sustainable collaborative projects with equitable profit and labour sharing. The collaborative practices that I utilised within the student Tours were underpinned by a particular set of values relating to ethical social wellbeing, environmental consideration and economic sustainability.

Such practices encourage people from Australia and India to work together, collaboratively and respectfully, and with a jointly developed set of goals. By focussing on ecological advantages such as using recycled materials, chemical-free dyes and traditional techniques that use little or no electricity, this model of practice aims to reduce environmental impacts caused by the fashion industry. By artisans, designers and ethical manufacturers working together, all have the potential to build creative and financially rewarding businesses that can enable artisans to continue using traditional practice.

Collaborative exchange between an Indian artisan and a western designer is complex. For a western designer or traditional artisan to understand cultural differences in India, such as gender, caste and religion is challenging. Just as in western design studios, the hierarchy variables within different artisan studios are significant. An emerging designer working on their own small-scale business will experience a collaborative exchange with artisans differently from an emerging designer employed in a large-scale business, where they are answerable to a head designer who controls creative and productive output.

This can be similar in an Indian textile artisan studio. An entrepreneurial textile artisan develops their own designs within a small-scale studio and will work differently to an artisan employed in a large-scale factory or medium-scale ethical manufacturing facility, that could be considered as semi-skilled labour force. This raises questions on how to develop an alternative model of practice

that could create positive change for Indian artisans while developing a sustainable alternative model of practice for Australian emerging designers.

Collaborative Practice in the Australian and Indian Fashion Industries

Collaborations between Australian and Indian practitioners are not uncommon. They are a result of both economic and social considerations. The diminishing supply chain of the Australian fashion industry has compelled designers to source raw materials and manufacturing partners from farther afield. India is a source of unique, luxurious textile options. Australian designers have travelled to India for decades, searching for new and novel resources.

Rather than working at a distance, Australian designers such as Gabriel Scarvelli, Francis Carrington, and Fiona Wright live in India and collaborate with artisans on a daily basis. They directly engage with artisans and ensure ethical working conditions to create their own and others' designs. Gabriel Scarvelli's couture studio in Delhi teaches artisans a variety of contemporary *tambor* embroidery methods, often new to the traditional *aari* embroiderer. The benefit to artisans is munificent, with Scarvelli paying them up to forty eight times the average rate, not to mention enhancing their skills (Enting 2004, para.2).

Other Australian designer houses such as Easton Pearson connect with NGOs and ethical factories to collaborate with nomadic and factory artisans. They spend lengthy periods of time in India working closely with organisations such as Shrujan Threads of Life, who is an NGO originating in Gujarat. Their objective is to help build sustainable livelihoods, particularly for women craftspeople, while restoring pride in traditional craft. Their aim is to help build a network of creative and productive community. Easton Pearson has built a strong relationship with this organisation, where artisan, designer, and ethical middleman can work together to create contemporary handcrafted textiles. Meanwhile, Roopa Pemmaraju is gaining recognition in both Australia and India for her Aboriginal collaborative model. She works with Australian artisans to create colourways for their designs. She offers them a percentage of sales and pays homage to their work through labelling and her website.

These industry examples are just some of the positive sustainable collaborations emerging within the fashion industry. These fashion houses consider the longer term working conditions for artisans and the communities in which they work. Pursuing and enabling these collaborations in the first instance can be difficult as it is not common practice in Australia to collaborate with artistic partners within the supply chain, and collaborations can mean different things to different people.

Ideally, such collaborative exchange should be achieved through co-design, where the designer, artisan, and ethical middleman develop creative concepts together using the skills of the designer. This is followed by co-execution, where artisan and designer sit down together and work out the process utilising the skills of the artisan. Examining industry examples as a source of inspiration is a good starting point for fashion students and emerging designers seeking to develop social sustainability in their garment-making endeavours.

Strategies for developing collaborative partnerships

In a collaborative fashion project, the aim is for both designers and textile artisans to broaden their skills and knowledge through an exchange of ideas. I have developed a six stage strategy to help students and emerging designers prepare for their collaborations with artisans.



Figure 30: A six-stage process

Stage One: Research

Building a collaborative partnership requires research and preparation. For the artisan, he/she prepares the tools and workspace ready for the interaction. For a student or emerging designer looking to collaborate with traditional artisans in India, it is helpful to research the style of artistry they are considering, other designers using the techniques, and where in India they will need to source this style. For example, Australian designer, Anu (Figure 31), develops her *aari* embroidery and block print designs through an ethical middleman to simplify the process of connecting with multiple artisans.



Figure 31: *aari* metal work and traditional block print design by Anu. Photo by Robyn Beeche.

Market Research

Before the Tours students were encouraged to prepare a mood board (Figure 32). The mood boards enabled students to focus on concepts in which they were interested and then present to the professional artisans. It was especially helpful for the first group in 2012 who did not have the advantage of seeing previous

tour results and some of the possibilities within the embroidery, printing and dying techniques. During the concept phases it was positive to see students considering the artisans and sharing cultural differences and Australian icons. One student explained:

I wanted to have something of my culture to exchange with my artisan and strengthen that combination in our work. Hence I chose to use one of Australia's most beautiful and iconic places, The Great Barrier Reef. (Student Blog, 2013)

These mood boards not only helped the students in sourcing raw materials with a particular idea in mind, the artisans found them inspiring and helped develop their ideas in contemporary design.



Figure 32: Student embroidery mood board. Photo by Julie Lantry

Potential Collaborative partners

Research into finding a collaborative partner can be achieved through various methods. Tours (such as those described in this thesis) are one way to locate collaborative partners. Recommendations from professional peers is another

option, while researching online through databases such as Shared Talent India²⁵ or Craftmark²⁶ is also helpful.

In India there are over two hundred methods of treating traditional textiles within the four technical categories of embroidery, printing, dyeing, and weaving (Ghosh & Ghosh 1995) For the Tours students engaged with fifteen different varieties within the four categories. This included four styles of embroidery *aari/zari*, *chikanjari*, *sujani*, *kantah* (see glossary), and three styles of traditional block printing - mud resist, *ajrak*, and pigment print. Four dyeing techniques were chosen, including *bhandani*, *indigo*, azo free vat and natural. To gain a deeper understanding of the potential for treating textiles it is helpful to research traditional (Figure 33) and contemporary versions (Figure 34).



Figure 33: Traditional *sujani* embroidery by Sanju Devi. Photo by Julie Lantry.

²⁵ <http://www.sharedtalentindia.co.uk/>

²⁶ <http://www.craftmark.org/>



Figure 34: Contemporary *sujani* embroidered jacket by Jiyo. Photo by Robyn Beeche.

Cultural Differences

Awareness of cultural differences is the first step to understanding and respecting collaborative partners from different backgrounds. Research into

religion, caste and gender roles aids in the development of a successful collaborative environment.

The combination of business and religion is imbedded in Indian culture. For example, Hindu factory/store proprietors will create a prime position for the shrine of Lakshmi (the goddess of wealth). Staff and owners pray on a regular basis, while Muslim staff are permitted to take time off for their daily rituals. For many western buyers this is unusual to witness. Students found it intriguing when arriving into retail stores first thing of a morning, the shop keepers were paying homage to Lakshmi to encourage a profitable day.

Or when a new business has its first day, such as the Ashok School of Embroidery, a puja is performed (as discussed in Chapter two). Students participated in this ceremony. One commented;

Upon arrival to Ashok's new studio, we were greeted with a *tulsi* (blessing) and then we were blessed again by the priest! The chants and prayers still resonate within my memory, and the scene of Ashok cracking open a fresh coconut on the floor and then blessing his studio with the juice will be one to remember. (Student Blog, 2013)

Within the Indian Muslim culture there are symbols and signs that have important significance. During Tour Four students were requested to design blocks for block printmaking. One student created an owl design for her experiments, however the block maker refused the design on grounds of bad luck within Muslim traditions.

The caste system plays a significant part in Indian culture. Complexities within the Indian caste system are often not articulated and difficult to understand. For example, in Australia a team will often join together for a meal during a project and chat openly whereas in an Indian context, a lower caste will generally not eat with others from a higher caste.

Institutionalised notions of gender roles can also present issues. Travelling to India as a single woman, alone, and without parents can be difficult for many traditional males in India to understand. Conversely, for young Australian women it is unusual to see males executing embroidery work:

There were so many cultural differences to get used to, but the fact we were girls traveling to India alone to learn a skill that it primarily executed by males in India (*sic*). In Australia embroidery is considered a female thing. It must have been strange for the artisans to cope with self-opinionated young girls travelling without their parents. (Student Interview, 2013)

Raising awareness around cultural differences in India is important to discuss with students, not only for their personal safety, but to build a respectful collaborative relationship with artisans. Once the research into the style of textile design trends is considered, a guide to pricing requirements and cultural research will help direct an emerging designer to the appropriate collaborative partner.

Stage Two: Engaging Collaborative Partners

After gaining an understanding of their target market, what look they desire, and how much they will pay, an emerging designer can make informed decisions about what style of artistry is appropriate for the collaboration. However, connecting with an artisan, or different artisans in different locations can make this process difficult. Gabrielle Scarvelli, for example, works direct with artisans. Easton Pearson works indirectly with artisans through ethical middlemen, while the designers from Australian label, Kissing Cousins, have spent months in a village setting developing work with a traditional artisan (Figure 35).

Different methods work for different designers. Some designers may prefer to stay in large Indian cities known for garment manufacture, such as Delhi, and work closely with a factory partner to develop a collection indirectly with their skilled labour force, while others will want to work directly with skilled artisans.



Figure 35: Contemporary cream-on-cream block print by Kissing Cousins. Photo by Robyn Beeche.

Entrepreneurial Artisan (Direct)

Over the past ten years there has been an increase in the number of artisans with developed design and business skills. These I describe as ‘entrepreneurial artisans’. They have embraced technology and understand the importance of communication. They adhere to quality and deadline requirements expected in the export market of India and are more prepared to discuss issues related to delivery. However, these artisans are in the minority. Entrepreneurial artisans are best contacted through organisations such as Kala Raksha²⁷, an artisan

²⁷ <http://www.kala-raksha.org/index.htm>

design school and museum based in Kutch, and Dastakar²⁸, who are dedicated to help artisans source raw materials, help price their goods and find markets for their product.

Ethical Middleman (Indirect)

Understanding the complexities of different artisanal skills can be difficult, and connecting with traditional artisans in a village setting is often difficult. Pending the desired outcome of the collaboration, whether to develop the designs directly with an artisan or indirectly with an ethical middleman will depend on brand philosophy such as ethical credentials, wanting to promote traditional craft, or designer fashion brands. For emerging designers looking to execute different styles of craftwork and closely with artisans in India, it can be helpful to work with an ethical middleman who can negotiate and coordinate designs with traditional, nomadic, or labour force artisans.

- **Labour force:** Generally work in factories. Artisans vary in skill level. For example, there are artisans dedicated to producing sample embroidery as well as production embroiders, each working to a different skill level.
- **Traditional/ritual artisans:** Generally work in an artisan studio. Often produce ritual or religious art as well as commercial textiles for the local market. Within this artisan studio there is a head artisan who instructs their skilled or semi-skilled labour force to complete the work he has designed.
- **Nomadic artisans:** Such as the *rabari* tribe based in the Node Dessert, Gujarat. They produce a unique style of embroidery involving mirror and stitches. Developed by village women for themselves, as gifts, or as a way to create income. These artisans often work with NGOs to develop contemporary designs such as the Easton Pearson collection from 2009 (Figure 36)

²⁸ <http://www.dastkar.org/index.aspx>



Figure 36: Easton Pearson collaboration with *rabari* artisans. Photo by Robyn Beeche.

During a tour to India in 2014 (unconsidered in this research), students gained an understanding of the differences between a semi-skilled labour force artisan and a skilled traditional artisan. One student had unfinished work from the main workshop begun with the traditional artisans and asked a new artisan to complete the design. She noted the significant quality difference with the piece.



Figure 37: Embroidery completed by different artisans. Photo by Julie Lantry.

The completed section was tightly stitched, creating a gloss finish, while the semi-skilled artisan's work was loosely stitched with unfinished threads (Figure 37)

Stage Two is a starting point to begin a successful collaboration. The decision to work directly with an artisan or indirectly through an ethical middleman is dependent on an emerging or student designer's desired outcome from the collaboration.

Stage Three: Building Rapport and Socialising Together

On arrival in the collaborative setting, the third stage is to encourage interaction through social engagement. This could include formal or informal introductions, discussions over chai or lunch, or experiencing local rituals together.

Sharing a Meal or Ritual

Drinking chai or sharing a meal is a good way to develop the relationship between designer and artisan or ethical middleman. This was most successful during Tour One, where Happy Hands pre-arranged meals that were shared as a group. The breaking of bread together, and the consideration of meal rituals and dietary requirements invoked a greater empathy of each others' cultures. However, this is not always appropriate, and some artisans prefer to eat with each other and not with young western students. The more traditional the artisan the more likely it is caste and gender will determine the likelihood of sharing experiences such as a meal.

Ceremony and ritual is another strategy that will help students or emerging designers gain a strong understanding of India's cultural heritage. During Tour Two, students, artisans, and coordinators participated in a ceremony to celebrate a new business. Witnessing this special cultural activity helped students understand the importance of ritual and the unique Indian blend of religion and work.

Sourcing Together

Another way to build rapport with an artisan or ethical middleman is to source raw materials for the project together. By visiting such places as Old Delhi or the Seelampur market, artisan and designer can discuss style and direction whilst gaining mutual respect and gaining an understanding of each other's sense of style.

Respecting Cultural Differences

In my fifteen years of travelling to India I still have difficulty understanding the many tenets of cultural life there. The caste system is foreign to western societies, and learning to understand the different levels of hierarchy in the system is not easy. In my experience, careful consideration and respect of such cultural differences is key to a successful collaboration with traditional Indian artisans. It is difficult for young Australians to understand the divide between gender, caste or religion. For Indian artisans working in a male dominated field it can be surprising to find themselves working with outspoken young people, particularly females. Artisans can also find offensive certain design ideas presented by western designers. Although my intention is to implement best practice, cultural mistakes still occur. As a designer who has practised in India for fifteen years, I have still been guilty of misreading an artisan's intention and have been unintentionally culturally insensitive in not recognising the importance of a ritual in a business dealing. Other designers, like Lisa Burke from Lisa Blue swimwear, have been confronted with cultural misunderstanding on a more public scale. In 2011, Burke included an image of Lakshmi on her range of swimwear (Benny-Morrison 2011, p.3). Such garments may be considered stylish and beautiful by western consumers, however the use of the goddess' image on a range of skimpy, sexy swimwear was an affront to Hindus worldwide (Figure 38)

Respected Australian textile designer, Sara Thorn, had a similar experience, demonstrating how easily such cultural miscommunications occur. Although she had worked in India for more than twenty years, Thorn found herself in difficult territory when a group of Kolkata embroiders bluntly refused on cultural



Figure 38: Hindu protests against Lisa Blue Designs. Photo by Neranda Nanu/Getty/Daily News New York

grounds to work on an image of a half-naked western women. Thorn apologised and revised her approach (Murray 2011).

In an attempt to circumvent such occurrences, before each tour students were given recommendations on ways to be culturally sensitive, such as modest dress for females, personal conduct in work and social environments, and potential differences in design ethics. These pre-tour meeting were conducted by UTS design staff, faculty with Indian experience, and myself. During these meetings industry examples of culturally sensitive practice was discussed, such as the way Easton Pearson engage with its artisans or the cultural mishap by Lisa Bourke. Recommendations were given to avoid creating controversial designs, such as graphic nudity or inappropriate religious concepts.

Developing Communication skills

Cultural etiquette varies between countries. In India, it can be considered rude to say 'no'. During Tour Three, the emphasis was on sample production for end of year collections and sourcing of new suppliers was needed. This led to issues with late delivery. Students were in disbelief when told their goods were not ready when they came to collect them. To avoid such disappointment it is important to express questions in a way that will not force an Indian supplier

into saying 'yes' to something that is really a 'no'. For example, "can you deliver on such a such a date?" would be better expressed "when will you be able to deliver the goods?". Although there is no guarantee things will not go wrong and delivery will be postponed, it is a start.

Body language can also mean different things in different cultures. For example, two men holding hands in Morocco, Saudi Arabia, or India can be seen as friendly affection, while in other countries it would be a considered a public display of homosexual affection. Various body language differences were observed during the tours:

The artisans will often shake their heads when you say something or point something out. While this might seem like they disapprove apparently this is their way of saying they like what we are talking about. (Student Blog, 2013)

While another wrote in her blog:

Putting your thumbs up to say yes/good/ok actually means you are keen for something a little more than friendship. I hardly ever use the thumbs up at home but as soon as there is a language barrier it is my first instinct when I need to confirm or affirm something. Even now that I know how it may be taken I instinctually go to do it! (Student Blog, 2013)

On the Tours the thumbs-up symbol was soon replaced with the OK sign. Being aware of differences in bodily communication, such as the Indian tilt of the head to express agreement will certainly aid negotiations during collaboration.

Although certain body language can give an incorrect impression it can also offer solutions to language barriers. It was discussed on numerous occasions how basic words and gestures can get you a long way during collaborations with artisans not fluent in English:

Most of the time we don't have an interpreter in there, it's just us working together and sort of communicating through like the work that we're doing, not sort of talking. So we use basic words to sort of get the grasp of what we're saying, yeah, most of the time she was sort of pointing to things and using our hands to communicate what we're doing. I was so surprised at how we could interact and communicate (sic). (Student Interview, 2012)

I have had a bit of trouble communicating with my artisan with the language barrier, but by the afternoon we reached a comfortable method of doing our own thing then occasionally looking at what the other was doing, touching it and watching as we slowly demonstrated what we were doing. (Student Blog, 2013)

In the textile workshops within this study, students and artisans were encouraged to express their thoughts and concepts. At first this was challenging,

with some artisans finding it difficult to alter their traditional skills in the fear of degrading their work, and some students found it difficult understanding the practical boundaries of the experimentations. But through co-operation and working through the chaos of resistance in the design process, a dialogic relationship developed that was more friendly and less dominating with an emphasis on empathy. Through learning this new subjunctive communication tool, all participants played both apprentice and master roles.

Comparing Collaborative Practice in the Field

To understand the intricate nature of the artisan/designer relationship, it is helpful to hear from experts in the field. During the Tours, many students had the opportunity to visit design studios and stores which place emphasis on collaborative projects with artisans. During Tours One and Two, students visited the studio of Rajeev Sethi, a designer who trained in the sixties with Pierre Cardin and the Eames team in Europe before coming back to India to forge a career through contemporary design. He is an advocate of preserving traditional skills and contemporary collaborations. He spoke with the students and artisans about the complexity of artisanal collaborations and the importance of equal partnerships:

...it is great to be able to combine such a culturally infused craft with the minds of young and creative designers like these students, but none of it really matters until that artisan profits from the collaboration for the work they have done, because they need it to survive. (Rajeev Sethi, 2012)

Each of the students left the encounters with Rajeev Sethi inspired to consider collaborations in an equitable way. One student commented:

This whole time I've been thinking about how I would benefit from the entire Indian experience, what I would get out of it, and what I would gain from the work produced. Not once did I think about the outcomes for the artisan in any of this. (Student Blog, 2012)

The encounter affected students differently in terms of their attitudes to others as well as through the work they were producing. Some reflected on their experience in their journals while others took a more proactive approach, ensuring the artisan and designer signed the work.



Figure 39: Rajeev Sethi with students and artisans from Tour One. Photo by Alana Clifton-Cunningham.

Creating a socialised environment helps develop a stronger relationship between artisan and designer. Visiting Indian fashion stores in Delhi was part of the strategy to raise awareness of contemporary collaborations with Indian designers and artisans. Students were welcomed into the stores and store managers were happy to answer questions. During Tour One we had the opportunity to extend this strategy to include the artisans. It was enlightening experience for many of them, and they were fascinated to see their style of work interpreted in contemporary designs, not to mention the retail prices it could demand. Although our artisans had not worked directly with these designers, they felt proud to see their craft represented in these stores. Sadly, as the artisans were from a lower caste than the store's usual clientele, they were not made welcome, with one retailer asking them to leave. Nevertheless, the overall experience had a positive effect on both students and artisans.

Stage Four: Experimenting

Collaborative partners should be prepared to share and discuss ideas. This is how new ideas bloom. It is important to listen and learn from a collaborative

partner to develop an understanding of the technical aspects of a design and how long each process can take. Respecting and acknowledging traditional design throughout the process is of great importance. In a student situation Craft Revival Trust makes the following recommendation:

Students should be briefed before the collaboration. A student designer should be humble, open minded, respectful and willing to learn from artisans. Be aware of their own strengths and willing to explore unknown creative territory. Be prepared to experience working conditions that are different to what they could be used to (Crafts Revival Trust 2005, p.129)

These recommendations for fashion students are a good way to develop successful collaborations throughout a design career. In 2012 designer Michelle Jank spent one month in Vrindavan collaborating with Ashok Ladiwal to develop ideas for an Artisans of Fashion project. Together they discussed ideas and concepts and how these could be technically translated into embroidery. They experimented with different cloth, embroidery thread and sequins to deliver the final couture garment.



Figure 40: Michelle Jank collaborating with Ashok Ladiwal. Photo by Robyn Beeche.

The recognition of collaborative practice was constantly evident on the tours. Both students and artisans remarked how through the process of collaboration they were able to develop designs they could not have achieved on their own:

It really was a team effort, there is no way any of us could have produced such a well-rounded collection of textiles without each other. The three of us worked so well together, constantly bouncing new ideas off each other that we ended up have a huge amount of samples. [...] After

experimenting quite a bit with our own ideas, my student partner and I decided to ask our artisan if he had anything else he hadn't yet showed us or would like to try. This might well be the best question we ever asked! I would say this was the turning point for our whole project (Student Blog, 2012)

An artisan commented:

...how she really liked working with students because I had my own ideas and the students got their own ideas and they mixed and it's sort of a fusion. (Artisan Interview, 2012)



Figure 41: Michelle Jank and Ashok Ladiwal *aari* embroidered Gown. Photo by Robyn Beeche

One of the teachers noted:

This time round the exciting thing was that the students went into the studio with one idea but by the second week, most of them exploded into another level of creativity. How much the thinking of the designs evolved! Took them about a week to relax and tune into what the artisans can do (Teacher Interview, 2013).

Through discussion between designer and artisan contemporary design can emerge, but executed with the technical acumen of a master. Through this process both designer and artisan gain knowledge of each others' skills and how their collaborative partner works through the process. Michelle Jank noted after her collaboration with Ashok Ladiwal (Figure 41):

The wealth of knowledge in handcraft I think is the most exciting part of collaborations with Indian textile artisans. I was able to realize so many paths of possibilities which I had never dreamed possible. That, for a creative person, is nirvana (Michelle Jank, personal interview, interviewed by Julie Lantry, 6 August, 2012)

Developing Technical Understanding

Part of being a designer is about understanding the technical processes in a supply chain, how long something could take to produce, what is a fair rate of pay, and what sort of prices a design can command. Students who have firsthand experience of what it is like to work in textile workshops in India gain a better understanding of technical processes mastered by artisans. This practical awareness of traditional methods, which often takes longer to develop and whose pricing and delivery structure needs to be managed differently, is an invaluable learning experience.

Slow textile methods, such as traditional textile methods, generally take time – often multiple processes are required for one design. For example, *ajrak* printing has six to seven stages. One student commented:

Looking at a sample of my artisan finished block printing, I would never have known how many steps and processes it would take to create these beautiful fabrics until I had to watch and then do it all myself. It's a very methodical process, but the patience required is beyond what I have ever done. (Student Blog, 2012)

Another student learnt from her embroidery experience that time is important for a commercial product. She originally wanted her design to be executed with long needle embroidery, however the experienced artisan suggested an alternative due to the limited project timeframe.

Artisans discovered new ideas that could be interesting for their own businesses. One artisan enthused:

I really liked collaborating with the student designers because I had my own ideas and the students got their own ideas and they mixed into a fusion and that now it's something which I can teach my group of people as well, so I'm excited in that. (Artisan Interview, 2012)

Many students documented each process in their design journals (Figure 42) and blogs so they could refer to these methods at a later date. Inexperienced designers often have little knowledge of the skill or detail that can be produced in any one hand-worked garment.

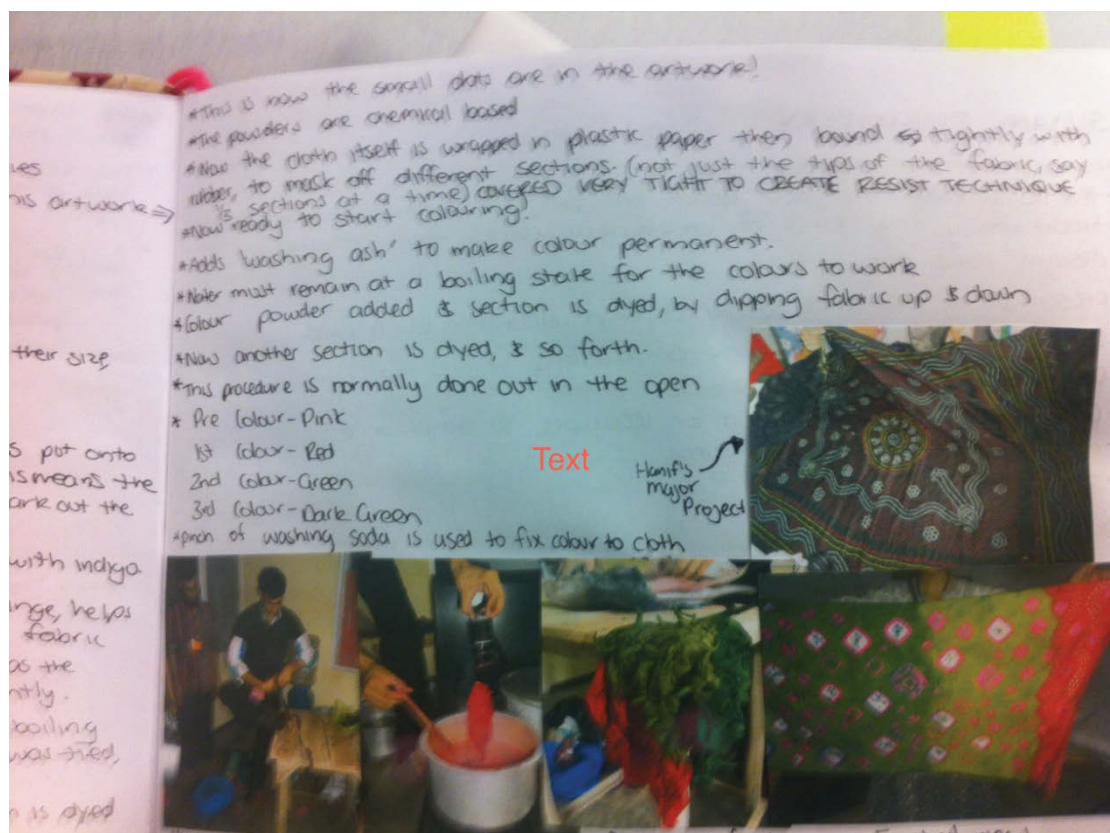


Figure 42: Student journal. Photo by Julie Lantry

During the tours students frequently commented that although they had learnt printing and some embroidery techniques at university, the sheer mastery of skills of the artisans with whom they worked was a revelation. One student noted:

I had naively thought that we might learn some of the skills that they have honed over 20, 30 or 40 years in a matter of a few days. I was very wrong. (Student Blog, 2013)

Another gained appreciation for textile art forms:

There are over sixty very detailed stitches within *chikankari* embroidery; it is an incredible art form that takes years to learn and years to teach. For me, learning only two of the stitches was incredibly difficult and slow. Having sampled this art form it's safe to say I can appreciate the tradition and delicacy that is inherent within it. It's something to be treasured. (Student Blog, 2012)

Other students recognised the speed with which artisans can work in particular methods:

What has completely blown me away is how quickly the artisans work, it's so hard to keep the new designs up! (Student Blog, 2013)

By witnessing the differences in speed for different methods, such as the swiftness of chain stitch in comparison to tedious knot stitch, students with this field work experience are able to design accordingly to their target market, considering price and aesthetic.

Most students had the opportunity to work with a variety of artisans and gleaned an understanding of different styles and levels of mastery. By witnessing how many processes or how much time it took to create just one piece of embroidery, for example, they gained a true understanding of the value of handwork.

Students increase their employment prospects when they gain a broad spectrum of practical and theoretical skills. By collaborating with accomplished technicians, such as Indian artisans, students can build a stronger skill set of textile finishes such as embroidery or printing. By exposing them to ethical manufacturers, students gain a greater understanding of what a sustainable manufacturing partner may require and how their set of values may differ from an unethical factory.

Respecting Traditional Design

Keeping traditional skills alive and not just preserved in history is important for the wellbeing of many artisans (Waterman 2011; Dasra India & Edmond de Rothschild Foundation 2013). For traditional practices to remain relevant, artisans need to be adaptable, applying their skills to new design motives and concepts. Finding a commercial path can be as important to artisans as it is to designers. Many traditional Indian artisans are putting down their tools, burning

their looms, or even committing suicide (Wood 2011) as they cannot compete in the computerised, industrialised world.

However, some entrepreneurial artisans are managing to walk the line between running profitable, creative businesses whilst simultaneously respecting and producing traditional fashion motifs. For example, Arun, a handloom artisan from Varanasi, manages to bridge the gap between the traditional and contemporary fashion worlds. He works closely with top designers such as Manish Arora to create exquisite textiles (Figure 43) for wealthy individual customers, even including ritual vestments for the Dalai Lama. This eases



Figure 43: A handloomed brocade by Manish Arora. Photo by Manish Arora

financial pressure and allows his team the time and breathing space to continue with traditional weaving practices. Although the students did not visit Varanasi, his example was discussed with both students and artisans and cited as a way to develop new designs whilst keeping traditional skills and historical motifs alive.

Designers such as Rahul Mishra and Manish Arora recognise the importance of original contemporary design and have developed sustainable practice in the production of luxury goods. Although traditional designs need to be preserved, it should be noted that traditional designs were once innovative contemporary products of their time. By educating students about the history of traditional designs and introducing them to traditional artisans, these emerging designers will consider their designs with all parties involved. In turn, offering traditional artisans equitable collaborations allows them more time and finances to work simultaneously on their traditional works.

Stage Five: Sustainability Considerations

During Stage Five artisans and emerging designers work together to ensure the collaboration is as sustainable as possible. The ecological impact of the product is considered, and ethical aspects such as intellectual property and working conditions are discussed to ensure the collaboration is a fair exchange.

Understanding these factors can be daunting for a designer working in India for the first time.

Understanding Financial Exchange

The Indian wage system is vastly different to that of Australia. An Australian garment worker receives an hourly compensation that is paid weekly and includes superannuation contributions. The government contributes to a health scheme from the tax contributed by the employee, and workers can obtain loans from commercial banks. In India, an artisan will receive a basic weekly wage with meals included. The employer, generally a head artisan or ethical manufacturer, will pay for an employee's medical bills, retirement compensation and usually contribute significantly to family weddings and offer loans to purchase property.

My westernised idea of what an artisan should be paid was not always appropriate. I felt an artisan engaging in collaboration should gain extra financial compensation, particularly as their artistry was being shared. During the Tours I paid the artisans above and beyond their usual salary. However, my good intentions often caused conflict with ethical manufacturing partners, who worried that I was unnaturally magnifying expectations of financial recompense for future customers. Great disappointment would follow should an artisan work with a similar educational organisation that did not compensate the artisans as generously.

In my experience of collaborative exchange, a successful outcome has not just been measured by financial reward. Artisans gain enjoyment and the chance to experience their craft through another person's creativity. Kevin Murray from the Sangam project asserts that the very word 'collaboration':

...implies the project/production has to mean 'equal' to both parties involved, and in such cases, more than monetary benefits. Therefore, it is important to understand what the artist might be interested in benefiting from the collaboration other than just some money. Are we able to share an award with him/her; or can we include his name/his SHGs name in labels so he gets more work in future? Can we see if he can get any media support (online/printed) from a certain project? 'What's in it for the artist' if thought over, in a little more detail, can ensure a fruitful relationship. (Murray 2012)

Although much collaboration is purely financial, other collaborative efforts are brought about by a mutual regard for social, environmental, and economic sustainability. For example, as discussed in chapter three, Monsoon of London's philanthropic approach to engaging village women with alternative income goes beyond financial reward. Monsoon trains the women in skills such as literacy, basic computer knowledge as well as the required stitching skills, while paying a fair living wage. They offer a free child minding service next door to the studio. Monsoon design team develop products suitable for the women's skill set. Followed by the buying team placing orders at a manageable scale and are flexible with delivery times.

Stage Six: Raising Wider Awareness of Collaborative Practice

Recognising the importance of collaborative practice and raising awareness of artisan/student cooperation goes beyond tour workshops. What the students

gain through the experience stays with them forever and influences their future practice as designers. Making the wider industry aware of these relationships, the importance of a sustainable livelihood for artisans, and what they can create, is a vital component in the process of making sustainable change within the fashion industry. Through the mediums of exhibitions, social media, and labelling, these collaborations can be celebrated with commercial success through various sales platforms.

Outcomes of the tour collaborations were catalogued through exhibitions of the work in India and Australia. During Tour One, Happy Hands arranged an exhibition at the end of the workshop for local designers and academics to visit and view the work. In Australia, UTS arranged exhibitions on campus for the three Tours, with industry, parents, and friends invited to attend. After Tour Three, TAFE presented an industry fashion parade featuring the work of the students who had travelled to India. The unique handwork was recognised by many industry representatives.

Another way to promote collaborative exchange is for emerging designers to promote through marketing. This includes product-labelling, images of the collaboration on social media, or articles in the press. Roopa Pemmeraju, for example, adds an image of the artisan on a swing ticket and acknowledges their contribution in her many press interviews (Pinto 2013; Burns 2012).

As a true collaborative experience, I consider Tour One to have been the most successful, with artisans and designers working side-by-side, researching, discussing, experimenting, and developing designs together. Nevertheless, it must be noted this was a contrived environment, where artisan participants were specifically chosen for their openness to collaborate on a contemporary level. These artisans were paid significantly above their usual wage as they had taken time out from their busy studios to travel to Delhi for these workshops. This collaboration was arranged by an NGO that contracted artisans for one specific project at a time. For the other three tours, an ethical middleman employed artisans. These artisans worked on a permanent basis with their employer. As I was paying the employer it is difficult to know the exact

compensation artisans received, although tips were given directly to artisans as thanks for sharing their skills.

A true collaborative exchange between an emerging designer and an Indian artisan would be most equitable with an entrepreneurial artisan working in their own practice, where success is measured in equal design input and economic success for both parties. However, rarely is this the reality. Finding partners that are sensitive to cultural differences yet open to gaining a deeper understanding of alternate systems can be awkward. For an emerging designer to find the right artisan partner who complements the design process is not easy. Conversely, it is also difficult for an artisan to find the right design partner who can communicate on a technical level and possesses an understanding of aesthetic differences of both Indian and Western styles.

Although it was my intention to develop collaborations where artisan and designer played equal partners, my westernised idea of equal partnership was not always appropriate. Collaborative environments where artisan and designer could truly enjoy the design process and revel in the personal exchange was not always appropriate due to the myriad of cultural differences.

The model I am proposing is in fact a marginal practice and not standard practice in India. Although I had great ambitions with the formulation of these Tours, the outcome inevitably hinged upon the personalities of the students and artisans themselves. With an educational experience of this kind there are so many variables learning outcomes to consider, yet it does not make the situation any less valuable. Success depends on a truly reciprocal partnership, where student and artisan share their knowledge and culture and learn from each other.

Conclusion

Over the past twenty years the Australian garment manufacturing industry has become less insular and more reliant on global collaborative partners such as India. India offers an enormous amount of commercial possibilities through traditional artistry, unique textiles and alternative manufacturing opportunities. But with these opportunities, sustainability issues have developed within the global garment manufacturing industry. For example, waterways in India have been contaminated due to toxic chemicals in dyes and cotton production, and there has been a widespread overuse of water. Workers, including women and children, have been exploited, living on minimal wages and often subjected to poor working conditions.

This study offers a sustainable practice model for emerging designers seeking alternative methods of production and working in the small-scale sector. It is a collaborative model underpinned by fair exchange, cultural awareness, and a healthy working environment. It considers alternative handcrafted sourcing options such as natural, organic, or recycled textiles.

For emerging designers, opportunities to implement sustainable practice canvasses both social and environmental realms: examples include sourcing textiles that are chemical free or use minimal water and electricity during manufacture, researching the supply chain to ensure collaborative partners are paid a fair living wage, or safeguarding worker conditions. Emerging designers exposed to these methods of practice early in their education gain a deeper understanding of technical skills and ethical manufacturing methods.

Education is key to positive change within the fashion industry. Through opportunities such as the curated Tours documented in this thesis, students gain valuable experience in sourcing sustainable raw materials, enhancing communication skills, and developing contacts for future relationships. By sharing skills and knowledge both artisan and designer can develop new concepts of embroidery, weaving, printing, and dying to produce contemporary products appropriate for both Indian and Australian markets. For artisans, these

collaborations represent an opportunity to gain an understanding of western design process, absorb new ideas for contemporary design, and maintain traditional techniques for fair recompense. For emerging designers the benefits lie in the opportunity to develop a profitable model of practice whilst developing unique contemporary handcrafted textiles, sourcing sustainable raw materials and building offshore contacts.

Collaborative practice can be the driving force behind change. Traditional craft must be preserved but also include contemporary outcomes. Through this collaborative model intellectual property of artisans and designers is respected. Loyal relationships can form where both artisan and designer acknowledge and respect each other's creative input and output.

Developing collaborative practice with traditional artisans in India can be complicated. As discussed in Chapter Four, I propose a six-stage strategy to reduce misunderstanding and foster sustainable outcomes.

1. Research - designers wishing to collaborate with Indian artisans should be aware of their target market, price points and vision on style of artisan craft.
2. Engage - decide on a direct or indirect engagement with the collaborative partner.
3. Build rapport with the collaborative partner.
4. Experiment together with ideas and concepts.
5. Develop ideas and consider sustainable solutions such as fair exchange, the recognition of intellectual property, what materials are used to produce the collection.
6. Raise awareness in regard to the collaboration, such as finding appropriate platforms to sell the collection and how it is marketed.

Through these strategies this collaborative model of practice can be the first step to building a sustainable future for emerging designers and Indian artisans.

Opportunities for Australian and Indian collaborations are on the increase, and the Indian and Australian governments are in the final stages of the

Comprehensive Economic Cooperation agreement (CECA). This agreement would assist in trade of goods and services and has the potential to increase manufacturing partnerships (DFAT 2015). To assist in building the relationship between Australian and Indian garment manufacturers there is an increase in funding opportunities for Australian fashion businesses wanting to enter the Indian market.

Further investigations for this research would be to develop a longitudinal case study tracking the impact of this collaborative model within the garment industry. It could involve case studies of emerging designers who have participated in the Artisan Culture Tours or case studies looking at internationally acclaimed fashion designers who have collaborated with artisans. These investigations could include ways to improve issues around quality and meeting deadlines and explore further methods to increase sustainability.

There is enormous potential for successful collaborative exchange between Australian emerging designers with Indian artisans for a sustainable future. Whether or not the forty-two fashion and textile students in this study collaborate further with any of the twenty-one artisans involved, the outcome is positive. From these tours, connections have been made with practice-based researchers who have collaborated with Ashok Ladiwal and Rajat Jain on a number of works, which have subsequently been exhibited in key exhibitions. Students from UTS and TAFE who have not been on the tours, but have seen the work coming out of the workshops, have commissioned Rajat Jain, Fiona Wright, and Swati Jain, for their final collections with successful results. Fashion and textile graduates who have the opportunity to collaborate with traditional textile artisans will gain a deeper understanding of technical skills, cultural differences and ethical and ecological considerations in a garment supply chain. An artisan who has met a group of students or emerging designers, has the potential to increase their client list, develop new ideas, possibly even build international recognition and increase financial gain.

Glossary

Indian traditional textile

After the process of fibre collection and spinning, traditional artisan techniques often begin with hand weaving and frequently followed by embroidery, block printing, or dyeing.

Block Printing

This method of printing with blocks (or clay tablets) dates back as far as 3000BC in Mesopotamia. The introduction of woodblock printing on fabric began in China in 220AD. The woodblock is carefully carved into a desired pattern by a block maker or *chippa* (see Figure 44), It is then immersed into a dye resist such as mud, iron black, or pigment ink. This is then applied to a fabric.

ajrak

Kutch in Gujarat is renowned for *ajrak* style block printing but the technique originates from Sindh in Pakistan. It is used to create traditional *saris* (woman's garment) and *lungi* (men's garment). Contemporary versions can include women's wear, home furnishing and kid's wear. *Ajrak* is produced with natural dyes and each region has its own style of design. The intricate process involves scouring the fabric, mordanting, printing, applying lime resist, multiple dyeing in either indigo, madder and/or iron black, and is finished with a washing process. Tools of the trade include wooden blocks, a padded printing table, a tray for the colours, bamboo lattice, cloth, brushes and a furnace for fixing the cloth.



Figure 44: Contemporary design by student designer and *ajrak* block print artisan. Photo by Julie Lantry.

chhipa

Block making for print purposes originated in Rajasthan and is one of the earliest printing techniques (Bhandari 2005). The art has been passed down from generation to generation, and to this day *chhipa* families are still carrying on the tradition within their communities.



Figure 45: Student block designs from Tour Four. Photo by student designer, Joanna



Figure 46: Block maker preparing a block design. Photo by Julie Lantry.

Pigment ink

A much simpler process than *ajrak* printing in that it has less processes. The same blocks are used but with pigment style ink, rather than natural dyes.



Figure 47: Nandu Kanwar and student using pigment ink block technique. Photo by Julie Lantry.

Mud resist

This practice of block printing relies heavily on water. Areas that traditionally have a reasonable water resource, such as Bagru and Sanganeer, have had most commercial success with this technique²⁹.

Different villages have developed their own unique designs over time. For

²⁹ In 2015 water contamination and drought has resulting in new regulations for printing in the Sanganeer region.

example, Bagru is famous for large, bold floral designs produced through the mud resist technique known as *dabu*. After printing the fabric in mud, sawdust is sprinkled across the top (see figure 46) and set in the sun to dry. Once dry it is dipped into a natural indigo vat to produce tones of blue. All students participated in a four hour workshop with artisan Mr Om using this technique.



Figure 48: Sawdust sprinkles after mud print. Photo by Julie Lantry

Dying

India is known for its obsession with colour. Colour is particularly important in India's cultural history. Through many techniques of textile embellishment, and dying with vegetable, mineral or animal resources, artisans have developed a wide variety of colour options.

azo free vat

A method that uses a bucket or vat which require a mordant to set the cloth. Cotton, wool, and some synthetic fibres can be dyed using this method. Fabric is then hung on bamboo racks to dry (see figure 47).

Students worked with dyers in Pushkar and Delhi to match their colours perfectly to complement their collection.



Figure 49: Fabric drying after dyeing. Photo by Julie Lantry.

bandhani tie-dye

Originating in Rajasthan, this was worn by royalty 1,500 years ago (Bhandari 2005, p.38). It is a simple dyeing technique using thread as the resist. Mostly used on fine fabrics such as muslins and chiffons (figure 48).



Figure 50: Tie-dye textile. The garment is tied for dying, then unravelled. Photo by student designer, Maureen

Indigo vat

Natural indigo is cultivated in a vat of living fermentation and does not require a mordant. It is cared for on a daily basis and can live indefinitely if cared for correctly³⁰. The process of dying with indigo is slow. When immersing a natural white cloth such as cotton or silk the indigo will react with the fibre. Pending the required depth, the cloth may be immersed a few times. Once the fabric is removed from the vat and hits the air, the cloth is green and slowly changes to a deep indigo colour. Students witnessed a demonstration by artisan Mr Ram Babu. All students engaged in the process with their mud resist samples.



Figure 51: Mud resist samples being immersed in vat. Photo by Julie Lantry.

³⁰ Some families in India have had the same vat for over one hundred years.

Natural dying

This method goes back as far as the Indus Valley civilisation (3000BC-1500BC). The knowledge of natural dying and fixing agents, known as mordants, are used including, tumeric, henna, indigo, pomegranate, and iron filings is still relevant 5000 years on.



Figure 52: Sample pot dying with natural dyes at Kullu Karishma. Photo by Julie Lantry.

Embroidery

India has over two hundred embroidery methods. There are often many stitch options within a particular method.

aari/zari

Aari refers to a hook-style embroidery, generally a chain stitch with silk thread. *Zari* refers to the use of metal thread on the hook. It is a difficult process and takes time to master. Within this one style there are over two hundred varieties of stitch work. Some of these include chain , *chotla*

padding and *jali* stitch. Some artisans specialise in long needlework while other stitches require the use of short needles.



Figure 53: Long needle stitching. Photo by student designer, Marissa.



Figure 54: Combination of *aari* contemporary embroidery stitches designed by Rajat Jain. Photo by student designer, Kaevi.

chikankari

A traditional white-on-white embroidery originating in Lucknow that dates back to 3000BC. This subtle embroidery method uses a number of different stitches which stand out from each other. Stitches include: *taipchi*, *pechni*, *bakhai*, *gitti*, *jangira*, *murri*, *phanda*, and *jaalis*. Traditional motifs tend to be floral, such as jasmine, rose, lotus, or flowering stems. Tools of the trade include a circular embroidery frame, fine embroidery needles, scissors, white embroidery thread, and wooden blocks for printing stitch line guide. It is a slow process. Once the design is created it is then transferred onto tracing film, printed onto the cloth, stitched with up to thirty six different stitches styles and finished by washing off the traced print. Women generally master this technique.



Figure 55: *Chikankari* embroidery. Photo by UTS Lecturer, Alana Clifton Cunningham.



Figure 56: Traditional *chikankari* design. Photo by student designer, Kaevi.

kantha

Similar to *sujani* stitch but originates from West Bengal. Used for a quilt-style effect. It is a simple running stitch, generally used in quilts and jackets made from padded, recycled saris. This style is used commonly among NGOs and women's groups as it is quite simple to learn.

sujani

Also *sujni* or *sujini*. Originates from Bhusura village in the state of Bihar. A patterned running stitch which gives a quilt-style effect. Developed by women as a way to depict a creative story about their newborn baby, dreams, or life. It is often used on baby quilts, wall hangings, or cushions. This embroidery is generally made from recycled saris. Tools of the trade include a circular embroidery frame, needles scissors, coloured embroidery thread, and tracing paper.

Weaving

Hand weaving or *khādī* fabric dates back over 5000 years. Different regions have developed their own weaving techniques and styles. Banaras is famous for its very fine silk weaving, while *kullu* is known for its work with angora and merino wool.

kullu handloom

A style of weaving created on a four-pedal loom which creates different weave designs including twill, satin and diamond weave. Commonly used in

Himachal Pradesh. Products produced include shawls, rolls of cloth in stripes, checks and plains, as well as blankets and rugs.

handloom using recycled materials

Recycled materials such as plastic or old saris are hand woven on large, medium or small looms. Generally developed by Non Government Organisations (NGOs) working with disadvantaged communities to develop ways to create income. Products produced are often for home products such as floor rugs (figure 57).

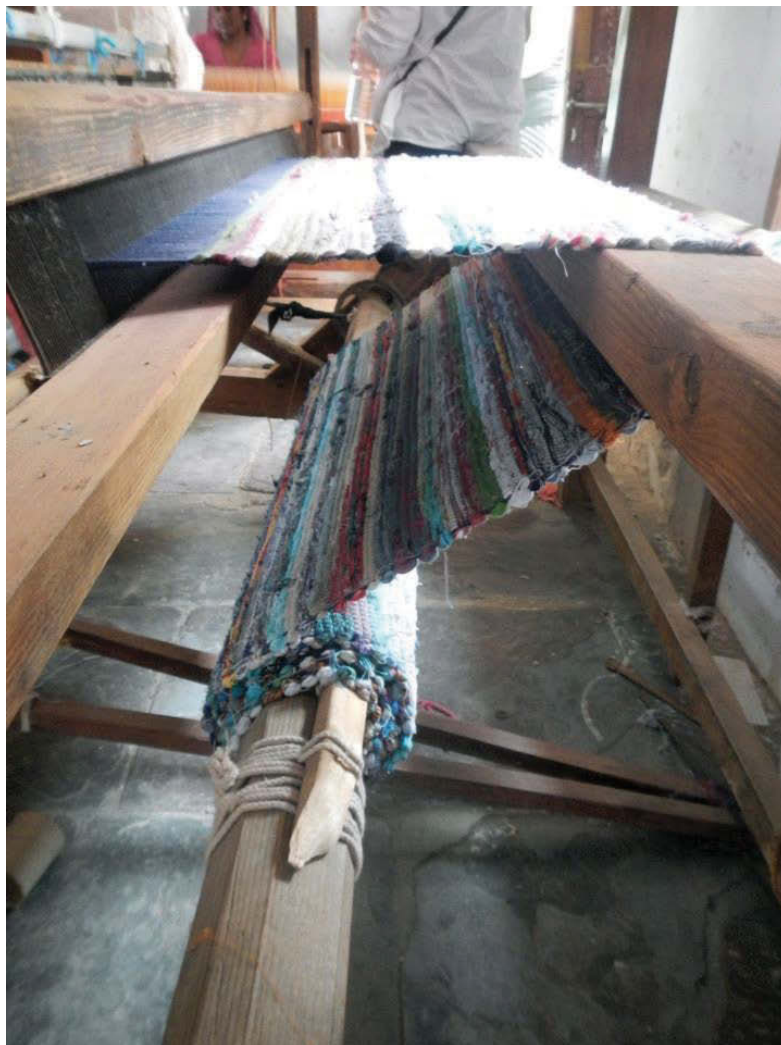


Figure 57: Handloomming recycled cloth at Tellonia. Image by Julie Lantry

Appendices

Appendix 1: Tours Table

Appendix 2: Interview Questions Education Facilitators

	Ethics	Environment	Economic	Culture
What is your background in design?				✓
How long have you been working with Australian students and Indian artisans?				✓
What opportunities to you see in working with Indian artisans and Australian designers?	✓	✓	✓	✓
What impediments have you experiences in working with designers and artisans?	✓	✓	✓	✓
Do you feel there could be more recognition for artisans?	✓			
How do you teach about sustainability?	✓	✓	✓	✓

Appendix 3: Interview Questions Artisans

	Ethics	Environment	Economic	Culture
Have you worked with Australian fashion companies			✓	
Have you worked with Australian fashion companies			✓	
Do you mind altering your traditional work to create modern fashion textiles	✓			✓
Do you feel there is enough recognition to your craft	✓			
Would you like to see labelling to recognise your craft input?	✓			
Do you believe you are fairly paid for your work?	✓		✓	
How would you describe your working conditions?	✓			✓

Appendix 4: Interview Questions Students

	Ethics	Environment	Economic	Culture
What did you learn most from your trip to India?	✓	✓	✓	✓
What surprised you?	✓	✓	✓	✓
What did you think of the Artisans working conditions?		✓		
Do you feel there should be more recognition towards artisans	✓			
Would you be interested in collaborating with a shared database connecting Australian designers and Indian artisan/manufacturers?	✓			
Do you think of sustainable issues when designing?	✓	✓	✓	✓

Appendix 5: Interview Questions Industry

	Ethics	Environment	Economic	Culture
How did you come to build a relationship with Indian suppliers?			✓	
What has been the most exciting thing about collaborating with India partners?	✓	✓	✓	✓
What difficulties do you face when working with Indian suppliers?	✓	✓	✓	✓
Would you be interested in sharing your contacts on an Australian/Indian shared database?	✓		✓	
Are you aware of any strategies where artisans are recognised when collaborating ideas?	✓			
Have you had any opportunity to visit artisan factories/studios?	✓	✓	✓	
Do you think of sustainable issues when designing?	✓	✓	✓	✓

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