



How You Make It

Education Resource



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Cover image:

MATERIALBYPRODUCT

(Susan Dimasi and Chantal McDonald)

Soft Hard Harder Dress Curtain (detail)

2007

silk, polyester, plastic, cotton

Creative direction: 3 Deep Design

Photography: Susan Grdnac

Courtesy the artists

Opposite:

MATERIALBYPRODUCT workroom

Courtesy the artists

Introduction

This education resource is intended as a starting point for generating ideas and classroom activities before, during and after a visit to *How You Make It* and is intended to complement and be used in addition to information provided in the exhibition catalogue, gallery wall texts and on the NETS Victoria website <www.netsvictoria.org/howyoumakeit>. The resource includes an introduction to the exhibition, suggested points for discussion and practical activities for junior and senior students. It is suggested that teachers select relevant sections of this resource to compile their own exhibition response sheet for students prior to their planned visit.

Pre-viewing planning

It is suggested that prior to visiting *How You Make It* you contact gallery staff to determine the following:

- Suitability of exhibition content and subject matter for the year level you plan to bring.
- Opening hours, transport and parking options, cloakroom facilities and if admission fees apply.
- Staff availability to give introductory talk/tour.
- Education and public programs, artist talks etc. that coincide with the exhibition.

Introduction to the exhibition

How You Make It explores artisanal fashion design practices that draw on traditional tailoring techniques to form contemporary collections. The designers in *How You Make It* create not only new garment forms and new ways of wearing clothing; they develop new design systems.

Existing garments are deconstructed: unpicked, reconfigured and reworked, using fine tailoring and conceptual templates in order to create a new style of clothes. The conceptual Australian fashion designers included in the exhibition open a dialogue between craft and design that places the focus back on how and why objects are made.

List of designers

Simon Cooper, Paula Dunlop, Ess.Laboratory (Hoshika Oshimi and Tatsuyoshi Kawabata), FORMALLYKNOWNAS (Toby Whittington), Anthea van Kopplen, MATERIALBYPRODUCT (Susan Dimasi and Chantal McDonald), Project (Kara Baker and Shelley Lasica) and S!X (Denise Sprynskyj and Peter Boyd).

How You Make It is a Craft Victoria and NETS Victoria touring exhibition, which has been curated by Kate Rhodes.

Of those included in this exhibition some identify as artists, others as fashion designers. In this resource they have all been referred to as designers for the purposes of consistency.

* Unless otherwise stated all text appearing in quotation marks is sourced directly from the exhibition catalogue.



Curriculum links and connections

The exhibition can be used to engage students in critical and creative thinking about ideas in art, studies of society and the environment, and design and technology and inspire their own art, design and fashion practice. As this exhibition is touring nationally teachers are encouraged to adapt the curriculum links given in the list below to suit the relevant state curricula. Use this list to generate ideas, activities and points for discussion, and where suitable contact Education staff at your local gallery for further ideas and suggestions.

Visual/Creative/Studio Arts

- The influence of the personal and cultural on a designer's practice.
- The social, cultural and historical contexts of fashion design.
- Designers' practice, collaboration and studio production.
- Designers' concepts, ideas and inspiration.
- The role of the designer in society.
- The diversity and range of media, materials, processes and techniques used by contemporary designers.
- Responding to designs/objects: analysis and interpretation using appropriate language.
- Industry issues: for example ethical considerations involved in the fashion industry.

Studies of Society and the Environment

- Social issues including environmental sustainability, recycling, identity.
- Design, art and craft as a reflection of ideas and beliefs in contemporary culture and society.

Design and technology

- The social, economic and environmental implications of design choices, decision making, resources and production methods.
- The purpose, processes and products associated with design.
- Ethical and legal considerations involved in design.
- The relationship between the designer, design, display context and audience.

Starting points

Some of the key motifs and ideas explored in the exhibition can be used as starting points. These can be developed according to the year level and specific interests of your students. Consider some of the following:

- Conceptual design, play, chance and experimentation.
- Deconstruction, remodelling and remaking.
- Recycling and sustainability.
- Fashion, self-identity and celebrity.
- Mass consumption and fast fashion.
- Detail, form and function.

The role of designers

Design surrounds us and plays an important role in our daily lives. Design determines the look (form) and use (function) of the objects that we use and wear everyday. Starting with a brief or problem designers experiment with their ideas and use conceptual strategies to create objects that meet these briefs and solve these problems; therefore fulfilling our needs and desires. Before they come up with their completed product designers may need to trial a number of creative solutions. They work through a process of experimenting with different designs, materials and techniques. The materials and techniques that designers use can contribute to the meaning of the work and assist us to understand their ideas.

Opposite:

Installing *How You Make It*
Photography: Slowlight Images

Courtesy Craft Victoria

Multipurpose design

In 2001, under the label anthea.vK, Anthea van Kopplen developed *The Envelope*: a single pattern template for an item of clothing with multiple uses. *The Envelope* can be configured and worn as a top, skirt, dress, coat or accessory and — when five or more people wearing it come together — a form of shelter.

A reference for *The Envelope* was Japanese fashion designer Issey Miyake's 1999 A-POC outfit. A-POC (a piece of cloth) was designed as a long tube of machine-knitted fabric containing embedded 'seams' that appeared as a faint outline on the cloth. The 'seams' outlined various items of clothing that could be cut out to the wearer's specifications and - as the fabric was designed not to fray — worn without modifications. The A-POC design minimised any waste fabric and simplified the production process — doing away with the need for manual labour to assemble the garment. Miyake envisioned it as clothing for the future that could be adapted for a variety of purposes.

Another reference point for *The Envelope* was a newspaper story about a group of snowboarders who died when their clothing failed to protect them from the freezing weather conditions. After researching the construction of contemporary snowboarding jackets van Kopplen learned that it took over 36 separate pattern pieces to make up the finished garment.

Sustainability is a key concern for van Kopplen and her design process carefully considers the expected lifecycle of the materials and processes that she uses. With *The Envelope* van Kopplen experimented with and refined her design until she came up with a single shape pattern for a multipurpose garment. The designer has made *The Envelope* pattern available for visitors to download free from the *How You Make It* tour website at: www.netsvictoria.org/howyoumakeit

The designer says: "...one of the parameters of a sustainable approach to design is longevity. So as an approach to creating longevity of a garment, you increase its number of uses. That's just one response. Another response to longevity is quality."¹



the envelope

Junior

Questions

- Do you have a favourite item of clothing? What is it about this item that you most like?
- Can the things that we wear make us feel good about ourselves? Why?
- Do you think that clothes hold the memories of those who wear them?
- Should clothes be functional? Why?
- Do designers only design and make those things that we need?
- Why might designers make something that we don't need?

Classroom activity

Collaborative design

Collaborative classroom work can have parallels with professional design practice where designers often work together with a multidisciplinary team to develop and trial solutions to design problems. Before commencing a collaborative project the teacher could lead a discussion on the conduct expected in a collaborative venture. For example adhering to mutually agreed approaches on the use of particular materials and/or techniques and why this is important. Discuss with students what the benefits of working collaboratively are. Are there any disadvantages that they can foresee?

Clever clothing

Discuss the various functions and purposes of clothing. Show children a range of historical fashions and styles from different countries. Discuss with them how fashion responds to political, economic and social events. What do they think clothing might be like in the future? What sort of fabrics might we use? Anthea van Kopplen predicts that: "fabrics of the future will either be fully recyclable or fully biodegradable."²

- Using Anthea van Kopplen's *The Envelope* as a starting point, students could work collaboratively in small groups to design a range of multifunctional clothing to be worn in the future.
- Students should discuss and mutually agree on what functions the items of clothing will have. They can then draw designs that demonstrate the multiple functions of the clothing.

Opposite:

Anthea VAN KOPPLEN

The Envelope

2008

tyvek 255 recycled content High Density Polyethylene

(HDPE), found fabric (1960s) 100% nylon,

found object (clear and blue PVC shower curtain),

wool/polyester found fabric

installation view

Photography: Slowlight Images

Courtesy the artist and Craft Victoria



Senior

Questions

- How is Anthea van Kopplen's *The Envelope* presented in the exhibition? How does its presentation add to or influence your understanding of this design?
- Do you think that garments with multiple functions might be the clothing of the future? Why/why not?
- Both Issey Miyake's design A-POC and Anthea van Kopplen's *The Envelope* allows the consumer a role in determining the final design of the garment. Discuss.
- Should designers be encouraged to consider sustainability and incorporate this into their design practice?
- What benefits are there in reducing the number of pattern pieces required to make up a finished garment?
- What other applications can you see for a design that reduces the number of components and processes required to manufacture it?
- Why do you think Anthea van Kopplen might have chosen to make *The Envelope* pattern available free from the exhibition website?

Opposite:

Anthea VAN KOPPLEN

The Envelope

2008

Models: Taka and Crystal

Location: Yarraville, Melbourne

Date: 21.02.2008

Time: 12:30pm

Photographer: Tomas Frimil

Hair and makeup: Jamie Richardson

Courtesy the artist

Classroom activity

Multi-function for the future

Research the work of British-born contemporary artist Lucy Orta (born 1966, Great Britain) whose practice over the past decade has investigated issues including urban homelessness; the plight of refugees and nomadism. Her practice fuses fashion, architecture, intervention, industrial design and performance. For the series *Refugee Wear* the artist constructed temporary shelters designed to provide personal comfort and mobility for the inhabitant. Other works in the series were designed to provide mobility and waterproof shelter for the Kurd refugee population; temporary protection and shelter for natural disasters such as the Kobe earthquake; and mobile sleeping bags for the homeless. Lucy Orta's work can be viewed online at her web page:

http://studioorta.free.fr/lucy_orta.html

- Work collaboratively to prepare a design brief for an item of multi-purpose apparel (clothing, courier's bag, backpack, jewellery etc.) that incorporates elements of personal habitation and recreation (i.e. an item of clothing might include a fold-out waterproof tent, an item of jewellery might include a mobile phone, email and web access or personal stereo). In the design brief outline a design problem that you need to solve or answer in designing your item. Include in the design brief an evaluation of the potential impact on the environment of the intended use of materials, components or processes required to make the item.
- Download the pattern for Anthea van Kopplen's *The Envelope*. Work collaboratively in small groups to make up the pattern in a range of different fabrics, incorporating different finishes and fastenings. Conduct a fashion parade for the class to promote this multi-purpose garment design. Document the fashion shoot using either drawings or photographs.

Fashion decisions

When a fashion designer conceives of, designs and produces a garment they are involved in a process of decision-making that can include the following considerations: what fabrics, finishes and colours to use; what processes and techniques to use; where, when and how to cut fabric; whether to mass produce items or have a limited production run; how they will promote and market their designs; where items will be manufactured; how much items will sell for and where the range will be stocked and sold. Designers can also consciously make decisions about the level of impact that their designs and business will have on the environment.

Many of the designers in *How You Make It* are committed to incorporating sustainability into their fashion design practices through recycling and or limiting the processes required in the production of their garments; thereby reducing their impact on the environment. The designers S!X (Denise Sprynskyj and Peter Boyd) explore ideas to do with the consumer society we live in where many things, including clothing, are disposable.

S!X and sustainable design

Denise Sprynskyj and Peter Boyd established their Melbourne-based label S!X in 1993 after graduating in fashion design from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT). Ideas of recycling and deconstruction are central to their design practice. As money for fabrics was limited when they first started out, S!X collected tailored garments from opportunity shops and other sources which were used as the starting point for their own unique designs. The duo experimented with cutting and tearing apart these garments, putting them back together to create unique outfits. The recycled garment then came to be used as a prototype that could be translated into a flat pattern and recreated in new fabrics.

Whilst the use of pre-existing garments was at first a solution to the high cost of purchasing fabrics, recycling and sustainability have now become embedded in their practice. S!X's production processes are a distinct alternative to mass fashion production and consumption.

Underpinning S!X's design practice is the idea of deconstruction and their philosophy that "the cloth we wear can mean something".³ In taking garments apart they reveal the method of their construction: the traces of a garment's past and construction (seams, markings, labels and tacking) becoming features of the new garment's exterior. Each S!X item is stamped with their label, which is designed to fade away with wear and washing until invisible.

S!X play with and question gender stereotypes. They often take existing tailored men's items such as jackets and suit trousers and transform them into women's apparel, leaving the details and tailoring visible. The designers' range for *How You Make It* involved the transformation of surplus stock from Melbourne men's boutique Chiodo into new garments for women.

Fast fashion

Since the mid 1990s when fashion stores like H&M (Sweden), Topshop (UK) and Zara (Spain) first appeared, the turnaround time between key seasonal fashion trends being identified from major design fashion shows, to mass-produced affordable garments appearing on the racks of chain stores has rapidly decreased. From an initial sketch or photograph taken by someone attending a fashion show, or an image taken from the Internet, garments that reflect key seasonal trends can be produced in factories and placed in chain fashion stores within two weeks. This phenomenon is often referred to as 'fast fashion' and identifies the fact that as consumers we are buying more clothes than ever before and as a result of the volume of production, the price of a mass-produced fashion garment is falling.

While there is an increasing awareness of the impact of mass consumption on the environment, fashion often seems to pass under the radar. Manufacturers know that many customers want to wear the latest fashion trends and are happy to buy more 'disposable' items at a lower price than pay more for fewer items. There is however a very real environmental price to be paid for this disposable fashion.



Junior

Look at the work on display by designers S!X. For the exhibition the designers have transformed surplus men's clothing (that would have been disposed of) into a new range of women's clothing.

- Can you recognise what these garments may once have been?
- Why do you think an artist or designer might use recycled or found materials in their work?
- What are some clothing labels that you can think of? What makes them recognisable?
- Why do you think S!X don't want their label to be visible forever?
- What words would you use to describe the clothing that S!X make?
- Draw a detail from one of S!X's designs.

Classroom activity

'Restyled' fashion

Using the designs of S!X initiate a classroom discussion on sustainability and ethical fashion. Designers can make decisions about what materials and processes they use and the impact that this will have on animals, people and the environment.

Read the following ethical fashion article from the BBC Blast website to students. The article traces the lifecycle of a pair of jeans from cotton plant to rubbish tip. The article also includes tips on how you can become a more ethical fashion shopper! http://www.bbc.co.uk/blast/fashion/articles/what_is_ethical_fashion.shtml

- Students can design and create a 'restyled' fashion garment or accessory (hat, bag, scarf) using recycled or reclaimed clothing or fabrics. Ask your parents for items of clothing that are no longer worn or visit an op shop to buy a pre-loved item. Have a fashion parade to showcase your 'restyled' designs to the rest of the class.
- In small groups design a poster with tips on how to be an ethical shopper. Consider how the materials that you use can reflect your message. Display the finished posters around your school.

Opposite:

S!X

(Denise Sprynskyj and Peter Boyd)

The tunnel collection (5 pieces)

2007

100% cotton, 100% wool, poly/cotton

installation view

Photography: Slowlight Images

Courtesy the artists and Craft Victoria



Senior

Questions

- Read the wall texts and any other material available on S!X in the exhibition. How would you describe S!X's fashion design practice?
- What sort of person do you think might wear S!X's designs?
- In what way do S!X's clothes carry traces of their original design and function?
- What are some of the social, economic and environmental consequences of design choices and decision-making?
- Should sustainability be a key consideration of Australian designers? Why/why not?
- What ways can you think of that a designer could incorporate sustainability into their practice?
- List the ways that you think mass-produced fashion impacts on the environment.

Classroom activity

Investigating ethical fashion

S!X's design approach can be used to start a discussion on ethical, sustainable and environmentally responsible fashion. On average how many items of clothing do your peer group buy each year? Is this indicative of you? How important is it to you that the clothes you purchase and wear have been made in a way that doesn't exploit workers, animals or the environment? How might you as a consumer seek out fashion labels that incorporate ethical and socially responsible clothing production practices and sustainable design?

Opposite:

S!X

(Denise Sprynskyj and Peter Boyd)

The tunnel collection (detail)

2007

100% cotton, 100% wool, poly/cotton

installation view

Photography: Slowlight Images

Courtesy the artists and Craft Victoria

- Research clothing and design companies that have adopted ethical design and manufacturing practices. How do they market and present their clothing and products? Is this different to the way less ethically produced fashion is marketed? You might like to start by looking at the following websites:

Chikactivist (Eco fashion)

<http://www.chikactivist.com.au>

Conscientious Shopper (Conscientious ethical fashion)

<http://www.conscientiousshopper.com.au>

Etiko (Ethical clothing and footwear)

<http://www.etiko.com.au/urban/>

Hunter Gatherer

<http://www.huntergatherer.com.au>

No Sweat Shop label

<http://www.nosweatshoplabel.com/>

Thread (Fashion without victim)

A monthly online eco-fashion magazine:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/thread/>

- Using your research as a starting point, make an artwork that responds to and reflects ideas of mass consumption and in particular the concept of fast fashion.
- Based on the saying 'You are what you wear' design a billboard with an image and simple text that promotes ethical and socially responsible fashion.
- Rather than your unwanted clothes going to landfill why not recycle them or swap with friends. Organise a 'Clothing Swap Party' at your school. People can bring along pre-loved items in good condition to exchange. Design a poster that explains the concept and promotes the event. Visit the Clothing Exchange website for tips on clothes swapping:
<http://www.clothingexchange.com.au/Site/Home.html>

Ideas and inspiration

Designers draw on a range of ideas and sources of inspiration when they design a garment. For some this means that each collection or range that they design will have a different look or feel. For others each collection is designed to build on and add to their previous collections. For many of the designers in this exhibition the actual processes involved in making the garment (including cutting, marking, joining and sizing) provide their inspiration.

Chance, play and accident in design

Kate Rhodes, curator of *How You Make It* writes in the catalogue that: "some of Australia's most recognised labels are also its most conceptual and experimental." Both Ess. Laboratory and Paula Dunlop incorporate elements of chance and experimentation into their design process. Both labels are influenced and inspired by the Surrealist movement and the way in which the Surrealists experimented with chance, play and accident in order to liberate the unconscious mind and create random and unsettling juxtapositions.

Ess. Laboratory takes its name from 'Experimental Surreal Style' and the idea of exploring the unconscious mind through experimentation is central to their design philosophy. Their meticulously constructed garments reflect the key themes of their practice: "the juxtaposition between the real and the artificial, between disfigurement and embellishment and the friction between reality and the subconscious that results in surprise."

Paula Dunlop uses chance, experimentation and play when she is designing clothes. For example she might fold fabrics while blindfolded to see what effect is created. Or she might ask an assistant to randomly choose the pattern pieces that will be used. These methods allow her to slow down the process of making and discover found elements that are incorporated into the finished designs.



Junior

Questions

Look at the designs by Ess. Laboratory.

- Do you think that these garments tell a story?
- List some of the materials that the designer/s used to make this garment
- Is the way that the garment has been made visible in the finished item?
- What sort of person do you think would wear these clothes?
- Write a short story about a character wearing these clothes.
- Make a drawing of this design.

Classroom activity

Create an Exquisite Corpse

Paula Dunlop's approach of 'chance' can be used as a starting point to make collaborative drawings and collages using the Surrealist game of 'exquisite corpse'. 'Exquisite corpse' was a technique developed by the Surrealists in 1925 in Paris. Based on an old parlour game, it was played by several people who would write a word, then fold the sheet to conceal what they had written and pass it to the next player for their contribution.

The Surrealists composed their sentences word by word, adding (in order), an adjective, noun, verb, etc. The game relied on the use of chance and accident to create sentences directly from the unconscious. One of the first sentences written using this technique: 'The exquisite corpse drinks the young wine' gave the game its name. Later the Surrealists adapted this technique for use in art making.

- Make your own Exquisite Corpse by dividing a large sheet of paper into 3 equal sections. Fold each section to create a line across the paper. The first player draws a head (section 1), the second a torso (section 2) and the third the legs and feet (section 3). Each player folds their section to conceal their drawing, but leaves part of the drawing visible as a starting point for the next player. Pass to the next player. When you have finished unfold your drawing to see what you have created!
- When you have mastered the technique experiment with collage (fabrics, torn coloured papers, buttons, found objects etc.) to create clothing designs for your figures you are drawing.
- Display your works in the classroom with the titles that you have given them.

Opposite:

Ess. Laboratory

(Hoshika Oshimi and Tatsuyoshi Kawabata)

Dress (Madame Edwarda) (detail)

2008

cotton, silk

Photography: Tatsuyoshi Kawabata

Courtesy the artists



Senior

Questions

- Choose a design by Ess. Laboratory and discuss how shape, colour, texture, pattern and material have been used.
- Are any of the processes that the garments have undergone visible in the finished product? Describe.
- Discuss how ideas of experimentation and chance (central to their design philosophy) are apparent in their designs.
- How is juxtaposition used in the designs of Ess. Laboratory? What effect does this have?
- Do you think that these designs were produced in limited numbers or mass-produced? Why?
- What sort of market do you think that there is for such highly individualistic items of clothing?

Senior activity

Inspired design

Ess. Laboratory and Paula Dunlop have both been influenced by the Surrealist movement and incorporated these influences into their fashion design practice. Consider how you might incorporate the things that inspire you into your own designs or artworks.

- Imagine that you are designing a small 'restyled' range of clothing to present to an eco-friendly boutique that is interested in stocking sustainable clothing designs. Visit an op shop and purchase some pre-loved items or ask friends or family for clothes they no longer want, and remake them into new items.
- Create a 'lookbook' (a portfolio with sketches and photos of your line) to present your designs to your potential client. You will need a digital camera, computer, printer and some willing models to wear your designs. Consider your client. Make use of handmade or recycled paper or card to present your designs. Be creative!
- In a visual diary record the design concepts, processes, experiments and solutions for your restyled range. Develop your ideas into a narrative with images to convey the inspiration and philosophy behind your re-styled fashion collection. Using drawing, collage or digital storytelling to present your finished collection.

Opposite:
Paula DUNLOP
Chance Blouse
2006
organic cotton
installation view
Photography: Slowlight Images

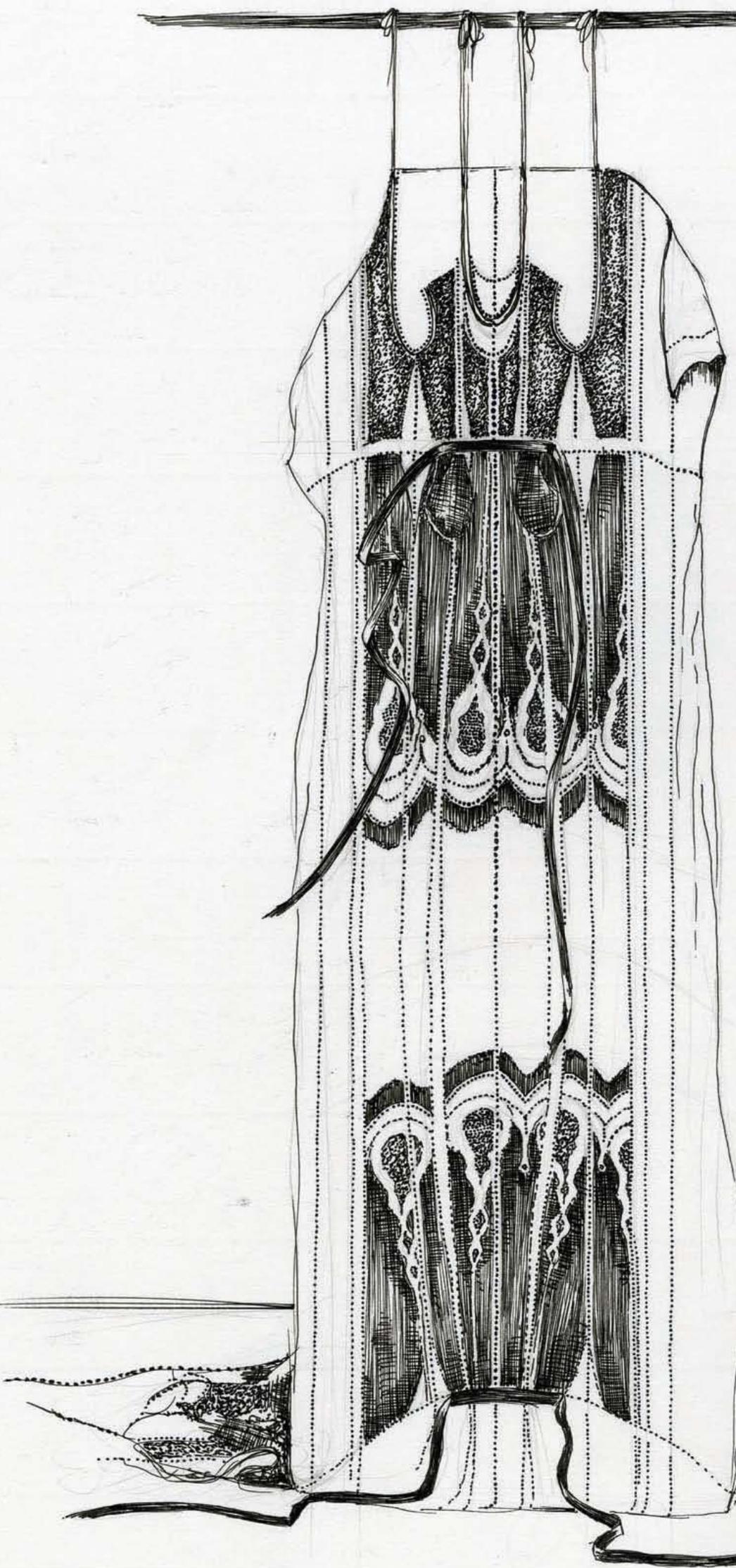
Courtesy the artist and Craft Victoria

The designer/ client relationship

Independent designers often develop strong and ongoing relationships with their clients, particularly if their clients have their clothes made to measure. As the clients are investing their money in a garment and the designers are investing their skill and time in making the garment it has to be a mutually beneficial relationship. Loyal clients will return and buy more of their designs and are one of the designers best marketing tools.

Jeweller and designer Susan Cohn who predominantly wears SIX designs says: "I often ask Peter and Denise to 'S!X-up' garments already in my wardrobe. They add surface detailing such as patterns or stitching or they will crunch the fabric. They might also change something structurally, which involves some re-tailoring. Initially it took a few visits to get things right but now it is usually only one — we have come to understand each other."

When Icelandic avant-garde pop singer Björk toured Australia in 2008 she commissioned designers Susan Dimasi and Chantal McDonald (MATERIALBYPRODUCT) to design a custom-made outfit that she could wear to promote her recent album launch and tour. When visiting the exhibition visitors can view the dress designed for Björk, the *Soft Hard Harder Dress Curtain*, 2007.



MATERIAL BY PRODUCT
Soft Hand Hard Handers SS08
RENDEZ-VOUS
installation proposal
Sketch #1

Senior

Questions

- What was your first reaction to MBP's *Soft Hard Harder Dress Curtain*?
- Do you think that aspects of Björk's personality are reflected in the design of MBP's *Soft Hard Harder Dress Curtain*? In what way?
- Would you like to wear this outfit to a special occasion? Why/why not?
- Is this garment designed to be functional? Why/why not?
- Read the information on the designers and their ideas that is available in the gallery? (e.g. wall text or catalogue notes). Does this information influence or change your understanding of the dress?
- Can you tell what materials and techniques the designers have used to construct this garment? What are they?
- How has the designers' choice of materials and design contributed to your understanding of the work?
- How does viewing design and wearable objects in an art gallery context (as opposed to a Museum or commercial context) influence the way we interpret and understand these objects?

Classroom activity

Famous fashion

If you could design and make a 'one-off' garment for a celebrity (author, actor, singer/musician, sportsperson) who would it be?

- Develop and write a scenario on which the design of your garment will be based, for example a one-off garment to be worn by a musician to a musical awards ceremony at which they will also perform. Include in your scenario the context in which the garment/outfit will be worn. Outline the purpose and function of the garment, visual, aesthetic, functional requirements, cost and time restrictions, environmental concerns, and any safety requirements.
- Produce a design brief for your client revealing the ideas behind the garment. Include references to your ideas and influences, fabric swatches, samples of finishes, and sketches showing the garment's construction and details.
- Develop working drawings of the client's preferred option. Compile a list of materials and finishes required, including costs. Present these with a production plan.

Opposite:

MATERIALBYPRODUCT

(Susan Dimasi and Chantal McDonald)
Chantal McDonald drawing for
Soft Hard Harder Dress Curtain
2007

Courtesy the artists

Adapting design

When Simon Cooper visited Vietnam he was astounded by the number of people he witnessed with severe deformities as a result of war related injuries, including ongoing exposure to landmines, or birth defects resulting from Agent Orange. In Ho Chi Minh City a specialist tailoring trade had developed to custom-make clothing for people with deformities or missing limbs.

Simon Cooper has long been interested in the ability of the human body to adapt and change to new situations and circumstances. *Chromosome*, inspired in part by his travels in Vietnam, presents a series of garments for bodies that have undergone radical genetic transformation.

In order to translate his drawings into actual garments Simon Cooper worked with an apprentice tailor. Together they had to find solutions to a number of design and technical challenges including how to fit horizontal flaps; curving button lines; reverse cuffs and floating collars.



Junior

Questions

- Do Simon Cooper's designs look like they could be worn?
- What materials are these designs made from?
- Do they remind you of anything else?
- Who do you think might have made them?
- Draw three of the designs.

Classroom activity

Redesigning design

In the classroom discuss how design changes and adapts over time to suit our lifestyles. While there are many classic design items that need no improvement, sometimes designs don't work as well as they could. Is there something that you use everyday that you think could be improved?

- Choose a pre-existing design (fashion, interior, housing, car etc.) and come up with three suggestions that would improve on this design.
- Draw the new design incorporating the changes or new design features you have made.
- Give your new design a name.

Opposite:

Simon COOPER

Chromosewn (7 pieces from a series of 20)

2007

cotton, buttons, zippers, steel pins

installation view

Photography: Slowlight Images

Courtesy the artist and Craft Victoria



Senior

Questions

- Read the *Chromosewn* wall texts and any accompanying literature about the work. Is there a subject or issue that this work explores? What is it?
- How might the title of the work reflect the subject or issue?
- How effectively does the artist's use of colour and materials help to convey their ideas? In your response refer to the colour, cut and fabric used.
- Discuss the use of asymmetry in Simon Cooper's *Chromosewn* designs.
- Consider the way that the work has been displayed. How does this influence your understanding of the work? In your response refer to the use of wall texts, labels, lighting etc.

Opposite:
Simon COOPER
Chromosewn (detail)
2007
cotton, buttons, zippers, steel pins
installation view
Photography: Slowlight Images

Courtesy the artist and Craft Victoria

Classroom activity

Futuristic fashion

Many fashion designers have dabbled with futuristic fashions. Might clothing of the future have to be 'smart' enough to respond to changing climactic and environmental conditions? What else might it have to adapt to? Might 'clothing of the future' just refer to its manufacture using high-tech materials and production processes? Or might it refer to clothing incorporating gadgets and robotic features?

In this clip on YouTube '1930s Futuristic Fashion Predictions' you can see what leading American fashion designers in the 1930s predicted men and women would be wearing in the year 2000: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txaR2HvnwVg>

- What do you predict men and women will be wearing in 2200? Draw fashion designs for both men and women.

For inspiration research fashion designers who have incorporated elements of futuristic fashion into their designs:

Hussein Chalayan (born Turkey, 1970):
<http://www.husseinchalayan.com/>

Jean-Paul Gautier (born France, 1952):
<http://www.jeanpaul-gaultier.com/>

Alexander McQueen (born 1969, London):
<http://www.alexandermcqueen.com>

Issey Miyake (born 1938, Japan):
<http://www.isseymiyake.co.jp/>

Paco Rabanne (born 1934, Spain):
<http://www.pacorabanne.com/anglais/acc-histoire.htm>

Vivienne Westwood (born 1941, United Kingdom):
<http://www.viviennewestwood.com>

Yohji Yamamoto (born 1943, Japan)
<http://www.yohjiyamamoto.co.jp>

Glossary

Design

Design is a process of production that encompasses numerous creative avenues. Other definitions of design include: to plan or fashion artistically or skilfully, usually in working detail; to form or conceive in the mind; a scheme of attack; to intend for a definite purpose; an adaptation of means to ends; an outline, sketch or plan. Design may also involve production, and evaluating products in a real context.

Definition sourced from the VCAA website:
<http://vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/>

Design brief

A design brief is a statement that contains an outline of a situation, context, problem, need or opportunity, and specifications that apply to the problem. Design briefs can vary in the amount of information they provide and the way in which this information is presented.

Definition sourced from the VCAA website:
<http://vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/>

Ethical fashion

Fashion that has been made, worn and passed on in a way that reflects concern for people, animals and the environment.

Exquisite corpse

'Exquisite corpse' is a technique or game of chance developed by the Surrealists in 1925 in Paris. Based on an old parlour game, and with numerous variations, it is played by several people who write a word or phrase then fold the sheet to conceal what they had written and pass it to the next player for their contribution. One of the first sentences written using this technique: 'The exquisite corpse drinks the young wine' gave the game its name. Later the Surrealists adopted this technique for use in art making.

Fast fashion

Refers to the increasingly fast turn around time between key fashion trends being identified from major fashion design shows to appearing as mass-produced garments in chain stores.

Found object

The term found object (from the French: *objet trouvé*) describes art that is created from or incorporates objects that are not normally considered art, often because they already have a mundane, utilitarian function.

Restyled fashion

Restyled, recycled or reclaimed fashion refers to items of clothing or accessories that have been made from pre-existing garments or fabrics.

Resources

Art and design education resource guide

The Art & Design Education Resource Guide (ADERG) is the standard reference for courses offered in art and design at tertiary institutions in Australia and New Zealand. Commenced in 1983, ADERG is a Directory of courses, a showcase of graduate work and a selection guide for those wishing to undertake a course of study. ADERG contains information about all of the institutions offering art and design courses as well as showcasing the work of recent graduates.

<http://www.dgdesignnetwork.com.au/aderg/>

Australian Fashion Council

The Australian Fashion Council is Australia's principal industry organization for Australian fashion businesses. The site provides up to date information for fashion industry professionals including legal issues commonly faced by designers and how to address them and up and coming local and international fashion events.

<http://www.australianfashioncouncil.com/>

Blast

The BBC website Blast features art and design, dance, writing, film, music and fashion for young people. On the fashion pages budding fashion designers can upload their design ideas to a gallery, look at style on the streets of Britain and find tips for their own fashion projects. Features a comprehensive section on Ethical fashion and tips for restyling garments.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blast/>

Powerhouse Museum

You can search and browse the collection online and the site also includes student fashion designs:

http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/exhibitions/student_fashion.asp

Store Wars, UK 2003

(Video/DVD, Producer: BBC Active)
30 minutes duration

An exploration of the strategies clothing manufacturers and retailers use to quickly respond to the newest fashion trends. Enabling customers to wear the latest catwalk designs in record time. Case studies of stores and shoppers help to illustrate the way in which: trend forecasters, short product lead times, the notion of disposable fashion, the use of the 'just-in-time' production model, and a flexible supply chain, have changed the way the fashion industry responds to its market. Available from Classroom Video:

<http://www.classroomvideo.com.au>

Thread (Fashion without Victim)

An online UK fashion magazine dedicated to the latest eco-styles and designs:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/thread/>

VCE Season of Excellence

An annual festival of works created by top Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) students. On this website you can view student folios from previous VCE Top Designs exhibitions. Designed to Inspire:

<http://www.museum.vic.gov.au>

Endnotes

¹ Transcript of 'Future Fashion', Episode 15, ABC broadcast 22/10/2002

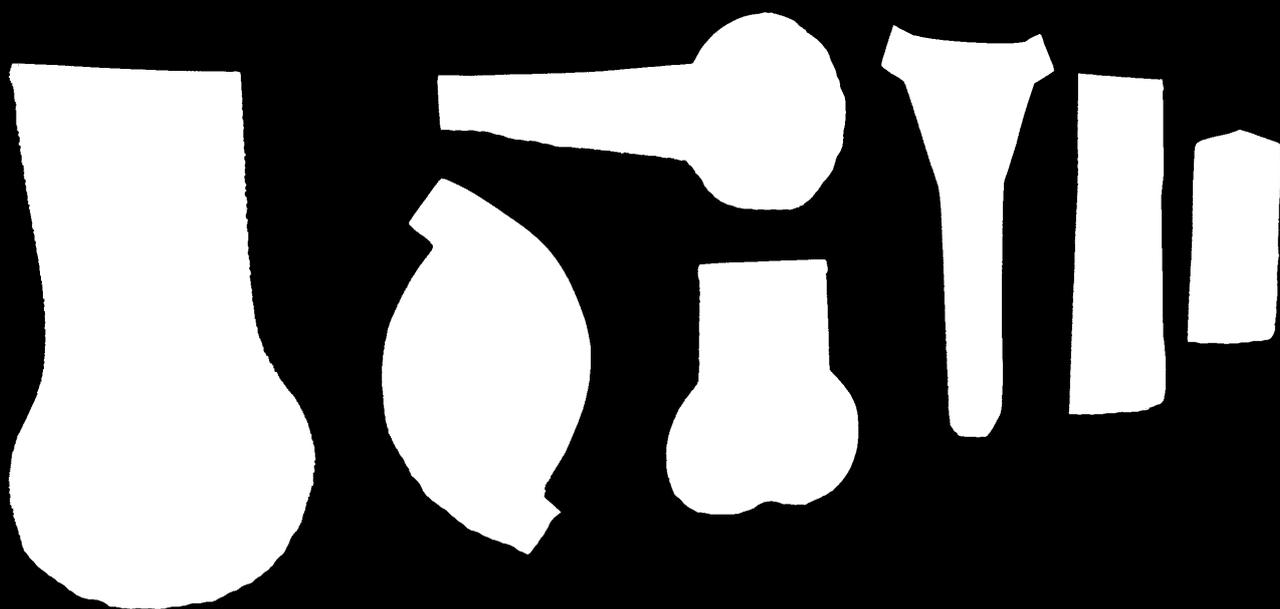
http://www.abc.net.au/dimensions/dimensions_future/Transcripts/s691796.htm [last accessed August 2008]

² ibid

³ R.T Hines, 'Cutting Cloth: Contemporary approaches to independent production', *Craft Australia*, June 2007

<http://www.craftaustralia.com.au/articles/20070624.php> [last accessed August 2008]

Interview: Simon Cooper



Were you particularly interested in fashion as a child? If not, when and how did you first become interested in fashion design?

Not fashion per-se but in clothes, sewing and costume.

Can you make mention of any key influences/ inspirations that are central to your fashion design practice?

Artists who explore the limits of what it means to be a human being in a body: Stelarc, Orlan, Yoko Ono, Carolee Schneeman. Writers who deal with the mutability of the body: Mary Shelly, Charles Darwin, H.G. Wells

Is there a central philosophy that underpins and informs your design decisions?

The realisation that the ideal human form is fictional, changing and excludes the vast majority of humanity. The idea that the human form's capacity for change and variation is its most beautiful feature.

From where does your interest in the variability of the body stem?

Studies in mythology, travels in India, late night monster movies, and theories of evolution.

Could you make mention of the design process you undertook in developing the *Chromosewn* series?

I imagined bodies that had been deliberately developed along alternative axis of symmetry then drew rough sketches of work clothes for these bodies. I took these roughs to a family tailoring business in Saigon, Vietnam and worked with their apprentice to produce patterns. I chose fabrics and colours for their masculine, military and work associations to emphasise the ideologies of control, discipline and functionality that underpin genetic engineering.

How is the tradition of tailoring embedded in your design practice?

To me, tailoring is the craft of making clothes for the individual, not mass producing for fictional averages. Bespoke clothing must be individually tailored.

What is the most important issue that you think is currently affecting the Australian fashion industry?

Seeing itself as an industry and not as a collection of craftspeople.

Do you wear you own label? If not, can you make mention of favourite designers?

I tend to wear obscure label-less pieces I find in small out of the way fashion boutiques from all over Thailand.

Interview: Paula Dunlop



Were you particularly interested in fashion as a child? If not, when and how did you first become interested in fashion design?

I was not particularly interested in fashion as a child, although I do remember admiring certain items in my mother's wardrobe. I was certainly very active in sewing and working with fabric, though the end products generally took the form of soft toys, cushions, fancy dress costumes or Christmas stockings; not so much clothing. As a teenager I took more of an interest in making clothes for myself, but I was never really an avid 'consumer' of fashion as such. It wasn't until I studied visual art (in my late teens) that I followed up on this inclination toward 'hands-on' making with fabric, which eventually led me to study fashion design at university.

In order to work as a clothing designer did you undertake tertiary study? How important was this to your career?

Yes, I undertook three years of undergraduate study, and one year in an honours program. At the moment I am doing my PhD (so, in a sense, I am very much still a student!).

My study has been very important to my career, especially my career in teaching and research. Rather than participate in the fashion industry solely as a designer, I also enjoy investigating the industry itself; how it is organised, how other designers work etc, and in sharing my ideas with others. It is for this reason I have continued with my tertiary studies. The university environment is a good facilitator for my continued exploration into these areas of fashion.

I still produce small-runs of garments for sale, but more and more my interest in making (and writing about) fashion has extended into collaborations with other artists and designers. In this, too, the university environment has been important as though I have had the opportunity to meet like-minded individuals interested in similar things!

Can you make mention of any key influences/inspirations that are central to your fashion design practice?

I think I am most inspired by creative practitioners who work through a spirit of

curiosity, and who enjoy sharing their ideas with others. I take a lot from the wonderful friends I work and study with — every day I feel so lucky to be around such clever, active and passionate people!

Is there a central philosophy that underpins and informs your design decisions?

A guiding philosophy is to enjoy myself, and allow space for the accident or the unknown/ unforeseen to enter the work. A lot of my work depends on the idea of not knowing where I'm going when I begin! It is only through this that I am able to keep things interesting for myself. I think there is a lot to be said for admitting that you don't have all the answers when you begin — it gives a good reason to explore and find out!

Can you discuss the way in which ideas of play, chance and experimentation are incorporated into your design process?

I try to change my approaches as much as possible. At the moment I am working with another artist/designer, and we are playing a lot with shape-generation (for pattern shapes) through projections of shadows/silhouettes. Play, chance and experimentation are incorporated into my design process in many different ways (probably too many to list here!) but lately I have enjoyed the fluidity and flexibility that comes with working collaboratively with others.

Is the tradition of tailoring a concern in your design practice?

I'm not sure that it is! Although I have been trained in patternmaking and cutting, my experience with tailoring (which is a very precise method in the production of a particular kind of garment) is very limited. I think to learn tailoring you would need to do an apprenticeship of some kind, or at least some dedicated study in the area.

My training in dressmaking has given me a very good grounding in clothing construction, and has allowed me to know when and where to 'bend the rules' and do things a little differently, but to still end up with a resolved design. That's what I love about fashion — it is not an area of 'free play' and requires a very particular kind of resolution to see an end where it works on a body!

Do you wear your own label? If not, can you make mention of favourite designers?

Yes, I wear my own clothes — both those made in new materials, and those made from recycled materials (the re-working of an existing garment bought from a second-hand store).

Opposite:

Paula DUNLOP

Jersey dress, kimono waistcoat and shrug

2006/07

organic cotton and re-worked vintage kimono

Photographer: Cameron Attree

Courtesy the artist

How You Make It

A Craft Victoria and NETS Victoria touring exhibition

© NETS Victoria, Kate Barber, artists
and photographers, 2008

Writer: Kate Barber
Design: Melissa Hart

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We are the peak body for visual arts touring in the state of Victoria. NETS Victoria provides opportunities for regional Victorians to access and engage with the best contemporary art, craft and design. We work closely with curators and galleries to develop ambitious and stimulating exhibitions that foster the exchange of ideas and promote new works by a diverse range of artists.

Destinations

Object Gallery (NSW)
21 June – 24 August 2008

Latrobe Regional Gallery (VIC)
27 September – 2 November 2008

Fremantle Arts Centre (WA)
3 December 2008 – 25 January 2009

Wangaratta Exhibitions Gallery (VIC)
28 February – 29 March 2009

Ararat Regional Art Gallery (VIC)
9 April – 17 May 2009

Mildura Arts Centre (VIC)
11 June – 15 July 2009

TOURING PARTNERS



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EXHIBITION PARTNERS



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www.netsvictoria.org/howyoumakeit

A comprehensive online resource featuring background information, tour itinerary, designer biographies, education resource, and media release.

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