

**raincoat**









**raincoat**

**a creative consideration  
of urban rainwear**

**Published in 2011**

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**Design by Janson Chau**

This exegesis is submitted to the Auckland University of Technology for the degree of the Master of Philosophy

Linda Jones  
Diploma in Dress and Fashion. Harrow School of Art. 1971



I dedicate this work to my daughter Amy Ison  
and to her father, Harry Ison, and to my students,  
past, present and future.

# contents

6	Table of Images
8	Attestation
9	Acknowledgements
11	Abstract

## PART ONE

14	INTRODUCTION
18	CHAPTER ONE
24	CHAPTER TWO
25	Introduction
26	Research Design
	Discussion of the Diagram
30	Research Question
30	Market Review
32	Ideation and Sketching
34	Design Drawing
36	Sourcing
37	Fabric Sourcing
38	Specialised Technical Sourcing
40	Design Development and Evaluation
50	Sampling
56	Evaluation of the Collection
58	Photo Shoot
62	Preparation for Showing
62	Showing
62	Preparation for Production
63	The Designers Journal
70	Conclusion
72	CHAPTER THREE
73	Introduction
73	Rainwear, Narrative and the Consumer Self
77	Narratives of Ruralism
78	Difficult Transitions
81	Current Trends: An Initial Review
81	Market Review
88	Current Trends: A Contemporary Review
93	Commentary
95	The Churchward
99	The Cape
103	The Trench
106	CONCLUSION
112	References

## APPENDIX ONE

117	United Kingdom Field Trip
119	Introduction
	Field trip aims
119	Precursors
123	Formal Archives
124	30th September 2008 V&A visit
126	14th October 2008 Bath Fashion Museum
128	20th October British Maritime Museum
129	Major Stores Stocking British Fashion Wear
130	Burberry
132	Aquascutum
133	Barbour
136	Dover Street Market
138	Muji
141	Mandarina Duck
143	Millets
144	Primark
146	Summary of the Store Report
148	References

## Table of Images

Figure. 2:1  
Kemmis, S. (1983). *Action Plan Model*. Retrieved October 7 2010, from <http://www.google.co.nz/images?hl=en&gbv=2&itbm=isch&sa=3&q=Kemmis+%281983%29.+Action+Research+Plan+Model&btnG=Search+images>

Figure. 2:2  
Jones, L. (2011). *Research Design Diagram*. Auckland: Private collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 2:3  
Jones, L. (2011). *Market Review Table*. Auckland: Private collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 2:4  
Jones, L. (2010). *Excerpt from Designer's Journal*. Auckland: Private collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 2:5  
Jones, L. (2011). *Example of 'Free-Fall' Thinking*. Auckland: Private collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 2:6  
Jones, L. (2010). *Refinement of Design*. Auckland: Private collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 2:7  
Jones, L. (2010). *Range Development Drawings*. Auckland; Private collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 2:8  
Jones, L. (2010). *Selected Design Line-Up*. Auckland: Private Collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 2:9  
Jones, L. (2010). *Working Drawing*. Auckland: Private collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 2:10  
Jones, L. (2010). *Working Drawing of 'The Cape'*. Auckland; Private Collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 2:11  
Jones, L. (2010). *Raglan Sleeve Block*. Auckland: Private collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 2:12  
Jones, L. (2010). *Magyar Sleeve Block*. Auckland: private Collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 2:13  
Jones, L. (2010). *Laying Pattern to Width of Fabric*. Auckland: Private collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 2:14  
Jones, L. (2010). *'The Cape' Evaluation of Fit, Balance and Proportion*. Auckland: Private collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 2:15  
Jones, L. (2010). *Balance and Proportion of Magyar Sleeve*. Auckland: Private collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 2:16  
Jones, L. (2010). *Evaluation of Back Detail*. Auckland: Private collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 2:17  
Jones, L. (2010). *Raglan Sleeve Raincoat with Detachable Hood*. Auckland: Private collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 2:18  
Jones, L. (2010). *My Version of 'The Trench'*. Auckland: Private collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 2:19  
Jones, L. (2010). *Buttons and Buckles Dyed to Colour Match Fabric*. Auckland: Private collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 2:20  
Jones, L. (2010). *Finished Samples Undergoing Final Scrutiny*. Auckland: Private Collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 2:21  
Jones, L. (2010). *Background Scenes at Photoshoot*. Auckland: private collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 2:22  
Russ Platt (2010). *Autumn/Winter 2011 Collection*. In Look Book. Muijs, S. (2010).

Figure. 2:23  
Jones, L. (2010). *Examples from Buyers Book*. Auckland: Private collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 2:24  
Jones, L. (2010). *Extracts from Designer's Journal*. Auckland: Private collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 2:25  
Jones, L. (2010). *Extracts from Designer's Journal*. Auckland: Private collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 2:26  
Jones, L. (2010). *Extracts from Designer's Journal*. Auckland: Private collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 3:27  
Rand, K. (2011). *Dries Van Noten Raincoat*. Auckland: Private collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 3:28  
Rand, K. (2011). *Elimination of Seams*. Auckland: Private collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 3:29  
Rand, K. (2011). *Concealed Pocket and Closure*. Auckland: Private collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 3:30  
Rand, K. (2011). *Pack-Away Hood*. Auckland: Private collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 3:31  
Chan, M. (2007). *Jaeha-Alex Kim Raincoat*. In Young Asian Fashion Designers. (2008). London: Daab.

Figure. 3:32  
Jones, L. (2011). *Pearl Fashion Store, Auckland*. Auckland: Private collection of Linda Jones.

Figure. 3:33  
Flatt, R. (2010) *'The Churchward'- A/W 2011 Collection*. In Look Book. Muijs, S. (2010).

Figure. 3:34  
Flatt, R. (2010). *'The Cape' - A/W Collection*. In Look Book. Muijs, S. (2010).

Figure. 3:35  
Flatt, R. (2010). *'The Trench'- A/W Collection*. In Look Book. Muijs, S. (2010).



#### ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

'I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements'.

Linda Jones

May 2011

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## ABSTRACT

The term 'raincoat' suggests an expectation of purpose and functionality. This practice-led research project examines how well these expectations are met within the context of urban fashion. Although New Zealand is the focus of the enquiry, the inclusion of an international perspective offers a broader context for considering how such garments have become narratives of identity.

The primary site of this research constitutes a collection of rainwear that seeks to address, through practice, concerns the designer has with 'design integrity' (or functionality). This functionality may be understood as both physical and social. In the production of the collection, a review of current fashion market trends was undertaken so the work could be developed and positioned as a commercial collaboration. This approach ensured that the design outcome was appropriately located within the market it was seeking to address.

**PART  
ONE**





## introduction

The term raincoat conjures a mental picture for the reader of a garment worn in the rain. The image may differ in style for each individual but it will probably carry with it memories and emotions traceable back to childhood.

New Zealand has an international reputation for excellence in the design and production of active sportswear with companies such as Swarzi, Macpac, Kathmandu, and Icebreaker creating leading edge ranges. These ranges carry the hallmarks of design integrity.<sup>1</sup>

However, when seeking out a high level of design integrity in the field of fashionable rainwear, one is presented with an anomaly. In general, in New Zealand, the consumer has available an assortment of garments that look like raincoats, but their function has often been marginalised in the pursuit of a place in the fashion market.

Accordingly, this practice-based research project seeks through the generation of a number of prototypes, to open a reconsideration of rainwear. The exhibited garments demonstrate ways in which design integrity might commercially interface with notions of fashionability.

In the project, the primary site of research is a collection of rainwear that constitutes 80% of thesis. The 'realisation' of these garments encompasses processes of design, development, production and sale.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In this thesis I use the term 'design integrity', to refer to the idea that the function of a garment lies at the heart of the brief and is positioned foremost during the process of design development. Accordingly, the function of the design is to meet a specific 'end use' and the styling will be cognisant of the environment in which the product is to be worn.

<sup>2</sup> This process is discussed in detail in the methodology chapter of this exegesis.

As a contextualising document, this exegesis serves to explain and articulate certain thinking integral to the development of the work. It is divided into three chapters.

The first offers a background narrative that positions the researcher and outlines how this research was significant for me, as a designer, fashion educator and consumer.

The second chapter considers the research design developed for the study. Using Action Research as a generic model, I discuss specific methods and 'oscillating' processes employed in the explication of the project.

The third chapter examines the current situation concerning rainwear design (within a fashion context). Integral to this chapter is a discussion of literature, critical ideas, and design, informing and supporting the inquiry. In this chapter, a reflection on urban and rural rainwear considers a chronology of rainwear designs in New Zealand. Design approaches to active sportswear and fashionable clothing are also discussed and an overview of the development of technical textiles for protective wear is outlined. This is done with reference to specific designers who have worked in rainwear design for urban contexts.

In concluding, the chapter contextualises this discussion with a consideration of current rainwear design in the United Kingdom. In this regard, it reflects upon a field trip report from the United Kingdom.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The report on a field trip to London examining contemporary developments in rainwear design is appended to the thesis as appendix one.



# chapter one

## Positioning statement — background narrative

I studied fashion design in London for four years. My specialisation was tailoring. Post graduation, in my career as a designer, I worked in a variety of fashion genres from high-end fashion to mass-market design. Throughout all of this, outerwear has remained my first love. My approach to design has also interfaced with my love of illustration and in this regard, drawing has always been my primary method of processing ideas. In conjunction with this, I have also been actively involved in fashion education.<sup>4</sup>

In 1999, I left London to come and live in Auckland, New Zealand (NZ). Here I joined the staff at AUT University. My position as a lecturer in design and illustration continues to date. Whilst I had many years of experience in the European fashion industry, I had little understanding of the New Zealand fashion industry or its fashion market. Although I could discern certain identifiable similarities, I had to work to acquaint myself with different methods and terminology. I encountered the fact that one is not always in a comfortable position, coming from elsewhere and secure with one's history when trying to fit into new and unknown territory.

I had very little concept of New Zealand before arriving. My notions of the country had largely been constructed from the usual uninformed generalisations made by people who had never been here. Accordingly, when I arrived, I had a

<sup>4</sup> University of Westminster (Harrow). University of Wales (Newport). Barnfield College (Bedford).



mental picture of endless pastures filled with sheep, a few houses dotted about, and a population that, if not farming, would be in boats or jumping off very high bridges into water.<sup>5</sup> I was therefore surprised when driving from Auckland airport to encounter streets of houses and urban environments with which I could identify.

Another aspect of my ignorance was the climate. I was informed that it was similar to the United Kingdom (UK) but better. I rapidly discovered the naivety of this description. New Zealand, like the United Kingdom, is a series of islands that from north to south experience variable regional climatic conditions. The weather I encountered living in Auckland was quite different to conditions I encountered in Dunedin. In the same way, the climate in London differs considerably from that experienced in Glasgow, Scotland.

When I arrived, I was unprepared for an Auckland climate that was far more inclement than I had imagined. I was also frustrated that I could not find a fashionable raincoat to suit the needs of this new environment. The raincoat I brought with me from the UK was too heavy. I found that I had two choices; I could buy a garment that looked like a fashionable raincoat but would not keep me dry, or I could buy a raincoat designed as active sportswear that would keep me dry but would alienate me in a fashionable urban environment. As much as I wanted to fit in with my new location, I found that I did not feel comfortable adopting a

wardrobe that identified with a rural history or outdoor pursuits that were not my own. As one of a plethora of New Zealand immigrants whose sensibilities were constructed in other cultures, narratives of rugged ruralism had little meaning for me.<sup>6</sup>

It was difficult for me to pick up the dress codes for New Zealand. My initial impression suggested casual attire with many references to outdoor pursuits. This was particularly evident in outerwear design, such as jackets and coats. However, this impression was often challenged when noting what often looked to me like eveningwear being worn as daywear. I found these differences intriguing but I experienced at times, a strong sense of not belonging.

The United Kingdom has an established dress code that tends to delineate and define what is 'appropriate' dress for formal occasions, casual rural activities etc. This code offers a certain level of security. However, if one transgresses it in a particular situation, one can quickly feel a sense of judgment and alienation. It may be argued that knowing or recognising appropriate codes allows the individual the security of belonging; be it to a small community or to a nation. In this regard, we may frame dressing as a form of communication. Barthes (2006) says, "Fashion is a language; through the system of signs it sets up, no matter how fragile this may seem, our society exhibits, communicates its being" (p. 61).

<sup>5</sup> This level of misconception is consistent with reports from Tourism New Zealand where the country is described as, 'a haven for those seeking peace, rejuvenation and relaxation as well as a playground for thrill seekers and adventurers. A temperate climate with relatively small seasonal variation makes it an ideal year-round holiday destination.' New Zealand is marketed, with an emphasis toward the outdoor, clean and green image; aspects of urban New Zealand are minimal' (para. 2).

<sup>6</sup> Upon reflection, I can see that I was struggling with issues of identification where the urban context I chose to live in felt familiar, but the narratives feeding much of its design were foreign and dislocated from my experience. This brought to the surface an innate knowing that what we wear is a significant communicator of who we are (or how we wish to be perceived). My interest in clothing as a means of communication of identity, location and even status, became integral to the process of my cultural assimilation.

Calefato (2004) suggests, "Sign systems, in which costume and fashion are included, manifest their functional mechanisms as sources of meaning and value. It is in this sense," she says, "that sign systems may be called communication systems" (p.10). If one accepts that 'meaning and value' are inherent in dress codes, it is easy to see how transgressions may be seen as disruptive. As a new immigrant, one communicates with a new social and physical environment. One may choose to read codes and adopt them as a form of assimilation. By this, I mean one may seek acceptance into the new society by demonstrating a cognisance of, and respect for, codes that have been established as signifiers of belonging. Thus, one's interest in clothing as a signifier of identity, location and even status, become integral to the process of cultural assimilation. However, in doing this one often does not wish to cast off certain values that have been developed as important in one's life, prior to arrival. It is inside this tension of assimilation, and the valuing of past cultural learning that a tension exists.

Campbell (2008) in discussing the rites of passage immigrants make suggests, that the purpose and actual effect of these transitions is "to conduct people across those difficult thresholds of transformation that demand a change in the patterns not only of conscious but also of unconscious life." He believes that in this time of transition (that he calls the liminal state) one undergoes a sense of severance

and ambiguity. Aguilar (1999) suggests however that this journey through cultural borders, eventually enables levels of "achievement eventuating in a new sense of self' (p.1).

However, this 'new self' is a negotiated state. In the process of finding and presenting an assimilable but 'honest' identity to the new society, one must balance and re-balance existing and new values. It was in this state that I asked, as a consumer, "Why do New Zealand fashion designers not design rainwear that keeps you dry?"<sup>7</sup> As an urban dweller who was accustomed to having access to a range of fashionable rainwear, that also served to keep one warm and dry, I encountered a society that appeared to divide rainwear into two quite separate categories. The first, offering an acceptable fashionability and style for urban garments, resembled a raincoat but did not keep one dry during the comparatively heavy Auckland downpours. The second provided highly functional rainwear for rural and sporting lifestyles but, in doing this, the designers drew on distinctive narratives of national ruralism rather than urbanity.

It was as a consequence of this dichotomy that the research question central to this thesis surfaced. I asked, "How might a fashion designer create a collection of rainwear for the New Zealand urban market that reflects upon urbanity but concurrently functions to address meteorological issues of heavy rainfall and temperate climates?"

Having now positioned the inquiry, the next chapter will discuss the research methodology and structure designed to facilitate a practice-led investigation into the issue.

<sup>7</sup> Traditionally a raincoat has a clearly defined function. The Collins English Dictionary defines a raincoat as a coat "made of waterproof material," and these coats are "waterproof and water-resistant garments designed to be worn in the rain." (pp.1281-1282). Within this definition, a clear understanding is established that a raincoat is designed, that a particular fabrication is required, and that the garment has a specific function.



## chapter two

### methodology and method

## INTRODUCTION

### INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, in a thesis, one outlines the methodology adopted in the explication of a project. Expanding this discussion, one also explains how certain methods within this approach were applied. Traditionally, the outlining of a methodology allows a reader to assess the validity of the research inquiry through a consideration of the appropriateness of its research design.<sup>8</sup>

However, established methodologies designed for non-art and design disciplines do not always accommodate the process of reflexive practice where neither the outcomes of an inquiry nor its process are easily predicted. Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) argue, “methods must not prescribe problems; rather problems must prescribe methods” (p. 14). Wood (2004), discussing the nature of design research, suggests that generally design projects are not seeking to prove an irrefutable truth (through the application of rhetoric or dialectical modes of argumentation). Instead, he suggests the design researcher should be oriented to making “practical, appropriate, and elegant interventions within actual situations” (p. 45). In this regard, methods are often devices that remain in comparatively protean states. However, they can normally be perceived as operating inside a distinct research design that contains certain generic principles.

<sup>8</sup> In a research project, methodology enables a consideration of how one engages in research and provides a means of placing what has been done into a full research context. In doing this, it also enables an explanation of choices, reasons and results.

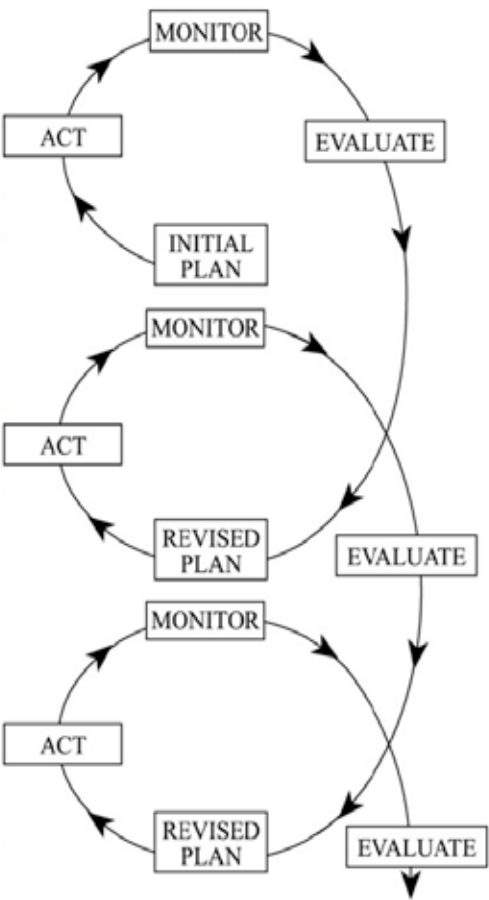


RESEARCH DESIGN

This research project does not adopt a single, predefined research methodology. Instead, it may be understood as having a research design tailored to be responsive to the nature of a creative inquiry. Accordingly, the research design is constructed so that it is useful in negotiating productive oscillations between reflexive practice (internal processes) and feedback and data (external sources).

As an overarching methodology, the research design may be likened to Action Research. Swann (2002) says:

Action research arises from a problem, dilemma or ambiguity in the situation in which practitioners find themselves. It is a practical research methodology that usually is described as requiring three conditions to be met. First, its subject matter normally is situated in social practice that needs to be changed; second, it is a participatory activity where the researchers work in equitable collaboration; and third, the project proceeds through a spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting in a systematic and documented way (p.55).



Source: Kemmis (1983)

FIGURE 1

The action plan model shown here is often adopted by designers and shows the cyclical nature of the design practitioner's approach to research. This process is similar to an empirical approach, the difference being that it is not linear and allows the researcher to work with intuition. This model proposes a process that identifies a problem, plans strategies of how the problem might be solved, researches relevant information in the field, evaluates the findings, analyses ways to proceed, then returns to re-evaluate the problem. Depending on which stage of the process the cycle addresses, there may be added titles for consideration, such as, experimentation or observation. Within the cyclical nature of this approach, there is the opportunity to include experiential knowledge and intuition.

My project may be seen as being “situated in social practice” because I am addressing issues of belonging and identity as well as design. It is participatory because I engage with others in a process of review and reformulation. However, structurally my approach to design is not cyclic. Although Swann claims “that action research and the action of designing are so close that it would require only a few words to be substituted for the theoretical frameworks of action research to make it applicable to design” (ibid. p.56), in truth it has been helpful for me to use some of the methodology’s tenets<sup>9</sup> but then re-shape its normally cyclic structure into a linear approach that oscillates between creative processes and data gathering and evaluation. In this regard, I move the inquiry through a process of internal reflection and systematic data gathering from external sources. This is illustrated in the diagram that follows (Figure 2).

<sup>9</sup> Action research normally describes a reflective process of progressive problem solving led by individuals working with others. Action research is activated by action, reflection and response. Dick (2009) suggests it is cyclic (similar steps tend to recur in a similar sequence); participative (participants are involved as active partners); qualitative; and reflective (it involves critical reflection upon process and outcomes and these are important parts of each cycle).

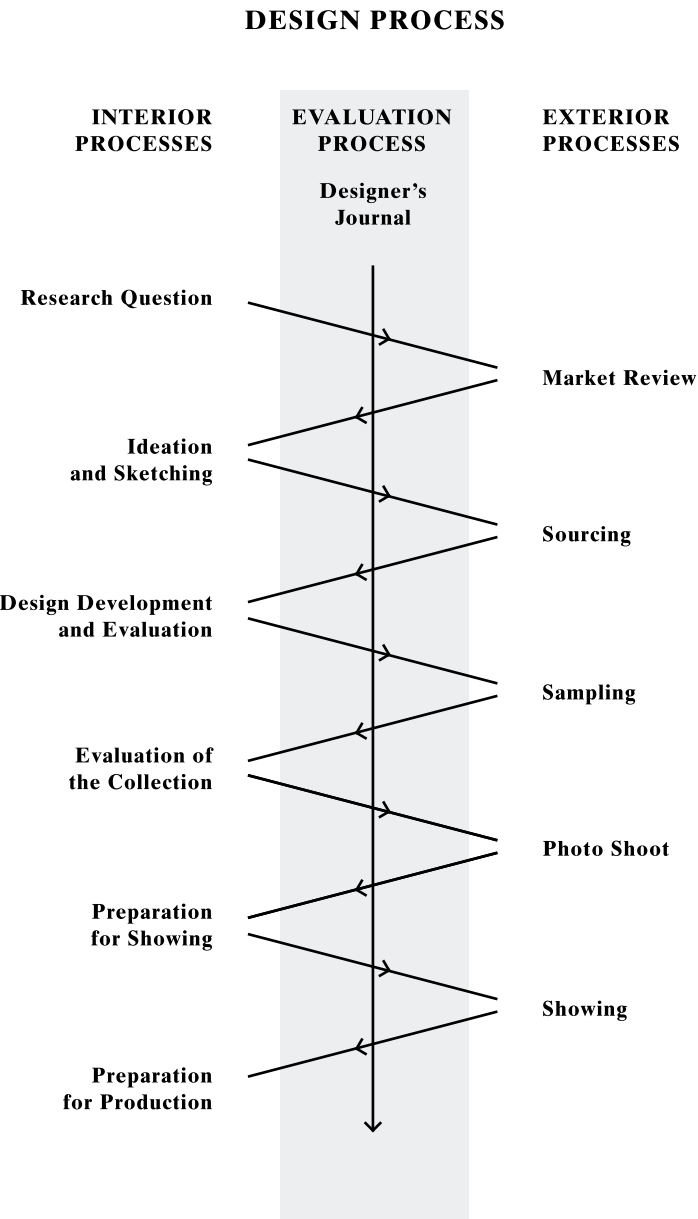


FIGURE 2

Interior and exterior design process. The research design flows through a linear process that oscillates between the designer’s interior engagement with the problem and externalised processes. In general, exterior processes enable the internal processes to move on to advanced stages in the design process. It is significant to note that critical reflection and evaluation surround this whole process and, as in Action Research, the dynamic between inquiry and evaluation drives each phase forward. [This is discussed in more depth under the subheading evaluation].

DISCUSSION OF THE DESIGN PROCESS

RESEARCH QUESTION

Nelson (2002) describes design as “the ability to imagine, that which does not yet exist, to make it concrete or concretized form as a new, purposeful addition to the real world” (p. 263). In attempting to address a real world problem, I began this research with a question. This question arose as a consequence of having experienced a sense of dislocation in a new cultural context. I asked myself, “Why do New Zealand designers not produce urban rainwear that keeps you dry?”<sup>10</sup> In asking this initial question, I was positioning myself as a consumer. As the research was practice-led however, this question developed slightly so that it became active rather than analytical.<sup>11</sup> In this regard, it changed to “How might a designer create a collection of rainwear for the New Zealand urban market that reflects upon urbaninity but concurrently functions to address meteorological issues of heavy rainfall and temperate climates?”

MARKET REVIEW

Having posed the question, I sought to understand the context in which any solution to it might be positioned. In this regard, I conducted a market review.<sup>12</sup> In doing this, I conducted an evaluation of fashionable rainwear in the New

10 This question refers to New Zealand fashion designers as opposed to designers working in areas of Active Sportswear or Outdoor Pursuits.

11 By this I mean I sought to address the question as a designer who created solutions, rather than develop a thesis by analysing and critiquing existing data.

12 A market review (sometimes called a market analysis) is research aimed at defining a company’s (designer’s) current or potential markets. The review studies existing products and opportunities and, as such, is instrumental in deciding how to position and expand new contributions.

DESIGN LABELS (NZ AND EUROPEAN)	HIGH TO MIDDLE MARKET (FASHION)	LOW-END MARKET (FASHION)
Scotties	Superette	Max
Zambesi	Country Road	Glassons
Karen Walker	The Department Store	Supré
Kate Sylvester	Smith and Caughey	Dotties
Workshop	Cue	The Warehouse
World		Ezibuy

FIGURE 3

Zealand market. To facilitate this I constructed a plan that identified specific retail groupings, as shown in Figure 3. These groups (all representing retail fashionable womenswear) could be demarcated according to pricepoint.<sup>13</sup> It is through this demarcation that demographic targets are established.

Constructing this review involved considerable legwork. Each store was visited with the primary intent of ascertaining if the retailer stocked rainwear and if so, if it could be categorised as effective for protection in wet weather. The stores chosen for the review covered a wide spectrum of fashion retail. After each store visit, notes and observations were documented in my journal, (see Figure 4). Evaluations of the findings of this review are discussed in the final chapter.

FIGURE 3

A review of womenswear fashion retail stores selling rainwear in the New Zealand market.

13 The price point is the retail price of a product. Normally price points are viewed in the context of possible competitive prices.

14 In my experience, as a fashion designer, this type of review must be regularly updated so one remains current with what competitors in the field are doing. Such a review allows for recognition of potential gaps in the market that one may choose to explore and develop.

## IDEATION AND SKETCHING

While the idea of design generally conjures up notions of originality and 'new' products, often design is a process of building on existing 'information' and refining this so that products more effectively meet needs, opportunities and markets. Accordingly, in this project it was not my aim to create a completely new form of rainwear; rather I sought to address a problem relating to functionality (both physical and 'cultural').

Although one often assumes that design ideation begins with sketching, with my work this process normally has a prerequisite. Conceptualisation generally occurs as a form of mental visualisation. In this regard, silhouettes, forms and the potential 'feel' of a garment begin to take form in my 'mind's eye'. As this visualisation gains substance I enter into an interior, dialogic process through forms of drawing.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Traditionally, there are four drawing disciplines used within the fashion industry; these are design drawing, working drawing, presentation drawing, and fashion illustration. Terminology related to these processes differs within companies. For example, a working drawing in New Zealand is commonly called a 'spec'. This word derives from the specification sheet that is formulated before any sample range is put into production. The spec sheet operates as a communicator between the design studio and factory. It generally contains visual information as well as text and measurements. Conversely, presentation drawings normally describe design drawings that are reworked and rendered. (These offer a more detailed visualisation for buyers, and are used when one is discussing new collections). Fashion illustration, however, is rarely executed by the designer. (This is not to say that designers do not have the drawing skills; it is simply a question of the judicious use of time). Garments illustrated to the level required for this type of presentation are normally completed once the garments are finished and sit within a collection/range. By this time the designer is normally working on the next season's collection/range. An independent fashion illustrator is normally employed to create these illustrations. The images are generally a consequence of a dialogue between the designer and illustrator and aim to capture the essence of the design story.

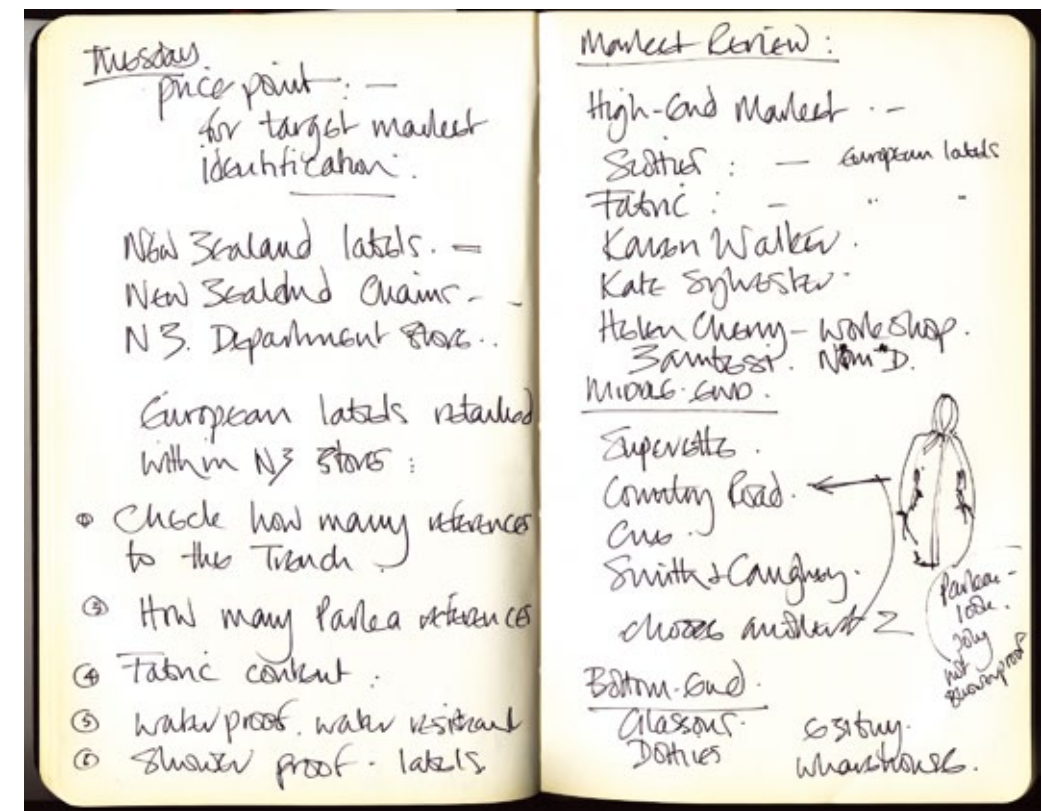


FIGURE 4

A review of women's wear fashion retail stores selling rainwear in the New Zealand market.

### Design drawing

The first designs that appear on paper are often cursory. They contain suggestions of shape and detail. I call this period 'free-fall' time. It is a time when one is 'thinking through drawing' without limiting potentials with high levels of judgment. Gully (2010) describes this form of sketching as putting "your mind on paper". She says this "spontaneous and rapid production of ideas means no editing in the head; getting it on paper; then going back to it later for scrutiny" (p.2).

After 'free fall' thinking I can begin to walk away from the sketches. Because a process of mental dialogue has begun, I can continue to refine my thinking because I can work with the memory of what has appeared on the paper. During this process, areas of weakness in the designs become obvious and I am able to return to the drawings to renegotiate aspects of the design and reassert authority over the idea.<sup>16</sup> This form of renegotiation becomes the actual process of designing. It is at this point that the drawing and my thinking are in functioning dialogue with each other.<sup>17</sup>

Once this process of thinking through drawing has resulted in 'concrete' visualisations, I normally step out of the interior space and seek expert (exterior) advice. This is done so that technical elements and sourcing integral to the design can be considered. This is necessary because, while I have experience in designing outerwear, I have little experience in the specialised area of rainwear. It is at this point that the research journey moves back out into the exterior frame and a collaborative aspect of the design process begins.

<sup>16</sup> The relationship between my drawing and myself is not always comfortable. There can often be confusion as to who is in control (hence the need to sometimes walk away and reflect on who is leading who). Gaining authority is another way of saying that while designing, sometimes my drawings need to 'listen' to thinking that occurs beyond the sketching process.

<sup>17</sup> Fabrication and specialised construction are factored into thinking at this stage.

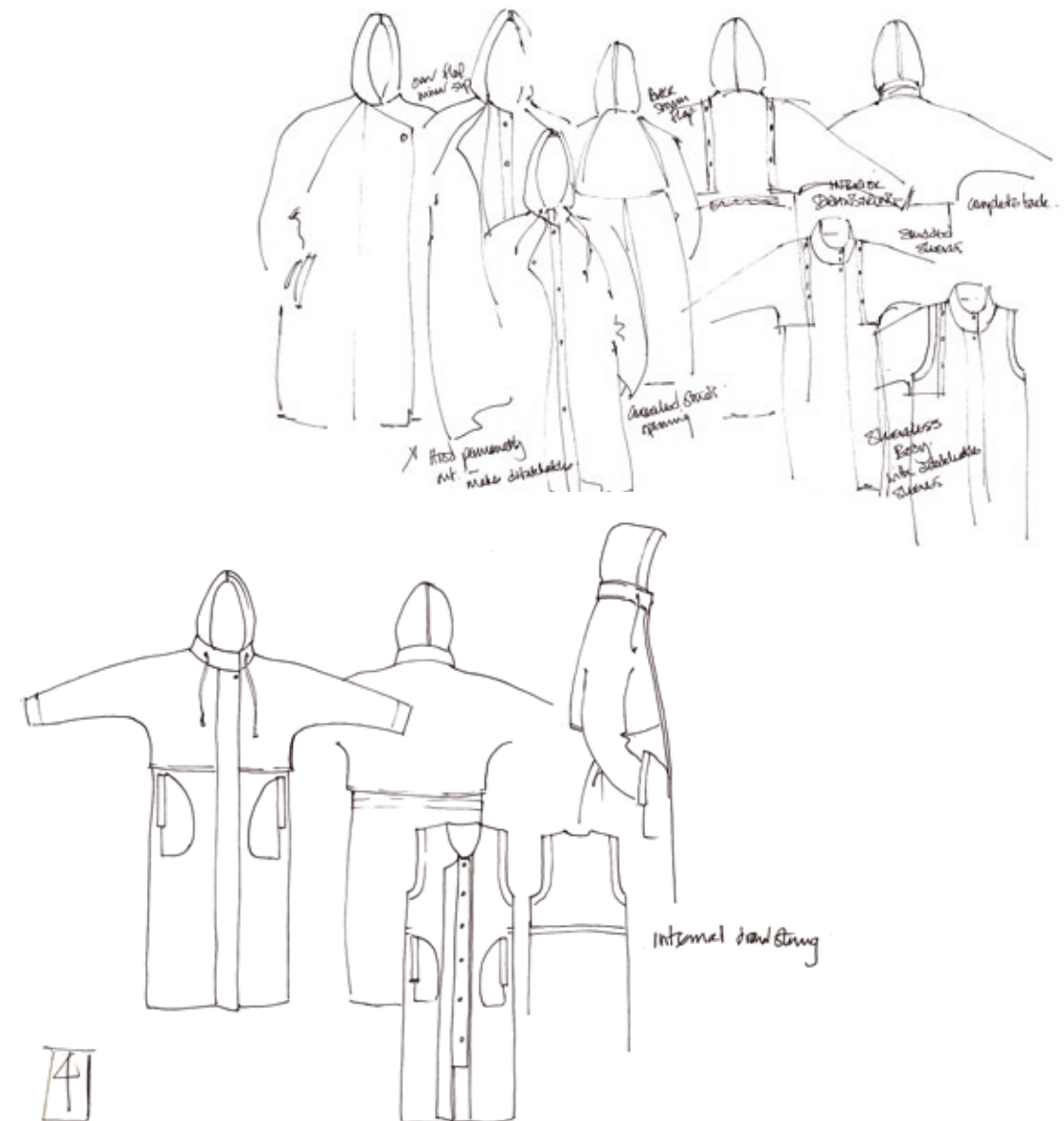


FIGURE 5 (upper)

This image shows an example of the 'free-fall' thinking as it is manifested through drawing. It is only during this period that I, as a designer, act in total isolation. Despite this, Temple (1994) argues that this form of sketching has the potential to operate as a facilitator and recorder of creative thinking and thereby provide opportunities for improved evaluation and renegotiation of problems. Supporting this observation, Rogers (2000) suggests that the sketch "possesses the potential to act as both a facilitator and recorder of creative acts, presenting opportunities for improved evaluation and the restating of problems" (p. 452).

FIGURE 6 (lower)

The development and refinement of the design occurs on the paper until I am satisfied that I have explored all aspects of the detail, aesthetic, balance, and functionality of the proposal. Often during this process, the body is barely referenced and only the outline of the garment is used.<sup>18</sup> This is a form of shorthand sketching that allows a concept of the body to be suggested but it does not let it interfere with the visualising of details, such as pockets or collars.

<sup>18</sup> Using this type of drawing requires an existing understanding of body proportion. The body is visualised while the drawing of the garment is developing. It is for this reason, that life drawing is so fundamental to a design process where one is clothing the body.



## SOURCING

Sourcing is the fashion designer's term for technical research, where outside elements needed to create the finished product (such as the fabrication, technical advice and trimmings)<sup>19</sup> are sourced and sampled before the design process continues. Traditionally, sourcing occurs before designing begins. This is because the information gathered is a fundamental factor informing early thinking in the process. The designer must have an understanding of the fabrics that are appropriate to the genre of the design. She, or he, must also know which fabrics and trimmings are currently available. However, for this project, I began by putting my design concepts on paper at an earlier stage because I wanted to think carefully about the kind of consumer my designs were targeting.<sup>20</sup> If I was working for a company or I had an existing label, my target market would already be defined; as it was, I was working on a solo project without an established context.<sup>21</sup>

The project gained commercial parameters for me through a chance conversation with Sherie Muijs,<sup>22</sup> who set up a design label under her own name, after leaving AUT University in 2006. Sherie was curious about my project because she was interested in the designers' responsibility toward design integrity. Following an in-depth discussion of the brief on which I was working, she said she would be interested in including my designs for her winter/11 collection. I could not have foreseen that this commercial collaboration would occur just as I was beginning the process of sourcing but, in retrospect, it was opportune timing.

19 Trimmings refer generically to buttons, zips, buckles and details used on the garment. These need to be bought from wholesale trimmings companies.

20 Targeting refers to the designer's target market.

21 I confess that this made the project feel somewhat insubstantial to me, because I am used to working within defined commercial parameters.

22 Sherie Muijs gained her Bachelor of Design (Fashion), in 2006. During this final year of her study she won the Deutz Fashion Design Ambassador award with her 'White Wash' collection. This collection was also selected to show at AUT's 2006 'Rookie Show', where it was bought by the Australian fashion company Belinda's. In 2007, she launched her own label. Her collections are sold throughout New Zealand.

## Fabric Sourcing

This aspect of the sourcing phase involved visiting fabric wholesalers to view the textile range they had in stock. Textile Houses carry their own particular ranges of cloth and, generally, designers can view the coming season's range just before they are ready to begin designing.<sup>23</sup> For the type of textile required for this project, I was not limited by the season, only by what was available.<sup>24</sup> Companies such as Charles Parsons, Chris Barlow Textiles and Wall Fabrics, that deal in the type of fabrics I was searching for, are all located in Auckland. After a lengthy trawl through what would be suitable and available (and considerations of colour and price), I chose two sample lengths<sup>25</sup> that I felt confident would work well. Although these first choices were relatively conservative, I also selected a wider selection of fabrics in swatch form<sup>26</sup>, to retain for later consideration.

Throughout this process, I gained valuable information from the textile representatives who were able to answer questions and offer advice. Fabric suppliers indicated which fabrics required seam-sealing<sup>27</sup> and identified appropriate products and methods for this procedure. This ongoing dialogue with experts constituted a form of information collaboration between the designer and specialist.

23 It is important to remember that both textile houses and the designer are working a year in advance.

24 Water resistant and waterproof fabrics sit in the category of specialised textiles and the ranges do not change seasonally as do fashion textiles.

25 A sample length is bought by the designer for the development of a first garment. This first garment is, rather confusingly called a sample. A sample length is cut from the main roll, which the designer can put on 'hold'. This means that the fabric is not available to any other designer for an agreed period of time. Many of the textile houses require minimum cuts of 30 metres, sometimes more. This can be financially limiting for the independent or emerging designer.

26 Swatches are small cuts of fabric, with details of width, fabric content, fabric care and price attached. These form a reference library for the designer to reflect upon while a design is in development. Swatches provide information without the expense of buying sample lengths.

27 To ensure a garment is waterproof, seams are seam-sealed so that water cannot penetrate where the seam is stitched.

### Specialised Technical Sourcing

The only two companies in Auckland that have the equipment and expertise required for the manufacture of waterproof garments are Safety Source NZ and Able Clothing Manufactory Limited.

Safety Source NZ specialises in protective workwear for the police, construction workers, firemen, farmers, and other workers who require high visibility, waterproof, protective clothing. I initially approached this company for advice about manufacturing seam-sealed garments.

I explained my project to James Russell, Operations Manager at Safety Source who introduced me to Robbie Fenton, their Production Manager. Robbie had worked with the development of technical processes for protective wear for thirty years and, through a number of conversations with her I learned a great deal that informed both my designing and pattern cutting. Both James and Robbie were very generous with their knowledge and agreed to work with me to produce the sample range. However this, due to timing, became impossible. At the time I was ready to sample test, Safety Source NZ had two very large orders for production

from existing clients. This meant that they had no available staff free to work on the development of my comparatively small range. This turn of events happened during the final sampling stage of my process. Up until then I had been developing designs, assuming that Safety Source NZ would produce the garments. They had already tested all of my fabrics and checked my first pattern drafts.

Through industry networking, I located Able Clothing Manufactory Ltd, which is by comparison, a much smaller company. Its manufacturing is divided into CMT fashion and CMT protective wear.<sup>28</sup> However, they had not had occasion to combine the two areas before. It was pointed out to me that it would be an expensive undertaking because of the small numbers I was producing.<sup>29</sup> However, an agreement was reached that they would produce some of the garments in full, and they agreed to seam-seal the remainder after construction.

<sup>28</sup> The acronym CMT means Cut, Make and Trim. The term refers to companies that provide cutting, manufacturing and finishing services.

<sup>29</sup> The price can only be reduced if the number of garments produced increases. (Once again, I became very aware of the problems emerging designers face, when they are trying to establish a label).

## DESIGN DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION

Having located materials and secured manufacturing systems, I returned to the design process. During the design development stage, reflection on sourcing and initial concepts operated in tandem with a process of more detailed drawing. Gully (2010) suggests:

Drawing helps the designer find unintended consequences. The information that emerges during the design process cannot be predicted prior to undertaking the design activity or task. Ideas emerge as to pathways that may be taken and this exploration gives glimpses of what might lie ahead. The designer will latch onto and try different configurations and multiple versions of this emerging something in order to take it to a higher level of resolution (p. 2).

Multiple versions of more refined ideas enabled me to finetune the designs.

In this stage of the design process, central concerns with ideation were replaced by those related to consistency, integrity, and internal coherence. Small changes were made as the dialogue between the drawer and the drawing centred on more detailed and technical/aesthetic concerns. Once a series of potential designs were produced, I selected a small number to progress on to a second phase of development.

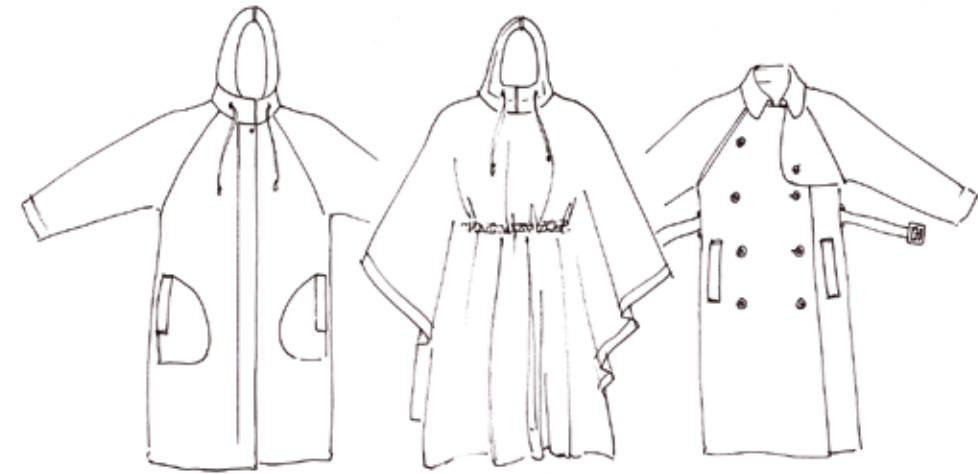
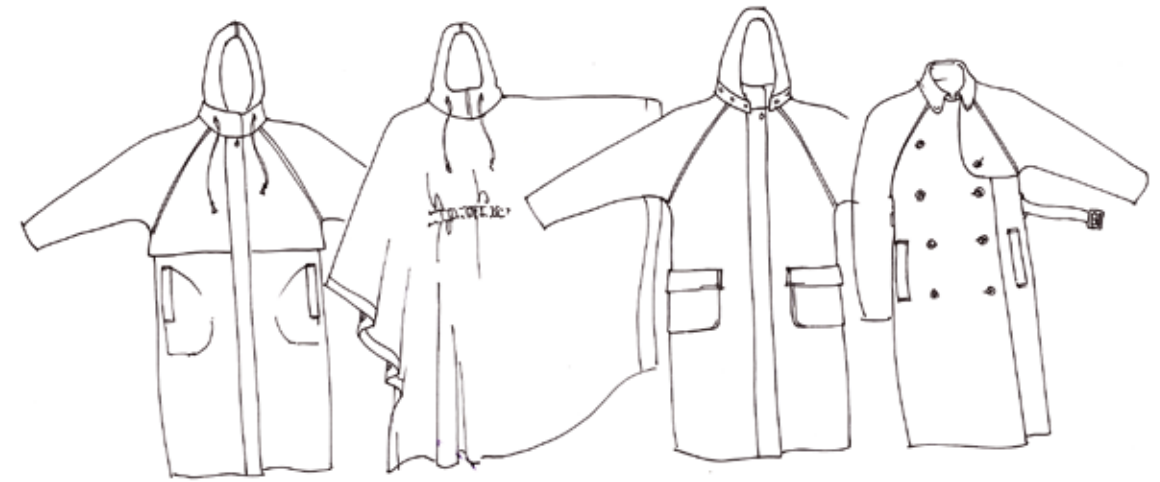


FIGURE 7 (upper)  
Range development drawings.

FIGURE 8 (lower)  
The line-up of designs I selected to take through to the next phase of development.

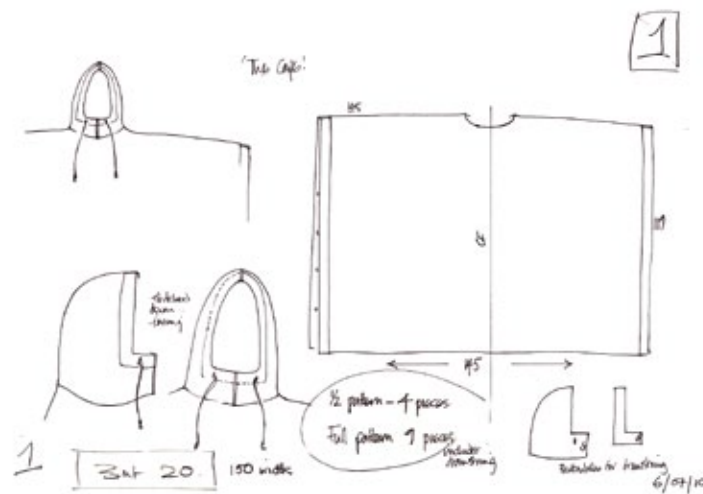
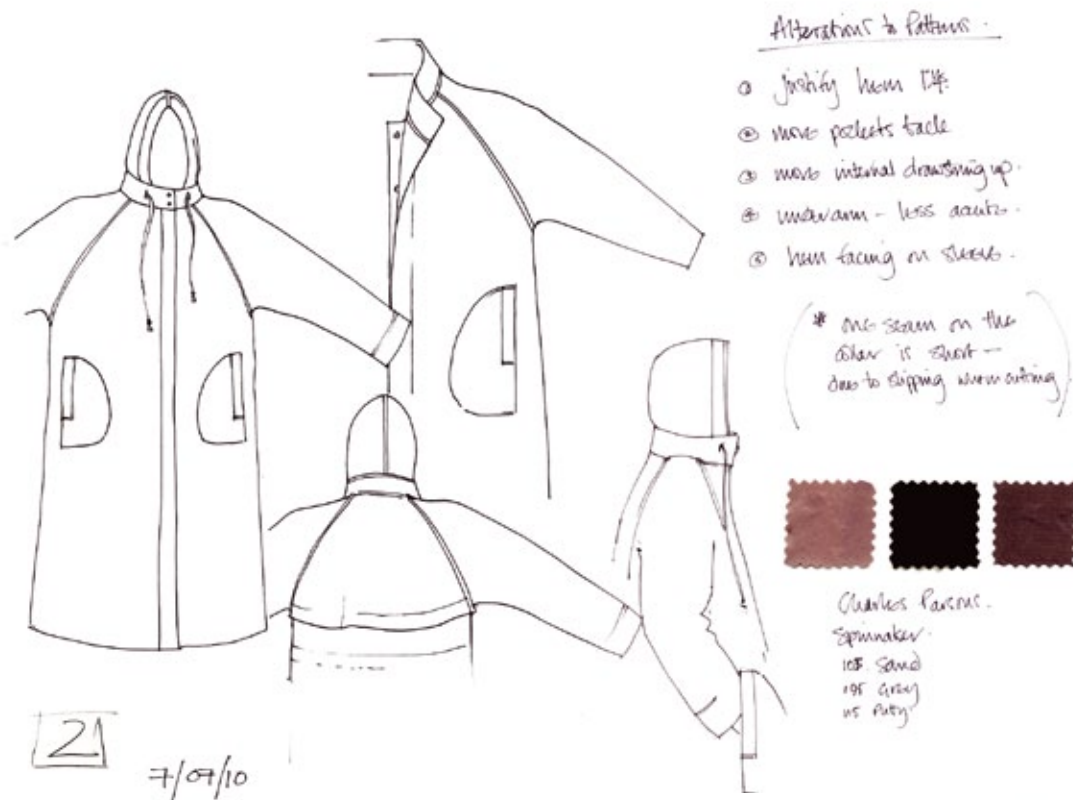


FIGURE 9 (upper)

Throughout the development of this garment, all alterations to patterns and notes for construction were added to the working drawing sheet, until the finished sample was made. By using this process, I was able to document every stage of development before the design emerged in a cape form.

FIGURE 10 (lower)

Measurements of straight lines create the main body for this cape. This is a very precise method of cutting and predates the kinds of pattern we generally use today. The body of the cape design here always remains two-dimensional; it is the body inside that creates the three-dimensional shape. Garments such as the kimono are traditional examples of this method of cutting.

In this more advanced phase of development, the drawings and the designer are still in conversation. However, for me the approach now became more technical as details were finely tuned with consideration of the cutting and construction elements required for the next stage of the project. The outcome of this process was the production of a working drawing,<sup>30</sup> which became the garment's *design history*.<sup>31</sup> Each design carried its own working drawing with a style number for identification (see Figure 9).

Although the first phase of development occurred through a process of drawing, once a small number of designs had been selected and refined, I took them to the cutting table to begin developing the Block<sup>32</sup> shapes.

In the designs I selected I chose to work with variations on three style shapes: the Raglan sleeve, the Magyar sleeve and the Cape.

The cape demanded a different approach to the other two. It required a form of two-dimensional cutting where measurements forming a rectangle created the silhouette. Only the neckline and hood deviated from the method (see Figure 10).

30 The working drawing provides the technical information required to produce the actual garment. A drawing has no language barriers and is therefore a highly effective way of communicating a technical approach if one is handing the design over to a pattern cutter, or if one's sample machinist is in another country, or has English as a second language.

31 This refers to the documentation of pattern alterations and aesthetic adjustments that have been made during the development of the garment. This form of documentation becomes a valuable reference for the designer, if she/he is faced with similar problems within another design project. Knowledge and experience are effectively gained through this process.

32 A Block is the master pattern from which other patterns are developed.





FIGURE 11

The Raglan Sleeve Block, although appearing relatively flat, is illusional. The cutting method for this style allows for a certain amount of shaping.



FIGURE 12

Magyar Sleeve Block Toile. The Magyar sleeve is cut with the body of the garment; that is to say, there are no seams joining it to the body. Critical comparative decisions had to be made in relation to the cost of fabric as opposed to the cost of seam-sealing application, cutting and construction. The costing or yield of fabric would be comparatively high for this particular pattern.





FIGURE 13 (previous page)

Laying the pattern to the width of the fabric (as opposed to the length) allowed a more economic solution. The problem was solved when I was laying up the pattern onto the fabric. I realised that I did not have to follow rules of working with only the lengthwise grain (which, when designing with woven textiles, is considered the norm). However, because the waterproofing process had stabilised the fabrics I was working with, I was not restricted to cutting on the lengthwise grain. Instead, I could use the width of the fabric, thus achieving a more economic solution.

While I was evaluating the integrity of the shapes I had created, I was, on another level, resolving issues related to pattern cutting, costings and yields of fabric. An example of this (mentioned in the caption to Figure 13) was my concern with the fabric costing/yield<sup>33</sup> of patterns that were exceptionally wide.

The problem was solved when I was laying up the pattern onto the fabric. I realised that I did not have to follow rules of working with only the lengthwise grain (which, when designing with woven textiles, is considered the norm). However, because the fabrics I was working with had been stabilised by the waterproofing process; I was not restricted to cutting on the lengthwise grain. Instead, I could use the width of the fabric, thus achieving a more economic solution, as shown in Figure 13.

Figures 14, 15 and 16 show the garments fitted to the body. This 'fitting' stage of the design development is crucial and demands time to observe how the garment moves and fits to the body. One also assesses how successfully the design details operate.

<sup>33</sup> Costing or yield refers to the amount of fabric required to cut a particular garment. This costing is added to the construction costs and any additional processes that the garment requires for production. In this collection, it was necessary to factor in the cost of seam-sealing the overall price of each garment.

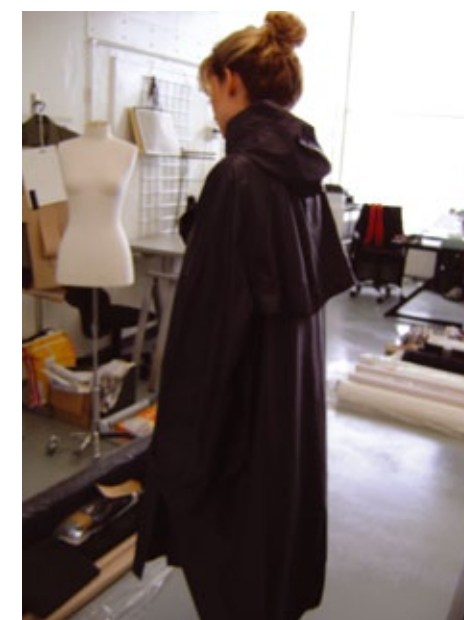


FIGURE 14 (upper)

The cape evaluated for fit, balance and proportion

FIGURE 15 (lower left)

Balance and proportion of magyar sleeve evaluation

FIGURE 16 (lower right)

Evaluation of back detail on magyar sleeve raincoat



The dialogic process I developed while drawing continued as a method of evaluation and move testing<sup>34</sup> through this phase of the work. In this regard, I refined my design by moving back and forth between my concept and the toile,<sup>35</sup> testing ideas and refining them in incremental steps. The toile therefore, was not a fixed manifestation of a pre-resolved problem. Its three-dimensionality allowed me to consider issues in a manner that drawing could not. Each new toile became the carrier of all accrued information and problem solving until it reached a stage where it was ready for its final cut (in the fabric chosen for the final garment). This cut became the first *sample*.

## SAMPLING

Although I had been sewing the developmental toiles as I refined details of the designs, I used a sample machinist from one of Sherie's manufacturers for the final samples. While sampling can be seen as the physical manifestation of a design, it can also lead to specific re-evaluations. In the case of this collection, issues arose for me when I finally viewed the samples in the fabrics I had initially selected.

Up until this point, I had been working with a dark colour palette, so my fabrics were mainly greys, navy and black. When I saw Sherie's sample collection, knowing that my raincoats would become an extension of it, I was confronted with

the fact that my comparatively sombre palette might easily get lost amongst her selection of equally dark garments. Accordingly, I re-thought my colour options and decided to introduce bright colours to balance out the collection. (Examples of these are shown in Figures 17, 18, and 19).

In addition, I noted that Sherie had made reference to the iconic trench coat in her collection. Considering this, I saw a way of not only complementing her work but also paying homage to a form that is a seminal aspect of rainwear design. Contributing to the style narrative of protective clothing as far back as the 1850s<sup>36</sup>, this belted, knee-length raincoat with its military style, straps and deep pockets held a certain historical reference to design integrity that I felt might be helpful in extending the ethos of my collection.

This said, in my designs certain traditions of this coat were renegotiated; I eliminated side seams and significantly reworked conventional proportions.

34 The term is taken from Donald Schön's writings in 1983 on reflective practice. Move testing experiments describe an action that is undertaken in a deliberate way to make a specific change. Such moves are considered in terms of the 'whole', and then either incorporated into the emerging design or rejected.

35 A toile is a version of a garment (often made in a cheaper fabric) to test the effectiveness of a pattern. In my project multiple toiles were constructed in the process of perfecting the designs.

36 The trench coat was developed as an alternative to the heavy serge greatcoats worn by British and French soldiers in World War I. Both Burberry and Aquascutum claim the garment's invention. Aquascutum's claim dates back to the 1850s; Burberry's version (as an army officer's raincoat) was submitted to the United Kingdom War Office in 1901.

FIGURE 17  
Raglan Sleeve Raincoat with Detachable Hood



FIGURE 18  
My version of a trench coat









FIGURE 19

Buttons and buckles sent out to be colour match dyed to fabrics

## EVALUATION OF THE COLLECTION

Although in my diagram I position the evaluation of the garment near the end of the process, it is clear that evaluation forms an integrated part of the whole design journey. It is integral to all phases because I do not divorce evaluation from thinking. In reflexive practice, one is always in discourse with both what one sees in front of oneself and with what remains in one's head. Therefore, I do not see evaluation following as a 'response' to drawing, mock-ups, sourcing or market reviews. It is integrated and inseparable from all of these phases. In this regard evaluation is the cognitive substrate upon which all of my design thinking sits.

However, there is a specific form of evaluation that occurred in the closing stages of this design journey. On return to the workroom from the factory, samples underwent a detailed scrutiny where I looked carefully at the quality of construction. Any cutting or construction problems that the sample machinist discovered as she/he was making the garment were discussed and resolved over the phone or with a trip to the factory. These changes were then documented on the working drawing sheet and adjustments were made to the pattern. This final and acute evaluation process occurred before the garments went into production.



FIGURE 20

Finished Sample undergoing final scrutiny with Sample Machinist before sending out for production.

From a range of five designs, I decided to use only three, the 'Cape', the 'Raglan' with detachable hood and the 'Trench'. The reason for this choice was based on the knowledge that these designs had achieved a level of resolution and design integrity that clearly addressed the initial aims of the project.<sup>37</sup> Accordingly, final details were added to the working drawings that then became the full 'Specification Sheet,' ready to be handed over to the Cutter.

### PHOTO SHOOT

When both Sherie's collection and my raincoat range were ready, a Look Book<sup>38</sup> and a Buyer's Book<sup>39</sup> were developed. Rachael Churchward (fashion stylist)<sup>40</sup> and Russ Platt (fashion photographer) were commissioned to work on presenting the completed A/W2011 Collection. The photoshoot took one day. Although I hoped the weather might be inclement so that my coats would appear in context, the shoot was conducted in a studio and the day outside was sunny. The day following the shoot, photographs were viewed, edited and compiled in running order. These were then sent to the printers for the making of multiple copies. At the same time the Buyer's Book was produced. For this I drew the entire collection, in a working drawing style, following the convention of a Buyer's Book.

<sup>37</sup> The other two designs required more development.

<sup>38</sup> A Look Book is a compilation of drawings or photographs showing the collection for the coming season. Images and details can be discussed as the buyer is shown the actual garments. Buyers normally take a Look Book away with them so that a record exists of what has been bought (or at a later date, what might be added to the order).

<sup>39</sup> A Buyer's Book details the wholesale price, suggested retail price, colour options, sizes and fabric content. It is used in conjunction with the Look Book as a cross-reference.

<sup>40</sup> A fashion stylist works for individual designers, design companies or fashion media to create visual 'stories'. These stories are used to promote the product and enhance the status of the label.

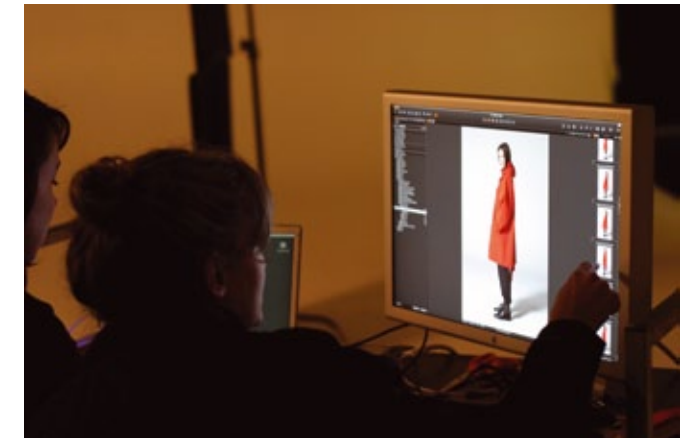


FIGURE 21

Background scenes at the photo shoot



STYLE NUMBER: 724  
 DESCRIPTION: TRENCH RAINCOAT  
 WHOLESALE: \$255.00 + GST  
 RRP including gst: \$659.00  
 SIZE RANGE: ONE SIZE  
 FABRIC: POLYESTER (WATERPROOF)  
 COLOURS: CONCRETE  
 YELLOW  
 FUCHSIA



STYLE NUMBER: 728  
 DESCRIPTION: CHURCHWARD COAT  
 WHOLESALE: \$280.00 + GST  
 RRP including gst: \$725.00  
 SIZE RANGE: ONE SIZE  
 FABRIC: COTTON (SHOWER RESISTANT)  
 COLOURS: ORANGE  
 CONCRETE  
 YELLOW  
 FUCHSIA



STYLE NUMBER: 729  
 DESCRIPTION: HOODED OVERCAPE  
 WHOLESALE: \$200.00 + GST  
 RRP including gst: \$520.00  
 SIZE RANGE: ONE SIZE  
 FABRIC: POLYESTER (WATERPROOF)  
 COLOURS: CONCRETE  
 YELLOW  
 FUCHSIA



FIGURE 22 (left)  
 A sample of Look Book images

FIGURE 23 (above)  
 Examples from the pages of the Buyer's Book



## PREPARATION FOR SHOWING

## SHOWING

The decision to show the collection during New Zealand Fashion Week meant buyers were not inconvenienced by having to travel to Auckland twice. The venue selected for the showing<sup>41</sup> was the Hotel De Brett, situated in the heart of Auckland's CBD.<sup>42</sup> My attendance was requested at the showing. This afforded me the opportunity to discuss with buyers the story behind the raincoats. It also enabled me to access useful feedback on the collection. The concept was well received and considerable discussion ensued. Orders were placed by all the buyers in attendance.

## PREPARATION FOR PRODUCTION

Because the main body of my work was completed prior to the photoshoot and the showing, all that remained for me to do was to double check patterns, yields, fabric orders and accessory items (such as buttons, buckles and toggles), before I handed the project over to the production team. This concluded the design process that brought the collection into being.

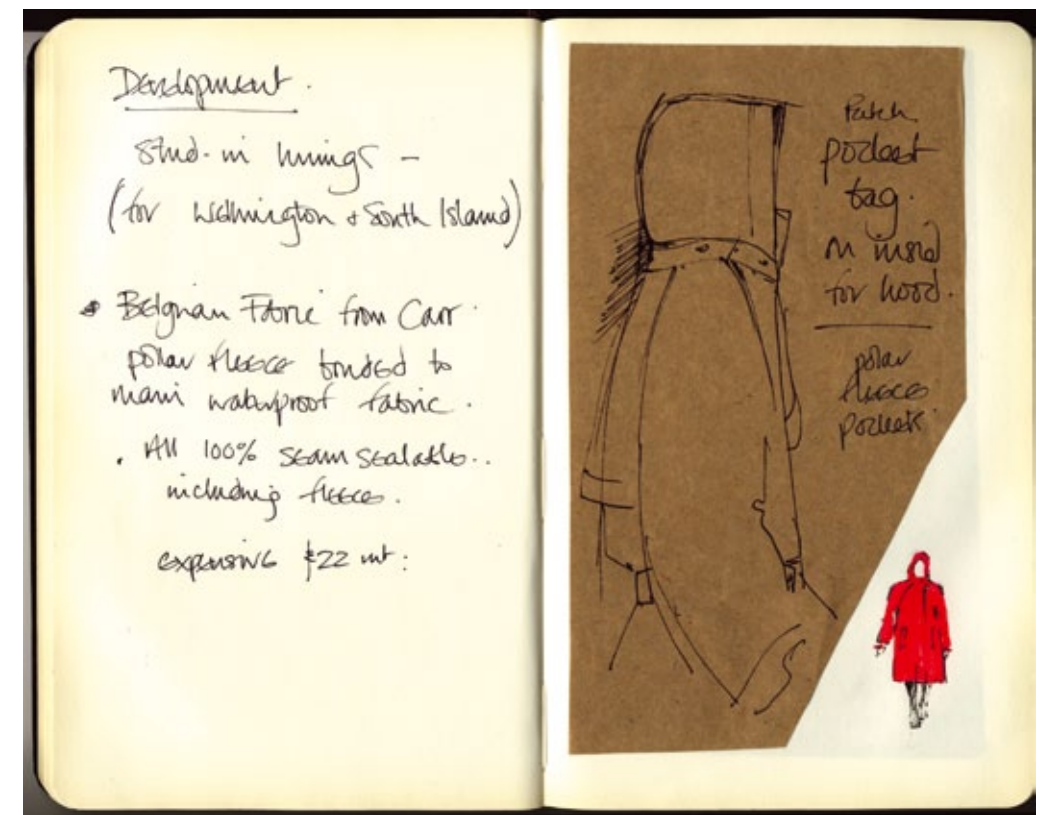
41 Showing refers to the physical presentation of a collection to individual buyers. These buyers might be established clients or people who are potentially interested in the work. Depending upon the number of buyers who wish to view a new collection, a time-line is set and appointments are made. The resulting schedule factors in time for a buyer to consider the collection at leisure and discuss and negotiate orders.

42 The Sherie Muijs Label has an established following with retailers such as Victoria Black (Christchurch), and Et Vous (New Plymouth).

## THE DESIGNER'S JOURNAL

Although the research design (Figure 2) suggests a sequential linearity, it is not that simple. In the diagram, we see a designer's journal that weaves through all processes. It operates in both interior and exterior stages of the design journey and may be seen as a kind of weft that draws the processes of thinking together. In my journal, I use multiple methods of recording, processing and data gathering. These methods include drawing, photography, writing and reflection. Newbury (2001) suggests, "for some projects the visual or artefactual is not simply of contextual significance, but is itself the focus of the research" (p.7). Schaltzman and Strauss (1973), when discussing reflective journals as a method note, "They have recording tactics that provide for an ongoing developmental dialogue" (p. 94).

This 'ongoing developmental dialogue' started from the outset of my project with the journal becoming my interior recorded voice and my exterior information carrier. In this regard, Newbury (2001) notes that the journal is "a self reflexive and media literate chronicle of the researcher's entry into, engagement with and departure from the field" (p. 7). The journal allowed me to archive and reflect upon gathered information as it occurred. Through all aspects of my research design, from Research Question to Preparation for Production, the journal played a significant role in plotting and planning incremental moves toward the project's resolution.



This journal comprised subjective considerations of what I was recording. Unlike the more scientific approach of report writing that Newbury (2001) describes as a “‘linear’ presentation of research typical of research paper writing” (p. 1), the entries that I made related more closely to Marshall and Rossman’s (2006) description of “the real ‘inner drama’ of research, with its intuitive base, its halting time-line, and its extensive recycling of concepts and perspectives” (p.15).

In the same way that information is accumulated and added to a working drawing, (where a sheet becomes a documentation of the garment’s development), my journal operated as an archive of the study’s history and also as a means of transferring knowledge and articulating methods.

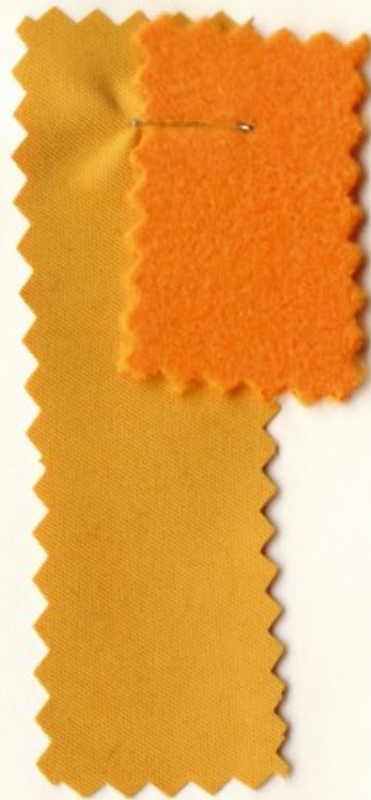
FIGURE 24, 25, 26 (above and following pages)  
Journal extracts from the thesis study 2010–11



Chris Barlow  
fabrics



Wall Fabric



Charles  
Parsons.



polar fleece  
match for  
projects.





Charles Parsons. —  
ACTIVE DIVISION.

Gortex.

Devmark Trading Ltd.

Meeting WED. 10<sup>th</sup>.  
3.30. —  
Coming to AUT.

Gortex no longer in  
New Zealand — Australia  
Head office —  
Agent comes over.  
will only sponsor big names.

Fabric Sourcing  
Trim

Hawes & Freer —  
water proof Zipr



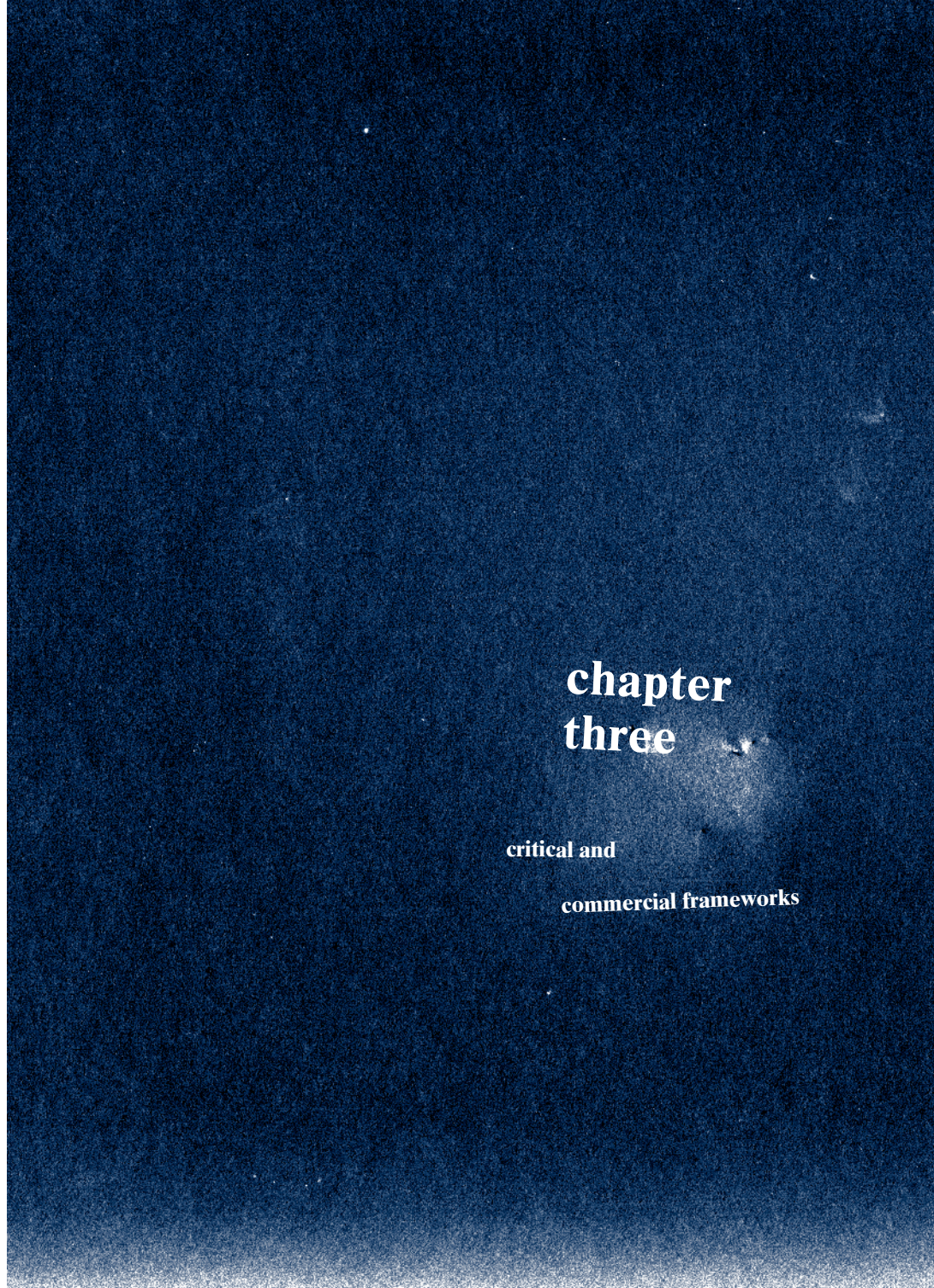
button & buckle dying  
get in touch with  
JESS GOTTRELL.

## CONCLUSION

In describing the research design, I have not attempted to mould the approach to problem solving so that it fits a pre-determined methodology. Instead, I have sought to describe not only the methods but also the 'narrative' of those methods and the broader conceptual base in which they operated (methodology).

The project was located in a commercial context and as such responded to both commercial imperatives and the need for a designer to access high levels of discovery and creative resolution. Although the project borrowed some of the tenets and processes of action research, it did not proceed through "spiral cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting in a systematic and documented way" (Swann, 2002, p.55). Instead, the research design was tailored to be responsive to the nature of a creative inquiry. Accordingly, it oscillated between interior and exterior phases that were permeated by a process of ongoing evaluation. Thinking was activated off drawing, toiles and a designer's journal. This journal also served as an archiving document. The seemingly linear nature of the design process was partly determined by the need for certain issues to have been solved before the next phase of the process could begin. That said, the research design was highly reflexive, dialogic and (demonstrably) able to adjust to disruption, opportunity and serendipitous occurrence.





## INTRODUCTION

### RAINWEAR, NARRATIVES AND THE CONSUMER SELF

#### INTRODUCTION

This chapter draws together research, literature, and observations that have supported design considerations in this thesis. It also discusses significant issues that were instrumental in informing the practice that led to the realisation of the exhibited garments.

The chapter begins with a brief theoretical positioning. In this regard it discusses issues of the commodity self (Ewan, 1971; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001), and aligns them with issues impacting on the design of my work. It then considers the issue of rural/urban narratives in clothing. Finally, because this is a thesis that engages with commercial imperatives, the chapter moves onto a discussion of the market into which my designs were positioned.

#### RAINWEAR, NARRATIVES AND THE CONSUMER SELF

In considering rainwear, we note that, as in other areas of fashion, certain brands often carry narratives of elitism, and social status. Thus, garments by Burberry, Aquascutum and Barbour in the UK and Helen Cherry and Karen Walker in New Zealand engage the consumer with a phenomenon described by Marx as 'commodity fetishism.' This occurs when social relationships between people are



expressed as, mediated by, and transformed into, objectified relationships between products and money. By this, I mean that normal social relationships and the sense of value we associate with them are replaced, and a sense of value is adopted by acquiring purchased objects and the narratives of identity they have 'woven' into them. Thus, I become a fashionable woman not by my intrinsic sense of design integrity but by the purchases I make.<sup>43</sup> This idea therefore suggests an awareness that we are the sum of the products we purchase; we become an Aquascutum or Burberry wearer but, more than that, we become these products.<sup>44</sup> This is why Barbour is able to recommend itself to us as being wealthy, 'well heeled' and successful. "When you purchase a Barbour you are acquiring a ... share of an international lifestyle. As soon as you put it on you're part of it – the world of those who have style, money and success" (Roetzel, 1999, p.199).<sup>45</sup>

By extension one buys with Aquascutum not only a relationship to the 'great and the good' but also the state of 'Britishness'. This identity is woven into the garment metaphorically but as deliberately as any physical thread. This is done by Aquascutum employing selected narratives of historical interfaces between their coats and events and personalities. Thus, we become British (and so 'belong') through the consumption of commercial narratives of Britishness.

The process of commodity fetishism means that we come to believe that we

43 'Fetishism,' as Marx used it, refers to the symbolic ascription of power to an object to the point where people come to believe and act as if the fetish object genuinely has that power. This power (for example, fashionable and discerning elitism) is eventually regarded as being a natural, inherent characteristic of the object, rather than something belonging to the nature of the wearer. So the raincoat is fashionable and discerning and affluent, not the person.

44 Stuart Ewan (1976) argues that eventually the commodity self begins to lose her own self in a plethora of product-identities available to her. She takes on the identity of her car, her perfume, her branded accessories, or her shoes.

45 From Barbour's 1999 marketing narrative, (see appendix 1).

self improve, and socially improve, by purchasing brands, rather than through our ability to identify and consume design integrity. Ewan (1976) suggests that brands developed through advertising create identities around ideas like elitism, fashionability, or belonging. This process, he argues, preys on social fears and hyper-self-consciousness. He suggests that as economies grew in the middle decades of last century, people were repeatedly positioned to be dissatisfied with their lives. They were then offered 'solutions' through commodity consumption. Branded objects did not simply enhance the self, but rather they created and became the self. The self, even though it may not have been socially elite, was offered a new kind of artificial freedom to become an elite. Brand narratives offered "a vision of consumption as a 'new school of freedom' " (ibid. p. 30). Ewan also notes:

"Each portion of the body was to be viewed critically, as a potential bauble in a successful assemblage ... Within the vision offered by such ads, not only were social grace and success attainable: they were also defined through the use of specific products. You don't make friends, your smile 'wins' them; your embellished hair, and not you, is beautiful" (ibid., p. 47).

Thus, when one walks down a city street, the part of one's body wearing a particular raincoat positions one socially. One's Karen Walker raincoat tells

others that one is a fundamentally different social being to the person crossing the street wearing a nylon coat from Ezibuy or the Warehouse. One becomes an assemblage of identities that are purchasable and socially defining. In the vernacular, one becomes a 'brand victim'. However, the state is deeper than this. One's identity has been reconstructed but so too have one's methods of determining what is of intrinsic value. It is through this process, I suggest, that the consumer replaces concerns with design integrity with the need for (and the pursuit of) brand narratives that help to reinforce notions of the commercially constructed self.

Thus, a disjunction occurs when one's preferred identity is urban and there is no product range available to signify this. One looks for a product narrative that might communicate what the other commodities one consumes suggest is urbanity. If one cannot do this, one's identity on a fundamental level becomes contradictory. This is why a Driza-Bone<sup>46</sup> or a Swannndri, (while often effective as a form of rainwear), feel inappropriate. This is because they carry narratives of the non-urban (and often) the masculine.

Accepting that in contemporary society a garment is more than its physical function, and that it operates in a dynamic of identity formulation, my project has sought to create a form of social continuity, while at the same time addressing levels of design integrity that are often missing from other brands (irrespective

of the level of social value they represent). The lack of design integrity, I would suggest, is a consequence of a stronger emphasis placed on the 'identity' of rainwear. Because emphasis is placed on what the garment represents, issues of physical functionality and design 'integrity' are demoted in the hierarchy of 'commercially effective' product development.

### NARRATIVES OF RURALISM

In 2002, the New Zealand government formed a New Zealand Trade and Enterprise initiative to develop a brand to promote New Zealand to the world. The enterprise was established with a view to maximising economic and business growth. For nearly a decade, the 'Clean and Green' campaign has been successful in promoting selective aspects of a nation that enjoys the rural outdoors and has a passion for sports and adventure.

However, I would suggest that this broad brand narrative portrays the nation from a predominately rural perspective and distorts the fact that the majority of New Zealand's population is urban based.<sup>47</sup>

Clothing plays a major role as a signifier of identity, be it recognition of social status or affiliations through work, school, or sporting engagements. What we wear narrates our sense of who we are. Some of New Zealand's most iconic clothing, like the 'black singlet'<sup>48</sup> and the 'Swannndri',<sup>49</sup> have become archetypal

47 The New Zealand Official Yearbook, 2002 recorded Aotearoa/New Zealand as one of the most highly urbanised countries in the world with 85.7 percent of its people residing in urban environments.

48 The black singlet is a menswear, sleeveless, woollen garment that resembles an undergarment. In the early twentieth century, it became the popular choice of attire for manual workers. In her essay, Engaging in Mischief: The Black Singlet in New Zealand Culture, 'Looking Flash,' Gibson notes, "by the 1970s, the black singlet had become an instantly understood shorthand for the archetypal 'Kiwi bloke' – a strong no-nonsense, hard working man" (2007, p.206).

49 The 'Swannndri' refers to a woollen, hooded, pullover shirt that was developed by William Broome, in 1913. The woollen fabric is treated with a secret water resistant solution, which enhances the waterproof properties of the wool. The original Swannndri bush shirt was made in plain wool but later a check was added to the range and the red and black check is now established as a Swannndri signature.

46 Driza-Bone developed the iconic Australian riding coat. The Driza-Bone label was established in 1898.

signifiers of allegiance to a rural identity that has been built off very selective social sourcing. These garments carry narratives of work, the healthy outdoors, and 'no-nonsense' integrity.<sup>50</sup> What is interesting to note is that the black singlet has crossed over into the realm of fashion<sup>51</sup>, while the Swannndri bush jacket has struggled with the intensity of its rural narrative.

### DIFFICULT TRANSITIONS

In 2005, Swannndri collaborated with Karen Walker to design "a way of making the distinctive Swannndri values more relevant to New Zealand and ultimately, an international audience" (Swannndri, 2005, p. 4). Here, Swannndri was following a similar model used by Burberry in re-imaging its market value.<sup>53</sup>

Karen Walker described the collaboration "as looking at Swannndri through urban eyes" (Swannndri, 2005, p. 6). However, the partnership ended in 2007, when Longbeach Holdings bought Swannndri. Chief Executive Gerard Kilpatrick claimed, "the company wanted to get back to its core business which was industrial, rural, outdoor, shooting, fishing, workwear type business."<sup>54</sup>

In a change of direction in 2010, Duncan McLean was appointed as the new in-house designer for the company. Enting (2010) suggested that McLean was brought in to rework the Swannndri range because the company could "see

potential for Swannndri to do what Gucci and Burberry have done and go from being unfashionable to being highly converted" (p. 10).

Abandoning deeply developed rural narratives is not easily done, especially once they have become iconic features of national identity. Although Swannndri, Barbour, Burberry, Aquascutum and Mackintosh each evolved through the development of a water resistant material, and each went on to develop a garment, their alignment with urban living was quite different. Mackintosh, Burberry and Aquascutum were all adopted after World War 1 by town and city gentlemen and have continued to be marketed in that context. Their narratives and the contexts of these narratives are essentially urban, or urban as it interfaces with the rural excursion.

Conversely, in New Zealand, the three seminal rainwear designs, the parka, the Swannndri and the Backhouse Oilskin, all carry distinct, masculinised, rural narratives. Indicative of this is Backhouse whose marketing clearly aligns its product range with historical notions of rural durability and reliability.

50 They attire the figures of advertising narratives selling everything from beer to utility vehicles. But more profoundly they attire broader constructs of what it is to be a New Zealander. We buy into identity marketing narratives like 'New Zealand is Clean and Green', or 'New Zealanders are number-eight wire innovators who can do anything.' These profiles of identity have no statistical basis. They are stories that are told to us and we adopt them as aspects of the self.

51 Variations of the black singlet can be found in virtually all men's and women's fashion stores; it has become a fashion basic, in the same way as a white T-shirt is classed as a basic fashion piece.

52 See <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/BU0508/S00370.htm>

53 In 2001, Burberry announced the appointment of Christopher Bailey as Design Director. This appointment was aimed at promoting the inclusion of a fashion range under the Prorsum label. The new work was designed to sit alongside the existing Burberry range. The inclusion of the Prorsum label was only part of a strategic plan to enhance what had become "an outdated business with a fashion cachet of almost zero", (Finch and May, 1998, cited by Moore and Birtwistle, 2004 p. 412). The Prorsum collections are now shown on the Paris catwalks. Burberry was not alone in re-imaging itself. Other iconic British companies like Barbour, Aquascutum and Mackintosh, have also marketed reinventions of their brands.

54 See <http://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/fashion/4326067/Swannndri-goes-stylish>



Accordingly, their website description positions the garment range inside very defined parameters:

For the origins of New Zealand's famous wet weather wear, you have to go back to the 19th century, when the predecessors of today's Backhouse coats and jackets were made from the sails of ships which plied the Pacific.

Impregnated with linseed oil, the sailcloth made incredibly tough, all weather clothing, which was soon adopted by rangers and drovers, as protection against the island's wet climate. These days Backhouse Oilskin Coats and jackets are classics, and are as tough as they ever were.

My thesis does not seek to renegotiate these essentially rural narratives in an effort to affect a 'crossover'. I accept that the brand stories work inside the market domains that the companies have nominated and their garments carry clear and articulate rural values. What I have done instead, is to design rainwear that speaks to, and of, an urban context. My collection is built on strategic reflections on current trends in rainwear design and on an understanding of the requirements of these garments as designs that must address functionability outside of a rural context.

55 <http://www.ecowool.com/outdoor-clothing/backhouse-oilskin-coats.html> (Backhouse, 2011).

## CURRENT TRENDS: AN INITIAL REVIEW

The dichotomous [or at least binary] relationship between urban and rural narratives of rainwear is not limited to New Zealand [see research report, 'United Kingdom Field Trip appendix 1]. However, in this country the manifestation of this divide is a discernable phenomenon. The high levels of design integrity apparent in New Zealand Active Sportswear form part of a broader association of this country's outdoor wear with functionality and fitness for purpose. Given the strong international reputation that companies producing this genre of clothing have built, one asks if such levels of design integrity might reasonably also become part of fashion label products designed as urban rainwear. Accordingly, it is helpful to consider approaches to urban rainwear in New Zealand.<sup>56</sup>

## MARKET REVIEW

The following is an edited version of a market review undertaken at the early stages of this project. The review considered three sectors of fashion retail that covered the broad range of garments on the market.<sup>57</sup> The aim of the review was to identify which design labels stocked rainwear as part of their fashion ranges. This was necessary because I was seeking to strategically position the designed outcomes of my thesis. In addition, the review involved a consideration of the functionality of these garments.

56 Data and observations relating to the current situation in the UK are presented in a subjective report appended to this thesis as appendix 1.

57 By fashion retail, I refer to companies whose other garments suggest an engagement with notions of urban fashionability. This is why in this review I do not include an analysis of outdoor, rural or adventure rainwear manufactured by companies such as Kathmandu, Macpac, and Icebreaker.

The low-end market had little to offer in the way of rainwear, and certainly what was available in stores such as Max, Glassons and Dotties did not include garments that engaged with significant levels of rain protection. That is to say, the fabrics used for these designs were neither water repellent nor particularly shower proof. In many cases, the rainwear was 'over-designed' and often featured significant amounts of stitch detailing which, because the garments were not seam-sealed, would result in water penetration. In general, the cut of these garments tended to be quite close. By this I mean, little consideration was given to the fact that, in general, raincoats are purchased as 'outerwear' and designs should normally take this into account when allocating sizing. Raincoats are normally designed to be worn over other garments. However, for a consumer to achieve a workable fit, one normally needs to buy garments two or three sizes larger than one's usual size. At the current time, internationally, this issue is compromised by increasing levels of instability regarding sizing. The issue resides in a phenomenon broadly described as 'vanity sizing'.<sup>58</sup>

Vanity sizing is well documented; Chittenden and Warren (2010), when discussing its appearance in the United Kingdom say:

"The dilemma for women is that while there is a British standard for clothing sizes, introduced in 1982, there is no requirement for retailers or manufacturers to use it. Often store chains base their sizing on their target customers. "A size 10 at H&M, for slim twenty-something's, will be smaller than Dorothy Perkins which attracts a more mature consumer" (para. 6).

58 'Vanity sizing' refers to garments that are labeled as a smaller size than they actually are, thus giving consumers the impression that they are smaller than they are. Useful reading on this approach to marketing can be found at: [http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/14802436/ns/today-today\\_fashion\\_and\\_beauty/](http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/14802436/ns/today-today_fashion_and_beauty/) [http://www.mytruefit.com/blog/fashion\\_advice/vanity\\_sizing\\_alive\\_and\\_well.html](http://www.mytruefit.com/blog/fashion_advice/vanity_sizing_alive_and_well.html) [http://women.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life\\_and\\_style/women/fashion/article7100795.ece](http://women.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/women/fashion/article7100795.ece)

Incrementally, sizes have been moved a half inch at a time to make women feel good because they believe that they are fitting into smaller sizes. In a survey conducted for Talbots,<sup>59</sup> an American fashion chain, it was revealed that:

"62 percent of women said they'd only consider clothes in their specific size when shopping. Asked whether they'd go up from that size, 46 percent said they'd go one size larger; only 24 percent said they'd go up two sizes. The margin of error was plus or minus three percent".

A similar survey conducted by New Zealand clothing alterations chain LookSmart, found that "43 per cent" of customers "would not go up a size to buy a garment they liked"<sup>60</sup> (p. 15).

The issue of vanity sizing for outerwear was evident in the majority of stores visited for the market review. It was not until I was examining European labels at the higher end of the market that I discovered raincoats where *allowance*<sup>61</sup> was built into the design. To address the instability of sizing in the market; in describing my raincoats I employed a more generic system of demarcation. Instead of a numerical system, I used the labels large, medium and small. All garments produced in the collection were designed with a built in allowance.

At the lower end of the mass market, companies such as The Warehouse and

59 The Talbots, Inc. Consumer Survey, 24th July, 2006

60 <http://www.nzherald.co.nz> Eloise Gibson. August 2, 2008

61 Allowance, which is sometimes also referred to as 'ease', refers to the amount added to the overall measurement of a garment, allowing for appropriate fit. The added allowance is normally accommodated for in the block pattern. Therefore, if I cut a size ten coat from a size ten block, the measurements would differ to that of a size ten dress. The coat would allow for the 'fit' over the dress.

Ezibuy offered rain jackets with hoods, either attached or detachable. In general, these coats were made of nylon. The aesthetic of these coats referenced outdoor pursuits but the garments did not feature the rigorous attention to functionality that outdoor pursuit rainwear normally has. This said, these jackets did offer more protection than anything viewed at Max or Glassons. However, they did not actively engage with any significant sense of fashionability and their level of protection was limited to the top half of the body only. Water shed by the garment ran off and soaked into anything worn below the waist.

A consideration of higher to middle range labels offered a similar picture to that evidenced at the lower end of the market. There were few raincoats available in these stores. Superette stocked one style stocked and it had a hood. It was a cotton canvas, parka style, three quarter length coat, which would not only get very wet in an Auckland downpour but would also become extremely heavy and take a long time to dry out.

Country Road offered a parka style raincoat. This form of rainwear has gained popularity among designers in the last five seasons. Country Road's version looked authentic as rainwear due to the fabric. However, the garment was at best, vaguely shower proof.

Smith and Caughey stocked a small range of raincoats and these tended to target the more mature customer. In general, the designs were conservative and could realistically be described as 'clothing' rather than fashion garments. These coats, however, did carry shower proof labels.

When reviewing the high-end of the market, designers such as Helen Cherry for Workshop, Karen Walker and Kate Sylvester all included *raincoat-styled*<sup>62</sup> garments in their collections. These coats were understandably of higher quality than anything viewed at the other levels of retail. The fabrication and design detail were superior. However, despite the better quality of fabrication, the garments viewed only resembled raincoats. Any significant reference to weatherproofing had not been addressed.

The New Zealand design label Zambesi had a PVC<sup>63</sup> cape jacket that positioned itself as rainwear (by virtue of the material).<sup>64</sup> Zambesi stock the Nom\*D label as well as European labels that sit alongside their own designs. At the time of review, no rainwear pieces were included in either the Nom\*D or European labels. Scotties is an independent boutique owned by the New Zealand designer Marilyn Sainty. Sainty no longer designs for the store but continues to retail high-end design labels. The majority of these labels are European, such as Lanvin, Ann Demeulemeester and Dries Van Noten. At the time of review, Scotties stocked a

62 By this I mean they had all made stylistic references to the trench coat, although the treatments were relatively conservatively designed.

63 PVC (Polyvinyl Chloride) is a flexible, water resistant plastic that became popular in the 1960s when designers Paco Rabanne, André Courrèges and Pierre Cardin included the material in their futuristic designs.

64 The majority of customers would probably recognise PVC as a rainwear fabric from memories of childhood raincoats or work wear.





FIGURE 27 (top right)  
Dries Van Noten Raincoat.

FIGURE 28 (top left)  
Elimination of seams: A Magyar sleeve is used to eliminate a shoulder seam

FIGURE 29 (bottom left)  
Concealed pockets and closures: zippered pockets are concealed by over-flaps, to prevent zip from exposure to rain

FIGURE 30 (bottom right)  
Pack away hood: The hood folds into the collar and studs into place

Dries Van Noten raincoat made in super feather light polyester (see Figure 28). Van Noten’s raincoat was lightweight, voluminous and comfortable to wear over extensive layering. However, the fabric whilst water resistant would become porous under contact pressure. That is to say, the shoulder area would become vulnerable to water penetration because it is in direct contact with the body.<sup>65</sup> The Dries Van Noten raincoat (as seen in Figures 27, 28, 29 and 30) demonstrates design detailing that shows an informed consideration of the garment’s function.

In summary, this market review confirmed what I had already deduced; I could not buy a raincoat that signified urbanity and was also comfortable to wear. In addition, I could not buy a raincoat that would offer significant protection from the rain.

65 Carrying a shoulder bag would exacerbate this problem.

### CURRENT TRENDS: A CONTEMPORARY REVIEW

Although this market review was undertaken in 2008 (at the beginning of the project), I have since, on several occasions, revisited a number of the stores. It has been with interest that I note that a number of the high-end design labels, such as Zambesi and Nom\*D, now feature rainwear as a more defined aspect of their collections. I suggest that two issues may have influenced this move towards inclusion of this genre of clothing. Over the past five years social awareness toward global warming has moved beyond initial accommodations of orchestrated paranoia. People are physically experiencing instabilities and record changes in rainfall and temperature in both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres. That said, the raincoats from the Zambesi and Nom\*D collections still only provide a passing reference to rainwear. Core functional issues in the garments have not been resolved.

In 2006, one emerging designer, Jaeha Alex Kim, showed a small range of raincoats at the 'Rookie Show.'<sup>66</sup> (Figure 31 shows an example of one of the raincoats). Both New Zealand and Australian buyers bought his Autumn/Winter, 2007 collection from the catwalk show. Kim's collection was fashionable and demonstrated the rigor of functionality. The raincoats were cut in waterproof fabric. Seam-sealing ensured that the garments functioned at a high level. This fusion of design integrity and an understanding of rain wear as urban fashion made his collection the first of its kind.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

FIGURE 31

Raincoat designed by Jaeha-Alex Kim, as part of his 'Rookie' collection. This image is taken from Young Asian Fashion Designers, (2008), Cologne, London, New York: daab gmbh

<sup>66</sup> The 'Rookie Show' refers to the AUT University, graduating fashion show, where a selection of third year fashion students have the opportunity to showcase their final collections to an audience of the fashion industry, fashion media and friends.

In concluding this chapter, this thesis is driven by a concern for a level of design integrity that might be effectively positioned inside a commercial context.

Reviews of the New Zealand market place appear to indicate a niche that might accommodate an urban narrative of rainwear. Designing a collection for this niche, I suggest, might serve not only to provide higher levels of functionality than what is currently available, but also on a more theoretical level serve, in the context of the commodity self, to contribute to a more cohesive sense of identity for urban women for whom fashionability is a significant aspect of the 'self'.

Having now discussed the theoretical positioning of the collection, its relationship to New Zealand rainwear as a rural narration of identity, and the market into which my designs have been positioned, it is useful to consider the collection itself.





## COMMENTARY

### COMMENTARY

The three styles of rainwear developed for this project, complemented Sherie Muijs' thirty-piece Autumn/Winter 2011 Collection. The inclusion of a bright colour palette added drama to the look of the collaborative work. The collection currently appears in retail outlets throughout the country.<sup>67</sup>

As mentioned previously, the buyers responded well to the concept of high integrity rainwear. However, I was disappointed when I visited two stores in Auckland (that carry the full range of the rainwear), I found that the sales representatives were not fully aware that while the three styles are fully waterproof, the orange colourway<sup>68</sup> of the Churchward is only showerproof. The buyer, who was excited about the idea of high functioning raincoats at the showing, had not communicated the garments' core qualities to the sales staff. In hindsight, I can see that more work was needed in building the narrative of these pieces; it was not enough to just talk the story.

In moving forward from this point, Sherie has two potential options open. The first is to progress these garments into her Spring/Summer collection and let their reputation slowly build. Alternatively, she might explore methods for marketing the design integrity that lies at the heart of the collection.<sup>69</sup>

Putting the communication issue aside, the garments have offered very successful responses to a design problem, both in the manner in which they address functionality and in their cognisance of, and response to, an urban sensibility.

Although the work generated in this thesis will be exhibited, it is useful in closing the exegesis, to briefly comment on the design features of each garment in the collection.

<sup>67</sup> Pearl, Auckland (New Market and Grey Lynn) and Wellington; The Cupboard, Auckland; VIPs, Auckland and Palmerston North; Victoria Black, Christchurch; Et Vous, New Plymouth; Waughs, Dunedin; Ground Floor, Timaru; Clothesline, Havelock North.

<sup>68</sup> Colourway, refers to the colour range available for each style; the colour-way for the Trench is Yellow, Pink, Grey and Black.

<sup>69</sup> The three styles now belong to Sherie. As the designer I chose to donate them to her as a way of thanking her for her support in allowing me to test my product through her label name.



FIGURE 32  
Pearl fashion store, Auckland

## THE CHURCHWARD

The raincoat (Figure 32) became known as The Churchward during the photoshoot, when the stylist, Rachael Churchward, waxed eloquently about the quality of the garment's design. The fabrication for the coat is a 'Peach' finish cotton that has a showerproof treatment but, this fabric cannot be seam-sealed and therefore is not a hundred percent waterproof. The colour and tactile finish are particularly alluring aspects of the design and this was certainly apparent from the buyers' response. Predictably, the sales figures for this style exceeded the others. Once again, this confirmed for me that in the context of fashion, decisions surrounding style often override issues of functionality. The garment is available in every colourway; it is only the orange fabric that is not waterproof.

The cut of the silhouette is generous enough to allow for layering of clothing underneath. This is especially important for colder South Island climates. With this in mind, the pockets are lined with polar fleece for extra hand warmth, and the pocket flaps ensure protection from rain entering the pocket bag. In addition, the hood is detachable from the collar (using stud closures) and a belt is attached through belt loops. This allows the garment to be worn cinched in at the waist (by stud closures) or, if preferred, studded at the back for a fuller silhouette. The garment is unlined.

### Potential design development

The Churchward (A/W 2013), might include a detachable inner lining for added warmth and a lightweight seam-sealable polar fleece hood lining.



FIGURE 33

The Churchward, designed 2010, Linda Jones.



## THE CAPE

This garment is designed to pack away into the hood. It offers an ideal solution for fashion-conscious commuters, walkers and bike/scooter riders, especially if the location is Auckland where the climate often passes through 'four seasons in one day'.

The garment is manufactured in seam-sealable, coated polyester. Its 2000mm waterproof fabrication ensures a high level of functionality. It is available in all waterproof colourways.

The Cape's drawstring waist allows reference to body proportion because its oversize silhouette may be perceived as overwhelming on a slight frame. This particular style, while placed within a womenswear collection, is relatively genderless and, to date, has been bought by men as well as women.

The Cape is also included in the Spring/Summer 2012 Collection. I was aware at its design stage that there could be some resistance to having to put it on over the head (this can be a particular problem for womenswear). I resolved the issue without compromising style or functionality by developing the design with a front opening.

THE CAPE



FIGURE 34

The Cape designed 2010, Linda Jones.

## THE TRENCH

Of the three designs, the Trench is instantly distinguishable as a rainwear garment. Its iconic form was adopted by the fashion world in the early 1930s, and it continues to be referenced by designers producing work for mainstream markets. My version of the trench coat combines style with functionality. Constructed in a seam-sealable, 2000mm breathable, waterproof Peach finish polyester, the garment offers a high level of protection from the rain.

As with the other two styles, the silhouette is generous, with a deep raglan armhole, allowing for comfort of arm movement. The traditional features include a storm flap, (which adds extra protection from rain entering the front closure); a collar stand, (that allows the collar to be turned up, protecting the neck from rain exposure); a back storm cape detail, (which allows rain to fall away from the body); and a buckled belt that can be worn closed or loose. In the design, I eliminated the side seams so I was able to produce a comparatively softer silhouette. The vertical welt pocket is lined with polar fleece, for warm hand comfort. The Trench is the most expensive of the three styles to manufacture due to the amount of detailing in the design.

### Potential design development

A sleeveless, detachable inner lining would suit the colder southern climate, and the inclusion of a detachable hood would probably offer further protection, negating the need to carry an umbrella.

All production orders for the raincoats have been sent out to the stores and are included in their Autumn/Winter 2011 stock. Images of the work are beginning to appear in fashion magazines and fashion blogspots, such as Black magazine and Rag Pony.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>69</sup> <http://www.rag-pony.com/2011/04/previewing-sherie-muijs-spring-11.html>  
[http://blacklognz.blogspot.com/2010/10/01\\_archive.html](http://blacklognz.blogspot.com/2010/10/01_archive.html)



**THE TRENCH**



FIGURE 35

The Trench, designed 2010, Linda Jones.





## conclusion

Today it was raining in the city. Autumn had turned grey and a downpour was ushering commuters into winter. On the street people huddled disconsolately in doorways, waiting for a respite from the traffic and the chance of a dash, huddled across the intersections. Rain whipped at their legs.

In the crowd there were shoppers wearing rain dampened, autumn coats and others with umbrellas, slicked by the rain. Here and there you could see a raincoat, bobbing like a rural visitor in town for the day... and just occasionally, there was one of my garments.

One of the great pleasures of being a designer is to see your work contributing to a better quality of life. The steps we make may be small and incremental, but they count. Although passing shop windows and seeing one's designs displayed may be heartening, it is the small, human incidents, like a colleague wearing one of my coats into work and telling me how well designed it is, that really count.

This design project is a commercially positioned inquiry through practice. Although the thesis engaged with (and was influenced by) certain theories surrounding the commodity self and commodity fetishism, it was made distinctive by its reliance on analyses of the market and consumer behavior. The thesis employed a form of action research. However, because it was designed

to respond to the specifics of a commercial fashion project, its 'research design' deviated from the traditional cyclic structure associated with this methodology. Instead it oscillated between designing and sourcing (both knowledge and materials). Inside this dynamic, evaluative processes operated to drive the designs towards higher levels of refinement.

The design of highly functional, fashionable rainwear is not an easy undertaking. First, the amount of time and comprehensive research/sourcing required for a project of this nature is intense. Building the right team to support what one is trying to achieve and at a standard one has established for previous work, takes time and a huge amount of energy and legwork. There is also a cost factor to consider. This would affect, in particular, emerging designers who would normally struggle with outgoing costs.

Until consumers become aware that they can wear an aesthetically stylish raincoat that will perform in wet weather without disappointment, there is no reason for designers to factor higher levels of functionality into their products. As long as consumers continue to buy garments that do not function as raincoats, their lack of design criticality and lack of insistence on integrity will enable poor design to continue. In producing this collection, I have sought through precedent to address this anomaly.

While this exegesis serves to contextualise the project, it is important to remember that the thesis (as the repository of knowledge) is embodied in the work. Scrivener (2000, p.1) defines this kind of thesis as a design technology research project. In this kind of project, he suggests:

- An artifact is produced
- It is new or improved
- The artifact is the solution to a known problem
- The artifact demonstrates a solution to the problem
- The problem is recognised as such by others
- The artifact (solution) is useful
- The knowledge reified in the artifact can be described
- This knowledge is widely applicable and transferable.

What characterises this type of project, whether technological or design, he suggests, is that it is "focused on problem solving" (ibid.). Thus, this thesis addresses a problem. The problem surfaced from a personal encounter. The question was refined and fed by both critical ideas and commercial/marketplace phenomena. The thesis outcomes were not simply exhibited but positioned commercially in a retail environment. They stood, (despite the subjective nature of some aspects of my inquiry) as designs tested by an everyday environment. If the propositions upon which the designs were developed were incorrect, then the designs would not work.

There are many ways of closing a thesis. With the summaries done and the work positioned, one sits back and considers the wider implications of such a body of research.



And so in closing, I am reminded of Hugh Latimer, the Bishop of Worcester, in the 1500s, who once observed, "The drop of rain maketh a hole in the stone, not by violence, but by oft falling".

This slow, incremental change is both the nature of rain and the nature of design. When as designers we conduct research, it is not just a scholarly undertaking, it is also an effort to affect change. We seek to address a problem and in so doing, improve (albeit in a small way) the world in which we live.

This is what I have tried to do.

It is my thesis and also my passion.

Linda Jones April 2011.

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# APPENDIX ONE



# UNITED KINGDOM FIELD TRIP

(October 2008)

An investigation into Rainwear Design and Development,  
and Current Trends in the United Kingdom



## INTRODUCTION

This report is a subjective compilation of observations and analyses of features of rainwear design profiling in the United Kingdom (UK) at the time I began researching the thesis. It served as a contextualising inquiry.

## FIELD TRIP – AIMS:

The inquiry is bifurcate. In this regard it has two specific aims:

To research rainwear design and its development in New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

To research current trends in fashion rainwear within specific, urban, United Kingdom environments, as a means of locating and comparing certain features evident or missing in New Zealand design.

Inquiries were conducted in the cities of London and Cardiff.

## PRECURSORS

This project developed from a disjunction.

I was aware of a situation where rainwear in the country I had recently adopted as my home was largely shaped by rural narratives of identity. In this regard New Zealand has developed a high level of credibility internationally for a genre of outdoor product associated with purpose and location. Companies like Swazi and Icebreaker produce leading-edge products that carry with them significations of functional, sleek, styled, rugged, masculinised engagements with the elements.

Useful in understanding the historical context of this phenomenon was Labrum, McKergow and Gibson's (2007), *Looking Flash – Clothing in Aotearoa New Zealand*. In addition, during 2008 Te Papa, the National Museum curated, *Made in New Zealand*, an exhibition that provided an overview of New Zealand fashion. Although

these 'texts' offered commentary, and to a certain degree, a confirmation of the role of the rural narrative in New Zealand outdoor wear, they did little to interrogate or critique the disjunction between fashionable urban narratives and permutations that occurred between these and urban constructions of fashionable rainwear.<sup>1</sup>

I was, however, interested in this form of the romanticised, rural narrative of rainwear and how it might be understood [and possibly renegotiated] in the light of a more international context.

To research rainwear design and development, from a historic sense, is an eclectic undertaking because, until Nick Foulkes published *The Trench Book* (2007), there had not been a significant publication that specifically addressed the subject of rainwear. Much information with regards to the design of such garments was embedded within the texts of broader fashion writing,

a1 Researching rainwear often will lead one to subtitles in broader texts. These generally provide small amounts of material/discourse under headings like Active Sportswear or Protective Clothing.

particularly those relating to menswear. In addition a substantial body of technical work exists without social commentary. This mainly comprises written instructions and formulas related to the waterproofing of fabrics (as textile manufacturing and treatment guidelines).<sup>2</sup>

Before leaving for the trip, I read the first chapter of Carter's (2003), *Fashion Classics: From Carlyle to Barthes*. In this a reference is made to Thomas Carlyle's work, *Sartor Resartus* (1833-4). Here Carlyle's fictional character Professor Teufelsdröckh, laments the poor array of clothing he had to protect himself from the rain:

... Whilst I – Good heaven! – have  
thatched myself over with the dead fleeces  
of sheep, the bark of vegetables, the  
entrails of worms, the hides of oxen or  
seals, the felt of furred beasts ...

(Carter, 2003, p 5).

This vivid description conjured a very rural setting and the inadequacies of clothing to deal with a wet climate of that time. It underscored for me the disjunction of experience one might encounter in a society. I say this considering the fact that Charles Macintosh had, by 1823 (ten years prior to Carlyle's book), developed and patented a means of waterproofing fabric that was then fashioned into garments called Mackintoshes. Whilst the Mackintosh was, by today's standards, a primitive looking, ill-fitting and bad smelling garment, in comparison to the description given by Professor Teufelsdröckh, it was a breakthrough that offered a clear solution to the discomfort he was experiencing.

The perplexing aspect of all of this was timing and location. On one hand we had a lament (albeit fictional) given by someone decrying a lack of design, and on the other hand we see major

developments having just occurred with regards to the performance of textiles whose design addressed the very problems the protagonist was experiencing.

This notion of resolution and complaint existing in the same time and space accompanied me on my journey across two oceans to the other side of the world.<sup>3</sup> I looked forward to an opportunity to access information and garments in their specific cultural/economic settings and to having conversations, face to face, with curators and industry people who specialised in areas related to my own inquiry. Best of all, I wanted to re-encounter the physicality of design and the context it was created to address.

<sup>2</sup> Fung, W. (2002). Coated and Laminated Textiles. Cambridge: Woodhead Publishing, and Journal of the Textile Association are two examples of sources of technical advice.

<sup>3</sup> Of course such narratives are culturally defined. At the same time I had been reading Patricia Te Arapo Wallace's (2007) accounts of how Maori, once they had arrived in New Zealand, met the challenges of the climate by developing appropriate clothing from birdlife, dog skins and plants.



## FORMAL ARCHIVES



My research engaged with two forms of design repository. The first was the formal archiving and critiquing venues that constituted public collections. The second was the major stores stocking British fashion wear. These addressed, through design, the issue of rainwear as a contemporary (and responsive) cultural expression.

The formal, public archives visited included:

The Victoria and Albert Museum

The British Maritime Museum

Bath Fashion Museum

### THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM (V&A)

Once dates were confirmed for the trip back to the UK, contact was made with the V&A with a request to book a viewing room. It was disappointing to discover that I had misjudged the timing required to book viewing rooms; I was out by at least two months for booking facilities to view clothing and no concessions could be made, due to the museum's mounting of a major exhibition in October.

However, the staff at the V&A were sympathetic and helpful. Contact details for Susan North, (Curator of Fashion 1600-1800), were forwarded to me with the suggestion of a possible meeting being arranged.

30TH SEPTEMBER 2008 – V&A VISIT:

Susan North kindly made time to talk with me and, after I had explained what my study involved, she gave me some helpful directives as to where I might access the information that I was seeking. She recommended the London Library for Archives and suggested that researching 'Queen' magazine (1842 – current issue), would most likely give me information about developments in the fashionability of rainwear.

We discussed the military influence on the development of rainwear/protective wear and she suggested that the Maritime Museum, along with the Imperial War Museum, would be worth investigating, especially for the Burberry pieces designed for Shackleton's trek to the Antarctic. Whilst much of what was suggested was already on my list, it was useful for that short time to be discussing and receiving confirmation about the significance of my inquiry.

My visit to the V&A coincided with the exhibition Fashion vs. Sport. I was interested to note

that a number of garments shown within a sports context had made the crossover to outerwear and protective wear, from what were originally military or science research designs.

Featured here is the American 'Parka'<sup>4</sup> influence that has translated into contemporary 'active sportswear' pieces. In the written example, fashion designer, Stella McCartney asserts that she "injects a sense of fashionability" into her designs, "without compromising functionality".

This was a significant quote as it reinforced for me the sense that my approach to design integrity formed part of a wider consideration among designers.

The exhibition was useful for the variety of items presented and this was influential in how I considered the breadth of possibilities in my practice. In addition the accompanying catalogue (Salazar, 2008) provided a useful discussion of the subject and was influential in contextualising design inspirations.



**Running outfit**  
Stella McCartney for Adidas  
Autumn/Winter 2008

Fashion designer Stella McCartney's ongoing collaboration with Adidas successfully injects a sense of fashionability and a more feminine colour palette into performance sportswear without compromising functionality. The outfit includes an outer shell jacket, a mid-layer jacket, tights, gloves and shorts, each serving a specific purpose in cold weather.

*Acrylic, Elasthane, recycled paper,  
polyester and wool*  
Courtesy of adidas

<sup>4</sup> The parka was originally a hooded outer garment with fur trim, worn in the Arctic. Originally it had a 'pullover' design but now generally features a front closure.

14TH OCTOBER 2008 –  
BATH FASHION MUSEUM:

I met with Rosemary Harden, Curator of Fashion at the Bath Museum, who spared some time for me while installing an exhibition of retrospective work by British designer, Bill Gibb. Once again, I would have needed to give several months notice to be able to privately view any work other than what was presently on show in the museum. We exchanged email addresses with a view to continuing a dialogue once I returned to Auckland.

Whilst looking through the clothing on display at that time, only one garment could have been classified as rainwear; a 1970s rain cape. On close inspection of the garment I noted that many of the design details were drawn from the trench coat but the fabric did not appear to be rainproofed. This suggested that the disjunction between fashionability and 'integrity' in rainwear

design was not necessarily a new problem.

Bath is a city steeped in tradition, with well-preserved examples of Georgian architecture. Today its buildings and the accompanying public spaces suggest both formality and a strong sense of historical fashionability. Wandering through its streets, I noted a significant number of Barbour jackets being worn and occasionally a Driza-Bone. These are both brands of outerwear worn for their functionality; the Barbour is a very traditional British rural wear and the Driza-Bone an iconic Australian wet weather garment.<sup>5</sup> In addition when 'reading the street'<sup>6</sup> I noted several versions of the trench coat, featuring authentic Burberry linings.



<sup>5</sup> I was wearing my beautifully designed Dries Van Noten raincoat for the occasion (which leaks like a sieve). Although I noted Australian design featured in this environment, there was no sign of New Zealand's iconic Swandri, or its derivatives. a

<sup>6</sup> By this I mean, I adopted an approach where I 'read' the street as a repository of knowledge. I saw it as a collection of 'living' texts that provided a picture of rainwear as a contextualized but unselfconscious indication of contemporality.



## MAJOR STORES STOCKING BRITISH FASHION WEAR

### 20TH OCTOBER – BRITISH MARITIME MUSEUM

The British Maritime Museum is situated in Lambeth, London. I went there to look at their collection of clothing developed by Burberry for Scott's expedition to the South Pole. Shackleton, a member of the team, had worked with Burberry in developing what must have been, at the time, leading edge clothing for the conditions.

It was interesting to see that the team preferred to wear wool and Burberry's cotton gabardine. In the collection there was even a Jaeger pyjama jacket that was worn as a coat. This is a very British approach.<sup>7</sup> (It is interesting to note that the Norwegian expedition preferred to wear fur).

By today's standard of technological development for this genre of clothing, it is hard to imagine how either expedition survived the freezing

conditions for as long as they did.

Although the visit was useful in the terms of the opportunity it offered for a close examination of detailing and functionality, it was tangential to my central inquiry. What it did suggest, however, was the durability of certain conventions in British design and the manifestation of certain common design solutions to addressing issues of water-proofing.

Although there is considerable data available (on a superficial level) in fashion magazines, normally this information is divorced from its user context and is generally presented as a means of selling the 'idea' of a garment. In this regard, depictions of fashion in magazines generally allow only a superficial consideration of detailing, fabric and construction. These publications are used to suggest emerging fashion trends; they generally offer aspirational and persuasive descriptions of fashion.

What one encounters in close readings of the street or on the racks of major chains in the UK, does not always equate with the narratives of 'use' presented in these publications. Because of this, I found it helpful in this research to examine rainwear in the context of what was 'worn' on the street and also what was available on racks for purchase. Clothes, I believe, need to be understood in a location and inside contexts of use.

This helps us to glean richer and often more

authentic narratives of experience.

Accordingly, in the second tier of my investigation in the UK, I sought to construct a 'store report' of the three levels of fashion retail, from top end designer and company labels, through to the middle price range mass market, and then into the lowest price range. In this regard I was concentrating on three aspects of fashion rainwear; style, price and functionality. I believed this data might be useful in constructing comparisons between the current New Zealand retail market and overseas trends.

I visited seven major chains:

Burberry  
Aquascutum  
Dover Street Market  
Mandarina Duck  
Millets  
Primark  
Muji

<sup>7</sup> By this I mean, there can be a certain doggedness with regards to traditional clothing amongst the British, which is tied up with memory, loyalty and the status of a product. Jaeger, established in 1884, has built a reputation for the high quality of both tailoring and knitwear, using superior yarns and textiles. Jaeger is described today as a 'Luxury British brand'. Their consumer buys into a history of tradition, in the same way that the Barbour, Burberry or Aquascutum customer does. The products have stood the test of time and have been endorsed by notable patronage from the higher echelons of society. They are imbued with memory, loyalty and status.

BURBERRY  
21-22 NEW BOND STREET,  
MAYFAIR, LONDON.

The Burberry trench coat is recognised internationally as the quintessential, traditional British raincoat. The location of the Burberry shop clearly indicates its target market. The shop sits alongside other companies of equal stature in New Bond Street and emanates a sense of wealth and civility. Burberry is at the top end of the traditional rainwear market, with raincoats in the price range of £545.00 to £850.00. Their Pack-Away Trench retails between £285.00 and £350.00. Burberry's Prorsum Range is at the very top end of the market with trench coats retailing in the thousand-pounds-plus bracket.

After a lengthy discussion with one of the sales representatives about the Burberry raincoats, I asked if the garment was fully waterproof. I can't explain how sad I felt when she answered,

"Reluctantly, no". This is the garment I have held in high esteem since adolescence. It was the raincoat that had been used in the trenches during the First World War. It was the garment I had aspired to own ever since I was a fashion student in the 1960s (and had in fact bought with my first bonus once I started working). Looking back, I can't remember experiencing any disappointment related to the coat's performance. I wonder now if owning my own Burberry had clouded its function flaws, or whether perhaps I had never worn it out in inclement weather so had never been confronted with issues of its design integrity.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> I should clarify here that the specific Burberry gabardine fabric from which the raincoats are constructed is waterproof. What compromises the garment's functionality is its construction methods. As soon as the coat is assembled, there are holes left for water to enter through all stitched areas. Only by heat seam-sealing all areas of stitching can the garment be truly waterproofed. This process would not be possible to apply to the Burberry gabardine or the cotton version of their trench coats because the fabrics used with seam-sealing are specialised synthetics.



AQUASCUTUM  
100 REGENT STREET,  
LONDON.

The visit to Aquascutum ran in a similar vein to the Burberry experience; the only real difference being that I wasn't so personally (nostalgically) attached to the product.

Aquascutum is another of the British iconic outfitters, producing protective wear for royalty and a demographic that seeks to buy into traditional and class-defining notions of British dress. Their price range is similar to Burberry's and both chains carry a status factor embedded in their brand stories. Aquascutum's historical narrative is closely woven into its positioning as a high status manufacturer of rainwear. The company was established in 1851 when the eminent tailor John Emary opened a high quality menswear shop in Regent Street. In 1853, after successfully producing the first waterproof wool, he had the discovery

patented and renamed the company 'Aquascutum' (Latin for 'water shield'). Receiving royal commissions in 1897,<sup>9</sup> the company developed lines of womenswear at the turn of the century and these garments became closely associated with the British suffragettes.

The brand is associated with high levels of design integrity and high status patronage. As with Burberry, Aquascutum rely on their fabrics as the water repellent or waterproof element of their rainwear. Construction methods, added application, or design detailing to support the fabric performance are of lesser consideration.

BARBOUR  
103-113 REGENT STREET,  
LONDON.

Barbour is yet another of Britain's iconic labels, but its profile is more distinctly rural. Both men's and women's ranges are designed for the country lifestyle and both use waterproof drop liners in the jackets and coats. The original Barbour fabric is made from 100% cotton with a Barbour Sylkoil Wax finish. Unlike Burberry and Aquascutum, the price range for their jackets and coats sits within the £300 bracket.

The atmosphere within the store was distinctively male dominant, whereas at Burberry and Aquascutum the environment felt more neutral. This is not an uncommon feature of British fashion. Balestri and Ricchetti (2000) note that in the fashion industry, "gender distinctions have proved to be extremely durable, capable... of withstanding, if not ignoring entirely, the larger currents that

move our society toward a more general gender blindness" (p. 52).

This, they suggest, is partly due to the fact that menswear originates from a culture that grew out of the ateliers of tailors. Leading craft tailors, they suggest, developed the manufacturing sector after the Second World War. The dichotomous relationship to womenswear, they argue, was due to the fact that women's clothes were traditionally manufactured in the home. They note that this split has continued so that "manufacturing apparel for one gender or the other produced products, patterns, manufacturing techniques, seasons, and innovations [that] moved forward incrementally, one sector leapfrogging the other, at times colliding, but never merging" (ibid).

Thus Barbour is British, but it is also distinctly male. Conceptually it follows a tradition that defines and demarcates, through gendered

<sup>9</sup> The company boasts amongst its patrons three Princes of Wales, Prince Rainier of Monaco, Sir Winston Churchill, Baroness Thatcher, Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, Sophia Loren, Cary Grant, and Michael Cain, (Felsted, 2009).



divisions, notions of outdoor living. Its range is designed to function for a variety of country pursuits; fishing, shooting, riding, etc. However, there is more to the Barbour than the garment itself. Roetzel (1999) notes:

When you purchase a Barbour you are acquiring a rainproof jacket: above all you are buying your share of an international lifestyle. As soon as you put it on you're part of it – the world of those who have style, money and success.

This jacket protects you from bad weather but also protects you from being improperly dressed (p. 199).

Here we have articulated something of the British notion of social demarcation through clothing. The sales pitch suggests a code of 'proper' and 'improper' dress and a sense that one's status and assurance of acceptability might be defined

by a brand. This concept, although evident in New Zealand, is not as pervasive. The idea of 'improper dress' does not hold the same levels of social anxiety as it does in the UK, where a clearly demarcated class hierarchy still determines access to certain privileges and opportunities.



DOVER STREET MARKET  
DOVER STREET,  
LONDON.

Dover Street Market retails to the top end of the fashion market, carrying design labels such as Raf Simons, Hussein Chalayan, Lanvin, Martin Margiela and, of course, the owner of Dover Street Market's own label, Comme des Garçons.

At the time of my visit there were no examples of designer label women's rainwear in stock but, judging by the price range of the coats, I think one would be purchasing in the thousand-pounds-plus range. The Raf Simons label was showing two styles of menswear raincoats, neither being fully waterproof but both were beautifully styled.

I had chosen Dover Street Market as my top end retailer, believing I would see a good range of top designers' work under one roof, and, as many of the leading designers are incorporating

rainwear into their collections now, I had hoped for a rich variety of designs. I had a visual feast but not in relation to the core concerns of my inquiry.



MUJI  
37 LONG ACRE,  
COVENT GARDEN, LONDON.

According to the 2008 Muji Life Catalogue, “Muji provides everyday essentials for the modern, urban lifestyle. Our products are simple yet sophisticated, functional, anonymous, reasonably priced and universally appealing.”

Muji is a Japanese retail company dedicated to design integrity within all their products. The name Muji is shortened from the company name, Mujirushi Ryōhin which, when translated, means ‘No Brand Quality Goods’.

For £9.95 I was able to purchase a totally waterproof raincoat made from E.V.A. (Ethylene Vinyl Acetate) which folds into a small bag. At Burberry, I would have paid more for the pockets. The coat comes only in black and it can be cut to size. The only issue with the garment (apart from its lack of pockets) is that the rain tends to sit on the surface of the fabric for an extended period of time.







MANDARINA DUCK:  
16 CONDUIT STREET  
MAYFAIR, LONDON.



This Italian company specialises in innovative design for bags and luggage using high-performance materials. During this trip, I was particularly interested to see if they had further developed a range that they had originally created in the late 1990s, that incorporated a rain jacket that could be turned into a rucksack. Sadly, there were no new updates. I consider this unfortunate because it is a lost opportunity to rework an excellent concept using the latest technologies in fabrication.

When the jacket is not needed it folds away back into the bag. The concept is innovative but unfortunately the fabric used for this product, over time, became sticky and unpleasant to touch. Another drawback is that the jacket is only high-hip length and not suitable for keeping one dry below the waist.



MILLETS  
109-111 QUEEN STREET,  
CARDIFF.

Millets is a long established company that specialises in camping equipment and outdoor protective clothing. As such, it is not a fashion store. I decided to investigate its range out of frustration with a menswear shop I had just visited, where I was told, in no uncertain terms, that if I wanted a fully waterproof raincoat I would have to go to an outdoor pursuits shop. The comment of course begs the question, "Shouldn't raincoats styled for the city, be made waterproof to the same degree as outdoor pursuit clothing?" Surely rain falls with the same degree of wetness irrespective of where one is. Interestingly, in Millets I found a cape that upon close examination I believed would function well in one of Auckland's heavy downpours. The price was £19.99.

PRIMARK:  
CARDIFF.

"Look Good, Pay Less" is Primark's by-line. It is a chain that has been operating since the late 1960s and it defines its market as the 'fashionable 35s'. However an examination of the demographic passing through its doors suggests a wider level of appeal. Primark might be described as being near the lowest end of the fashion market and the nearest equivalent in New Zealand would be the Warehouse chain. Both of these businesses associate their brands with notions of 'value for money'.

Primark had an extensive range of rainwear, none of which was waterproof. The only garment I found was a water resistant jacket. The price was £4.00 and it had pockets. I have as yet to test it for its level of water resistance but it would not be uncharitable to say that its style factor is more generic than fashionable.





## SUMMARY OF THE STORE REPORT

Discussed here is a small sample of the stores visited. Whilst I viewed a variety of raincoats, some of which were beautifully styled, I could not find what I believed would be waiting for me; a range of fashionable, leading edge, designed rainwear that was fully waterproof.

I truly believed I would find this in the UK. The disappointment came as a realisation that I had probably created a culturally determined consumer myth. An examination of products suggested that in reality rainwear saw as its priorities class signification, brand identification and styling. All of these had priority over functionality. The well designed fusion of these ideas existed as a figment of my imagination. This is not to say that the consumer was not provided with choices. One could look good and get wet, look not so good and get wet, or stay dry and look as if one was about to engage in a decidedly masculinised outdoor 'pursuit'.

The Londoner, like the Aucklander it appeared, was left with a choice between two values; style or function.

However, I believe that high levels of functionality and style can be combined. In achieving this one can present consumers with a product that can keep them dry and also 'speak' with some grace to the urban environment in which they dwell. One would expect that, although cost may be involved in achieving this correlation, brands that charged up to £850 for a jacket [NZD \$1,806.00] might be reasonably expected to see such design issues as integral to the integrity of their brands.

At the end of this journey I was left, as a designer, with a clearly defined problem. I asked ... Within a considered cost structure, and being cognisant of a targeted demographic, can one renegotiate existing approaches to rain wear? In doing this, can one design fashionable

garments for a New Zealand urban environment that 'speak to the city'? Can this rainwear simultaneously engage with high levels of functionality that directly addresses the climatic conditions that the intended consumers will encounter?

These questions became the substrate upon which my thesis was built.

Best of all, I wanted to re-encounter the physicality of design and the context it was created to address.

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