Re-fabricate:

Evolving design through user interaction

Debra Laraman

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Attestation of Authorship

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

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Abstract

Re-fabricate:

This research project focussed on discarded clothing and textiles, as signifiers for the lowest exchange value in the fashion system, and sought methods to add value by up-cycling[1] into one of a kind fashion garments. Opportunities to add value were investigated with three main ideas emerging which include up-cycling the visual appearance of the garment or textiles through restyling, user interaction, and creating a narrative for the garment. The practice focussed on developing methods to incorporate these concepts as a way of extending the life of low value textiles into items that could be re-introduced into the fashion cycle[2]. Walker (2008) suggests that by conveying the story of a product to the consumer, the perception of value increased, and opportunities to explore this concept were investigated during the project. Experimentation with a variety of materials and techniques resulted in developing a method to re-fabricate[3] threadbare and stained garments into a new material. User participation[4] was investigated as a way to 'add value,' as it was hoped that by enabling the user to interact with the design they would value the item more. Exploring this concept led to the development of a range of garments and garment kits that enabled the user to learn techniques and make garments using discarded textiles and clothing. The garments and kits were developed using methods and techniques that could be easily mastered and used materials that would be readily available to the user. The development of the garment kits reframed the user as a designer/maker, which is sometimes referred to as participatory design,[5] and Followed Fletcher's (2008) directive that for practical reasons, the methods need to be low tech and inexpensive. A group of research participants trialled the garment kits, made their own garment and provided feedback, which informed the final phase of the project and the development of revised kits and garments. The project suggests potential opportunities for the fashion designer may exist by focussing on the use of existing resources and heightened user connectivity in the design of garments.

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[1] Up-cycling increases the value of discarded products
[2] Fashion cycle refers to the making, selling, purchasing and wearing cycle of clothing
[3] Re-fabricate is to remake the materials into a new material
[4] User participation involves the user engaging with the product)
[5] Participatory design is the user and the designer creating together (Fletcher 2008)

Introduction

This project developed through experimentation with second-hand clothing and discarded textiles, a review of literature and researching fashion designers who use recycled materials in their work. Consequently, relevant theory was considered in response to the work at the time and previous work and ideas were often reconfigured and revisited in future work. My practice developed through engagement with the material and concepts, in contrast to a market-driven fashion approach that focuses on success through sales and economies of scale. This research project sits within the developing field of artistic research, as such, the outcomes of this project are not validated by absolute data which can be indisputably replicated or defended, but are the result of my reflections and interpretations informed from my practice and experience. The participant feedback is as a response to the kits they completed and the time and place in which they were undertaken.

The key concepts I sought to investigate through the practice focussed on;

- Exploring opportunities to add value to discarded textiles and second-hand clothing
- Developing methods to transform low value discarded textiles into higher value garments that could re-enter the fashion system
- Providing opportunities for users to participate in the design process
- Extending the life of garments and textiles

The exegesis provides an overview of the development of the research project and discusses my design process from a personal perspective. The project was undertaken over two years of part-time study, which enabled time for reflection, development of ideas, and the inclusion of research participants in the project. The exegesis begins with an overview of the theoretical and contextual information that informed the project, and then discusses the methodology that was used to enable the project to develop. The practical work begins with experimentation into methods to transform pre-consumer[6] and post-consumer textile waste[7] into new fabrics that can be used to make new garments. This is followed by a focus on garment design and the development of the garment kits. The practice then requires the involvement of the research participants and the construction of the garments using the kits. The final phase of the practice is in response to the research participants' feedback and results in the development of revised kits and garments. The research concludes by suggesting a focus on heightened connectivity to the user as a design consideration to encourage users to keep garments for longer, and proposes methods to up-cycle discarded garments into items that could have potential value within a commercial context.

Up-cycling is explored as a way to add value and extend the life of products to divert waste textiles from the landfill. Post-consumer textile waste is often sent directly to the landfill or it may enter the second-hand market to be re-sold. According to Caulfield (2009, p.4) "most pre-consumer textile waste in Australia is simply sent to the landfill". There were no studies available that specifically looked at textile waste in New Zealand , although I suspect it would be similar to the Australian situation (refer Fig 1). Materials for the project were obtained as donations from family, colleagues, and industry.

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[6] Pre consumer waste to waste from the manufacturing process of fibres and textiles and includes, off- cuts, selvages, rejected materials, B grade garments and footwear (Caulfield, 2009)

[7] Post consumer waste is garments and household textiles that the consumer decides to discard

Textile factory/mill

Apparel manufacture

Textile wholesaler

Pre-consumer
waste
Textile/off cuts faulty garments

Retail apparel

Retail fabric store

Consumer-
clothing

Consumer -fabric

Recycled
clothing store

Post consumer waste
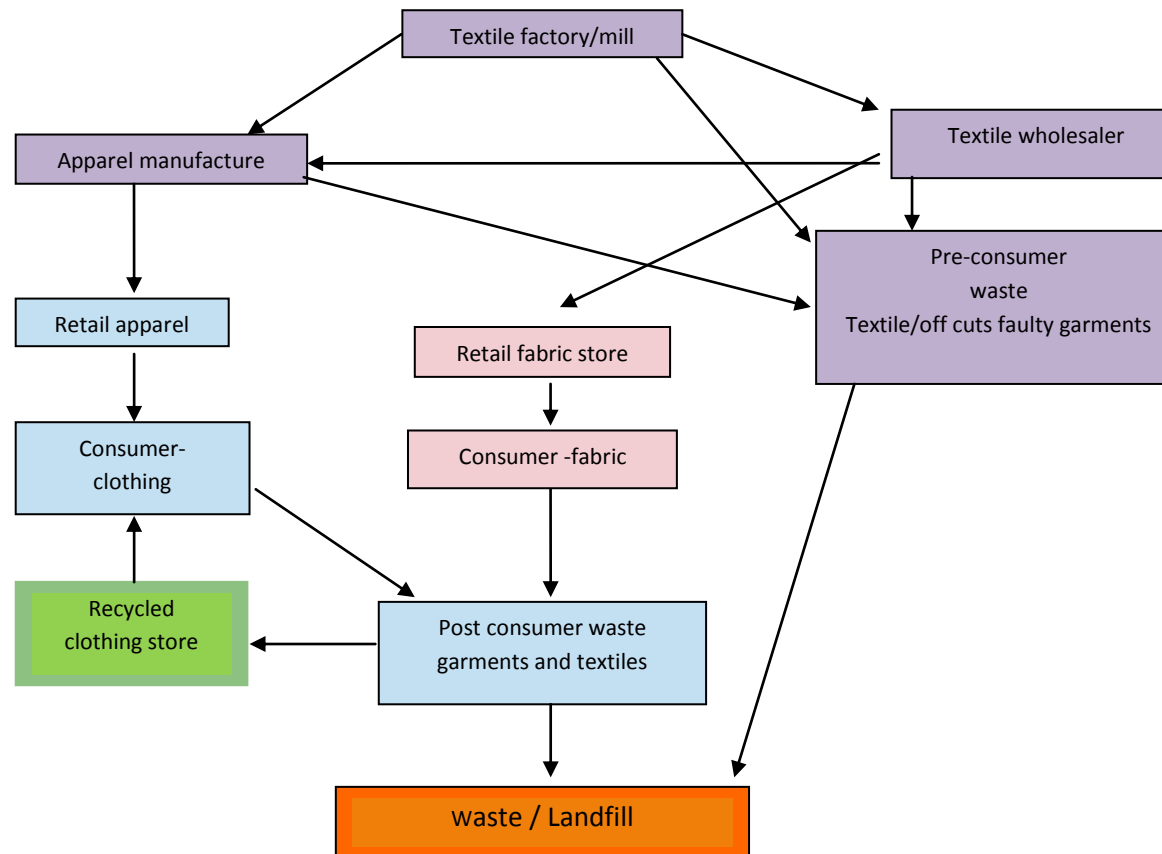garments and textiles

waste / Landfill

Figure 1: September 2009. Debra Laraman. Schematic of pre and post-consumer waste in New Zealand (an example).

Chapter 1 Contextual and theoretical framework

1.1 Fast fashion

Over the last decade New Zealand apparel companies have increasingly moved to offshore production, which has resulted in job and skill losses in the sector. Consumers are now able to buy garments more cheaply than they can buy the fabric or yarn to make their own clothing. Three out of every four garments sold in New Zealand are made in China and consumers are now spending 80% more on clothing than 10 years ago (McAleer, 2008).

Chain stores offer a plethora of fast[8] fashion which is cheap, and rapidly changes to entice the consumer to keep buying for an already burgeoning wardrobe. Fletcher (2007) says fast fashion is less cherished and personal and more likely to be thrown away and that similar garments and thematic trends dominate fashion which leads to boredom and over consumption. Schwarz and Laky (2008) suggest that flooding the market with low cost, low quality goods has dumbed down the consumer as they are drawn into a continual cycle of purchasing and replacing outdated goods. While many consumers may crave individuality in their clothing, they often lack the confidence and knowledge to make or adapt clothing themselves and so their only choice is to consume.

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[8] Fast fashion is based on rapidly increasing rates of consumption and cheap clothing

1.2 Second-hand

Pre-loved garments can offer an alternative to buying new fashion, as they offer a unique quality simply by being no longer available in stores. Designer second-hand and vintage clothing has become popular but is often expensive and out of the reach of many consumers. According to Palmer (2006, p.197) "vintage has now shifted from subculture to mass culture because of the disappointing fact that , regardless of price, fashion today is rarely exclusive".

Re-using second-hand clothing and re-vamping garments is not a new concept and has often been practised out of necessity and lack of available resources. However, there are now fashion designers using recycled garments and materials in their collection, which has more to do with using excess resources and making a statement about eco issues than lack of resources. By researching contemporary fashion designers using reclaimed materials I identified three methods for using recycle materials in a commercial fashion context, namely re-styling the garments, using the clothing as a material resource and up-cycling which was often through applied decoration. "Junky Styling" (a United Kingdom. fashion business) utilise the features of the original clothing, such as collars, pockets, zips, and re-cut the items into unique garments that reference the origin. They also offer customers a "Wardrobe Surgery" service where customers can bring in old clothing and have it made contemporary again (Junky Styling, 2009). "Alabama Chanin" (based in Alabama USA) has taken a different approach to using reclaimed materials. This business uses the garments as a material resource and cuts new styles from the original garments leaving no visible reference to the original clothing. The garments are made entirely by hand, using local craftspeople and age-old techniques (Chanin,2008). Rebecca Earley (based in the United Kingdom), is well known for her "Top 100" project where she up-cycled 100 blouses using a printing process with the aim of increasing consumer attachment through the unique images (tfrgdev 2009). Black (2008) suggests that because new clothing is so cheap it has eroded the value of second-hand clothing, thus the impetus for re-cycling has decreased. According to the Environment , Food and Rural Affairs Committee in the United Kingdom, 30% of the waste at some landfills is cheap throw away fashion (green-pepper, 2009). Exploring ways to add value to discarded clothing and textiles is necessary, or an ever-increasing amount will end up in the landfill.

To create more sustainable clothing it is important to understand why some clothes are kept and others thrown away after only a few wears. Vaughan (2006) suggests that clothing can act as a souvenir of lived experience, connecting us to moments in our life and anchoring us to particular periods. Older clothing may be kept (even though it may be threadbare and no longer wearable) purely for the memories it evokes or for its aesthetic value (Banin &Guy, 2001). This aspect was evidenced during the practice when a donated t-shirt came with a handwritten note from the owner (refer Fig. 2 and Fig. 3).

Bye and McKinney (2007), identified four categories of why women keep clothing they no longer wear, namely;

1. Weight management (either too big or too small),
2. Investment value (the value is the money that was spent),
3. Sentimental value (relates to an event or memory, or a gift)
4. Aesthetic object (it is just so beautiful).

The identification of these categories gave me clues for designing garments that women would want to keep. I realised I needed to design garments that could fit more than one size, encouraged a sentimental attachment, and were visually appealing. To encourage sentimental attachment I considered two approaches. The first was creating a narrative for the garment to communicate with the user and inviting them to add to the story by signing the swing tag. The second method focussed on user participation with the garment through customisation, to encourage an emotional attachment via the experience. Designing garments as an "aesthetic object" is challenging, as the
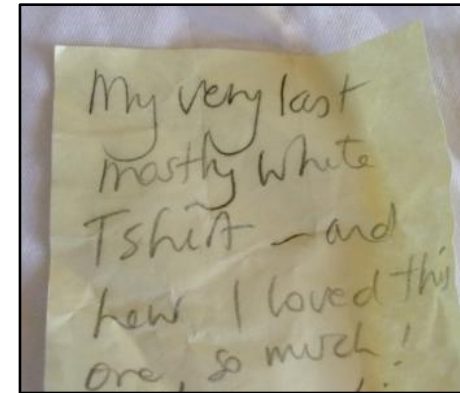

Figure 2: June 2008. Debra Laraman. Note supplied with a donated t-shirt evidencing sentimental attachment.

Figure 3: June 2008. Debra Laraman. Donors last white t-shirt.

experience of a product is subjective and personal, so I focussed on creating garments that were highly detailed and appealed to my personal aesthetic. Walker (2008, p,188) says "aesthetic appreciation cannot be reduced to quantitative criteria, but is based on an holistic contemplation of the intrinsic properties of the object and is informed by knowledge and values we bring to the artefact."

1.3 User participation

While developing the garment kits I was cognisant that the instructions should not be too prescriptive, as I wanted to provide an opportunity for the participants to experiment. Hackney (2006) describes the role of kits through women's consumer magazines in the 1920's and 1930's as enabling women to learn new skills and express ideas and values, rather than encouraging women to become dependent upon projects. Von Busch (2008) suggests step-by-step instructional manuals can be commands or take the form of a cookbook, in that they can be directional or offer advice and encourage users to experiment by themselves. The original kits I developed engaged the user in the entire making process of the garments by providing full instructions and materials and suggesting opportunities to adapt or alter methods. I drew parallels with the concept of "participatory design" as described by Fletcher (2008) who says participatory design is built on the idea that those who use the product are entitled to have a voice in how it is designed with the wearer being a co creator. In contrast "user engagement[9]" is a finished product that the user can interact with, such as a pair of sports shoes supplied with felt pens for the wearer to colour in (Fletcher, 2008, p. 63). My early practice and the final phase of the project were more closely aligned to user engagement as the work did not allow the user to be involved directly from the inception to the final production, but by producing a garment that was not "closed'[10] I attempted to invite participation and engagement with the design.

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[9] User engagement involves the user in the customisation of the design (Fletcher 2008)

[10] Closed products are presented to us as complete with an almost untouchable status that dissuades us from personalising them (Fletcher, 2008)

1.4 Sustainable design

This project incorporated principles used in sustainable design practice, by reusing materials, up-cycling, incorporating user participation, and slow design[11] processes. According to Walker (2008), objects we have had a hand in creating ourselves are valued for their intrinsic qualities rather than extrinsic beauty, and we are more likely to repair them than simply discard them. In contrast, most fashion garments do not offer the opportunity for the consumer to engage with the product, and are often discarded rather than repaired, as it may be more cost effective to replace the item than repair it.

Three areas for the sustainable fashion designer to investigate during the design process are suggested by Vaughan and Van Kopplen (2006),

1.   Master craftsperson; craft applied to fashion to transform an ordinary garment into an individual and desirable garment

2. Allure; the physical and emotional attributes of the fashion product to engage the viewer

3. Customization; re-designing current fashion products and the development of new ones, in line with sustainable parameters

The identification of the three areas were important considerations for my practice, as I intended the user to become the master craftsperson through the techniques that they would use. They would participate in customization of the garment to their personal aesthetic, and by doing so, I hoped they would form an emotional attachment (allure) as the garment would reflect their design preferences.

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[11] Slow design is about designing and producing quality products with awareness and responsibility.

Chapter 2 Research methods .

2.1 Heuristics

This project utilised a range of creative research methods including heuristics, reflection in and on action, research diaries, questionnaires, and user participation. The Heuristic approach provided a framework that allowed for maximum experimentation and enabled me to gain a greater understanding of my own research practice. Moustakas (1990) identified the six phases of Heuristic methodology as initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative syntheses (refer Fig 4).

Initial engagement
Search to discover the topic and question

Creative synthesis
Putting the components and themes together from an internal perspective drawing on perceptions, intuition and beliefs

Throughout the process; Reflection, self searching, tacit knowledge.

Immersion
 Everything related to the question becomes raw material for immersion

Explication
Utilizes focussing and indwelling to recognise the components of the phenomenon and is ready use them

Incubation
Retreats from the question and allows tacit knowledge to extend understanding beyond immediate awareness

Illumination
 A breakthrough or insight occurs without conscious striving or concentration

Figure 4: August 2009. Debra Laraman. The six phases of the Heuristic discovery (Moustakas, 1990, p. 27).

The identification and awareness of the phases in the process enabled me to analyse my own practice, and helped me to accept that time to contemplate and allow ideas to incubate was an important part of the process. Erwin (2003) describes how naming the steps in the Heuristic process helped formalise something she had informally used throughout her life and provided a powerful tool for engaging with tacit knowledge. The stages in the Heuristic inquiry did not always follow one another as I found that through experimentation and reflection new ideas would emerge which would reframe my focus, and change the direction. Periods of incubation enabled new ideas to emerge, but the work could not be rushed as illumination could occur at any time followed by immersion as new material suddenly becomes necessary and connections and links with other material become possible. I found each experiment provided value for future work, although often this was often only recognised through reflection and during future practice when ideas would re-emerge in a different context (Fig. 5 to Fig. 7).

Figure 5: June 2008. Debra Laraman. Experimenting with garment designs using fabrics created from old jeans.

Figure 6: May 2008. Debra Laraman. Knitted garment made from t-shirts with detachable sleeves.

Figure 7: June 2008. Debra Laraman. Fabrics and ideas such as detachable sleeves were reconfigured.

The Heuristic process gave me the confidence to accept situations and leave problems to incubate, with the expectation from this stage illumination would occur.

Schon (1991, p.62) suggests reflection–in-action is bound by the "action-present" which is the zone of time that action may make a difference; this can be minutes, days or months. Realising the work was not progressing I allowed myself time for incubation (refer fig. 8). I also decided to change my working method and reverted to my usual practice of drawing to enable some new design ideas to emerge. I felt the process of drawing helped me overcome a creative block.

Heuristic inquiry allows for maximum experimentation, which enabled me to connect ideas and experiment with new concepts as they emerged, however it also created a huge workload, with many experiments not directly contributing to the outcome of the project, but enabling me to try out ideas and concepts (Fig. 9 and Fig.10).

I started working with denim and have done several experimentations. 25th march I did not progress very far, although I tried several new methods of creating cloth.

I was a little concerned that I felt I had come to a standstill, however I am aware that in the creative process sometimes leaving things to incubate is the most beneficial method. I went away to a conference for the weekend

On my return .
I decided I actually needed to *change the working method* and that simply draping on the mannequin was not the right process for the moment. I went back to drawing. I felt I managed to push the project ahead with several Ideas coming up through my sketches. I felt relieved……

Figure 8: April 2008. Debra Laraman 2008. A page from my research diary (one of the only typed entries).

Figure 9: June 2008 Debra Laraman.

Recycling Garment labels as decoration.

Figure 10: June 2008. Debra Laraman.

Transforming a man's t-shirt to a fitted women's garment through the positioning of darts and addition of fabric off cuts.

Research diaries were important tools to engage with my practice and connect ideas and concepts. My practice utilised a trial and error approach and I worked intuitively with the materials, which enabled unexpected ideas and outcomes to develop. I occasionally used drawing as a process to explore ideas, which had the benefit of not requiring material resources and was fast, through using a combination of approaches, I developed a deeper understanding of my design practice (Fig. 11). Moustakas (1990, p.13) states, "self understanding and self growth occur simultaneously in heuristic discovery". During the project, I developed a new awareness of my personal assumptions and beliefs and began to question my own consumption habits. I came to understand my revulsion to second-hand clothing and develop methods to overcome the negative aspects I felt towards handling them. I experienced how a story can imbue a garment with value and I questioned my usual design process and values. Green, Banin and Guy (2001) suggest the act of being researched can cause the subject to undergo periods of reflection and that this is not confined to the subject as the researcher/writer is vulnerable too. Heuristic research is subjective, as the researcher cannot be stripped from the research as they draw on tacit knowledge and experience to expand their understanding. In the case of this research project, it could be conducted by other designers who may produce completely different outcomes.
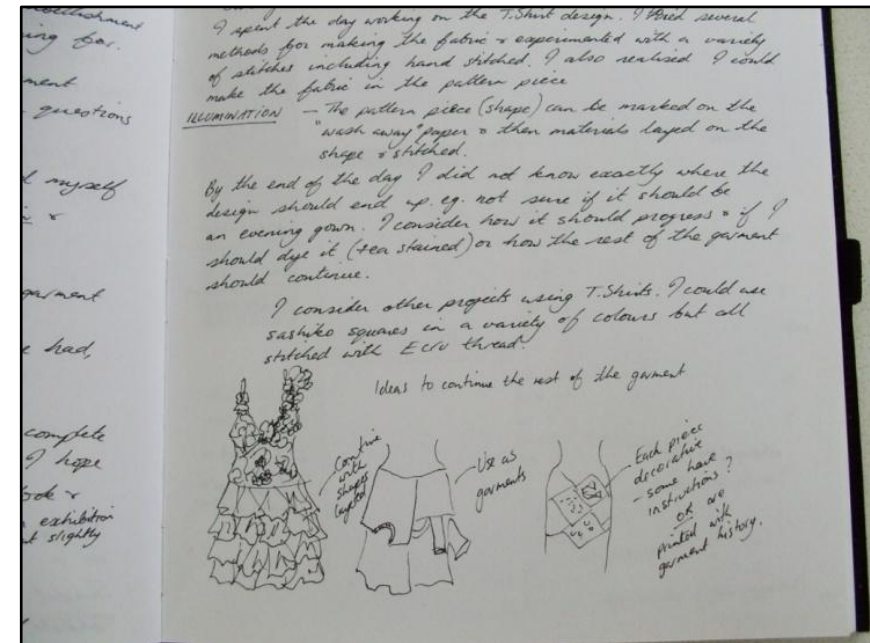
Figure 11: March 2008. Debra Laraman. Research diaries invited constant dialogue with my work.

2.2 Research Diaries

I used three methods to record the development of the project, namely the research diary, the visual journal, and digital documentation. The research diary provided a comprehensive account of the practice. I chose a bound diary and hand wrote all my notes in chronological order as this provided an honest account of the project's development and did not allow for refinement or editing (Fig. 11). In heuristic research, the research diary may take the form of a pin board or loose-leaf folder to allow for rearrangement and connection of ideas, however I wanted a true and comprehensive record of the process to enable me to gain a better understanding of how the project developed. I found this format was easily transportable and accessible, which invited constant dialogue with my work. Scrivener (2006) discusses the need to "Reflect on Action and Practice" (ROAP) and how this is driven by the desire to learn from experience. I found the research diary enabled me to interpret and analyze my work in relation to relevant literature, make connections, and understand my practice. Newbury (2006, p 1) suggests that "the research diary can seen as a melting pot for all the ingredients in a research project, prior experience, observations, reading and ideas".

The visual journal was an A3 folder with removable plastic sleeves (Fig. 12 and Fig. 13) which were used to store the actual fabric experimentations and thumbnail images of the experimentations. This journal was useful as a visual record of the project which allowed me to quickly revisit previous techniques and ideas. Having actual fabrics enabled me to interact with the tactile properties of the samples which was not possible with digital or written work.

Figure 12: July 2008. Debra Laraman. Pages from visual journal.

Figure 13: July 2008. Debra Laraman. Fabric experimentations in the visual journal.

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Digital documentation involved documenting the practical work through photography. The images were filed digitally, resulting in thousands of images being stored, which were useful for reflection during the project, and for the development of the kits.

Chapter 3 The Practice

3.1 Experimentation with materials

The practice consisted of several key areas of experimentation that helped shape and direct the project.

- Experimentation with materials

- Rags to riches

- Denim experiments

- Garment as narrative

- Applied decoration

- Developing garments for the Kits

- Developing the kits

- User participation and feedback

- Later practice

- Final phase

The initial experiments focussed on experimentation with layering and stitching techniques to use small pieces of material to create a new fabric. Opportunities to engage the user with the material were considered by creating a surface that could be adapted by adding extra fabrics (from the owner's old clothing), or by removal of materials to reveal the under layers (Fig. 14 to Fig. 16), thereby evolving the design over time. This was followed by investigating methods to transform second-hand clothing into new garments and explored opportunities for user interaction, which led to the realisation of the garment kits. Seven kits were created and

Figure 14: July 2008. Debra Laraman. Fabric experimentations in the visual journal

Figure 15: February 2008. Debra Laraman. Random fabric shapes gathered and stitched.

Figure 16: February 2008. Debra Laraman. Layering fabrics with Reverse appliqué and hand stitched appliqué

trialled by a group of research participants. The final phase of the practice focuses on the development of garments and kits in response to the feedback from the research participants.

During my practical experiments I asked myself the following types of questions to determine if the work was successful or not;

- By what methods and processes can value be added to discarded textiles and clothing?
- Would a consumer want to wear the garment?
- Do the garments have commercial value?
- How can I engage the user in the garment design?
- What type of materials do most people have access to?
- Can the garments be made using techniques that a novice could easily learn?
- What skills, techniques and equipment are most suitable to use?
- How much time is required for the user to engage with the garment?
- What information and materials should the kits contain?
- What other methods could I use to extend the life of clothing and textiles?

The first experiment focused on methods to add value to fabric swatches (pre-consumer waste), which are generally considered to be too small to be used (Fig. 17). The experiment focussed on methods to assemble the pieces into a new material. Cutting the fabrics into small strips enabled the limited amount of materials to be positioned so the colours and textures could be balanced in the garment (Fig. 18). Vertical stripes on the lower section of the skirt provided a guideline so the user could add additional strips of material from their old clothing or fabrics scraps in these areas (Fig. 19 and Fig. 20). The initial experiments provided a valuable way to trial different textile techniques and highlighted the importance of using readily available materials that the user would have access to and resulted in a shift to using mass produced garments that most consumers owned.

Figure 17: March 2008. Debra Laraman. Swatch cards.

Figure 19: March 2008. Debra Laraman.
Assembled fabric strips into a skirt.

Figure 20: March 2008. Debra Laraman.
Assembling the lower section of the skirt with guidelines for users to attach fabrics.

Figure 18: March 2008. Debra Laraman.
Strips of fabrics ready to be assembled.

3.2 Rags to riches

This experiment focussed on re-contextualising the t-shirt as a symbol for cheap, mass produced fashion into a one-of-a-kind couture garment. Initial experimentation focussed on methods to transform t-shirts into a fabric with a lace effect. This process enabled me to overcome the negative emotions[12] I had towards second-hand clothing, as I could deconstruct the garments into small pieces and reassemble them into a new material. I trialled many different methods to create a fabric that resembled lace, exploring placement of the strips, the formation of patterns and hand versus machine-stitched pieces (Fig. 21 to Fig. 23). I focussed on bringing a handmade quality to my work that was easy to learn and invited user participation. My intention was to create garments that consumers would want to purchase for aesthetic reasons and want to keep for emotional reasons.

Figure 21: March 2008. Debra Laraman. Exploring methods to construct fabrics.

Figure 22: March 2008. Debra Laraman. Layering lace pieces and applied decoration.

Figure 23: March 2008. Debra Laraman. Hand sewing soluble paper to create texture.

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[12] My negative emotions to second-hand clothing were associated with feeling dirty when touching the clothing and a concern about the previous owner's cleanliness and mortality.

Figure 24: March 2008. Debra Laraman. Experimenting with construction methods.

Figure 25: March 2008. Debra Laraman. Developing the decoration.

Figure 26: March 2008. Debra Laraman. Moulaging the pieces on the mannequin.

Figure 27: March 2008. Debra Laraman. Attaching the fabric pieces and assessing fit.

I considered methods to construct the garment and experimented with cutting away areas on the original t-shirt and using this material to make new pieces that could be sewn back into the garment (Fig. 24 and Fig. 25). I decided to transform the whole garment and used the original t-shirt to create a new fabric. Each new piece of material was positioned on the mannequin and the garment design developed through repositioning and assessing the placement of each piece (Fig. 26 to 30).

Figure 28: March 2008. Debra Laraman. Man's t-shirt used upside down to form the skirt.

Figure 29: March 2008. Debra Laraman. Assembling the pieces and considering garment options.

Figure 30: March 2008. Debra Laraman. Back view with the waistband reused as a strap to reference the original garment.

I wanted to reference the past of the garment to imbue the garment with a history, so I used some recognisable pieces of the existing garment and repositioned them (Fig 28). This process enabled me to relocate the parts of the original garment that are in close proximity to the body (neck and underarms) into areas further away from the body. I felt some of the original garment should be visible in order to appreciate the result, but through ongoing assessment of the design, I decided to remove the lower section as I felt it detracted from the new garment by blatantly declaring its original form. I considered my emotional response to the work and realised that it was the result I connected to, rather than the origin of the garment, so I used only the ribbing from the original t-shirt as a strap (Fig. 30).

The juxtaposition of the delicate lace fabric in contrast with the original t-shirt created a tension between an item that had become more beautiful but less useful, and I wondered about the perception of value and aesthetics in our desire to keep or discard clothes. Walker (2008) discusses how the aesthetics of a product are a key factor in creating an emotional tie with an object. This was an important consideration for my own work as the product needed to attract the viewer in the first instance, or they would not want to wear the garment and engage with it.

Figure 31: March 2008. Debra Laraman. White top Made from discarded, old, threadbare and stained white t-shirts destined for the landfill.

Figure 32: March 2008. Debra Laraman. Back view.

Figure 33: March 2008. Debra Laraman. Side view.

The final garment (Fig. 31 to Fig. 33) was important for the project as it was through this experiment I trialled processes of making new materials using strips of t-shirts.

The focus on hand stitching techniques and applied decoration aimed to create a garment that had added value (from its original form) and I hoped would appeal to the consumer as an aesthetic object. User participation was possible via the application of additional Suffolk puffs, flounces, and stitching.

3.3 Denim experiments

The next experiment focussed on using discarded denim garments, as they were readily available to most people. I was interested in transforming the utilitarian feel of denim into a more delicate and decorative cloth as a way of adding perceived value (Fig. 34 to Fig. 38).

Figure 34: April 2008. Debra Laraman. Denim pieces cut into shapes and re-assembled using soluble paper and machine stitched.
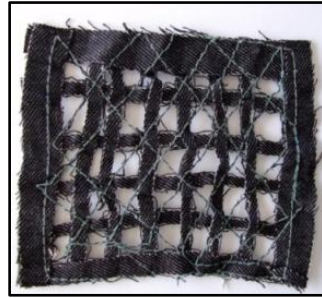
Figure 35: April 2008 .Debra Laraman. Denim fabric strips re-assembled into a grid pattern and machine stitched.

Figure 36: April 2008. Debra Laraman. Denim shapes machine stitched.

Figure 37: April 2008. Debra Laraman. Random fabric strips machine stitched together to create a new fabric.

Figure 38: April 2008. Debra laraman. Embroidery design created for the user to complete the areas unfilled.

I was inspired by the work of fashion designer Martine Van't Hul who incorporated the idea of the unfinished in her 2003 spring collection, by leaving some of the embroidered flowers uncoloured in her evening gowns, so the wearer could engage with the garment. However because her garments are so delicate I felt they were presented as closed designs. Fletcher (2008) suggests that the fashions presented to us as "complete" or "closed", have an almost untouchable status that dissuades us from personalising them. I experimented with embroidery designs that could quickly be completed by the user using a simple stitch and chose denim as a base cloth because it is robust and easy to work with (Fig. 38).

Figure 39: April 2008. Debra Laraman. Using drawing to explore design ideas.

Figure 40: April 2008. Debra Laraman. Drawing of jacket design.

Figure 41: April 2008. Debra Laraman. Experimenting with design options for the jacket.

Figure 42: April 2008. Debra Laraman. Denim jacket, side view.

Figure 43: April 2008. Debra Laraman. Trialling ideas and reconfiguring previously made textile samples.

The process of drawing had enabled ideas to emerge and I utilised many of the previously made materials (Fig. 39 to Fig. 43). I considered options for user participation through the addition of materials that could add length to the hemline through applied decoration, embroidery or appliqué techniques. I reflected on the work and felt that setting some constraints with regard to the materials may help the work progress in a clearer direction.

3.4 Garment as narrative

This experiment focussed on using donated t-shirts and slicing them into strips to be knitted. The garment concept was to use rectangular shapes that could be repositioned to change the design of the garment (Fig 44 to Fig. 47). User interaction was possible through adaptation of the pieces and tying other materials directly onto the garment.

Figure 44: May 2008. Debra Laraman. Attaching knitted panels to the hem to add length to the garment.

Figure 45: May 2008, Debra Laraman. Knitted panel used to create a shrug.

Figure 46: May 2008. Debra Laraman. Attaching the knitted panel to create a long sleeve.

Figure 47: May 2008. Debra Laraman. Knitted garment on Model.

I photographed each garment before cutting it up and I realised that some of the donated t-shirts seemed to belong to one person. There were four items that appeared to be souvenirs from an athletic event. Three of the garments showed signs of continual wear and the fourth one was barely worn (Fig. 48 to

Fig. 52). I became very interested in why one had not been worn, and wondered if the previous owner disliked the graphics. I found myself constructing an imaginary identity for this person. I imagined the previous owner to be an athletic male and perhaps the graphics of the strong man on the front of the garment did not fit with his image of himself. Gregson and Crewe (2003) state that often the new owners of second-hand clothing create imagined histories of the previous owner to authenticate the clothing and imbue it with stories to make it more special and meaningful. I knitted the strips from these t-shirts with strips of my children's clothing and suddenly became very uncomfortable as I felt as if this anonymous person had now been intertwined into the story of my own family's garments. Rovine (2003, p. 221) states, "For many consumers the attraction and value of second-hand goods lies in the imaginative potential of its former life, second-hand goods are imbued with a history and geography". I realised I had created a fictitious biography for these donated garments which had become more interesting to me because of this experience and I became aware how the story of an item could alter the perception of value to the new owner.

Figure 48: May 2008. Debra Laraman. Donated threadbare t-shirt from 1990.

Figure 49: May 2008. Debra Laraman. Donated, well worn t-shirt from 1999.

Figure 50: May 2008. Debra Laraman. Donated t-shirt from 2000.

Figure 51: May 2008. Debra Laraman. Donated t-shirt from 2003.
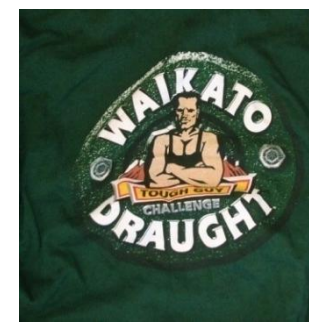
Figure 52: May 2008. Debra Laraman. Graphics of the strong man image.

This experiment raised new areas for investigation that I had previously not considered. I became more interested in why we choose the clothes we wear and why we keep clothes we no longer wear. Banin and Guy (2001) identified three groupings for this, namely, discontinued identities which were linked to a former identity, which they wanted to distance themselves from; transitional identities where the image is perceived to be on the move, and,

connectedness to others, which is linked to maintaining associations to a time, place, or person. Through this exploration, I had been able to experience my own emotional response to second-hand clothing and become aware of how garments can act as a souvenir of experience.

3.5 Applied decoration

The focus of this experiment was exploring user participation through applied decoration. I was interested in using appliqué as a method to develop an all-over pattern, that the user could add to over a period of time.

Figure 53: June 2008. Debra Laraman. Experimenting with the garment design and removable knitted sleeves.

Figure 54: June 2008. Debra Laraman. Experimentation with garment and applied design.

Figure 55: June 2008. Debra Laraman. Experimentation with garment decoration.

Figure 56: June 2008. Debra Laraman. Experimentation with garment.

During the development of this garment, I had to constantly consider how I could invite user interaction, and make the garment appear finished but not complete. I found myself constructing and deconstructing my design so that user participation could still be possible (Fig. 53 to Fig. 56). I utilized methods I had previously experimented with, such as knitting to create detachable sleeves, sashiko patches made of denim, and some components from the original

garments such as the denim waistband. I did not think this garment was successful, because I did not like it aesthetically nor that it was made from other garments where the origins were still clearly recognisable

However, this experiment was an important part of the research because, while I was questioning how to enable the user to learn techniques to engage with the design, "Illumination" (Moustakas, 1990) occurred and realised I needed to create a kit to accompany the garment. I made a mock up of the packaging, the templates and materials needed to extend the design of the garment (Fig. 57 to Fig. 59). This was a turning point in the project and gave me a clearer direction to follow.

Figure 57: June 2008 Debra Laraman. Ideas for kit packaging.
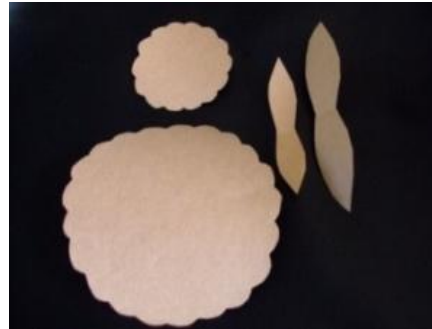
Figure 58: June 2008 Debra Laraman. Kit templates.

Figure 59: June 2008 Debra Laraman. Strips made from t-shirts which are ready for knitting.

3.6 Developing garments for the kits

The next stage of the practice focussed on experimentation with materials to develop garments for the kits. I decided to use the oldest most threadbare materials to explore how textile waste that appeared unusable could be re-used. I used threads from the overlocker, scraps of materials, and strips from old t-shirts and transformed them into a decorative cape (Fig. 60 and Fig. 61).

Figure 60: July 2008. Debra Laraman. Up-cycled cape: made from strips of old threadbare t-shirts.

Figure 61: July 2008. Debra Laraman. Up-cycled cape. Image from Good: New Zealand's guide to sustainable living, issue 3, p.45.

Figure 62: July 2008. Debra Laraman. Garment made from pre-consumer waste.

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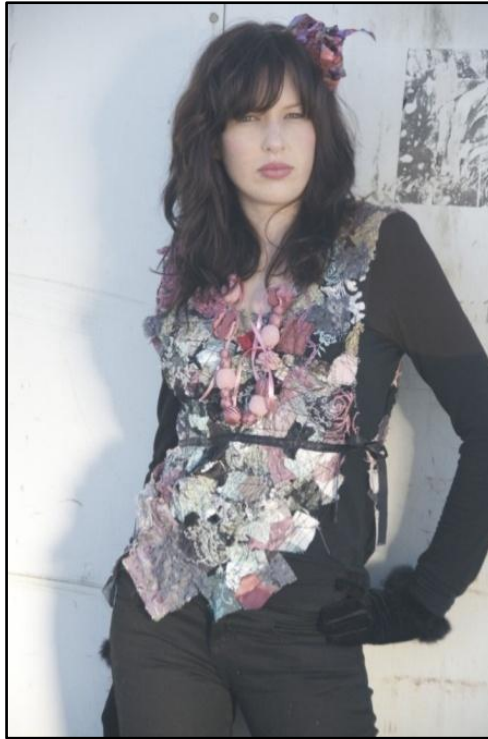
Figure 63: July 2008. Debra Laraman. Garment on model.

This garment was made from pre-consumer waste and designed to use minimal construction processes, as the making of the fabric was the focus (Fig 62 to Fig. 63). I made a pattern that allowed the user to lay the fabrics in a configuration that eliminated the need for darts (used for bust shaping). This reduced bulk and enabled the fabric to be moulded into the shape of the garment. The top was designed to have one side left open and tied by ribbons to enable it to fit more than one size and eliminating the need for closures. Illumination (Moustakas 1990) occurred and I realised that the kits could be developed to reframe the user as the maker.

3.7 Developing the kits:

The development of the kits required adaptation of normal garment construction methods to simplify the designs. I considered every aspect of the making process and documented each step through digital photographs and written instruction (Fig. 64 to Fig. 68). I drew parallels with von Busch (2008) who suggested that the fashion designer role could take the form of an orchestrator and facilitator and I realised the kits would challenge the role of the designer as the user would ultimately have control over the design.

Figure 64: August 2008. Debra Laraman. Making a pattern for the cape from calico.

Figure 65: August 2008. Debra Laraman. Positioning the materials on the soluble paper.

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Figure 66: August 2008. Debra Laraman. The stitched pieces.

Figure 67: August 2008. Debra Laraman Rinsing the fabric under the tap to remove the paper.

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Figure 68: August 2008. Debra Laraman. Experimenting with joining panels to eliminate seams.

Developing the instructions for the 'Side tie top kit' produced unexpected discoveries. Again, "Illumination" occurred and I realised that the kit did not require a separate pattern for the garment as the soluble paper could have the pattern shape printed on it (Fig. 69 and Fig. 70). In July 2009 I realised this concept had arisen in an earlier experiment but was not recognised for its potential until the garment kits were developed. This demonstrated to me how previous ideas re-emerged and how tacit knowledge can be acquired and later utilised without recognising how it was acquired.

Design constraints were parameters that had to be constantly considered and negotiated through the practice.   The availability of materials and the necessity to use easily mastered techniques and low technology processes controlled the ability to experiment too broadly.   The user was the constant and central aspect to any design consideration and paramount to the outcome of the project..

 The kits were designed to cater to a range of skill and ability levels and used a variety of techniques. Each kit featured a heart rating system that was developed to communicate the level of difficulty at a quick glance. with one heart being the easiest and five hearts the most difficult to make (Fig. 71 to Fig. 77).

Figure 69: August 2008. Debra Laraman. Making a calico pattern.

Figure 70: August 2008. Debra Laraman. Laying fabric pieces on the soluble paper.

EVOLVE: Customising Craft Kit

TIP: Transform, Individualize, Prolong *the life of your garments*

Kit information

Level   : easy/intermediate
Method   : Sewn
Additional Materials needed : sewing machine, crocheted flowers or additional decoration.

Figure 71: August 2008. Debra Laraman. Side tie top kit information

EVOLVE: Customising Craft Kit

TIP: Transform, Individualize, Prolong *the life of your garments*

Kit information ♥ ♥ ♥ ♡ ♡
Level : easy/intermediate
Method : sewn
Additional Materials needed : sewing machine and a pair of scissors

Figure 72: August 2008. Debra Laraman. Kit information for the cape.

EVOLVE: Customising Craft Kit

TIP: Transform, Individualize, Prolong *the life of your garments*

Kit information ♥ ♥ ♡ ♡ ♡
Level : easy
Method : hand or machine stitched
Additional Materials needed : scissors

Figure 73: September 2008. Debra Laraman. Kit information for the Shrug.

EVOLVE: Customising Craft Kit

TIP: Transform, Individualize, Prolong *the life of your garments*

Kit information ♥ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡
Level : easy
Method : Hand knit
Additional Materials needed : knitting needles size 15 or 25mm .
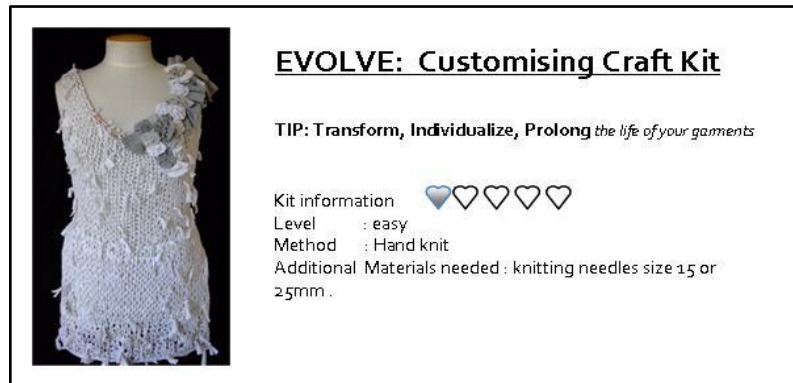
Figure 74: October 2008. Debra Laraman. Kit information for the knitted top.

EVOLVE: Customising Craft Kit

TIP: Transform, Individualize, Prolong *the life of your garments*

Kit information ♥ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡
Level : easy
Method : handsewn
Additional Materials needed : scissors and thread

Figure 75: October 2008. Debra Laraman. Kit information for the black and white singlet.

The embellishment kit was a separate kit that enabled the user to decorate any of the garments using fabric flowers, Suffolk puffs and flounces (Fig. 75).
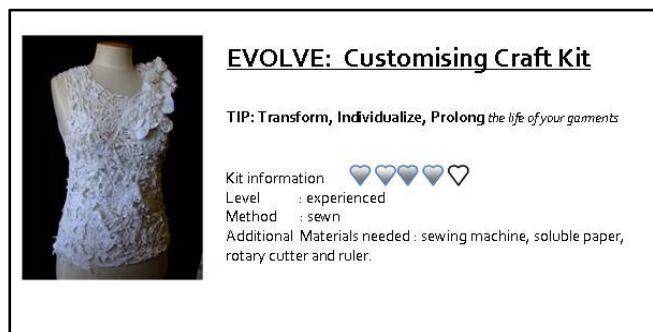
Figure 76: November 2008. Debra Laraman. Kit information for the white top.

Figure 77: November 2008. Debra Laraman. Kit information for the embellishment kit.

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Between September and December 2008, seven different kits were developed. The kits were designed to cater to a range of skill levels and included all the materials necessary to make each garment. The methods and equipment needed to make the garments mainly focussed on hand stitching or knitting, with the most technical kits requiring a sewing machine. User participation was needed to evaluate the kits and approval was sought from the Ethics Committee at Auckland University of Technology.

Figure 78: December 2008. Debra Laraman. Packaging options.

Figure 79: December 2008. Debra Laraman. Packaging options.

Figure 80: December 2008. Debra Laraman. The final packaging.

I considered options for packaging ranging from re-using plastic bags, recycled textile bags that could later be used as shopping bags and decided to use Envirosaks that were biodegradable with the text "standing up for our planet" already printed on them (Fig. 78 to Fig. 80). I thought the garbage bag was the perfect packaging for the kits as its function was reversed, by salvaging waste materials and reconnecting with the user as a primary resource.

I hand-printed the word EVOLVE on each of them using a stencil. Each kit had a swing tag on the outside showing the finished garment, and recycled materials were used for the handles.

Chapter 4 User Participation

4.1 Ethics approval

Figure 81: September 2008. Debra Laraman. Exhibition held in the Void Gallery, Tauranga.

Ethics approval was obtained late in 2008, but to encourage awareness of eco fashion and my project, I held an exhibition to evoke interest for participation in my project (Fig. 81). Volunteers for the project were sought via a notice on the staff intranet site at the Bay of Plenty Polytechnic (where I work). There were more responses than anticipated so I was unable to provide kits for everyone. This indicated there was a strong interest in recycling and people were keen to learn skills to help them transform their own garments. Seven kits were given out and five completed garments were returned. My initial intention was to conduct a workshop for the participants to make the kits, however I decided that this may influence the outcome too much as I would have been on hand to answer any questions. Participants took the kits home with them to complete in their own time over the Christmas period.

4.2 Participants' garments

Figure 82: October 2008. Debra Laraman Original garment.

Figure 83: Feb 2009. Participant's garment.

Figure 84: May 2009. Participant's garment worn by model.

This participant is an experienced knitter who adapted the pattern and used a variation of knitting stitches to produce a lace effect in the garment which she tea-dyed. She did not use the embellishment kit that was supplied preferring to use her own methods.

Figure 85: October 2008 Debra Laraman. Original black and white singlet

Figure 86: February 2009. Participant's garment. T-shirt transformed into a singlet using hand stitching and appliqué

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This participant adapted the stitch techniques and finished off the neckline and armholes using a different method (Fig. 86).

Figure 87: September 2008. Cape by Debra Laraman image from Good Magazine: 2008, Issue 3: Genuine Articles . Page 45.

Figure 88: May 2009. Participant's cape.

Figure 89: May 2009. Participant's cape worn by model.

This participant developed her own method to construct the material for the cape and used a contrasting thread. She also purchased additional fabric flowers which she used as embellishment (Fig. 88 to Fig. 89).

Figure 90: : Sept 2008. Debra Laraman. Original garment.

Figure 91: February 2009. Participant's finished garment: shrug.

Figure 92: February 2009. Participant's finished garment: shrug.

This participant sourced a t-shirt the same colour as the original garment. The kit contained a black and a white t-shirt. She machine-stitched the garment instead of hand- stitching and developed a method to stabilise the appliqué by using starch (Fig. 91 to Fig. 92).

This participant used her sewing knowledge and experience and created bust darts even though they were not part of the construction method for this garment (Fig. 94 and Fig. 95).
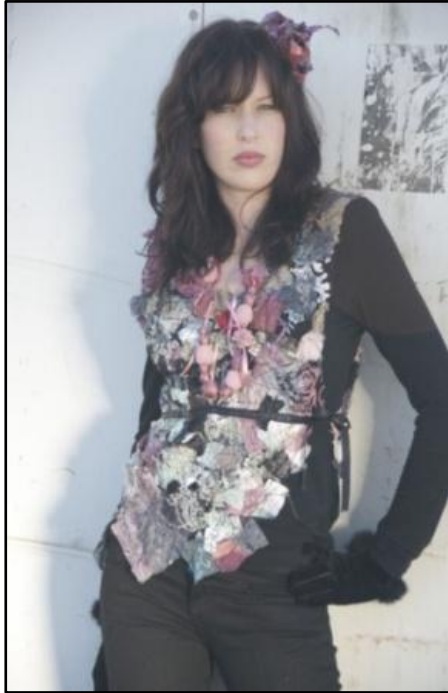
Figure 93: May 2009. Debra Laraman. Original garment.

Figure 94: February 2009. Participant's garment.

Figure 95: February 2009. Participant's garment side view.

EVOLVE: Customising Craft Kit

TIP: Transform, Individualize, Prolong *the life of your*

Kit Information
Level   : easy
Method   : hand stitched
Additional Materials needed : scissors

Figure 98: May 2009. Debra Laraman. Original embellishment kit.

Figure 96: May 2009. Debra Laraman.
Original garment..

Figure 97: May 2009. Debra Laraman. Original cape.

The above garments in Figures 96 to 98 were given out as kits but not made up by the participants. One participant was given the kit with the white top (Fig. 96) and the embellishment kit (Fig 98), but due to ill health she was unable to complete the kits. The other participant made the cape kit, but was unhappy with the results and did not return the garment although she did complete the questionnaire.

4.3 Participant feedback

In February 2009 the participants were invited to a morning tea, where they had the opportunity to see each other's garments and share their experiences. The finished garments were displayed on mannequins and each person was invited to talk about their garment, describing how they felt during and after making the garment, the process they went through and any problems they encountered. All seven participants attended, and they all returned the questionnaire which had been included in each kit. My analysis of the feedback is based on the completed questionnaires and the group discussion.

My analysis of the feedback

Negative	Positive
• No choice over contents and designs • Garments did not all fit • Practice materials would be helpful • Results not at their preferred standard • Some items were not completed • Possibly too much work	• Adapted methods to suit themselves • Liked to follow the instructions but were able to use their own knowledge and preferences. • Formed an attachment to the garment by being involved in the process • Inspired them to do more sewing and learn more techniques • Realised the potential for using old clothing and revamping items they already owned • Excitement and a feeling of achievement

The feedback and garment results indicated to me that participatory design kits (making the entire garments) would not be as successful as a kit designed for user participation. I decided that a small kit provided with a garment would achieve my aims more effectively. This would enable the user to interact with the garment on a smaller scale and reduce the amount of work, and the need for practice materials, while still providing an opportunity to learn skills. The user could choose a garment that appealed to them and fitted, which could be worn immediately or developed further in the future. The swing tag could be used to communicate with the user and provide information about the development of the garment.

The next phase of experimentation focussed on developing garments that enabled user interaction and had potential in a commercial context. User participation mainly focussed on methods to individualise the garment through applied decoration, as a way to pass on skills and techniques in an easy to learn method. I was concerned about the limited user involvement, and I was cognisant of Vaughan's (2006) suggestion that an ideal design scenario would allow the user to be involved from inception to the product realisation. This was a similar concept to participatory design as proposed by Fletcher (2008). I felt this concept could be incorporated through a website or blog as a way of extending skills and enabling the user to make full garments in the future, but felt it was outside the realms of this project to investigate further. My work was more closely aligned to user engagement as it did not allow the user to be involved directly from the inception to the final production, but by producing a garment that was not "closed" I attempted to invite participation and engagement with the design.

4.4 Validating my analysis of the particpant feedback

In July 2009, I had concerns about my analysis of the participant feedback and wondered how the kits would have been used if I had run the initial workshop that was originally intended for the research participants. As part of a professional development day for staff at the Bay of Plenty Polytechnic I was invited to hold a t-shirt revamp workshop on the 17th July 2009. Thirty-one people (males and females) attended the workshop that covered dyeing, printing, hand and machine stitching techniques. Example garments were on display and instructions were verbalised. The results were very successful with several people making mini capes using the soluble paper method, and others revamping t-shirts through appliqué techniques or printing and dyeing. The reaction was very positive with several people approaching me in subsequent days to show me their finished garments and stating how the opportunity had made them start sewing again with one even buying a sewing machine. It was obvious from the feedback that people enjoyed the opportunity to learn new skills and gained satisfaction from making something themselves.

I concluded that having the initial workshop may have made the process more enjoyable for the participants and perhaps improved the success for some of them, although the participants may not have read the instructions properly as I would have been on hand to assist. The original intention of the kits was for use by individuals, not in a workshop situation. Therefore, I felt that the process I used was valid and provided the most useful feedback.

The workshop indicated that participants had a desire to engage in design, but further evidenced that easy methods were necessary.

Chapter 5 Later Practice

5.1 Later Practice: exploring design options

The later practice explores opportunities to add value to a variety of garments.

The first experiment considers opportunities to utilise a low value men's skivvy and transform it into a contemporary women's' garment that can be worn as a skirt or dress (Fig. 100 to Fig. 101). The aim was to create a garment using minimal construction techniques. This was achieved as the only change to the garment was cutting the sleeves in half and sewing them up to form pockets. The garment can fit a variety of sizes and the user could continue the applied decoration through the accompanying kit, supplied with the garment.

The kit would include an image of how the garment may look with further embellishment (Fig. 102). The concept was that the user would add to the garment over period of time and throughout its life so it would be constantly evolving.

Figure 99: March 2009. Debra Laraman. Men's XXXL skivvy shown in the original state ready for up-cycling.

Figure 100: March 2009. Debra Laraman. Up-cycled through appliqué and stitch. Shown with the mini cape made from recycled textile waste.

Figure 101: March 2009. Debra Laraman. Man's XXXL skivvy, can be worn as a skirt or dress.

Figure 102: March 2009. Debra Laraman. Digitally created imaged to provide an indication of how the garment may look with additional embellishment.

I was interested in developing garments that functioned as an accessory because they could be worn with a variety of garments, could be worn for several years, could fit a variety of sizes and could easily be individualised by the user.

Two capes were made, with the first being created by using the lower section of a men's jacket, which was reshaped and hand-stitched (Fig. 103). The accompanying kit would include materials for the user to add more embellishment through appliqué and hand-stitching and included an image of how the garment may look with additional embellishment (Fig. 104). The lining had slits to enable easy access for hand stitching without stitching into the lining fabric.

The second cape was designed as a blank garment that could be worn immediately or the user could embellish by using the accompanying kit and instructions or add other colours and fabrics from their own resources onto the material (Fig. 105 and Fig. 106).

Figure 103: April 2009. Debra Laraman Mini cape made from the lower section of a man's jacket.

Figure 104: April 2009. Debra Laraman Digitally created image indicating how the garment may look with extra embellishment.

Figure 105: August 2009. Debra Laraman. Black cape made from a t-shirt.

Figure 106: August 2009. Debra Laraman. Embellishment ideas for the cape.

This garment was designed to be sold in a partially completed state (Fig. 107 and Fig. 108). The kit includes fabric that has the appliqued shapes stitched onto it so the user can cut around the shapes, hand- stitch them onto the garment and add embroidery and beads. The garment is designed to evolve over a period of time and the kit includes an image of how the garment may look with additional embellishment (Fig. 109). The back strap is made from a broken zip.

Figure 107: September 2009 Debra Laraman. Tunic made from a men's XXXL singlet.

Figure 108: September 2009. Debra Laraman. Garment on model.

Figure 109: September 2009. Debra Laraman. Digitally created image indicating how the garment may look.

5.2 Final Phase: developing the concept

Figure 110: September 2009. Debra Laraman Black top.

Figure 111: September 2009. Debra Laraman . Black top. Back view.

Figure 112: September 2009. Debra Laraman. Black top. Front view shown with additional embellishment (to be made by the user).

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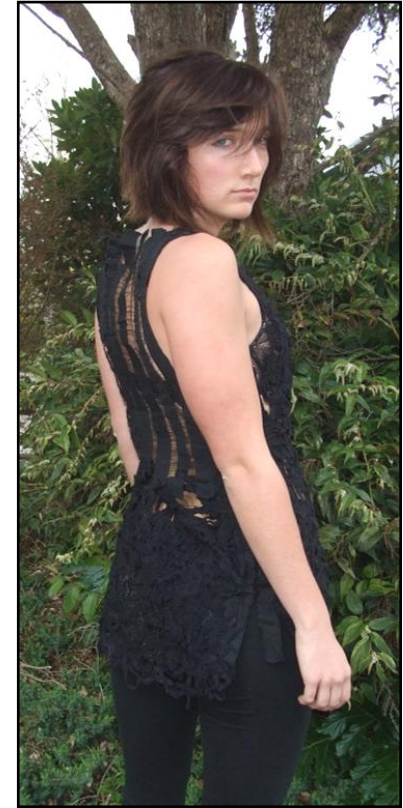
Figure 113: September 2009. Debra Laraman. Garment worn by model.

This garment was made from one discarded t-shirt, bias binding and a small off-cut of material. It is designed as a blank canvas that is decorative enough to be worn immediately, and comes with an embellishment kit so the user can adapt it (Fig. 110 to Fig. 113). The user could add colour by stitching other materials onto this garment

The packaging for the kits was designed so they could be hung with the garment (Fig. 117 and Fig. 118). I realised (Illumination) that a kit sold separately would enable consumers to re-vamp and individualise their own garments, which would extend the life of garments they already owned and 'add value'. This concept offered another approach by moving the process completely to the user and focussed on using their own garments. On reflection I realised this idea had surfaced earlier with the embellishment kit but the potential for its use was not fully realised at that stage. I considered using re-claimed materials in the kits and decided that the garments would be second-hand (already owned by the user) so the kits could have a combination of new and old materials. A prototype "t-shirt transformation kit "was developed . I chose the t-shirt because it is a cheap garment that is often discarded once it is stained or develops holes. Ideally, the kits would be sold in fashion stores as opposed to craft or haberdashery stores, as the target market is people who like fashion and do not already have the skills and knowledge to revamp and re-style their own clothing.

Figure 114: September 2009. Debra Laraman T-shirt revamp kit. Packaging idea. Concept 1 (front view).

Figure 115: September 2009. Debra Laraman T-shirt revamp kit. Packaging idea. Concept 1. Front View from above.

Figure 116: September 2009. Debra Laraman. T-shirt revamp kit . Packaging idea. Concept 1, Back view.

The initial idea for the packaging was to create a box that resembled a handbag and was made from recycled cardboard that had a surface texture printed to look like material (Fig. 114 to Fig. 118). However, on reflection I decided that a more eco-friendly method was to use re-cycled brown card and minimal printing so the final packaging uses only black ink (Fig. 119 to Fig. 121)

Figure 117: September 2009. Debra Laraman Mini kit packaging idea. Concept 1 (front view).

Figure 118: September 2009. Debra Laraman Mini kit packaging idea. Concept 1.(side view).

Figure 119: September 2009. Debra Laraman. Mini kit packaging concept 2. Front view.

Figure 120: September 2009. Debra Laraman. Revised t-shirt transformation kit.
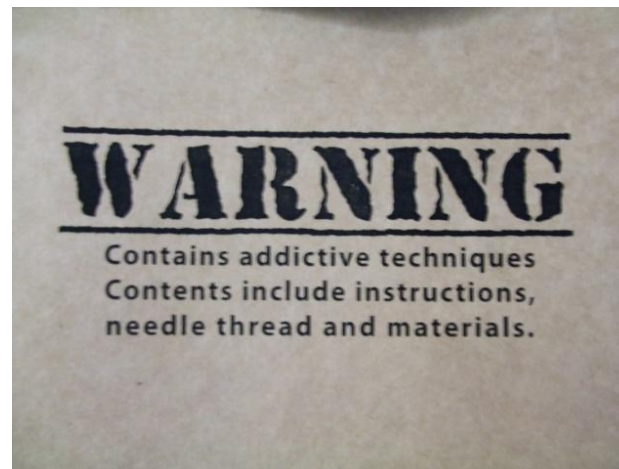
Figure 121: September 2009. Debra Laraman. Warning label on the back of the kits.

The swing tags were designed to communicate with the consumer to add value and contained information about the original garment, its transformation and an invitation for the new owner to add their details and continue the story (Fig. 122 to Fig. 124). Fletcher (2008, p. 168) suggests that "signing a garment label can be seen as a declaration of responsibility and an expression of long term commitment". The garments and kits were developed to have commercial potential, although testing this aspect is beyond the scope of this project.
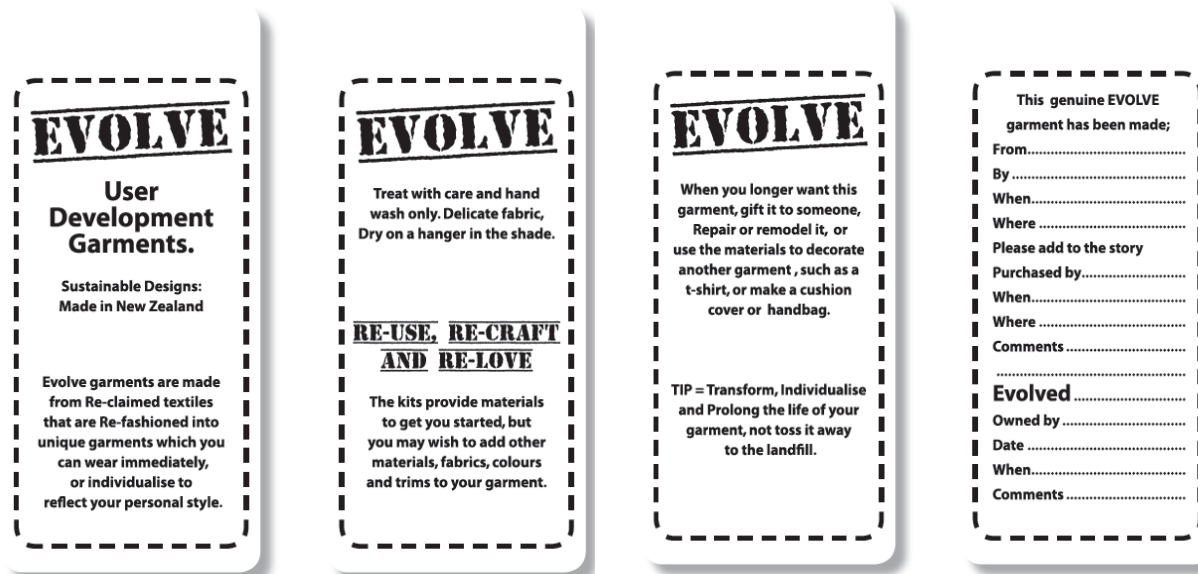
Figure 122: September 2009. Debra Laraman. PDF of swing tag 1.

Figure 123: September 2009. Debra Laraman . PDF of swing tag 2.
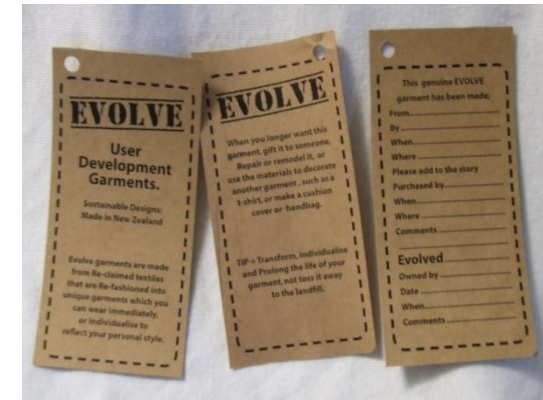
Figure 124: September 2009 Debra Laraman. Printed swing tags.

Conclusion

This exegesis provides an overview of the development of the *Re-fabricate: Evolving design through user interaction* project and gives an insight into my design process that I hope will be useful to others working in this area. Within my practice I found that the ability to build on each step of the process, and the linking of theory and practice through reflection in and on practice, was paramount to the development of the project. The recording of the process through a variety of methods provided rigour to the project and facilitated the opportunities to engage in the practice.

Through my practice I investigated methods to add value to discarded textiles and clothing. I developed a process that enabled even the most threadbare materials to be made into new garments that simultaneously reflected the past and yet appeared new. In order to encourage an emotional response from the user (so they would want to keep garments for longer), I sought to understand how people form an attachment to garments. Through my research and relevant literature I identified four aspects that I aimed to incorporate into my work which I adapted from the literature of Bye and McKinney (2007), Vaughan (2006) and Johnson and Wilson (2005):

1. Sentimental value (the story of the garment)

2. Investment value (appreciated for the money it cost and time spent making it)

3. Aesthetic value (it is visually appealing)

4. User participation (I made this)

The final garments incorporated these concepts by:

- using the label to communicate the story of how the garment was made and by whom (sentimental value)

- handwork aspect, user needed to invest time and effort to evolve the garment (investment value)

- decorative garments that could be considered beautiful (aesthetic value)

- Enabling the user to interact with the design by individualising it to their taste (sentimental value, investment value, aesthetic value and user participation).

I sought to incorporate a handcraft aspect to the garments in contrast to mass production methods, using simple stitch techniques and low-tech equipment, to encourage the users to engage in the design process. Two prototype kits were developed, one that was provided to the consumer when they purchased the garment, and one was a transformation kit that was designed to be sold separately, to extend the life of the users' garment and enable them to individualise their clothing. Through the project, I hoped to encourage people to think about their fashion consumption and disposable habits. This was achieved on a small scale through the exhibition I held in the Void gallery, through user participation in the design project, and via the t-shirt workshop.

My research suggests new opportunities for the fashion designer by focussing on user participation as a design constraint and utilising discarded textiles and clothing as resources that can be up-cycled and re-enter the fashion system. The designer could become a facilitator of ideas and methods, by creating garments that allow adaptation and individualisation and provide opportunities for the users to develop skills and techniques. I hope that encouraging people to try easy techniques empowers them and builds their confidence so they rely less on mass-produced fashion. User participation would not herald the death of the designer, but could provide new opportunities for designers to operate in a more collaborative way.

 My practice has unfolded new ways to recycle clothing that focus on slow design rather than mass production, has potential value in a commercial context, and could offer alternative methods for apparel production. Van Dyk Lewis (2008, p.255) states "potentially, slow design poses the methodological revolution for fashion design practice; it supports the reduction of resources in industry, trade and the environment". Schwartz and Laky (2008) suggest designers should focus on small-scale production and move away from mass production if they want to be part of future fashion.

Through the project I have developed garments that enable user participation which is more closely aligned with user engagement than participatory design, as the user is not directly involved from the inception of the design. I aimed to expand on the limitations of user engagement by creating garments that are not closed and by including the additional kits and documentation. The kits enable a shift in control from the designer to the user, providing an opportunity for the user to learn skills and techniques which may enable them to design garments in the future and perhaps re-develop the methods that were used.

Further research into user engagement and participatory design would enable designers to explore and understand how these concepts could potentially operate in the fashion system. My project offers an alternative method for production that acknowledges the creativity of the potential user and hopes to engage them in the design so that a feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment may help connect them to the garment for a longer period than fast fashion

seems able to do. Furthermore, it aims to connect with the consumer by creating a narrative and imbuing the garment with a history that makes it more interesting and special, thereby 'adding value'.

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Table of Images

Kit Instructions

The following instructions are from the kits supplied to the Research Participants.

Evolve: Customising craft kit
Transform
Individualize
Prolong

Kit information
Level   : Easy, beginner   🤍🤍🤍🤍🤍
Method   : hand sewn
Additional Materials needed : a pair of scissors

Your kit includes pre-selected and co-ordinated fabrics, templates, yarn, and sewing needles. We have taken all the hard work away, so you can concentrate on creating an individual garment. Good for you and good for the environment.

If you are using an old t-shirt, cut off the sleeves and trim away the neck so you are left with a simple singlet style top. This helps remove any old stained or worn areas that are prone to form under the arms and around the neck. Alternatively you can use a singlet style top.

Arrange your fabrics on top of the t-shirt and pin in place.

Stitches : *All stitches used on this t-shirt are very simple to do.*
Choose how you want to attach each piece and refer to stitch instructions if needed.

You can attach all pieces using a running stitch, but ensure you stitch around the shape approximately 3-5 mm from the edge in case of fraying. However you may wish to finish the edges of each shape, by turning them under and then stitching around the edge. Once all pieces have been attached you can added further interest by stitching directly onto the base material.

Around the armholes, use a running stitch and attach a strip of fabric.
Around the neck, use a running stitch or blanket stitch. Make sure when stitching that you do not pull the yarn too tight, as a t-shirt is made from stretch material and the yarn is non stretch, so this can cause problems with fabrics not sitting correctly and the yarn pulling.
Start each new piece of yarn, using one thickness and tie a knot in the end. You can place the knot on the front of the t-shirt material, where it is visible, or start from the inside of the garment in which case the knot will be hidden.

Stitch Instructions
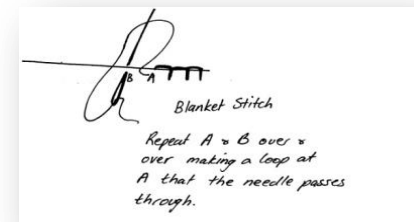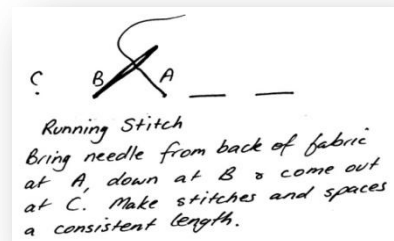
Running Stitch
Bring needle from back of fabric at A, down at B & come out at C. Make stitches and spaces a consistent length.

Blanket Stitch
Repeat A & B over & over making a loop at A that the needle passes through.

EVOLVE: Customising Craft Kit

Transform
Individualize
Prolong

Kit information

Level   : easy , level 2
Method   : hand stitch and /or machine stitch
Additional materials needed : scissors, t-shirts

Front view

Back view

Place the pattern piece on the t-shirt and using a pen or chalk draw around the shape. You will note that on the front of this t-shirt, the paper pattern has been folded in half, as the whole piece will not fit directly across the front, due to the collar and placket. On the back, you will be able to use the pattern at its full width. If your t-shirts are not long enough, you may choose to make the sleeves shorter, or add an extra strip of fabric as a cuff, which can be done once the garment has been made. Cut 4 sleeves. One set of sleeves will be the outer (main) of the garment and the other will form the lining.

Using the "main" pieces, place them on a flat surface and position the templates in the pattern you like. Once you are happy with this draw around the templates so you have the positions marked on the fabric. Cut the templates from your contrasting/lining fabric; you should have sufficient fabric left over from the t-shirt that you are using for the lining, or choose any other fabric you would like to decorate the shrug.

Position the shapes, on the right side of the main fabric, in the positions you have already marked on the fabric. Pin all pieces in place.

Stitch all pieces in place using a running stitch

Running Stitch
Bring needle from back of fabric at A, down at B & come out at C. Make stitches and spaces a consistent length.
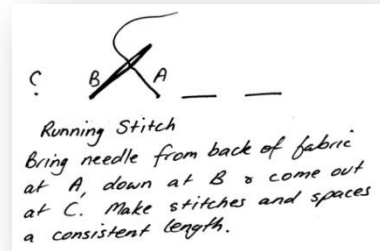
Once you have stitched all the decorative pieces onto your shrug, you will need to join the two sleeves together at the centre back. You can either use a sewing machine, or over locker if you have one, or you can hand-

Running Stitch

stitch.
You will now have two shapes.
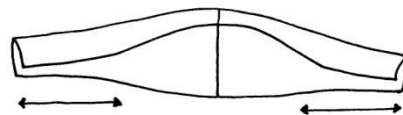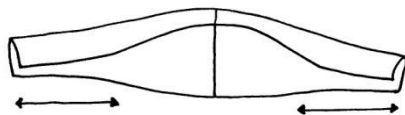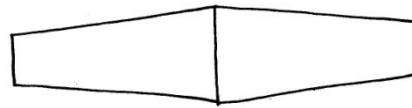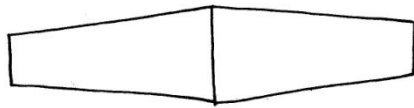
Fold the pieces in half and stitch each one along the inside arm.

stitch   Stitch
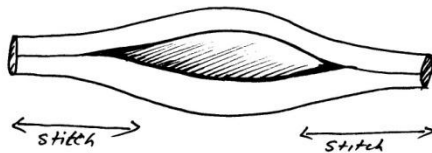
Place the two shapes together with wrong sides facing each other, turn through to make sure the right side of the fabric is on the outside, and the lining piece is placed on the inside of the garment. Raw edges will now be concealed inside the garment.

Begin at the back neck and either stitch the binding around the neck edge or you may wish to use a blanket stitch. Instructions for both methods follow Attach binding around the neck edge of the garment and pin in place as you work your way around. Use a running stitch to secure this in place. A contrast thread colour will highlight the stitching, or you may wish to stitch in the same colour as the binding.

Blanket stitch.

If you want to use a blanket stitch; it will be best to fold the raw edges to the inside, creating a hem approximately 5 mm wide. Pin this in place and then stitch around the edge of the garment. A contrasting thread colour will highlight the stitching and give the garment a handmade look.

Note. Terracotta is the colour of the lining; hence, the thread colour will contrast with the main colour of the garment.
Finish off the cuffs of the garment using the binding or the blanket stitch.

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EVOLVE:

Customising Craft Kit
Transform
 Individualize
Prolong

Kit information

Level   : easy

Method   : hand knit

Additional Materials needed : knitting needles size 15 or 25 mm

A variety of t-shirts

To prepare your strips of fabric you need to lay the t-shirts on a cutting mat and using a metal ruler and rotary cutter slice the garments into strips approximately 1 cm wide. You will need approximately 2-4 old t-shirts to make a new garment, but this depends on the size, as the Grey garment features above was made from one 4 XL men's skivvy. Cut the strips using the length of the garment, not across the width

You may wish to use a variety of coloured garments ,or you could use one colour. If you use light coloured garments you will have the option of dyeing them another colour once the garment is knitted, which can give some fantastic results.

As this garment is going to be knitted, you need to choose fabrics that have some stretch in them and for this reason it is recommended that you use t-shirts or sweatshirts.

FRONT and BACK

You can make these garments using a variety of several needle sizes and the basic instructions follow, however you can adapt these to fit your requirements.

Using size 15 mm needles, cast on 33 stitches, **(**If you prefer a more open look (see grey garment) then you can use a 25 mm needle and cast on 24 stitches

Row 1, knit from first to last stitch

Row 2, purl

Continue repeating rows one and two until work reaches the desired length (or 33 rows , which will be approximately hip length). This garment is made from two squares or rectangles (depending how long you want it to be) . The length of the garment is measured from the hem line to the shoulder line.

Cast off. Repeat the process, so you have two pieces.

Once you have knitted the two rectangles, tie the top right corners together and then the top left corners, which will be the shoulder seams. Sew the side seams together by using a strip of material and as a piece of yarn. Start at the bottom and stitch the side seams together, leaving approximately 25 centimetres at the top, which will form the armholes.

You have now completed the top. It can be left undecorated or you may wish to add assorted fabrics onto it, by tying them onto the garment.

These fabrics can be added and removed to change the look of the garment.

If you wish to add sleeves at a later stage then knit two more rectangles, which can be sewn directly into the armholes of this garment. To make sleeves, you need to measure your arms at the widest part and use this as a guide for casting on the amount of stitches needed to knit the rectangle. Decide on the length of the sleeve and once you have knitted to that length, cast off. Attach the sleeves to the garment.

You may wish to dip dye your garment or dye it a darker colour to even out the shades of white. If so, you will need to know if the garments you have used are 100% cotton or a polyester/cotton blend as different dyes will be required for both. Experiment and create an individual look.

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EVOLVE:

Customising Craft Kit

Transform

Individualize

Prolong

Kit information

Level   : easy/ intermediate 🤍🤍🤍🤍🤍

 Method   : hand sewn

 Additional Materials needed : a pair of scissors, sewing machine

 (optional crocheted flowers)

 This kit can be used to transform either post or pre consumer waste, or any scraps of fabric you available. It is great for using old garments and you can add lace or ribbons for more a more interesting and textured look. When using this kit you make the material as you create the garment.

Place the pattern pieces on the wash a way fabric and draw around each of them using a pen. Make two copies of each piece and mark one of them as the base.

Cut out the base piece and arrange your fabric pieces on top of this. Making sure you have sufficient fabric at the edges of the garment.

Once you are happy with the arrangement of fabrics, place the corresponding pattern piece on top of the fabrics

Pin this piece in place, ensuring you have sufficient pins around the edges so the fabrics are securely sandwich between the top and base layer .This will allow you to see the shape of the garment and enable you to sew over the top of the fabrics.

Ensure you keep the paper flat to avoid the fabrics moving around within the wash-a-way paper. Using your sewing machine, randomly stitch backwards and forwards , continuously moving the fabric around to ensuring each piece of fabric has been stitched to another. You may wish to leave some areas with no fabric to create a lace effect, if so then make sure you have several intersecting lines of stitching.

Once you have stitched all over the piece, check to ensure that there are no areas that have not been secured by stitching. Pay particular attention to the edges of the garment as this forms the shape and size of the garment piece.

Once you have made each piece, rinse under warm water using a small amount of detergent, and then hang the piece outside to dry.

Tip: You may wish to use either a contrast thread or a self coloured thread depending on the overall effect that is required. You can use a variety of stitches, so feel free to experiment, as all the stitches will look fine together and can add to the texture and surface interest of the garment. If you want to use a basic sewing stitch, a number 3 stitch length, is recommended.

Continue making each piece using the same method. This images show the lower part of the garment

Once you have made both sections of the front, you will need to fit this to your bust. You can stitch this dart in place to fit your body shape and then join the upper and lower pieces of the front together.

Pin the top and bottom sections together and stitch across them until they are secure.
You can either stitch directly across the two pieces, or cut a small strip of wash a way paper and place it across the join line of the two pieces, stitch and then once secured, rinse under the tap.

When you have made the back and front, it is time to join the pieces together.

Pin the left sides together and stitch back and forth across the sections until they are secured. Secure the shoulder seams using the same method.

Sew a ribbon across the seam line that joins the upper and lower sections of your garment. Leave at least 30 cm of ribbon at the front and back of the garment so that you can tie it up.

Trim up any areas that may need adjusting so the finish looks professional and fits your body.

You may wish to add additional trims such as crocheted doilies, ribbons, and lace. Get creative and really personalise your garment.

Extending your ideas

This top can be made with a variety of fabrics, from t-shirts (which are knit fabrics) to silk, satin, polyester, or denim. You will need to decide if you would like your garment to look more covered or more open and fragile. Examples of fabric you may wish to create.

Consider making other items, perhaps accessories such as capes and scarves that can instantly change the look of a garment and are an economical and creative way to individualise your wardrobe.

EVOLVE: Customising Craft Kit

Transform

Individualize

Prolong

Kit information

Level   : easy/ intermediate 🧡🧡🧡🤍🤍

Method   : hand sewn

Additional Materials needed : a pair of scissors

This versatile accessory will help add a little interest to any outfit. Make a statement and show your creativity in a unique item that is environmentally friendly, and costs you very little to make.

This garment has been made using a variety of old t-shirts that were out of shape, stained and only useful for the ragbag.

Step one

Place the garments you wish to use on a cutting mat, and using a metal ruler and rotary cutter, slice each of them into 1 cm wide strips (the length of each strip will vary)

If you do not have a cutting mat and a rotary cutter, you can use scissors and cut either strips or shapes (any shape will work).

Step 2

Lay the "wash a way" paper pieces marked "base" on a flat surface and arrange the fabric scraps within the garment shape. Ensure you place sufficient fabric pieces around the edges of the pattern shape; otherwise, you will create a piece of fabric that is the wrong shape or size. Place the corresponding sheet of "wash a way " over the top and pin the pieces together

Step 3

Keep the "wash a way "flat to avoid the fabric pieces from moving about between the layers. Place on the sewing machine and begin sewing backwards, forwards and all over the piece, ensuring you attach each strip of fabric to another. Take particular care around the edges, as these areas form the shape and size of the garment.

Tips

Thread choice: use either a contrasting or tonal thread and if you are using a sewing machine a straight stitch, with a stitch length of 4, will give you a quick and effective method. However, you may wish to use a decorative stitch or use several types of stitches; experiment and create your own look.

Adding texture and interest: You may wish to add a mix of hand stitching and machines stitching, if so then the best time to do this is prior to washing the "wash a way" from your fabric piece.

If you would like to add ribbon or yarn, this can be placed either between the layers of the "wash away" at step two, or you can place it on the top of the "wash a way" once it has been and stitch it directly onto the top layer of the "wash a way"

Step 4
Once you have completed the three pieces needed for the cape, rinse under warm water until the "wash a way " disappears. Wash the pieces again using soap powder or detergent to ensure no residue is remaining. Dry the pieces.

Step 5 assembling the pieces
When the pieces are dry, arrange them in the shape of the cape and pin in place. You can now either hand stitch these pieces together or you may wish to cut a small piece of wash away and place on the front and back of the seams, stitch randomly all over the seams.

Step 6

Attach a zip either by hand sewing or using your sewing machine. I have used a chunky metal zip which was recovered from another garment however you may wish to use ribbon as a closure to tie the cape or buckles, buttons or frogs.

If you have used "wash a way" on the seams then you will now need to rinse the garment under warm water and then once dry you can decorate further, or it is ready to wear.

Draw around a shape

finished shape

Extending the garment.

This cape can easily be added too, either as applied decoration such as embroidery, appliqué, or you may wish to extend the length by simply adding further strips to the length using the wash a way method you have just used.

Remember you can use other fabrics and different shapes , why not try an assortment of fabric squares, or circles, anything is possible and these create wonderful items for you to wear or give to someone as a special gift.

The shapes are stitched together using a decorative stitch on the sewing machine, but this can also be achieved by hand stitching

Fold and cut

EVOLVE: Customising Craft Kit
*Tr*ansform
 *I*ndividualize
*P*rolong

Kit information

Level   : intermediate   ♡♡♡♡♡

 Method   : machine sewn

 Additional Materials needed : sewing machine, wash a way paper, rotary cutter and ruler

 Kit includes   : pattern instructions

Lay your t-shirt on a cutting mat and using a metal ruler and rotary cutter slice it into strips approximately 1 cm wide. Alternatively, you can use scissors to cut the strips but this will take longer.

Trace around the pattern for upper front of the garment using a pen, and mark this image onto the "wash a way" paper.
Place the strips of fabric randomly in the shape of the garment, ensuring you have plenty of fabric at the edges of the garment shapes. If you wish to incorporate additional laces, ribbons or scraps of fabric, lay them on top of the strips of fabric.

Once you are happy with the arrangement of fabrics, place another piece of "wash a way" on top of the fabrics.

Pin this piece in place, ensuring you have sufficient pins around the edges so the fabrics are securely sandwiched between the top and base layer .This will allow you to see the shape of the garment and enable you to sew over the top of the fabrics
Ensure you keep the paper flat to avoid the fabrics moving around within the wash a way paper.

Using your sewing machine, randomly stitch backwards and forwards, continuously moving the fabric around to ensure each piece of fabric has been stitched to another. You may wish to leave some areas with no fabric to create a lace effect, if so then make sure you have several intersecting lines of stitching.

Once you have stitched all over the piece, check to ensure that there are no areas that have not been secured by stitching. Pay particular attention to the edges of the garment as will form the shape and size of the garment piece. You may now rinse this section under warm water with a small amount of detergent. Rinse until the piece is no longer sticky and then hang outside to dry.

The front pattern piece has a fold line indicated on it. Trace around the bottom section of the front, onto the " wash a way" paper. Continue making this section using the same method as you did for the upper front section.

Once you have both the upper and lower front pieces of the garment made you need to join them together.

There are several ways to do this . Two methods are demonstrated.

The method on the left, shows the top section (which has had the "wash a way" removed) which is laid over the lower section (with the "wash a way" still intact). Sew directly over both pieces stitching backwards and forwards randomly, to make certain the two sections are attached to each other.

Alternatively you may prefer to cut a strip of "wash a way" and place it over the join line, and then stitch over this area. This is the best method if you have already removed the "wash a way" from both pieces of the garment.

This garment has been designed with a plain back (a piece of t-shirt material) to that the stretch allows the wearer to slip it on over their head, however if you prefer you can repeat the above method for the back of the garment. If you do choose to do this be aware that much of the stretch will be removed and you may need to make an opening in the garment.

Cut the back section of the garment from either the back of the t-shirt you are using, or another garment. This can be a contrast colour if you prefer.

Join the front and back sections together by pinning in place and then hand or machine stitching.

To finish off the hem, use a piece of lace trim, ribbon or a strip of fabric that you can pin in place and then sew onto the hemline.

To finish off the armholes and the back neck, you can cut the rib section away from the old t-shirts neckline, and sew it onto the new garment around the armholes. The neck edge should be sufficient length for the back armholes.

You can also cut the hem from the old t-shirt and use this for the back neck section on the new garment.

If you prefer to leave a raw edge on your new garment, then you will not need to do this section of the instructions.
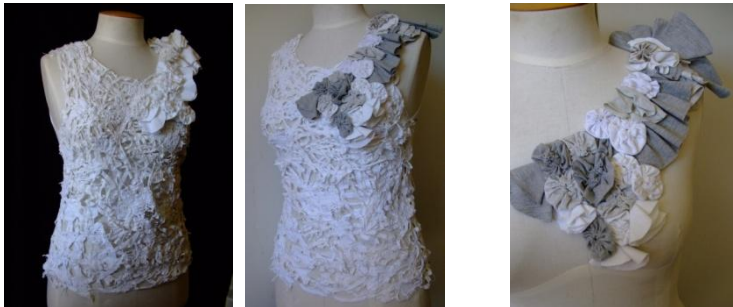
You have now finished the garment. If you would like to decorate it further, you may want to make the embellishment kit, which can be easily be added to a garment or removed.

The images show the while top with a white and a grey toned embellishment kit.

EVOLVE:Customising Craft kit

*T*ransform
Individualize
Personalize

Embellishment kit

Kit information

Level   : easy, level 2   🧡🧡🤍🤍🤍
 Method   : hand stitch and /or machine stitch
 Additional materials needed : scissors, t-shirts,

The embellishment kit is designed to you can add decoration to any top and then remove it and apply it another top. It will instantly add interest to the plainest of garments and crate a unique look

Use the template provided and cut I pair from any fabric you have to hand. However keep in mind this fabric base may be visible (depending on how much you decorate it).

How to make Fabric flowers

There are two types of flowers (left), both using the same method , with a minor variation in the cutting technique.
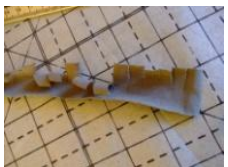

Cut some strips of fabric approximately 2cm wide and 25 -30 cm long.

Fold one strip of fabric in half length ways. Cut along the folded edge, making sure not to cut right through.

Roll the fabric strip up until it forms a flower. Use a needle and thread and sew the base to secure it in place.

Second flower

Using a strip of fabric , make small cuts along the length of the fabric (far left).

Roll the fabric strip and secure from the base using a needle and thread with a few stitches, make sure you sew through all layers of the flower to stop it from unravelling.

Gathered flower

Cut a strip of fabric approximately 2 cm wide and a minimum of 15 cm (anything longer is fine).

Thread a needle and tie a knot in the end of the yarn.

 Use a large running stitch and stitch along the length of the strip approximately 3 mm in from the edge. Pull the thread to gather up one edge of the stip. Tie a knot at the end to stop the gathering from coming undone. Arrange this into the desired shape and use a stitch to hold it in place.

Suffolk puff

Cut a circle out of cardboard to use as a template or use the ones provided

Trace around the circle and cut a circle form the fabric.

Thread a needle and tie a knot in the end of the yarn,

Sew around the edge of the circle approximately 3 mm in from the edge using a running stitch. Once you have completed the circle pull the end of the yarn and gather the circle up. Tie off to secure

Circle, Flounces

Using a variety sizes of the circle templates, cut several circles from fabric.

You may wish to use a variety of coloured fabrics or tonal colours or even stick to one colour only. Fold the circle in half leaving one side slightly smaller than the other.

Fold again, into nearly a quarter and then fold the last piece back on itself. This will give you a shape similar to the one in the photograph. Lay the pieces in an arrangement you like on the fabric template (base) and stitch in place. The flounces are best positioned toward the shoulder area with the largest ones placed at the top.

When you have secured all the pieces in place attach the second template piece to the back by hand stitching around the edge. You can achieve a neater finish by turning the raw edges of the shape to the inside so they are enclosed and then stitch around the edge.

You are now able to attach this piece onto any garment as a decoration. You may also wish to make smaller ones which can be used as a brooch and attached to garments with a brooch clasp or a safety pin. These methods can also be used to create felt flowers with will give your work a warm, homely hand made look.

Enjoy and experiment.

Research forms