

A MANUAL

FOR SARTORIAL DISRUPTION

(PART I)

**An intervention in support of aesthetic design innovation
in men's tailored clothing.**

A N D R E A S . M . M I K E L L I S

**A thesis/dissertation submitted to AUT University
in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Philosophy (MPhil)**

2011

Department of Fashion Design, School of Art & Design.

Primary Supervisor: Dr Jan Bryant

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

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

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to gratefully acknowledge my research mentor and supervisor, Dr Jan Bryant for her invaluable support, guidance and commitment to this work and Antonagis Krasia for sharing his time and profound knowledge of the craft of traditional vraga making. I would also like to thank Sharon Evans-Mikellis, Linda Jones, John McDermott, Cameron Dargaville and Dr Welby Ings.

ABSTRACT

This practice-based research project critically examines the menswear design process. It proposes that since the late 19th century there have been fundamental changes in most areas of clothing design, yet the elemental visual features that characterise men's contemporary tailoring have, with the exception of a few periodic surface adjustments, remained in stasis. The work explores alternative design approaches in this field and acts as an intervention in support of innovation.

The focus of the research is centered on examining how industrial menswear designers reference the past. Conventionally, this is achieved through a translation of what has existed, conversely this work it is about how ideas can be drawn from 'history's potential', acknowledged in Walter Benjamin's work as "historical materialism" ("Thesis on a Philosophy of History": *Illuminations*, 1940). This concept has been investigated through the study of clothing systems from the past that demonstrate a sense of formality and a distinct visual presence but whose latent design value has been overlooked. The un-bifurcated (a garment that does not branch off into two sections) *vraga*, from the Eastern Mediterranean was identified as a credible historical model to be re-evaluated. The design principles of the *vraga* were reworked to create an alternative system of clothing, one based on an all-in-one universal garment that this research refers to as a 'braccasuit'. It is a garment type that evolved from the concurrence of elements: utilitarian workwear, formal tailoring, dynamic playfulness and sober structure. It is designed to disrupt user expectations, from its distinctive appearance and how it is worn, to the way that it also disrupts, through anonymity and ambiguity, 'status capital' value since it has no form of branding or labelling.

This research principally addresses the design of a 'new' look; future development work will underpin the notion of 'sartorial disruption' further by exploring how the system can be socially implemented and commercially represented. Initial research undertaken suggests that this could be achieved through the development of an alternative approach to conventional retailing, where the

dynamics of consumer actions could be challenged. One such method is based on the idea of forcing a dislocation of the existing static retail model by creating a mobile depository for innovative, experimental menswear to be temporarily sited in major international cities. It will be formed on the principles of a constantly changing group collective, where individual designers may be asked to join for any number of 'situations'. This will be supported by the 'Sartorial Disruption Network', that will take the form of a website, blog, e-journal and a hard-copy magazine, to encourage dialogue and collaboration.

KEYWORDS: Menswear, Tailoring, Suit, Vraga, Historical Materialism, Modernity, Authenticity, Nostalgia, Disruption, Innovation.

A MANUAL FOR SARTORIAL DISRUPTION (PART I)


ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. THE RESEARCH ENQUIRY

As a practitioner, I clearly acknowledge my debt to the past and how it has shaped my work both conceptually and technically. This knowledge led to questioning the design process that creates industrial menswear and in particular a re-evaluation of the tailored suit. The thrust of this design research is focused on examining the potential for creating men's tailored clothing that is not entrenched in the formula of conventional historical research and also in a search to establish an alternative design aesthetic.


History, or what I identified through Walter Benjamin as "historicism" (the uncritical acceptance of a version of history), began as the problem in this field, but has been reshaped as historical materialism (or the discovery of a potentially radical version of history) as a potential solution for rethinking design. The fashion machine rotates through time, collecting the past; in commercial industrial fashion it often scoops up the predictable and in high-end designer fashion it rummages in the quieter corners, delicately selecting the more obscure. There is however another paradigm, one of exile, where significant historical clothing systems have been removed and buried from view. The contemporary fashion design system does not seem to encourage the unearthing of these. I identify them as the "un-modern" ones, the difficult ones, the inefficient ones and the ones that could potentially alter the status quo. "To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognise it 'the way it really was'. It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* p.247). The background research for this work explores how historical factors have impacted on the appearance of modern menswear, from our relationship with the notion of authentic clothing, to the evolutionary development of contemporary tailoring. History was then considered in relation to the design process by exploring how, in the present, we relocate the potential of the past within a contemporary context.

To do this it was necessary to define a creative research approach that would underlie alternative propositions to the menswear arena and the tailored clothing system. The arena is wearable fashion, and in terms of this project the arena for sartorial disruption is what the new could be. This came from the outskirts, from a peripheral band of the epicentre of fashion (clothing), in a place where men's tailoring is not represented as linear, structured, organised, efficient or unadorned.



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Fig.01 Albanian man wearing a *fustanella*
(1885)



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Fig.02 Greek Cypriot wearing a *vraga*
(1879)

For the purposes of this project, I am calling this continuing system, “clothing modernity” or “design modernity”. This research is not proposing that in the 21st century menswear is devoid of decoration; clearly t-shirts are embellished with prints and embroidery, shirts are made in elaborate woven designs, and knitwear is intricately patterned. However, the influence of clothing modernity is primarily evident in the structural characteristics and assumptive functionality of garments. The physical shape of t-shirts, jeans, regular shirts and the cut of a tailored suit epitomise the principles of late 19th century design modernity. For this project I have explored clothing systems and artefacts that were discarded, buried away

and forgotten as a consequence of the idea of progress. Initial design investigations began with traditional garments from the medieval period and also clothing systems from the Eastern corners of Europe such as the *fustanella* from the Balkans (Fig.01), and the multi-pleated Cypriot vraga, from the Latin word *brace* meaning lower body covering (Fig.02). This garment was exhumed and then interrogated through an investigation of fit, cut and silhouette. The design process then focused on reconfiguring the vraga to achieve a utilitarian tailored sensibility.

Within the historical evolution of western clothing, the jacket has become the primary item within the men's suit system and this research now presents an alternative scheme of clothing where the leg covering takes the lead. The full-length seamed trouser is a relatively new addition to the male wardrobe. Although an early version of a trouser-type garment can be traced back to the 7th century BC, worn by the cavalry of the Babylonian army, the item of clothing most closely resembling the present-day trouser was not introduced until the 16th century by the Venetians and adopted in France during the French Revolution, it became universally worn in the early 19th century (Boucher, 1987). In a personal analysis of the trouser from a design perspective, the garment has limitations, primarily due to its poor physiological consideration. It does clearly allow for a certain degree of movement, including easy access into the saddle of a horse but its main characteristic being made up of two cylindrical tubes, attached together through a front and back crutch seam, does not take into account the position of male anatomy. This design anomaly is currently one of the factors that activist groups such as Bravehearts in Kilts Against Trouser Tyranny,¹ are suggesting as grounds to promote the wearing of un-bifurcated clothing.

Within a contemporary fashion context we have witnessed a series of surges in design experimentation of the trouser area, from the 'men in skirts' fad during the early 1980s to the more recent trend for lo-rise-lo-crutch jeans instigated in part by the look of hip-hop culture and then by menswear designers such as Kris Van Assche (who has been reworking the proportions of trousers) and also by Actor Throup and his collection based entirely on inventive trouser cutting. A design shift is occurring, in that the trouser area is beginning to gain importance, although

most designers are still working from the archetypal trouser model as it stands, adjusting and rescaling what exists, or reverting to skirt and kilt-type garments.

The vraga represents a lower body garment that reflected status, masculinity and function. It was excessive in the volume of fabric required in making one (35 meters) and also labour intensive; from the meticulous hand pleating to the exhaustive dying process (the garment was immersed multiple times in vats of indigo and then finally in black pigment to achieve a subtle iridescent midnight tone). This resulted in a garment that had a profound physical presence. Its visual impact was created by the dynamic drapes of fabric swaying from side to side when walking and the very distinctive audible rustle made by a style of vraga that was made from heavily starched fabric. This garment was worn in Cyprus until the 1950s, declining in popularity as a result of the effects of colonialism, westernisation, modernity and efficiency:

Well dressed: who doesn't want to be? Our century has done away with sumptuary laws, including those regarding dress, and everyone has the right to dress like a king. How many of its citizens actually take advantage of this fact can be regarded as a measure of the cultural level of a state. In England and America, everybody; in the Balkan countries, only the upper ten thousand (Loos, 1988).

Architect Adolf Loos' view that "everyone has the right to dress like a King," – in this case Edward VII, implied, on one hand, that this was a step towards egalitarianism but conversely it also suggested that this advancement was superior to other forms of dress, proliferating the view that garments such as the vraga were symbols of low culture, and that these elements needed to be discarded. This can now be observed as an acutely clinical attitude that resulted in a more homogenised international style. Under the terms of clothing modernity the vraga was unlikely to have been seen as an efficient garment, even though its physiological characteristics (in that through the cut of the garment the fabric had only minor contact with skin), determined that in normal wear it did not need to be laundered. The vraga also took considerably longer to put on than a pair of trousers, it required a different system of clothing to be worn with it and it may not have been streamlined enough for certain activities; however, this research

questions why contemporary men's clothes have to be valued by a contemporary understanding that accords wearability and performance as primary factors. All the ritualistic aspects of preparing and dressing have been virtually erased as a result of our obsession with time-saving, eliminating the essentially human interaction between wearer and garment. The vraga reflected this ritualistic interaction, firstly, in how the garment was put on — this was achieved through a sequence of steps that were followed to attain the correct positioning of the pleats; and secondly, by how it was stored. Once the garment had been removed after wear, the draw-cord was tightened to re-form the waist pleats, the length was then twisted, wrapped (diagonally) with the cord, tied and preserved in a cocoon-like bundle. This ancient process helped to redefine the three-dimensional pleat structure, ready for its next use (the vraga was made from natural silk or cotton fabrics, fabrics that technically cannot be permanently pleated). This pre-wear/post-wear connection with clothing has in general been lost — onto a coat hanger or into a washing basket having become the contemporary way.

This research is focused on exploring an alternative to the tailored 'clothing system',¹ one that does not sit within the realms of fashion design but along a circumferential location. The appearance of contemporary tailored suits can be observed as a prevailing style but where occurrences of change follow a decelerating trajectory and identified in a series of contributing factors that underpin this condition as: a) a predisposition toward nostalgia, b) the value placed on authenticity, and c) the imposition of modernity. Together these elements have also helped shape the broader fashion process, potentially resulting in a negative impact on aesthetic design innovation in menswear.

The work will begin by examining the historical framework behind this issue by mapping out the evolution of men's tailoring, commencing with the streamlining of male clothing during the Georgian period (1760-1820) to the implementation of the modern suit system in the late 1800s. The research will also investigate aspects of

¹ Franck In the context of this research the term 'clothing system' will be defined as an arrangement of specific garments that form a universal look. In the case of the tailored suit system this is comprised of coordinated component items: jacket, trousers, shirt, tie, underwear, shoes and periodically a waistcoat or vest. The 'Fashion Design System' will refer to the creative processes and technical methods designers individually apply in the research and development of ranges and collections. The term 'Fashion System' will allude to the overarching commercial mechanism that predicts, creates, markets and distributes industrial fashion products.

men's clothing reform that occurred during the first part of the 20th century, including the work of activists such as the Men's Dress Reform Party (1929-1940). The practice aspect of the project is the development of a corpus of garments that offer an alternative proposition to the conventions of the current evolutionary and cyclical design processes in tailoring. Conceptual design ideas have been specifically formulated for this work such as the notion of applied 'sartorial disruption' and the prospect of 'tailoring outside the tailoring system'. 'Sartorial disruption' being pursued as a mechanism to interrupt the continuum that exists in the development of men's tailored clothing design, an evolutionary process that, since the late 19th century, has followed a predictive path based on incremental design changes that reference and re-reference specific historical clothing elements along a linear tract. The process of 'tailoring outside the tailoring system' has been explored through the creation of experimental garments that attempt to capture the uniform formality of the tailored suit and the sense of alternative historical clothing systems.

1.2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review was undertaken to establish a critical framework in relation to the key issues underpinning the research inquiry. These were acknowledged as texts relating to the historical and social background behind the aesthetic development of the tailored suit, the influence of aspects of nostalgia, authenticity and modernity on the issue, and how reform in menswear has been explored during the 20th century. The literature review also considered aspects of design research methodology, alternative contemporary design approaches, and conceptual thinking in regard to clothing design.

Initial reading identified that the tailored suit began its evolution during the mid-18th century and a comprehensive range of historical-based literature from the beginning of that period was examined. It was important to consider the research in terms that went beyond a purely aesthetic phylogenetic time frame to include a socio-political perspective, a fundamental issue in terms of rationalising the context of innovation and change. A number of texts were considered such as *The Psychology of Clothes* (Flugel, 1950), which outlined significant factors related to the “The Great Masculine Renunciation”, a movement instigated as a consequence of the French Revolution in the late 18th century, in which traditional hierarchical social systems were re-evaluated. Moving to the mid-19th century, the psychological, physiological and aesthetic significance of military uniforms on menswear was examined, primarily through the work of Elizabeth Hackspiel Mikosch (2009). Literature in relation to further shifts that occurred during the late 1800s included: the relaxation of men’s dress codes, instigated by the Prince of Wales (Edward VII), (de Marly, 1985; Blackman, 2009); the influence of the ‘Protestant work ethic’ and the effects of 19th century industrialisation, were considered, together with the impact of modernity, where an aesthetic streamlining and reduction process was imposed (Weber, 1904). This notion was investigated in part through Adolf Loos’ work, *Ornament and Crime* (1908), where from his perspective as a leading modernist architect, men’s tailoring would be rationalised further under his notion of modernity. Our relationship with the past was then analysed regarding the ‘system of fashion’ and its bond with capitalism through

Walter Benjamin (1955) and how fashion acts as a historical “structuring device” (Lehmann, 2000).

The next stage of the work explored the impact that authenticity and nostalgia have on contemporary fashion design practice. Literature commonly deals with these elements in terms of their being indispensable fashion research and marketing tools (Evans, 2003), and not from the more critical perspective that this research supports. From the late 19th century, the notion of authenticity has been recognised as a consumer desire and has acted as a dominant commercial mechanism in the consumption of luxury goods (Veblen, 1899). Today it can be identified as an illusive, yet valuable asset in the materiality of products (Stewart, 2005). Further research in this area uncovered a number of pertinent web and blog-sites that deal with the subject of nostalgia and authenticity in menswear, most significantly *The Militant Guild of Rural Tailors*,ⁱⁱ where a fictitious organisation has been created to promote nostalgic tailoring practices within an antagonistic conceptual framework.

The literature was then reviewed to include aspects of menswear reform in the 20th century, and how artists in particular were eager, early in the century, to incorporate the aesthetics of clothing within the parameters of their particular philosophical interests. The Wiener Werkstätte (the Vienna Workshop 1903-1932), (Stern, 2004), was followed by the Futurists (1909-1944), who were also focused on a process that unified all aspects of art and design. Most significantly was the *Futurist Manifesto of Men's Clothing* by Giacomo Balla (1913) that outlined what the Futurists perceived as a dynamic, decorative new perspective on the design of men's clothing, and the concepts of Ernesto Michahelles, who took a far less ornamental view, following principles of hygiene and practicality (Blackman, 2009). Factors such as hygiene and comfort in men's clothing were further explored through the work of philosopher Edward Carpenter (1844-1929) and the Simple Life movement (Burman, 2009), and more extensively through the Men's Dress Reform Party (MDRP, 1929-1940), who proposed that the tailored suit was unhealthy, restrictive and uncomfortable (Bourke, 2006).

Later in the 20th century, key areas of fashion disruption were identified as important to the research, such as the punk movement in the late 1970s and fashion deconstruction a decade later. Punk was considered both through personal, primary research and in texts that explored the subculture's contradictory characteristics (Sabin, 1999) and also in how as an unstructured entity it could never be fully, captured commercially (Vinken, 2005).

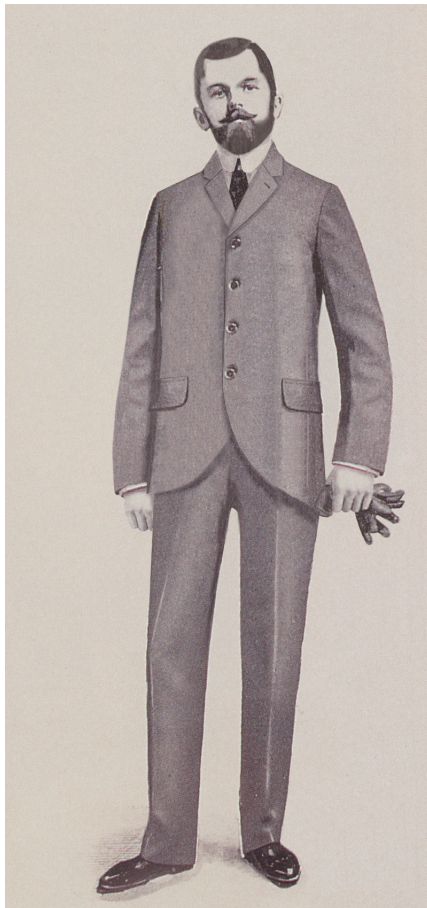
There is a proliferation of texts relating to fashion deconstruction, and in particular the work of designers Rei Kawakubo and Martin Margiela. This is an area of fashion that has been identified by theorists and writers as having academic and intellectual worth, in that the theory underlying the principle is based on a conceptual model that determines that the idea behind the clothes supersedes appearance. For this work, *Fashion and Philosophical Deconstruction: a Fashion in deconstruction* (Loscialpo, 2009) was of particular interest as it affirms that designers such as Kawakubo and Margiela were not merely deconstructing the physical notion of garments but were proposing a form of disruption on the greater system of fashion.

Reading was also undertaken in respect to determining the specific methodological design process utilised in the development of the research, and the methodology model of 'action research' (Schön, 1983; Swann, 2002).

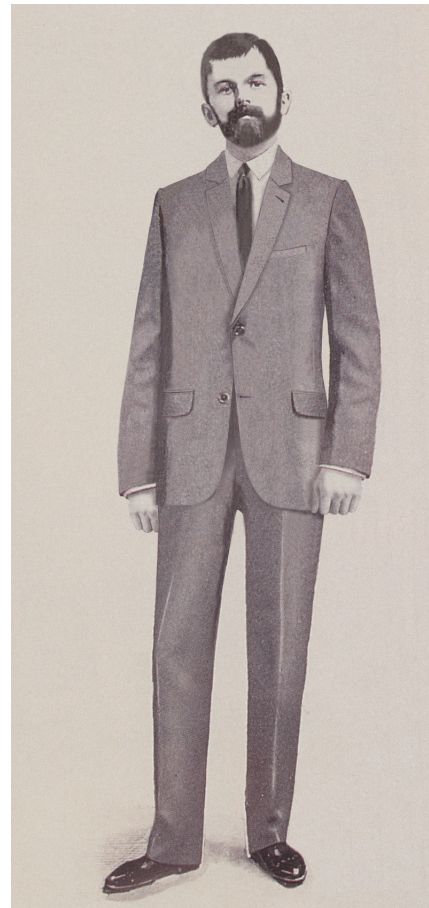
1.3.1. CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND - HISTORICAL

THE EVOLUTION OF EDWARDIANISM - THE PREVAILING AESTHETIC

The first part of this chapter outlines the historical developments of the tailored suit by determining the chronological antecedents and social context of the modern proto-model that first appeared at the end of the 19th century. Primary and secondary sources have been utilised to include a range of perspectives on the history of the evolution of the modern tailored suit system. This research proposes that the modern tailored suit has a singular and prevailing aesthetic, and is a universally accepted mode of male dress.



1909



2010

Fig.03 *One Hundred Years of Innovation*, (Mikellis, A. 2011).

Illustrations from a series produced for this research showing the evolution of the Edwardian.



1909

1919

1925

1934

1945



1958

1966

1977

1985

1994

2010

Fig.04 *One Hundred Years of Innovation*, (Mikellis, A. 2011).

Illustrations from a series produced for this research showing the evolution of the Edwardian.

The aesthetic design evolution of the modern suit system began with the removal of ornamentation in the early 1800s, with various men's garments being streamlined: jackets lost their exaggerated cuffs, shirt frills were removed, jackets and waistcoats were shortened and garments that had previously been worn only by the lower classes such as trousers, replaced knee breeches (Figs.05 & 06). Evolved from utilitarian and riding clothing, these garments did not have decorative buttons or protruding buckles to get caught on anything and the cut and proportions of the garments allowed for greater physical movement. They would have been perceived as being more practical and ergonomic.

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Fig.05 Isaac Smith, (1769)

Fig.06 Robert Southey, (1804)

During the 19th century the jacket determined the look of this 'new order of clothing'. Its design evolved as a result of the broad 'cross-referencing' of men's coats from that period (as opposed to a direct linear evolution). Elements from garments such as frock coats, morning (riding) coats, Norfolk (hunting) jackets, and more significantly workers' (utilitarian) jackets and military (naval) uniforms all went through an assessment process, based primarily on a modern 'functionality value'. This resulted in shorter jackets, such as the lounge jacket, becoming popular, championed by the Prince of Wales (Edward VII, British monarch 1841-

1910). He had become an enthusiastic proponent of wearing garments originally designed for sporting activities such as hunting, to formal occasions. His coronation in 1901 not only signified the birth of a new century but his influence on fashion instigated a major shift away from Victorian male dress codes. A pioneer of modern architecture, Adolf Loos was convinced that the introduction of 'modern menswear' was directly attributed to the Prince of Wales (Purdy, 2004), "Since his youth he had been a royal fashion icon, whose every sartorial move was closely followed by the trade and in the press and his personal style indicated a trend towards greater informality" (Blackman, 2009).

This view is further endorsed by Diana de Marly. In her book *Fashion for Men*, she relays an account at Goodwood Races when the standard dress code was broken by the then Edward, Prince of Wales:

The Prince of Wales, however, upset the system by arriving at Goodwood Races in the new Homburg hat he had introduced from Germany and a lounge suit, just when everybody of note, from the host, the Duke of Richmond, downwards was properly dressed in black (black frock coat and black silk top hat). This was the signal for chaos to break out, for in 1900 Goodwood Races saw men in flannel suits, navy blue blazers and white duck with straw boaters – sportswear at a society occasion! (de Marly, 1985, p.109).

During the 19th century, specific design details of the modern suit were also being influenced by the armed forces. The fundamental upper garment features that characterise the modern jacket: the lapel, the chest structure, and the shoulder line have a distinct commonality with military uniforms.

The development of one of the most defining visual characteristics of the jacket, the lapel, is cursorily linked to the exaggerated high-collared lapel popular in the 18th century (Fig.07). However, this design research has determined that the scale and cut of the contemporary lapel seems to have far more in common with standard issue military and naval jackets from the early 1800s (Fig.08). These garments were made from heavy wool flannel with a rigid collar stand, often buttoned to the neck. This area unbuttoned and folded back forms a lapel,

becoming the lapel detail archetype. A clue to substantiate this view is that the lapel buttonhole, still common on most tailored jackets, clearly began life as a functional detail – the top button from a ‘closed neck’ jacket.

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Fig.07 Unknown man, (c.1800)

Fig.08 French naval jacket (c.1850s)

Uniforms have continually played a role in both the psychological and aesthetic development of menswear. Historians such as Elizabeth Hackspiel Mikosch, outlines this relationship further:

Nineteenth-century uniforms shaped men’s bodies and minds...The sartorial construction of masculinity was carried out through the uniform’s material, cut, and tailoring (Hackspiel Mikosch 2009, p.122).

Historically, this shaping of “men’s body and minds” echoed the military objectives of the projection of physical potency by focusing, in varying degrees, on the torso area. Enhancing the chest area in clothing has been a popular fashion statement since the Middle Ages, reaching extremes during the reign of Henry VIII (1509-1547), elegantly sculpted in the 1600s, and still very much in vogue in the exaggerated ‘pouter pigeon’ chests of the 1840s:

A broad chest was obviously more important than broad shoulders during this period and was therefore artificially enlarged by ample padding in the front and back. The broad chest was understood as a particular sign of manly strength, so that men who entered military service in Germany in 1877 had to have a chest with a circumference at least equal to half the body length (Ibid; p122).

By the end of the 19th century, this view began to further influence civilian thinking, with physical exercise becoming a popular past-time, romantically heroic and symbolically patriotic; it was further warranted by the real possibility of fighting for one's country. This reinforced the conventional notion that physical strength and masculinity were inseparable and in direct contrast to the genteel femininity to which women of that period were supposed to aspire (Fig.09).



Fig.09 Elizabeth Lawrence Fiske (1900)

In this respect it became evident that the physiologically enhancing effects created by structuring details such as epaulets and shoulder extensions found in military uniforms would again infiltrate civilian clothing design. This was set in a period when the shoulder line of men's coats did not rely on artifice but reflected natural lines (Fig.10). In investigating this further by examining Victorian jackets and garment patterns, I have found that to achieve this effect, the shoulder was cut with an extended diagonal shoulder blade seam, this being on the fabric's bias (off-grain) allowing the garment to mould itself into the shoulder area.



Fig.10 Alexandre Dumas (1855)

By the first part of the 20th century, fabricated shoulder shapes were integrated into tailored jackets to become one of the mechanisms that determines periodic trends. They are also a key for defining everything from the nuances of an individual tailor's signature look, to a national 'cut'; such as in the shoulder line of a suit from Italian tailors, Ermenegildo Zegna, which has a very rounded soft shape, or in traditional English suits where the shoulders are lightly padded with a slight slope.

All of these physiological characteristics are inherent in contemporary suits and have come together to define a clothing system that this research labels 'Edwardian', a term reflecting the period when this system of clothing became fully formed and universal, 1901-1910. This research presents the view that the use of the term Edwardian must supersede the previous, limited explanation based on a 'high-break' four-button jacket or in reference to a look attributed to ex-World War II officers of the Brigade of Guards whose civilian dress consisted of a fitted jacket, tapered trousers, an overcoat with a velvet collar, and a bowler hat. This apparently evolved to influence the 'Teddy boy' subcultural style of the 1950s;ⁱⁱⁱ in fact, all modern tailoring is the 'Teddy' look (*Teddy* being a derivative of the name Edward). The Edwardian system is typified in appearance by the specific combination of garments worn (jacket, trousers, occasionally a waistcoat, all made from the same fabric and aided by a collared shirt and tie), the homogeneity of silhouette, the internal structural features that include canvas, wadding, shoulder pads and interlinings, and details such as lapels, collar, pocket placement and button/break style (Fig.11).



Fig.11 William.J.Baer (c1906)

This is a system that resulted from major cultural shifts, the consequence of which was the systematic rejection of the 'triviality of adornment', and proposing that masculine tailoring be a sober affair. The roots of this theory are based on a series of major social developments that include the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution and female emancipation.

Psychoanalyst J.C.Flugel suggests that while during the late 18th century women triumphed in their battle to achieve a greater level of sexual emancipation in their appearance, men on the other hand had their sartorial ornamentation stripped away from them, a significant event that we now take for granted. He expands on this further:

Men gave up their right to all the brighter, gayer, more elaborate, and more varied forms of ornamentation, leaving these entirely to the use of women, and thereby making their own tailoring the most austere and ascetic of the arts. Sartorially, this event has surely the right to be considered as "The Great Masculine Renunciation." Man abandoned his claim to be considered beautiful. He henceforth aimed at being only useful (Flugel, 1950, p.111).

This research supports Flugel's view that this was in part, triggered at the end of the 18th century by the French Revolution instigating a movement against the hierarchical systems associated with aristocracy, religion and feudal structures by eliminating the traditional markers of social status (Ibid). If the French Revolution inspired democracy and democracy gave rise to the bourgeoisie, then the bourgeoisie required a democratic form of clothing:

The fundamental element of bourgeois clothing is uniformity. We are now all just citizens, all possessed of the same rights. Clothing therefore no longer separates people as it once did by means of particular features, worn by one and forbidden on pain of penalty to another. Now whatever one man likes the other may also adorn himself with. At the same time, this uniformity signifies opposition to the majestic tendency in the fashion of the *ancien régime*. The majestic consists in surpassing. Even in clothing every person is now part of and belongs to the whole (Purdy, 2004, p.319; Fuchs, 1898).

In Western Europe, the uniformity of bourgeois men's fashion became a symbol of industrialisation, and nations that continued to wear their traditional national dress were considered pre-industrial (Ibid). This 'symbol' of progress became the motivating factor in the internationalisation of the Edwardian look. In the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean the notion of formal men's clothing already existed in the form of clothing systems such as the *vraga* in Cyprus and the *fustanella* in Albania (these will be discussed further in the following chapter), but these garments did not conform to the over-riding European ideal, that of a modern tailored suit. Inevitably this Western European system or *Frankika*, as it was referred to in the Eastern Mediterranean,³ became the dominant look, driven primarily by the significant global-economic-political status of countries such as Britain during the 19th century.

For a comprehensive realignment to succeed it required an egalitarian 'base line' of formal clothing that would firstly cut across demographic lines and secondly follow the philosophy of 'efficiency', a theory central to the sentiments of the Industrial Revolution. Beginning in the mid-18th century, with the introduction of mechanised processes in industries such as textile manufacturing, this resulted in a shift from manual-based labour to technologically-driven production. A second wave of industrial progress followed in the 1850s, with improvements in transportation systems, such as railways and shipping. In the 19th century, the realigning of male sartorial style also coincided with another view of why personal dress should be standardised; this was based on the effects of the doctrines

³ '*Franck*' or '*Frankish*' - Term used to describe 'European' clothing such as the Edwardian suit during the mid-19th Century. National Historical Museum. *Cypriot Costumes*. Kapon Editions, 1999. This term appears to have evolved due the legacy of Lusignan (French) occupation of islands such as Cyprus in 13th-15th Century.

underlying Christian religious denominations such as Protestantism. Max Weber suggests that this is founded on principles that underpin the Protestant ethic. In his work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, he proposed that Puritan Christian religious groups that grew out of Calvinism, followed principles that supported organised industrialisation and the accumulation of wealth through labour. However, they also believed that the activity of labour was itself spiritually motivated, resulting in the need to foster more frugal approaches towards how earnings should be spent: in light of their fundamental belief that God wanted wealth to be used only for "rational and utilitarian" purposes. This ascetic thinking was directed particularly at the creative fields of art, design, literature, theatre and fashion:

Hence, dispassionate instrumentalism was given a decisive upper hand over and against every application of artistic tendencies. This purposiveness was especially important wherever the direct decoration of the person was involved, as for example in respect to dress. The foundation in ideas for that powerful tendency to render styles of life uniform, which today supports the capitalist interest in the "standardization" of production, derived from the Puritans' rejection of all "glorification of human wants and desires" (Weber, 1904, p.95).

This can be observed as a conflict within capitalism, in particular a threat to the luxury goods market where the rendering of uniform styles results in the elimination of market-driven conspicuous consumption. However the "standardisation" aspect promoted by the Protestant ethic clearly had a positive effect on the successful introduction of the Edwardian suit system, from its ascetic, unadorned characteristic and visual uniformity to its egalitarian economic accessibility (as a result of industrial efficiency and mass production). Efficiencies affected not just the process of manufacture but also the aesthetics of its products. In menswear design this was achieved through the exploration of a reductive design process that proposed a pared-down simplicity, a modern simplicity that was also beginning to appear in other areas of design such as furniture, product and architecture. For Adolf Loos, cultural progress was dependant on the elimination of ornamentation on products, and that craftsmen should not be wasting valuable resources and time in the pursuit of superficial decoration: "The

evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornamentation from objects of everyday use" (Loos, 1908). Loos' application of this theory is interesting, as in some of his work such as *Steiner House* (Vienna, 1910), the exterior clearly reflects an unadorned philosophy, whereas the interior design shows flourishes of decoration and detailing that is non-utilitarian. Loos considered that a sign of modernity and intellectual superiority was being "in disguise", or rather, indistinguishable in terms of the clothes one wore, and that London, being "the centre of Western culture", epitomised this philosophy:

An article of dress is modern if, when wearing it on a particular occasion in the best society at the centre of one's culture, one attracts as little attention as possible to oneself as possible (Loos - Ibid).

Another architect who, along with Loos, promoted the notion of standardisation was Le Corbusier. He radicalised the non-decorative, taking what Loos had proposed to more extreme lengths. However, Le Corbusier often extended his aesthetic approach beyond utility; this is highlighted in an article in *The Master Builder* by critic and architect Peter Blake, in a comparative study of a Marcel Breuer, 1925 armchair and a Le Corbusier, 1928 armchair with a pivoting back:

There are two chromium tubes that connect the front legs to the rear legs. In a Bauhaus chair these tubes would, quite obviously and soberly, have been straight. But in the Corbu chair the tubes start out straight and then, for no apparent reason at all, suddenly leap up in a quarter-circle before they join the rear legs. This and other little details – such as the cylindrical pillow strapped to the head of the reclining chair - make (Le Corbusier's) just about the wittiest, sexiest chairs designed in modern times (Blake, 1960, p.69).

This idea that modernity does not have to be represented within a solely rational context has in men's tailoring been ignored in favour of the indistinguishable. Paradoxically, as in Loos' *Steiner House*, it is the interior of a man's suit that offers a sense of individuality. The interior is the sole benefactor of decorative innovation and these hidden details have been the subject of significant design attention, with the inside of often sober garments showing inspired flashes of creativity. Since the

early 1900s, the insides of garments have displayed strong individualistic detailing and by the late 1980s this clandestine extravagance had grown even more in popularity, with designers such as Paul Smith and Oswald Boeteng offering a whole series of alternative approaches to the design and configuration of internal linings and facings; with contrasting patterned linings, distinctive pocket details, shaped ('French') facings (Fig.12), decorative piped edging, coloured saddle stitching and contrast-coloured under-collar felts (Fig.13).



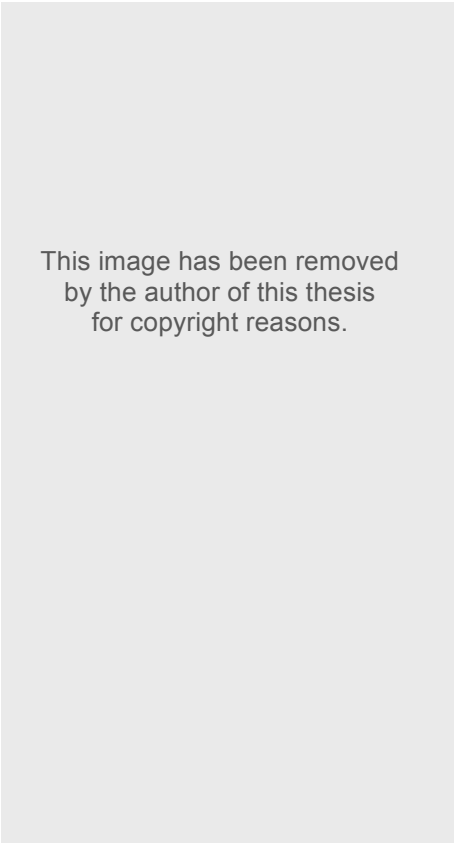
Fig.12 Lining detail ('French' facing)



Fig.13 Under collar contrast felt detail

This is a location where a fragment of distinctive decoration is permitted to exist within the confines of conformism. It has the potential to suggest that beneath the sombre, conservative hard shell lies an element of character, symbolic of a cultured, cool, creative persona. These are acceptable, often aspirational features that have become inherent in the 'sense' of the suit. There appears to be minimal evidence in respect of these developments having had any impact on the broader character of the suit system where creativity, individualism and wit remain veiled.

Innovation in tailoring is most commonly concerned with advancements in textile technology and manufacturing processes, and is evident in how new fibre, yarn and weave developments have helped enhance the performance of tailoring by improving comfort and durability (Musgrave, 2010). Also, trends based on the visual impact of colour, (Fig.14) and weave construction have sporadically injected new dimensions into tailored garments.⁴



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Fig.14 Oswald Boeteng (c2000)

⁴ Examples of this include: a fashion in the 1960s for suit fabrics made from a wool/mohair fibre mixture, woven using different colour yarns in the warp and weft to create a 'shot' or 'tonic' cloth resulting in a dynamic sheen; the popularity of bold check fabrics in the 1970s; and the solid vivid colours introduced in the 1990s by the new generation of Savile Row tailors, such as Oswald Boeteng and Richard James.

In the search for a new system of tailoring, the research has revealed that redesigning the tailored suit is not an effective way to explore this project. In his chapter 'Tradition' from *The Englishman's Suit*, British designer Sir Hardy Amies, a stalwart for upholding the conventions of tailoring, makes a legitimate statement on the subject of redesign:

I feel there ought to be a word other than 'designer' of men's suits. You cannot truly design or redesign a garment, the basic shape of which is already determined by history. If you don't follow tradition in design of a suit inherited from the past, you have no suit. A 'designer' can alter proportions: of length of coat, of width of shoulder, of placing of buttons. He can propose a double-breasted instead of a single-breasted fastening. But he is not 'designing' a suit; he is very often only proposing to alter details of a suit, which already exists (Amies, 1994, p.102).

Restraining from redesigning the Edwardian is supported by the Art Historian Anne Hollander, who suggests that any direct assault on the suit would lose the fight and that rebellion can only succeed by means of a sidestepping process, whereby men simply reject the wearing of conventional suits (Hollander, 1995). An alternative would need to be in place to supplement its function, one that does not simply offer casual fashion or dressed-down tailoring, but clothes that reflect a sense of formality, based on a uniform yet distinguished look, where status is not simply suggested by the products monetary value, brand power or design ranking.

1.3.2. CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND - PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

This work is founded on my formal education in design, and my experiences as a practising fashion designer. For a great deal of my career I followed one of the principle methods of clothing design development, one that relies on the cyclical reworking of the past, specifically garments from the late 19th century to the later part of the 20th century. It was the examination of this process through the critical analysis of my own practice that influenced the direction and sentiment of this creative research project.

The formative work I produced in the UK from the mid 1980s until the early 1990s was characterised by a 'post-punk-post-modern' design philosophy, fusing what would often appear as incongruous, random or irreverent elements. This was formed from my own personal experience with the punk movement in the late 1970s, absorbing the anarchic sense of the time and recognising the potential for change. Punk evolved in Britain during a period of sustained economic recession, with long-term pay restraints being set and implemented by the then Labour Government, headed by Prime Minister James Callaghan (1976-1979). These unpopular measures to curtail inflation culminated in what became known as the 'winter of discontent' (1978-1979), with industrial disputes, resulting in mass strikes by workers: from coal miners and lorry drivers to rubbish collectors and mortuary technicians. British streets were left littered with mountains of rotting refuse and the dead lay unburied (Rombes, 2009). This was the political backdrop of punk and as a teenager growing up in South London I responded to this by collecting vinyl records, reading *Fanzines*, watching bands such as The Clash, The Damned, 999, and The Buzzcocks play live, and creating my own music, playing bass guitar in a local punk band. My interest in designing clothing also began at this time, instigated in part by the fact that the look of punk had not yet become a commodity,⁵ the do-it-yourself method being, at that time, the only way. Initially I was customising clothes to achieve the style, one of the first pieces I adapted starting life as an old emerald green t-shirt from Paris, with a large image

⁵ In 1976/1977 only one store in London existed that sold the Punk 'look' - Seditionaries (Kings Road/Worlds End). Examples from 1978 onwards include - Paraphernalia (Croydon), The Last Resort (Petticoat Lane), Boy (Kings Road) etc.

of the Eiffel Tower printed on the front. The sleeves were ripped out and a silhouette outline of a phallus was drawn over the shape of the tower, with a thick black marker pen. I wore the t-shirt inside-out, the reversed diffused image seeming, at the time, even more seditious. A decade later the legacy of my involvement with punk strongly influenced my first body of professional work, developed under the label of Angel UK, producing collections such as *Celtic Soul* (1988), which used decorative textile elements from early Celtic manuscripts mixed with a late 1960s British skinhead aesthetic and *To Peter Blake with Love* (1989), which merged Pop Art and Futurism. Later examples of work such as *Salvation* (1991) combined the proportions and garment details of late 19th century religious preachers' clothing with an exploration of fashion 'deconstruction' (by exposing internal structural elements of the garments). This juxtaposing of historical themes with political and sub-cultural phrases was typical of my design approach during that period. As each collection progressed the aesthetic language adjusted and by 1995 a more purist design philosophy had emerged in the work, resulting in the formation of the A.J.Black label. This new project employed a research approach that focused on a specified period of time, place and product, as seen in collection *ONE* (1995, Fig.15), which explored the detail and cut of historical uniforms.



Fig.15 A.J.Black (1995).

The design research process for each collection systematically rifled through military archives initially from WWI (1914-1918), unveiling lost utilitarian details and vintage sartorial elements. These components were then reconfigured by introducing contemporary fit and proportions through cut; manufactured in regulation armed service twill weave fabrics; and finally aged through a series of post-production laundering processes such as 'enzyme washing'.

A.J.Black's design philosophy was embedded in relocating the past to find its place in the future. To a certain degree, a sense of fashion modernity was achieved and recognised in editorial articles, such as this one by Nick Compton in *Arena Magazine* (Spring/Summer 1997), where he describes my S/S'97 collection as – "soft minimalism, its clean, directional, dare we say, coolly modern". Having the work recognised as being *modern* was, at the time, critical in establishing the brand's design position. It was a place that had observable rules based on historical references that were either already imbued with, or could be adjusted to suit the idea of a democratically modern design process based on functionality, simplicity and comfort. By following these rules, the process helped me define aesthetic parameters, offering a simple blueprint for clothing modernity through reinvention and encouraging me to embark on future projects and collaborations.

In 2001 I worked as a designer for the brands Rodd & Gunn, and Logan, both labels having been created and marketed as iconic New Zealand lifestyle brands. The concept of Rodd & Gunn was based on the notion of a rural utopia and with Logan it was nautical heritage that informed the design of the garments. The collections I designed for them relied on establishing a sense of reminiscence, with fabrics and details being the visual and tactile reference points for time and place. Examples of this include working closely with an Austrian fabric mill, F.M.Hammerle, who had been recreating fabrics from their archives and who supplied a striped cotton fabric with a raised texture, originally produced in 1928, which was made into a Rodd & Gunn casual shirt with utilitarian pocket detailing. The garment was then washed to add a specific level of 'ageing' and 'handle', resulting in a product that represented a commercial 'vintage-style' of design, and an archetypal brand product.

I later moved on to work on the 'C.People' project, creating a new menswear brand for the Australian, USA and Asian markets. Commissioned by Cambridge Clothing Ltd, a leading Australasian tailoring manufacturer, my design brief was to formulate a new concept brand that would act as a Research and Development tool for the company to explore new product categories and investigate untapped markets. I developed the brand's concept around the notion of egalitarianism and created a stylised version of the copyright symbol as the brand's logo.

The intention was that the logo, together with the lack of any form of external or conspicuous branding, would create an alternative yet commercial marketing message for a mass consumer market. The design for this work was informed by the brand's visual philosophy, based on an international egalitarian style. The product development process relied on a multi-faceted system of fashion research that fused historical elements from different eras with natural, yet technologically advanced fabrics, unique 'garment-dyed' colours and sophisticated laundering treatments. The design was often inspired by specific historical workers garments, such as a 1940s Blacksmith's shirt from rural mid-America to a 1890s British railwayman's jacket. (Fig.16).



Fig.16 C.People (Jacket inspired by a 1890's Railwayman jacket), (2003).

The brand's concept offered consumers an experience that blurred notions of time and place, resulting in a sense of familiarity, further exemplified in the retail design and merchandising of the C.People flagship store on Flinders Lane in Melbourne, Australia. The design of the store integrated period industrial furniture such as 19th century bakers' racks to display shoes; antique oversized factory workbenches with original mid-century bentwood ply furniture by Charles Eames and Australian designer Grant Featherston. These elements were set against burnished steel walls and distressed paint finishes. The C.People marketing campaign I developed extended this view further, producing a series of experimental short films to represent the collections through an alternative medium to conventional runway shows, in collaboration with filmmaker Greg Wood, and utilised a photographic approach based on the principles of early 20th century portrait photography. This reinforced the brand's egalitarian philosophy by promoting the use of 'real' people as models to express greater diversity of age and ethnicity, resulting in films and images that had no distinct sense of when, who or where (Figs.17 & 18).



Fig.17 C.People S/S2005i, (2004).



Fig.18 C.People S/S2005ii, (2004).

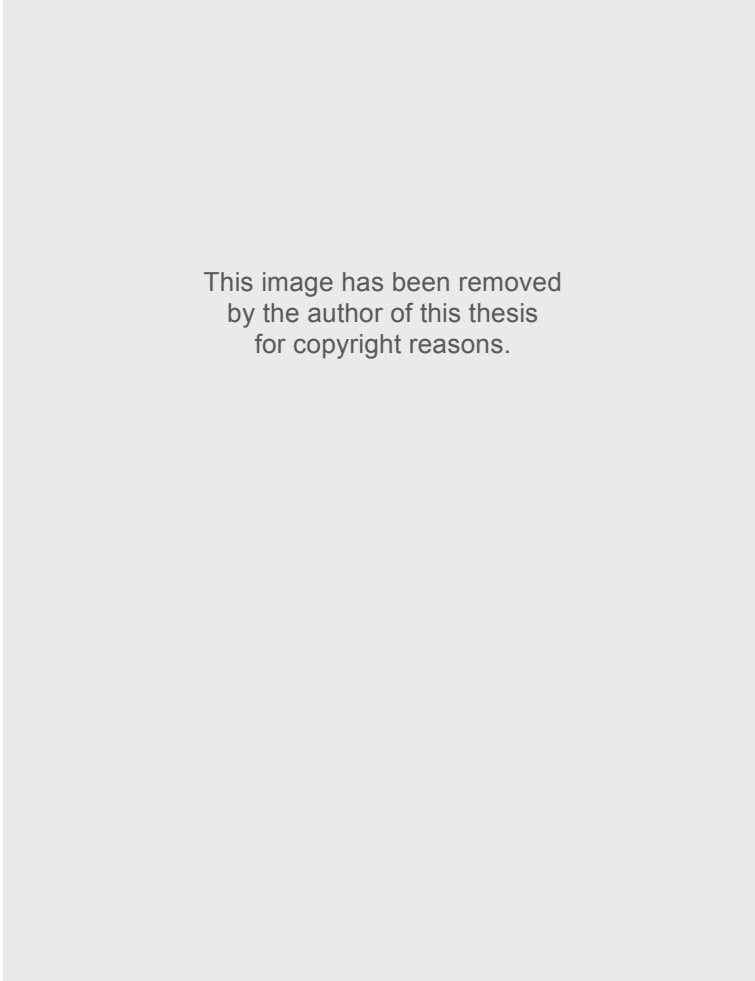
Later projects included designing ranges for Workshop (NZ), where I researched and developed a vintage inspired Japanese denim product range and collaborated on the Gubb & Mackie (NZ) brand to design collections informed by a 1940s nautical aesthetic (Fig.19). Until recently much of my work followed the principles of this type of conventional design development, a method used by many other contemporary menswear designers including Paul Smith, Dries Van Noten and Marc Jacobs. This has evolved into a dominant methodology within the menswear design process, where everyone uses a similar historic resource pool, fashionably determined by a particular sense of nostalgia and authenticity.



Fig.19 Shirt detail, Gubb & Mackie, (2008).

1.3.3. DESIGN & SOCIAL CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

A PREDISPOSITION TOWARD NOSTALGIA & THE VALUE PLACED ON AUTHENTICITY



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Fig.20 David Piper and Johnny Vercoutre outside *The Modern Times* nostalgia club.
East London, (2004).

Fashion design research is commonly informed by investigating the look, cut, detail and sentiment of clothing from the past, from the reworking of individual garments to the stylised reinterpretation of an era as reflected in many designers' collections, from Dries Van Noten to John Galliano. This process of historical design appropriation is fundamental to the cyclical evolution of fashion trends, whereby a specific period impacts on the visual and popular culture of another time — such as the influence the 1980s has on the present day. It is a process that is well documented with designers, historians (Boucher, 1987), and academics, rationalising and contextualising the fashion system's particular interest with a specific period in relation to a given point in time (Parrot, 1994). This chapter will explore the development of a growing trend based on more extreme forms of design appropriation and garment reproduction. This trend is distinct from fashion's conventional, romanticised thematic reworking of the past and also differs from the eclectic referencing of historical elements by designers to establish a vintage-hybrid look, evident in products such as retro-style t-shirts promoting mythical mid-century Californian surf clubs, and cargo pants from fictional military combat units. This results in garments that are discernibly distinct from their original source and evident in industrial, contemporary men's fashion retail stores such as Hallensteins (NZ), Abercrombie & Fitch (USA) and Topman (UK).

This work will also investigate the theory that in some areas of contemporary fashion design practice, a parallel process has emerged that follows a more literal form of historical appropriation. Menswear designers in particular are going beyond the indirect referencing of a specific period towards the reverential reproduction of tailored, utilitarian and proletariat clothing in an attempt to create a valuable commodity component, that of authenticity. This characteristic has become a clearly defined consumer desire and an additional value in the materiality of objects. Authenticity is a less tangible, yet essential commodity ingredient, and from a sociological perspective, theorist and poet Susan Stewart expands on this view in her book *On Longing*:

Within the development of culture under an exchange economy, the search for authentic experience and, correlatively, the search for the authentic object become critical. As experience is increasingly mediated and abstracted, the lived relation of the body to the phenomenological world is replaced by a nostalgic myth of contact and presence. "Authentic" experience becomes both elusive and allusive as it is placed beyond the horizon of present lived experience, the beyond in which the antique, the pastoral, the exotic, and other fictive domains are articulated (Stewart 2005, p.133).

This desire for authenticity has also become a recognised marketing tool and within this context has been defined as the 'experience economy', and explained as being where the more artificial, transient and virtual our lives become the more we crave personality, stability and ultimately, a sense of the past (Gilmore, 2007).

For the purposes of this work authenticity will be defined as 'the desire for products to be underpinned by a credible sense of the past', and found in the research, design, manufacture and sale of recreated clothing. These are pieces that propose a credible lineage based on validated historical research (archival garments, vintage patterns, original drawings, period photographs and produced using era-orientated fabrics, colours and construction techniques), in an attempt to create products that are an accurate representation of the original source. However, as each trend surfaces, it does have a different outcome from its defining period. This is due to the effect of the process of the interpretation of the citation — the oversized t-shirt of 1984 is generally less oversized in 2011 — so the look essentially becomes the look of the present. This trend towards authenticity has had designers taking more extreme approaches, where the exploration of primary historical clothing references has become indispensable to the design process, resulting in a proliferation of designers who are now predisposed to the recreation of artefacts. This is the foundation of retrospective fashion cycles, with consumers creating the look directly by purchasing original second-hand clothing, and additionally by the designers who reclaim the old to help inform their future design work. In an article called "The Vintage Hunt" from the fashion journal, *Fantastic Man*, journalist Charlie Porter explored the extent of this process, where dealers supply fashion designers with original vintage

garments and Porter follows one such dealer who hunts down the clothing of the recently deceased at New York *tag sales*.⁶ The pieces are then assessed for potential design value and sold through his company, the Cherry Resource Centre, where fashion designers can rent or buy the salvaged pieces for the purpose of “inspiration” (Porter, 2010).

This form of defined historical inspiration is one approach that menswear designers utilise, however for this research I have examined the past from a broader creative design context, through a view of the past as an interactive non-linear vehicle, where fashion utilises history, and visa versa. In Walter Benjamin's work, he uses fashion to illustrate how the past is a unique, constituent component of history, a historical “structuring device”. With its constant referencing and re-referencing of itself it can act as a trigger to change past events into the present (Lehmann, 2000).

A historical materialist cannot do without the notion of a present which is not a transition, but in which time stands still and has come to a stop. For this notion defines the present in which he himself is writing history. Historicism gives the "eternal" image of the past. The historical materialist leaves it to others to be drained by the whore called "Once upon a time" in historicism's bordello. He remains in control of his powers, man enough to blast open the continuum of history (Benjamin, *Illumination*, p.262).

Historical materialism is centred on the perspective of history being about the possibility of changing the present by finding unrealised potential in the past. Conversely historicism has an overwhelming concern for the 'institution' of the past, one built on the idea that history is a sequential series of events, measured by quantity: as it extends forward in time it gains material wealth; “Its method is additive; it musters a mass of data to fill the homogeneous, empty time” (Ibid). Benjamin's definition of historical materialism appears to approximate the fashion designer's fluid relationship with the past, where history is perceived as a vast

⁶ Tag Sales – A process of selling second-hand items from a deceased estate, where prospective buyers are given a number, which determines their position in the queue to enter the property and purchase the used goods. Porter Charlie. *The Vintage Hunt*. Article in *Fantastic Man*, Magazine Issue No.11 Spring/Summer 2010. TOP Publishers

swirling research pool from which to draw ideas. However, in most cases, the design of menswear has evolved, at least in the latter part of the 20th century, into a mechanism that gathers, consumes and regurgitates previous decades along an almost linear time line, revisiting the same locations, commonly in sequence; in other words as historicists, rather than historical materialists. This is reaffirmed in the way designers also engage with historical social structuring, both subliminally and ironically, through visual representations of divisions of class and society. This is a legacy implanted in the psyche of many European designers, such as Luella Bartley who often recreates a “class-ridden” look in her work: "I think it is inherent in all of us, the class thing is very deep in people whether you are fighting against it or repressed by it. I play with all those notions" (Bartley, 2007).

Bartley reflects a particularly British perspective to the design of clothing and an approach that revolves around the recognition of the symbols of class. It reiterates a sense of belonging, based predominantly on stereotypical class indicators such as a Harris tweed jacket and a Barbour oilskin coat. It is a coded, yet literal design method and a perspective that has a specific field of vision. In contrast, designers such as Yohji Yamamoto take a more cerebral approach to the reinterpretation of the social structuring of our past through clothing. In Wim Wenders' documentary film about Yamamoto, *Notebook on Cities and Clothes* (1989), this design approach was evident. It showed Yamamoto examining the photographs of August Sander (from his series *People of the 20th Century*), portraits from around the 1920s of people from a cross-section of German society: artists, artisans, bakers, bankers, poets, peasants, workers, etc (Figs.21 & 22). These images have directly inspired many menswear designers. For Yamamoto it was the scrutiny of the subject that was most important, suggesting that his inspiration came from reading the image beyond the clothes to acquire a sense of who the person was and what they did, as well how wide their trousers were.

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Fig.21 Painter Heinrich Hoerle, (1928)

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Fig.22 Young peasants, Westerwald, (1913)

“When we look at people on the street in modern cities we can’t understand which profession they are doing, they all look same for me. But in this time (1920s) people looked like their profession and background. The clothes are clearly representing their business and their lives.” Yamamoto’s process transcended the basic aesthetic restoration of the past by introducing a historical persona in clothes, establishing a more conceptual method to the design of men’s clothing, founded on the sentiment and feeling of a piece, as opposed to its appearance.

A designer taking an entirely different approach to Yamamoto is the influential Belgian designer Martin Margiela, who presented a 1994 collection to the international fashion world where instead of just imitating the sentiment of originals he bypassed the conventional design process by creating reproductions, and in other collections he created new garments out of existing ones:

Time clings to Margiela's work. His clothes carry the traces which time leaves behind, and are themselves signs of time. Time has entered into them in two respects: 1. As the time of the production process: and 2. As traces, which time leaves behind in the fabric in the course of use...There are skirts made out of the kind of scarves that can be collected at a flea market; clothes made out of old clothes which have been taken apart and then put back together again; pullovers made out of old stockings... (Vinken, 2005, p.142).

For Margiela this was part of a bigger vision that questioned the conventions of the fashion system and was evident in later collections where he deconstructed tailoring to create garments that were left unfinished (such as frayed hems) or where the internal, normally hidden elements such as pocket bags were left visible.

Other practitioners, such as contemporary French designer Marc le Bihan, are also influenced by clothing from the past, integrating as Margiela does, historical references into their products by incorporating actual parts of garments, or fragments of cloth taken from vintage pieces, into new garments. However, Le Bihan's work is not driven simply by reconstructing the past but is also about creating clothing collections that attempt to disrupt our perceptions of time, place and person by presenting fashion ranges that do not follow a singular historical theme, are not gender specific, and are intended to sit outside fashion's chronological trend cycle (Kamitsis, 2010). Industrial fashion design collections are typically 'themed', in that they have a specific reference point or a combination of design influences that come together to create a coherent, co-ordinated range of merchandisable commercial products. They are collections that have a defined historical narrative attached, one that the fashion media and marketers can organise and compartmentalise within the cycle of prescribed seasonal trend. Since the 1950s, these chronological trend cycles have been running between a twenty to forty year span; examples include the influence of the 1920s on the 1960s, the 1930s (Art Deco) impression on popular art and design in the 1970s, the widespread effect of 1950s culture on the 1980s, and the impact of 1980s fashion on the 2000s. Traditionally these time spans have been used as a mechanism in the relocation of fashion. A significant figure in the establishment of

this design method is American designer Ralph Lauren, born in 1938 in the Bronx, New York. His influence began in 1974 when, as the costume designer for the movie *The Great Gatsby*, his representation of the sartorial style of the 1930s inspired the next generation (following on from the mid-1960s when the activity of flea market clothes shopping first flourished) to scour second-hand stores for period pieces to recreate the look (Constantino, 1997). Lauren recognised the commercial value of the notion of authenticity and built this philosophy into every aspect of his business:

Lauren's success lay in his timely recognition of the traditions and values of the past – and the myths associated with the past. Like most designers, Lauren looked to the past – real and fictional – for inspiration, altering details to suit the present, but he was one the first designers to translate recent historical dress into successful marketing concepts with products based on mythical American male archetypes such as the hunter, the cowboy, the countryman and the man-about-town (Ibid; 111).

The “mythical American male archetype” was a central theme in Lauren's work and this was typified by his iconoclastic representation of an American rural aristocracy, where wealthy, sophisticated, gentlemen-cowboys sat astride thoroughbred horses on vast, mid-western ranches. American designers in search of ‘the authentic’ have been commonly inspired by the broad notion of ‘rustic Arcadian clothing’, from Lauren's gentrified farm owners to designers who focus on the clothing of early immigrant pioneers, farm workers, peasants and labourers, with fashion labels such as Earnest Sewn focusing much of their research on this more prosaic area. ‘Earnest sewn’ is also clearly the intent of the brand by suggesting a hand-wrought wholesomeness inspired by the blood, sweat and tears of the farmer workers of rural America as represented in these images from the 1930s and 1940s by photographers Dorothea Lange and Mike Disfarmer (Figs.23 & 24).

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Fig.23 Hoe Cutter, Alabama, (1936)

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Fig.24 Farmer, Heber Springs (c.1940)

Donwan Harrell, the designer of another American brand PRPS, suggests that his brand acts as a voice to reflect the nostalgic vision of a masculine American lifestyle. This is outlined in this statement from the label's marketing communication:

PRPS repeatedly references a wealth of detail from authentic military uniforms, workwear and hunting apparel, we are continually in the research process; from taking notes of a painter's stains to observing wrinkles on a mechanic's knees. Our constant pursuit is authenticity (PRPS, 2010).

These brands are often influenced by rural clothing and in particular denim jeans, being an indispensable item of modern clothing and a key marketing mechanism in the 'authentic aesthetic' phenomenon that inspired a new fashion category – Premium Denim,⁷ (vintage-orientated products initially made from shuttle loom denim fabrics). The introduction of Premium Denim was due in part to Japanese textile manufacturers who had

⁷ Premium Denim – refers to denim products that are commonly made using vintage selvedge looms, made in limited numbers and are sold at a premium price NZ\$350-600. Examples of brands include – Nudie, Acne, Rogan and Denham.

purchased disused U.S. narrow-shuttle looms (which had been superseded by more economical projectile looms in the 1950s to help facilitate the appetite for denim apparel in America and Europe) and began producing denim on these slower machines.^{iv} This fabric production method, combined with double-ring spun yarn, produced a denser fabric with an inconsistent textured appearance resulting in each pair of jeans having a 'more unique' characteristic than conventional denim apparel, thus appealing to a Japanese sensibility in its reflection of the concept of Wabi-Sabi, which essentially defines beauty as imperfection. The concept has been taken up by many of the U.S. brands that reverence the philosophical principles of Wabi-Sabi (Earnest Sewn, 2010), This 'slow' uneven fabric with its recognisable red selvedge on the inside of the outer-side seam, together with traditional detailing and garment construction techniques, laid down the foundations for the premium denim boom, initiated by Japanese labels such as Evisu and followed by an international contingent of like-minded brands (Nudie, PRPS, Earnest Sewn, Acne, etc.).

The designer behind the Evisu brand, Hidehiko Yamane, originally trained as a tailor and during the early 1990s recognised that denim had the potential to feed the craving for those in search of the rare. He initially began manufacturing denim on the old American shuttle looms that had a maximum output capacity of only forty meters per day, and due to the narrow width of the fabric (30 inches), equating to only fourteen pairs of jeans (Evisu, 2010). This, together with the fact that the jeans were meticulously made and that the branding devices on the back pocket were individually hand-painted, resulted in a mass produced product that could only be made in limited numbers, thereby achieving a commercial rarity value that was also further reiterated in the higher retail cost of the garments (1990s prices ranged from approx US\$250 to US\$350). 'Evisu' in Japanese aptly refers to the name of the Buddhist god of money and good fortune (Ebisu, 2010). Evisu is significant in the growth of this category and reflected in the Japanese obsessive collector sentiments of the otaku,^v a term first used in Japan in the early 1980s in reference to devotee collectors of manga (comic books) and anime (Japanese animation). The etymological meaning of otaku is "your house" (Eng, 2009), implying that the living space is central to the activity of collecting and housing objects. This notion of people acquiring, hoarding and cataloguing

unusual limited edition items in their living environments is not a new development and can be equated to the wunderkammer and kunstammer collections (cabinets of curiosities or memory theatres) that first appeared in the 16th century. Originally focused on a form of trophy hunting, accumulating natural history specimens as a microcosmic representation of the world, these came to include more unusual curiosities (preserved two-headed animals, shrunken heads etc.) and later, objects that were manufactured specifically for their rarity or status value, such as Fabergé eggs. The status value behind this form of consumerism evolved into a mechanism to foster consumption, where products created by craftsmen were developed specifically for the purpose of “conspicuous consumption” (Veblen, 1899), and exhibited by their owners as status markers. The sociologist and economist Thorstein Veblen, a critic of 19th century capitalism, believed that consumption should be based on utilitarian needs rather than as a tool to elevate the hierarchical social status of the “leisure class” (Ibid). He identified that for a member of the leisure class to achieve credibility it was not only necessary to have financial wealth but also to foster an “aesthetic taste”, a characteristic that demanded time, research and learning, and a further reinforcement of status — a form of “culture capital”.^{vi}

Today's discerning authenticity hunters have in most cases transcended the Victorian class system but in relation to their consumption of luxury goods, ‘culture capital’ dominates, a characteristic Veblen clearly recognised in the late 1900s:

Since the consumption of these excellent goods is an evidence of wealth, it becomes honorific: and conversely, the failure to consume in due quantity and quality becomes a mark of inferiority and demerit. This growth of punctilious discrimination as to qualitative excellence in eating, drinking, etc., presently effects not only the manner of life, but also the training and intellectual activity of the gentleman of leisure. He is no longer simply the successful, aggressive male, - the man of strength, resource, and intrepidity. In order to avoid stultification he must also cultivate his tastes, for it now becomes incumbent on him to discriminate with some nicety between the noble and the ignoble in consumable goods. He becomes a connoisseur in credible viands of various degrees of merit, in mainly beverages and trinkets, in seemly apparel and architecture, in weapons, games, dancers, and the narcotics. This cultivation of the aesthetic faculty requires time

and application, and the demands made upon the gentleman in this direction therefore tend to change his life of leisure into a more or less arduous application to the business of learning how to live a life of ostensible leisure in a becoming way (Ibid; p.74).

The culture capital gains further worth when combined with the value given to the narrative behind the acquisition odyssey of individual items and also on the substance of the collection as a whole: this being the story of the journey taken to unearth the rare, the genealogy of the individual pieces, and the value of the collection in relation to the sum of all its parts; also evident in the activity of train-spotting and stamp collecting, where the set or series has in most cases a greater value. This has now become a substitute for the creative hobbies of the past, when during your spare time you would have made your own 'one-offs' such as pottery, clothes and furniture. This 'making' has now been replaced by 'participation', based on the appropriation of objects as opposed to the creation of crafts, and explained further by Susan Stewart in her book *On Longing*:

Within contemporary consumer society, the collection takes the place of crafts as the prevailing form of domestic pastime. Ironically, such collecting combines a preindustrial aesthetic of the handmade and singular object with a post-industrial mode of acquisition/production: the ready-made (Stewart 2005, p.166).

The post-industrial male consumer-collector of manufactured goods has proliferated during the first part of the 21st century and they participate in a pastime that offers them the opportunity to be involved within a competitive arena, where they can display their culture capital, compare notes on the quintessential, the rarest garment, the oldest details, the most traditionally made and the best copy. An example of a brand that has been established with this particular consumer in mind is the Japanese brand, General Research. Their designers systematically develop limited edition collections that are accurate reproductions of iconic utilitarian clothing such as vintage motorcycle and mountaineering apparel, navy and even prison uniforms (Figs.25 & 26).


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Fig: 25 General Research Brand,
(Reproduction prison uniform), (2008).

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Fig: 26 Prisoners (convicted polygamists), (c1900).

Japan has embraced the authentic aesthetic on many levels. Not only has it been instrumental in the appropriation of historical references and the manufacture of nostalgic niche products, but also in the broader consumer arena, as evidenced by the significant presence of English designers such as Margaret Howell, who has over seventy of her own stores and concessions across Japan,^{vii} and who produces contemporary collections inspired by traditional utilitarian clothing. At the other end of the scale are the British craft designers producing garments in small limited numbers for the Japanese market, such as Paul Harnden, and who, like many other designers from the U.K., favour the reproduction of clothing worn by artisans, tradesmen and the military, in general a poetic notion that romanticises the 19th century proletariat.



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Fig.27 Paul Harden shoes, (c2006).

Harnden creates shoes and clothes based on this 19th century romanticism by following a fundamentally lo-tech, Luddite, approach to achieve a pre-Industrial Revolution aesthetic (Fig.27).⁸ These articles are produced using traditional, locally sourced materials, with fabrics made on vintage looms, and craft

⁸ Luddite – one of a band of protesters against unemployment who destroyed machinery in northern England about 1812-18; hence, any opponent of technological innovation. *Concise Dictionary*, Chambers, 1991

methods that include hand sewing. The products are then aged using extensive laundering and polishing techniques to create a patina of time and wear. This approach centres on creating a product that appears pre-used, a unique, found relic. The brand Old Town Clothing, however, offers a very different experience, where the new product has been produced to appear captured or frozen in time. Old Town Clothing encompasses the broad idealised notion of heirloom heritage by blending quintessential British clothing, such as Fair Isle tank tops, tweed jackets and corduroy trousers, with industrial workers' clothing from the early 20th century,^{viii} (Fig.28).



Fig.28 Old Town Clothing, (2005).

Other designers, such as Nigel Cabourn, use a combination of original recreation: incorporating ageing and contemporary factors to establish a more universal vintage feel. Cabourn works from a converted gardener's house in the north of England and has an extensive archive of 4,000 vintage pieces, which include British Military uniforms and workwear that he utilises as inspiration (Cabourn, 2005). He explains this further:

It is this ever-increasing vintage collection that is the cornerstone of each collection, not a response to a particular trend or general demand. Each collection has a real story, sense of history and integrity underpinned by the highest level of quality (Ibid).

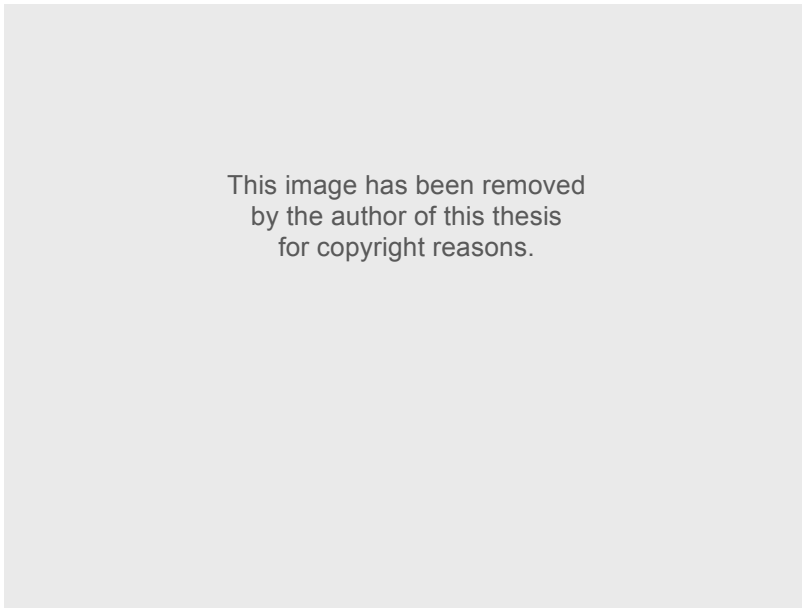
The traditional clothing of a farmer, a blacksmith, a sailor and a soldier, inherently functional, inspires this integrity and unpretentiousness, clothing that is not designed with an inbuilt obsolescence but built to last.

Garments, such as those photographed by August Sander in the 1920s, had features that served a specific purpose and were made in traditional natural fabrics that had longevity and could be repaired easily. It is evident that the growing popularity of these clothes is a reflection of the global movement that is edging away from the sterile homogenisation seen in products that are mass-produced, in favour of a more independent self-sufficient paradigm, one that is also appearing in many areas other than clothing design. Examples of this include the revival of socio-political motivated working-class music such as Folk, with artists Devendra Banhart, Joanna Newsom and The Unthanks typifying this genre, and the resurgence of the handmade, with websites such as Etsy, acting as an international commercial hub for craft-based products (jewellery, ceramics, furniture, etc).^{ix} This shift is also reflected in the dramatic global increase in home-grown produce and farmers' markets,⁹ inspired, in part by the success of the Slow Food movement, which began life in rural villages in Italy in the 1980s as a direct action organisation to combat the onslaught and corporate dominance of brand chains such as McDonalds, KFC and Domino's Pizza. Proposing an alternative, community-led philosophy, it embraces the idea of 'locally-made' and connects the producer with the consumer (Petherick, 2007). In fashion terms, this translates to a reaction against over-consumption and the rejection of global mass-produced super brands such as The GAP, in favour of the tailor-made and artisanal by supporting local supply chains, local production, natural fabrics and marketing practices that promise lovingly-made-long-life-clothes.

This philosophy extends beyond a product's design and manufacture into the retail experience. It is about presenting a total experience, with the sound of a hand-wound ticking clock, hand-written receipts and hand-stamped labels at the Old Town store to Earnest Sewns' physical re-creation of a 19th century rural general store in the Meatpacking District in New York City (Fig.29). The store is entirely experiential from the bittersweet smell of the oversized rough-sawn timber floorboards, to the vintage industrial lighting and antique furniture acting as merchandising platforms. These messages are paradoxically reiterated through technology on company websites, with brands such as PRPS presenting a lo-

⁹ There are currently 80,000 members worldwide, who are attached to 850 different local chapters. It is the biggest and most international organisation of its kind. Petherick, Tom. *Sufficient*, Pavilion 2007.

tech-analogue aesthetic, where information is charismatically hand-written on faded pages from vintage notebooks that are 'manually' opened and turned.^x



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Fig.29 Earnest Sewn, New York, (2008).

The spectrum of approaches to these synthesised experiences varies, with some brands offering an extreme, reproduced package. For others it a more superficial representation, but all have a common factor in that they all offer a romanticised, accessible view of 19th century American and Western European life and clothing. In some cases, designers such as Margaret Howell ensure that while the details of the garments are recreated, the use of fabric and construction techniques do not always reflect the original: such as a utilitarian item being made in luxury fibres such as cashmere and double-twisted Italian cotton poplin as opposed to the more prosaic varieties of wools and linens that were originally used. Howell's aesthetic suggests a sense of the familiar and follows the standardised fashion process where old ideas are observed and re-evaluated, and contrasts the more fundamentalist themed approach of Earnest Sewn who aims for re-creation of product, time and place, in the purest sense. Mass industrial fashion is further capitalising on this area of authenticity, with Japanese high-street retailers such as UNIQLO producing products that take on the appearance of premium denim by creating a version of selvedge jeans but sold at a fraction of the price. This commercialisation adds a further idiosyncratic element that sits alongside other

potential issues such as the idea of clothing originally intended for labour but reproduced for a luxury market, to the nostalgic misinterpretation of class with some garments appearing to have far more in common with the clothing of upper-class rural land owners than 19th century proletariats.

A designer based in Holland, Jason Denham has developed a marketing strategy to counter any doubts of his status as a leading arbiter of "authenticity"; in "the desire for products to be underpinned by a credible historical truth", he offers consumers a glimpse of some of his actual reference garments in a historical library on his brand DENHAM's website.^{xi} Denham actively promotes authenticity, both through his own work in which he reinterprets iconic utilitarian garments and by his collaborative work with 'The Militant Guild of Rural Tailors' – a conceptual research centre that promotes the notion of a "tailorwise resistance to the mass-production of the Industrial Revolution".^{xii} This fictional historical Guild is used as a mechanism to help revitalise the tailors' craft by developing a web and blog site that acts as a central networking location for anyone interested in this field, listing international practitioners, resources, traditional tailors and sub-genres; from brands that are focused on a purist reproduction process to designers such as Denham who are passionate about the past but recognise that some aspects of these products are open for change. Along with denim, men's tailoring has also been instrumental in the establishment of this revivalist thinking and a symbolic vehicle at the forefront of the movement, aided by the highly technical knowledge of tailoring, its component parts, 'mysterious' details and the elitist principles of bespoke presenting a valuable cache for the authenticity hunter. In the past decade this interest has grown with not only a new generation of luxury tailors entering the arena but also in the mass-makeover of conservative tailors. British tailors such as Kilgour, who under the control of Creative Director, Carlo Brandelli, repositioned the brand by replicating the look that epitomised mid-20th century tailoring modernity (Sherwood, 2007). Defined by a softly structured, streamlined, reductive appearance and lean fit, it was a look that many other designers, including Hedi Slimane for Dior, had been proposing.

Whether it is bespoke suits or premium jeans, these are articles typically acquired by male consumers and these men are willingly or unwittingly partaking in a

complicity that is impacting on the process of design innovation. It is a situation that has become more acute in recent years, reinforced by the commercial marketing of a confined aspect of our idealised past. The issue with this shift, is that it is not the methods behind the reinterpretation of the past that are necessarily the problem, but the fact that most menswear designers have focused on a singular historical capsule made up of Anglo-American 19th and 20th century uniforms, tailoring and utilitarian clothing.



Fig.30 Universal Works, (2009).

TWO: PURPOSE AND FOCUS

2.1 SARTORIAL DISRUPTION: A BACKGROUND FOR REFORM

The purpose of this research is to determine an applied design mechanism for 'sartorial disruption' in an attempt to interrupt the continuum in men's tailored clothing. It will focus on exploring the theory of 'tailoring outside the tailoring system' by creating work that is inspired by garments that have been overlooked by a combination of social, political and historical factors. This chapter will begin by examining how artists, reformers and designers have attempted to overturn the conventions of men's clothing design during the 20th Century, from conceptual statements to practical aesthetic propositions.

When I began designing menswear in the 1980s, there was a challenge to create innovative products within the parameters of an industrial fashion design system. Relying initially on irreverent and deconstructive design approaches, the work was fundamentally about reconfiguring conventional historical elements. I later worked with methods that rigorously explored garments from the past, in minute detail, to attempt to gain a deeper understanding of their design value. More recently I have come to a point in my practice where I find there is a need to interrogate and disrupt the perceived value of the past. This has come about through not only the consequence of my experience but also as a reaction to the endemic influence of the European-centred, historic sensibility of modern menswear. Other contemporary men's fashion designers such as Damir Doma, are also proposing a more critical creative approach. However, it is the inherent design systems that are still not being addressed, such as the composite system that makes up a male outfit (essentially trousers, a shirt and a jacket) and also the broader fashion system that is based on a model of predetermined cycles and conventional retail distribution mechanisms.

In the early 1900s the design of menswear was systematically challenged — art movements, in particular, were eager to impose the principles of their ideologically-driven manifestoes on the breadth of design disciplines, with artists such as Gustav Klimt and the Viennese Secessionists (1897-1939) promoting a concept of unity throughout all the visual manifestations of art and design, including fashion. In the design of men's clothing, Klimt offered a concept based on the simplification of dress by creating a full-length garment made from indigo-dyed linen (Fig.31), symbolic of freedom (Blackman, 2009), and described further:

Adorned at the shoulders with applied arabesques very similar to those in his paintings, these garments expressed both Klimt's rejection of contemporary fashion and his search for an *Urkleid*, an imaginary primordial dress. Since they were designed as an archetypal model for all types of clothing, Klimt's robes were far more essentially anti-fashion than a simple *Eigenkleid* (individual or personalised dress); (Stern 2004, p.23).

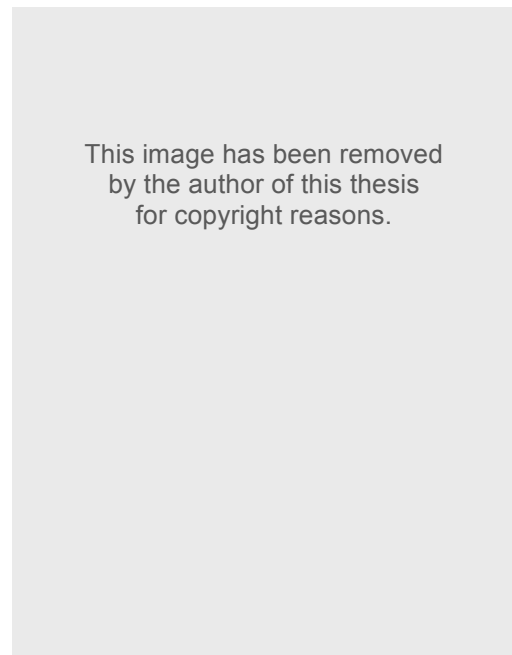


Fig.31 Gustav Klimt in one of his robes, (1914)

The adoption of these 'primal' robes was confined to Klimt's creative contemporaries such as the poet Hermann Bahr, who wore a simple robe-type garment and the dress designer Emile Flogel who also wore non-western, kaftan-style garments that were printed with dynamic monochromatic geometric patterns.

This approach was further explored by the Wiener Werkstätte (1903-1932), who, as a community of artists (following the Secessionists) were enthusiastic to include the notion of dress within a co-ordinated system of aesthetics. This system required that the artist hold the position of aesthetic autocrat, with the founding

member of the Wiener Werkstätte, Josef Hoffmann (an Austrian architect and industrial designer) proposing that clothing had to directly reflect and co-ordinate with art. However, his dictatorial approach seemed to be in direct conflict with his earlier views presented in an 1898 article, *The Individual Dress*, an article in which he offered his theory on liberal dress reform. This was based on the concept that clothing should be designed with the individual in mind, reflecting the personality of the wearer, and that people should not be governed by the *diktats* of fashion (or art) (Ibid. p.25). The impact of the clothing designed by the Wiener Werkstätte was extremely limited, for even though the movement was prolific in designing garments that fitted within their holistic scope, few members of the group had any background in the production of garments or a formal understanding of materials, and much of the work was therefore never realised beyond conceptual drawings (Ibid. p 27).

Similar to the Wiener Werkstätte, the Futurists were also concerned with a modernisation process that dictated a unification of all modes of art, design and culture. This was a predominantly male movement. Their work was underpinned by the publication of a series of manifestos specific to areas that included the design of men's clothing and reflected an ideological perspective that believed that fashion was inherently evil, that it needed to be replaced by a constantly renewable system of clothing based on a form of wearable art (Balla, 1913). In 1910 their motivation for the reformation of menswear was in part driven by the fact that the ubiquitous, solemn Edwardian suit represented a European-wide conformity, a tangible target. A leading member of the movement, Giacomo Balla was one of the first Futurists to design clothes and believed that to achieve an unprescribed, anti-fashion aesthetic, they should have a flexible capability centred on the notion of transformation. In line with their tenets on modernity, speed and movement, this meant that individual garments were required to be essentially dynamic, having the ability to be dramatically adjusted and changed. This was achieved through the use of 'modifiers' (detachable fabric elements) that could be attached, removed and repositioned to reflect the kinetic characteristic of Futurist art. This sense of movement could be activated by the "manual intervention of its user" (Lista, p.70).



Fig.32 Futurist Manifesto of Men's Clothing, (1914).

In Balla's first manifesto on men's clothing of 1913 — *Futurist Manifesto of Men's Clothing* (Fig.32), he asserted both a pragmatic and vigorously imaginative vision, where comfort was fundamental but where "daring clothes with brilliant colours and dynamic lines" would also be significant (Balla, 1913). The manifesto outlined principles that responded to the promotion of industrialisation by demanding that clothes had a built-in obsolescence to help generate manufacturing productivity and that fostering this short lifespan philosophy would also generate a fricative fashion flux resulting in clothing that would always be new, exciting and aesthetically stimulating. The Futurists theoretically re-evaluated traditional men's clothing from the colour to the cut:

We must invent Futurist clothes, hap-hap-hap-hap-happy clothes, daring clothes with brilliant colours and dynamic lines. They must be simple, and above all they must be made to last for a short time only in order to encourage industrial activity and to provide constant and novel enjoyment for our bodies. Use materials with forceful MUSCULAR colours – the reddest of reds, the most purple of purples, the greenest of greens, intense yellows, orange, vermilion – and SKELETON tones of

white, grey and black. And we must invent dynamic designs to go with them and express them in equally dynamic shapes: triangles, cones, spirals, ellipses, circles etc. The cut must incorporate dynamic and asymmetric lines, with the left-hand sleeve and left side of a jacket in circles and the right in squares. (Ibid)


However far-reaching and innovative the Futurists may have appeared during the early 20th century, it is clear that the garments they designed were but a superficial adaptation of traditional tailoring (Fig.33); by transposing geometric details such as asymmetric lapels, and adding abstract surface patterns, they were using a simple rudimentary technique to adapt existing garments. It is also evident that early on in the formation of the movement their conceptual and political rhetoric on fashion was only realised within the context of 'works of art': one-off pieces. Irrespective of how much the Futurists championed industrialisation, none of their men's clothing was ever mass-produced.



Fig.33 Photograph taken by Giacomo Balla on the top of the Eiffel Tower, (1925)

It took a further twenty years for an artist from the second wave of the Futurist movement, Tullio Crali, to produce far more credible garments in an attempt to reform men's tailoring. In 1932 he created garments for himself that reflected a more minimalist style by designing a tailored jacket that was stripped of all detail – no pockets, lapels or collar. With a close body fit and narrow silhouette, it was to be worn with a co-ordinated shirt and without a tie (Stern, 2004). This represented a far deeper understanding of the design principles of clothing than the ostensibly ornamental process favoured by his predecessors. He focused on proportion,

silhouette, cut, fit, balance and artisanal craft. Crali also questioned the broader system of men's tailoring (the constituent parts that define a suit), a philosophical approach that for him was not just about using clothing as an extension of an artist's canvas but appeared to be a genuine attempt to redefine the aesthetics of the tailored suit (Fig.34).



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Fig.34 Tullio Crali wearing his fluid, pared-down jacket, (1931)

The Futurists produced several manifestos on men's clothing which were interpreted by artists in a number of conflicting ways: Balla's design approach appears to have focused on creating dynamic garments that were “Aggressive, Shocking, Energetic and Phosphorescent” (Balla, 1913) and for Crali, it was about establishing a process reflective of the anti-decadent, pro-simplicity sentiment of the group's manifestos by eliminating excessive detailing. For the artist Ernesto Michahelles (also known as Thayaht), the principles of comfort, practicality and hygiene were behind his design philosophy. Thayaht was an artist with a professional interest in fashion. He had a technical understanding of dressmaking and collaborated, from the late 1910s, with the fashion designer, Madeleine Vionnet, on design, illustrations and conceptual developments. Their relationship included a shared interest in ‘dynamic symmetry’,^{xiii} which Vionnet

explored through the cut and textile details of many of her garments, some of which were directly inspired by the 'golden section' (a process of proportional division).^{xiv} Although radical in her design approach, Vionnet as a couturier was fundamentally creating clothing for an elite, yet commercial market; whereas paradoxically, Thayaht's political sympathies lay with the Futurist notion that fashion (design) was immoral and that a far more universal method of dress was required to counter the trend-focused fashion machine. In response, he created an item of clothing based on a utilitarian, all-in-one boiler/jumpsuit, which he called the 'tutu' (from the Italian word *tutta* meaning *all or everything*). The concept of the tutu was governed by an egalitarian design philosophy that proposed that the garment be worn by all social classes and occupations (Fig.35).

It would be economical to produce leaving no waste fabric after the garment had been cut out (achieved by using geometric, interlocking pattern pieces), no decorative features, and would be engineered in a way that would make it extremely simple to make, by all (Blackman, 2009). The universality and comfort aspect of the tutu would have had significant appeal in relation to its social aspirations, however its governing serviceable aesthetic would suggest that the garment was too informal to be considered as a credible contender to replace the Edwardian suit.

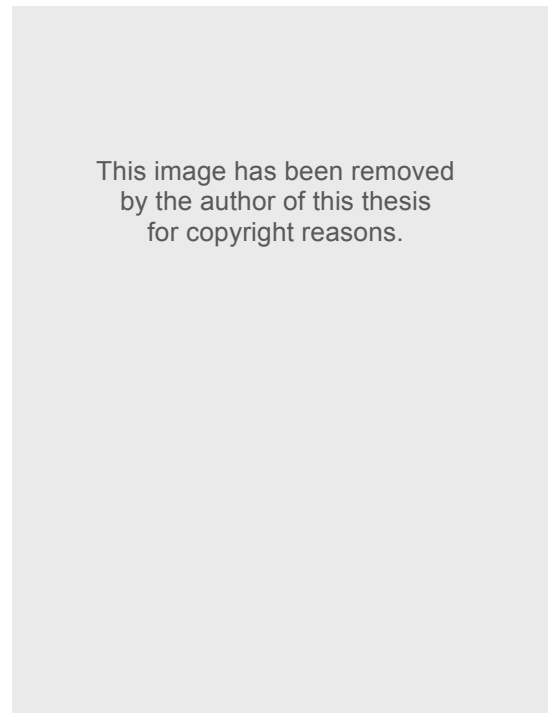


Fig.35 Ernesto Michahelles (Thayaht) wearing the *tutu*, (c1920)

This was a garment conceived soon after World War I (1914-1918) and was developed with a view to countering the negative economic effects of the war. It was a symbolic attack on the burdens that the fashion system imposed on consumers (financial, status, comfort, etc.) and it also reflected the Futurist's interest in a post war "cleansing" by creating healthy, sanitary garments: "Hygienic; that is, cut in such a way that every pore of the skin can easily breathe. In order to achieve this, avoid any tight-fitting part and any tight belt" (Balla, 1914). These issues of hygiene and men's dress reform had already, previously, been explored by philosopher, Edward Carpenter (1844-1929), who in the late 19th century was a key figure in The Simple Life movement:

Its goal was progressive replacement of the ills of capitalism and industrialisation by a socialism based on individual perfection, valuing Ruskinian ideas of manual labour and the cultivation of personal and spiritual liberties (Burman 2009, p.136).


Carpenter proposed that a simplification of dress was required and that the components and techniques used in men's tailoring created an unhealthy vessel, "the *coffin* of modern menswear" (Ibid).

No one who has had the curiosity once to unpick the lining of a tailor-made coat that has been in wear a little time, will, I think, ever wish to have coats made on the same principle again. The rubbish he will find inside, the frettings and frayings of the cloth collected in little dirt-heaps up and down, the paddings of cotton wool, the odd lots of miscellaneous stuff used as backings, the quantity of canvas stiffening the tags and paraphernalia connected with the pockets, bits of buckram inserted here and there to make the coat 'sit' well – all these things will be a warning to him (Carpenter, 1886. p.136).

An organisation known as the Men's Dress Reform Party (MDRP, 1929-1940) took on board much of Carpenter's concepts, advocating that middle-class men were being adversely affected by the demands of "capitalist labour" which promoted the mandatory wearing of clothes that were unhealthy, restrictive and uncomfortable (Bourke, 1996). Many of the founding members of the MDRP – doctors, scholars and clerics, had participated in the British Eugenics movement, (which explored

ideas such as the genetic improvement of a race through “prudent” human breeding practices). By the time the MDRP formed in 1929 their philosophies began to encompass more civil concerns, specifically in regards to men's health (through the wearing of hygienic clothes) and also on male liberation - in relation to the “fears of the threat of feminism” (Ibid), by asserting a far more liberal approach towards freedom of choice and individuality in male dress. The MDRP were focused on making practical improvements to clothing that could have direct health benefits and did not claim to have a strong aesthetic agenda, although in MDRP literature there are references to men's dress as sinking “into a rut of ugliness” (Burman, 2009). This does suggest their interest did also extend to the appearance of garments, as they were clearly inspired by the visual characteristics of recreational clothing of that period, which included wearing shorts, garments that utilised relaxed fabrics, unstructured cut and a broad spectrum of colours. The tailoring trade argued that the MDRP was incapable of producing garments that were technically credible, from the materials used to the construction of the garments (Bourke, 1996). The MDRP rejected this view and responded by proposing that their garments were superior to conventional men's clothing, made in the best quality fabrics and constructed with the structural integrity of tailoring. They also added that the advantage of their garments was that they were equally suitable for work or recreation and could be easily cleaned.¹⁰ The Movement recognised that for this new ideology to gain acceptance they needed to present a strong, rational image to the public, which in the early 1930s would be to assure them that the group's interests were not centred on extremism or eccentricity, but on comfort and freedom. To reiterate this view, the MDRP organised large city-centre rallies, where their members, consisting of respectable middle-class professionals, would parade in their 'healthy' individualistic clothes (Fig.36).


¹⁰ Laundering a wool suit in the 1920s relied on it being 'sponged' and 'aired' as *dry cleaning*, which used petroleum or chlorinated based solvents, was still in its infancy.



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Fig.36 Members of the Men's Dress Reform Party. London, (c.1935)

In 1937, the MDRP instigated the 'Coronation Dress Reform Competition', a contest for the public to enter their men's dress reform design ideas in specific categories from professional clothing to evening wear. Judges included the psychologist J.C.Flugel (a founding member of the Movement) and contestants included radiologist Dr. A.C.Jordan, who entered designs for the uniforms of telegraph boys (Fig.37) (Burman 2009).



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Fig.37 Clothing designed by Dr A.C.Jordan for the 'Coronation Dress Reform Competition', (1937).

Jordan's design's typified the MDRP's view that the tailored jacket was not a required element within a male clothing system and that trousers were to be replaced by shorts. The idea of wearing short trousers was at the time questioned, particularly from a health angle; in a Northern Hemisphere climate, bare legs would be susceptible to the effects of cold weather and the aesthetics of this garment were also coming under fire:

Whether man's lower limbs look their best encased in slightly flattened parallel tubes may be open to doubt, but at least there seems no great aesthetic advantage in cutting the tubes short at the knee.^{xv}

The popularity of the Movement grew both in the UK and internationally with affiliated leagues for the reform of menswear being established across the world, including one of the most prominent being in New Zealand. This does show how successful the Movement was in promoting their ideas for change and that organised resistance to mainstream notions of men's clothing existed and flourished. However, in the late 1930s the MDRP's directive was overshadowed by the greater issues relating to the impending war (World War II 1939-1945). As the century progressed, organised opposition to the conventions of menswear become more sporadic and this was in part aided by gradual acceptance of casual and sportswear in everyday clothing and also by the significant impact of post-war sub-cultures. The MDRP's onslaught had focused on men's tailored clothing — being at the time the only 'choice', and therefore as with the Futurists, a clearly identifiable target — the Edwardian suit,

It was not until the early 1960s that the middle and mass market openly adopted any significant changes, during this period (1960-1965) a new aesthetic was introduced by the French fashion designer Pierre Cardin. He created a look that stripped the suit of much of its 19th century ancestral baggage. Details such as the collar, lapels, lapel buttonholes, welted breast pockets, pocket flaps, etc. were made efficaciously defunct. This new look attained broad commercial success, helped by pop groups such as The Beatles who wore the distinctly cylindrical-cut jacket that had no collar or lapel, devoid of any superfluous detailing, and

executed with the technical integrity of Cardin's couture background (Fig.38). Cardin was strongly influenced by simple geometric shapes such as spheres, circles, squares and cylinders and used these as a basis from which to construct garments, demonstrating that it was possible to establish a credible look and new perspective on the design of menswear (Langle, 2005).

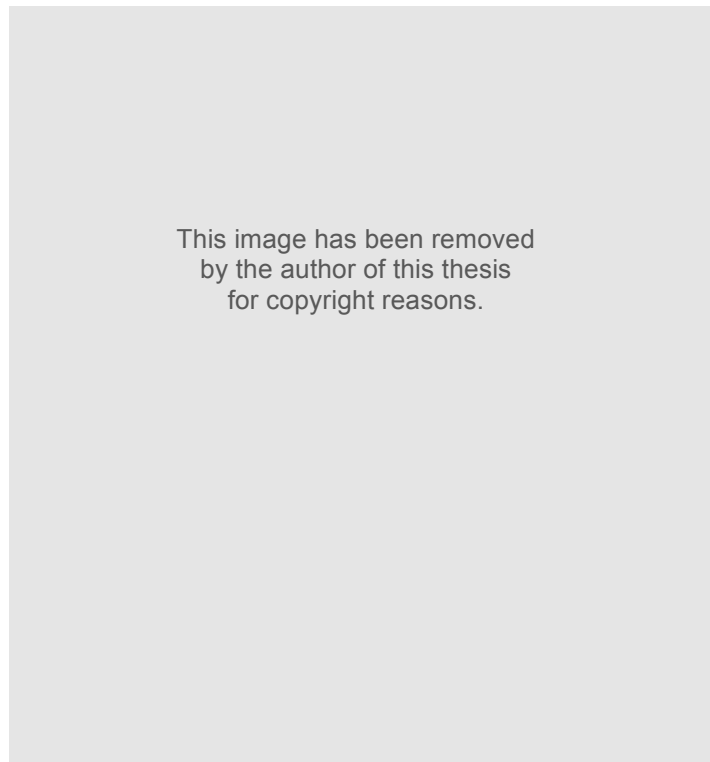


Fig.38 The new 'cylinder' style suit by Pierre Cardin, (1960)

Some may argue that dress reform in men's fashion is now irrelevant, due in part to what is seen as the liberalisation of male dress codes, the vast choices that appear to be available and how fashion is now disseminated through social media and blogs. Within the system of men's tailored clothing this does not necessarily appear to be the case, as the choice is still restricted to the conventional components of jacket, shirt and trousers. It is clear that there are variations in fabrication and proportion but fundamentally it is a universal system, one that represents a hierarchical benchmark in menswear design.

2.2 SARTORIAL DISRUPTION: CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT (MEN'S FASHION)

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the potential for 'sartorial disruption', this being the pursuit of an alternative perspective to the systems that generate men's fashion. It is about exploring the notion of disruption within the context of fashion (clothing) through the critical examination of Edwardian tailored menswear. The research will assemble concepts that will form the basis of a design-based framework for the practice component of this project.

Until recently, it has been my belief that the modern fashion system was not at the start of its life but at the end. This view evolved from a personal dissatisfaction with fashion that was imbedded in the legacy that Punk had left me with. It is clear that other sub-cultural movements such as the Hippies of the 1960's and 1970s seriously challenged the fashion system, however it is Punk ideology that continues to personally influence my work. Punk was a subculture that questioned the bourgeois conventions of the time by amalgamating the gender ambiguity of glam rock, antagonistic political iconography (such as images of Karl Marx and Nazi insignia) and sexually subversive elements, with a do-it-yourself approach to the structure and decoration of clothing, creating a hybrid yet essentially new look. Punk was anchored in a non-linear philosophy, where opposites and contradictions gave it its energy, but this also took it along a more destructive dead-end pathway. The elements would inevitably cancel each other out; "punk was also 'about' originality and plagiarism; anti-commercialism and commercialism; sophistication and dumbness; humour and seriousness" (Sabin, 1999). These characteristics also suggest that punk's creation could not have been simply engineered. In *Punk Rock: So What?* Roger Sabin argues that its participants were not just "passive pawns of history, their lives shaped by grand narratives beyond their control" (Ibid). Punk's conception, evolution and destruction were effectively controlled by those involved within the movement and this is what made it so disruptive. A potential effect Punk could have had on the fashion industry was on the system of clothing production. By introducing the notion of a democratic user-generated design process, everybody was a designer and everything could be used or reused (including refuse sacks) to fabricate clothing: an anti-establishment concept that was intended to disengage fashion

from capitalism. However, although its impact was significant, it could never be revolutionary, as the tradition of fashion requires that a trend be commercially captured. Punk ideology was about the moment, with its instant, spontaneous outbursts, its energy and anger could never be authentically synthesised or manufactured:

Punk was too uncompromising to establish itself as a lasting stylistic possibility, but its sting remained even in the diluted, popularized offences against the canons of good taste on the part of popular culture (Vinken, 2005, p.65).

Punk's legacy to the fashion system was that it introduced the potential for radical change on a far greater scale than the MDRP or the Futurists. It fused high and low art in a way that allowed for a new approach in the design of clothes; "the fact remains that there was an unprecedented meeting of avant-garde and popular culture inaugurated during the Pop Art era and reaching its zenith during the punk era" (Rombes, 2009). This new method of design inspired the post-modern fashion of designers such as Jean Paul Gaultier; "I like my clothes to take a lot of different influences and to show them together. So there is not one kind of beauty but many kinds of beauty" (Wilcox, 2001), and the deconstructive direction taken by the Japanese designer Rei Kawakubo, and later by Belgian designer Martin Margiela:

By the practicing of deconstructions, such designers have disinterred the mechanics of the dress structure and, with them, the mechanisms of fascinations that haunt fashion. The disruptive force of their works resided not only in their undoing the structure of a specific garment, in renouncing to finish, in working through subtractions or displacements, but also, and above all, in rethinking the function and the meaning of the garment itself... Their major contribution consisted, and still consists, in their endless challenging of the relationship between memory and modernity, enduring and ephemeral. (Loscialpo, 2009, p.01).


It is evident that designers such as Kawakubo and Margiela have consistently questioned the fashion system by offering us alternative views on the way clothes are designed, marketed and merchandised. Kawakubo, as the designer of

Japanese fashion label, Comme des Garçons, introduced in one of her first collections (Paris, 1981), not only a new perspective on the appearance of western clothing but also attempted to redefine the notion of fashion itself:

Kawakubo's collection rejected the idea of the beautiful, the noble, the perfect; it erased the difference of the sexes and sought to define a relation of body and clothing that was no longer based on hiding, revealing and exhibiting. The provocation of the French name (*Comme des Garçons*) of the label pointed to the fact that the dignity and ceremoniousness of the Parisian fashion world is here an object of wit and parody (Vinken, 2005, p.70).

Kawakubo extended this philosophy across all areas of her business; in the marketing of her brand she removed the actual product from advertising campaigns to establish an anti-commodity, indirect form of communication, and within her retail approach she created and merchandised each store individually to suit its particular site and international setting (Ibid), disrupting the conventional retail/marketing mantra of consistency. Since the early 2000s Kawakubo's critical approach to fashion has extended further by exploring even more alternative methods of selling garments to the public; from the re-thinking of conventional visual merchandising at Dover Street Market, London, to being a pioneer in guerrilla retailing (Barr, 2008).

Similarly to Kawakubo, Margiela's criticism of the fashion system can also be determined on many levels, including his reluctance to participate in the modern cultural obsession that promotes the 'Cult of the Designer', (where the personality of the designer becomes exponentially more significant, in terms of consumer awareness, than their work; these include designers such as Karl Lagerfeld, Vivienne Westwood and Tom Ford). Margiela rejects the idea that the designer should be a performer; "the role of Martin Margiela is one played off-stage" (Wilcox, 2001). He rarely makes any public relation statements or appears publicly following the presentation of a new collection. Margiela's work cuts across the grain of the fashion system, re-thinking fashion by experimenting with conceptual anomalies from reproducing direct copies of garments, physical deconstruction tailoring, and creating clothing from existing products (Fig.39).



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Fig.39 Recycled ski glove jacket – Martin Margiela, (2006)

Margiela's approach to retail and visual merchandising also explores new boundaries; retail sites that are destination based, unconventional character properties, roughly decorated whitewashed interiors, white matt emulsion painted fixtures (including the clothes hangers). These visual statements suggest that high fashion does not have to be represented in terms of the high-gloss conspicuousness of brands such as Prada and Gucci, but by a more spontaneous, fluid, creative aesthetic. The experimental visual style that Margiela established in the late 1980s became the blueprint for many other retailers and fashion designers, from L'Eclaireur in Paris to Zambesi in Auckland. However, many of those whom he influenced merely took on board the superficial character of his work, overlooking the intellectual integrity behind the message that he was

proposing. His appropriators saw the commercial value of the look but not the philosophy. His exploration of fashion deconstruction, in particular, was about making changes that extended beyond the appearance of a raw-hemmed garment; “In all these collections Margiela questioned the logic and techniques of tailoring, pattern cutting and garment construction that are fetishised in the couture atelier” (Evans, 2003). It was fundamentally about the critical exploration of what fashion stood for:

Margiela applies his deconstructive talent to the subversion of the strategies of the present-day fashion scene. Perhaps more radically still than Kawakubo, his work aims at conquering a distance from the idea of fashion itself (Vinken, 2005, p.140).

In fashion terms this is radical thinking: making changes and introducing new ideas are prospects that often incite resistance. I believe that effective change needs to be activated on the peripheries of the fashion system (with a ripple) and for the disruption to be successfully transferred it will need a combination of factors. These include the identification of a critical weak spot in time and the introduction of an alternative clothing system that can be presented for consumption within a new setting to conventional fashion retail.

Timing

This part of the chapter will investigate a series of elements that suggest that the opportunity for a disruptive influence on the menswear design system is imminent. During the past few years a number of independent, yet inter-connected critical trends in men's fashion have occurred and can be identified as a cluster of progressive developments found specifically in the work of a new wave of menswear designers and guerrilla retail projects.

i.) ‘New Wave’ Designers

This is a point in time where the look of 19th and 20th century men's fashion has begun to be severed and alternative associations with the past are occurring. This new genre of menswear is exemplified by designers such as Aitor Throup, Denis

Colomb, Label Under Construction, Julius, Fabrics Interseason, m.a+ and Damir Doma, who have all been actively moving away from tailored or utilitarian inspired menswear to more dynamic, layered or draped silhouettes.

This new direction has surfaced in the past five years and is distinct from the avant-garde art-clothes of designers such as Nick Cave (who experiments with dynamic transformative body coverings). It is a defined movement that questions both the physical and conceptual characteristics of men's clothing. Croatian-born designer Damir Doma focuses on the singular matter of redefining the physical — the aesthetics of men's clothing. Since his first collection in June 2007 he has become recognised as a leading innovator in menswear design (Bryce, 2010), presenting collections that initially had commentators (male fashion bloggers in particular), (Turlie, 2010), discrediting his vision, many finding it difficult to embrace:

"Men sometimes have problems with my collection, it's taken about two years to get to the point where everyone kind of gets used to it because in the beginning it was a bit disturbing for some people" (Skelton, 2010).

What some journalists found perplexing was that they were unable to contextualise Doma's work within the parameters of the cyclical fashion system and, equally frustrating for them, he successfully managed to transgress masculine/feminine archetypes. Doma created a look that was strongly male yet had not resorted to the use of conventional male historical clothing references, and the traditional notion of fashion modernity has been discarded for a perspective based on a more rhythmical interaction of cloth, the human body and its surroundings. Doma, continuing from Kawakubo and Margiela, all provoke the fashion system by injecting new ideas from the perimeters, as does designer Aitor Throup, who takes this even further. He jabs the institution of contemporary fashion with a multi-disciplinary tool — performance art, film and clothing — to disrupt the fundamental notion of what constitutes a fashion collection and how it is presented. Throup suggests that even the idea of a fashion show is an outmoded one-dimensional model:

I don't like the mentality of showing something for a very limited amount of time to a static audience that doesn't get to choose the amount of time they need look at the object or the angle from which they look at it....There is a narrative built in them and here I can allow the viewer to be the active component rather than the passive component (Azadi, 2010).

In Throup's recent work he has begun to challenge the idea of a fashion collection by concentrating exclusively on the exploration of ergonomically engineered trousers, moving the focus away from a conventionally co-ordinated range (Fig.40).

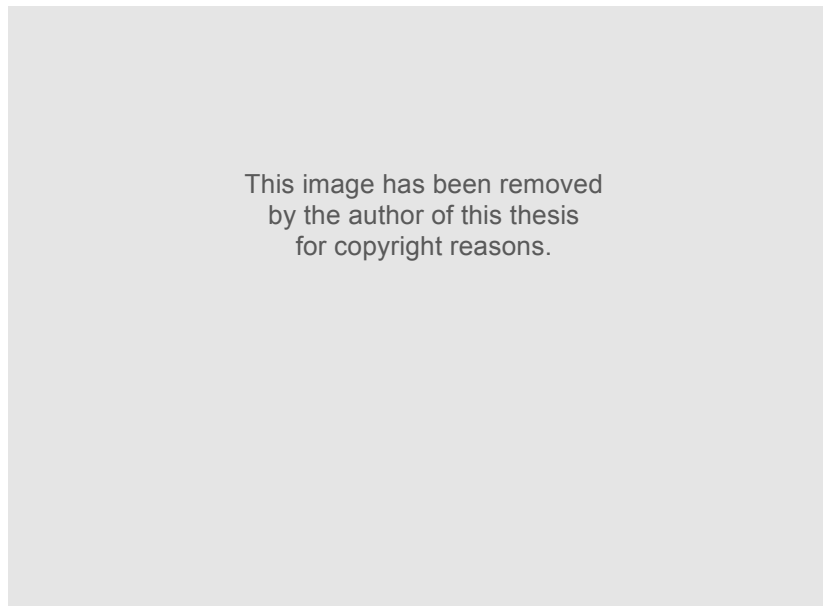


Fig.40 Aitor Throup Autumn/Winter 2010 Collection, Paris, (2010)

This was presented during Paris Men's Fashion Week (Autumn/Winter 2010) offsite, at an art gallery and shown on fabricated male forms that were moulded in active poses and suspended from the ceiling to achieve a more dynamic experience for the viewer and buyer:

"It is clear that Throup's designs exist beyond the tired parameters of fashion - they are meticulously constructed garments existing both within their own narrative and without, made with respect for the human body" (Azadi, 2010).

Throup is challenging the mechanisms of the design process and its distribution. He presents questions to fashion retailers as to how they merchandise a collection that is not a (traditionally perceived) commercially co-ordinated range and how the products can be viewed 3-dimensionally, not simply draped over hangers or laid out flat as is the case of denim jeans. It can be argued that while Throup's work is not destined for an industrial retail market and is therefore marginal, it does, however propose a convincing commercial alternative.

ii.) Retailing

It is this more analytical thinking from designers that has also led to the development of new fashion retailing concepts such as the pop-up shop phenomenon that Comme des Garçons instigated in 2004 with their first guerrilla store in Berlin. This was referred to as “a campaign against shopping uniformity and architectural grandeur” (Socha, 2010), by offering a temporary retail experience that focused primarily on the product; "What's important is interesting, good products, not multimillion-dollar architectural interventions" (Ibid). The idea behind this quickly flourished with many fashion brands from Nudie Jeans to Louis Vuitton following the formula, using the environments to test new ideas and approach the distribution of clothing in a less conventional way:

In the US, pop-up shops are almost becoming a 'permanent' fixture. For example, in New York some companies are opening retail spaces specifically for the pop-up shop phenomenon (Golding, 2010).

Today the pop-up shop has become a presence within most major cities; this is not just as a consequence of designers/retailers wanting to explore disruptive or experimental practices but it is also a result of the effects of a worldwide economic slow-down. This form of guerrilla retailing is distinct from stores who resell unsold and out-of-season stock in deserted stores. It reflects a situation where research and development by global brands can be explored more economically than within traditional retail environments, and also where experimental designers can have access to alternative distribution channels, creating a mechanism that is advantageous both financially and within the context of innovation:

It's a perfect concept for our hyper-heavy society...so by pulling it down and starting again, businesses can be constantly reinvented. Because they are temporary, pop-ups can take risks. They don't need as much polish, so they don't need as much investment (Barr, 2010).

Fundamentally the potential consequences of this new retail format offer greater opportunities for both supplier and consumer. It reflects a move away from homogenised retailing where, as in New York, warehouses and lofts in districts not normally associated with mercantile acts, present new retail experiences. It has opened up a new dimension in the act of consumption, where the one-stop efficiency and multiplicity of the shopping mall is being confronted by a hard-to-find, one-of-a-kind paradigm.

An aspect of the retail process that this project is exploring is based on the thought of bringing together a group of menswear designers to present their work together as a collective, using an alternative framework for the presentation and sale of their work. The collective will present their work in unconventional venues for a short period of time (three to four days) selling limited issue garments and in some cases one-off pieces. It is envisaged that it will be a travelling show, presented at major cities in Australasia and Asia. As the collective travels its dynamics will change, adding and losing designers according to its evolution. I will be working on this major project in the future and anticipate that some of its foundations will be laid down in this current work.

THREE: DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

3.1. DESIGN DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

System

This system of design is determined by offering an alternative to the conventions of the Edwardian suit, eliminating the separate components such as jackets and trousers in favour of an integrated unit. For this research these are referred to as 'braccasuits' (where the clothing system is reduced to one essential garment). The design aesthetic of this is informed by medieval (Fig.53) and vraga-type (Fig.54) leg coverings. Under-garments have also been developed in accordance with the principles of this new look. In addition the work integrates the other, non-aesthetic characteristics of garments such as the vraga, restoring a more ritualistic interactivity with our clothes, from how they are worn to how they are stored. The garments do not have any branding or labelling, as a mechanism to disrupt the conventions of fashion marketing.

Silhouette

The experimental development work initially focused on creating a dynamic new male silhouette, founded on the vraga and then developed into the all-in-one garment. The silhouette is based on the exploration of large pleated and gathered volumes that are anchored at the waist and transferred into the front or back leg region. These are garments that respond to and reflect movement, creating capacious fluid silhouettes, a characteristic that is the antithesis of the static behaviour of an Edwardian suit.

Detail

To make a credible connection with its audience, the braccasuit required that some of its design details capture a suggestive memory trace of Edwardian tailoring so that the garments are still read in the language of tailoring. These traces or markers may, to a certain degree, appear subliminal or abstract, created

through a process of methodically extrapolating elements of traditional Edwardian tailoring, until all that remains is a suggestive mark or memory of the reference: the tip of a single lapel, a protruding shirt cuff, a keyhole buttonhole, the edge of a collar, the stitch-line left where the breast pocket had been, and also in the use of pinstripe woven fabric, overdyed to leave a faint hint of the Edwardian business suit archetype.

Fabric

The concept for the choice of fabrics was initially based on the use of traditional wool suit fabrics as a direct link to the Edwardian suit. On reflection, however, this seemed to counter the essence of the work, falling into a more conventional menswear design formula. The decision not to use wool was also influenced by its technical characteristics, in that even lightweight wool fabrics such as super 120s, would be unlikely to perform successfully for the purpose of this work. Because wool has excessive draping qualities, the yarn having a great deal of elasticity, there would be too much drape and the fabric would drag the pleats/gathers down without achieving the lofty volume the silhouettes demand. This decision resulted in focusing on a predominantly cotton based textile story using new fabrics that have been developed as a result of advancements in spinning technology, producing high-twist, double spun compact yarns. Made into fabrics that are lightweight but tightly woven, allowing for the use of large quantities of fabric in individual garments (in this case up to 5 meters for a braccasuit), giving them substance without adding density to the mass. The fabrics are in weights of 220-300 grams. For the under-garments, a refined-textured 100% bamboo fabric of 130 grams has been utilised together with mercerised cotton-knit jersey. These fabrics have mostly been sourced directly from a leading fabric mill, Crespi based in Novara, Italy, and have been supplied in a Prepared For Dye (PFD) form (this is fabric in its natural colour state that has not been bleached but has been treated to absorb pigment). The fabric selection also includes other European PFD fabrics such as pinstripe woven linen and pinstripe woven silk.

Colour

The design theory in relation to colour for the work is based on two guiding principles; firstly, maintaining a uniform element that acts as a trace indicator, relative to the Edwardian tailored aesthetic (this has been achieved by selecting specific colours found in wool suiting fabrics such as charcoal grey and dark navy) and recreating the formal sense that this instils; and secondly, exploring the indigo dye process used in the colouring of a traditional vraga in an attempt to capture the unique visual essence of those particular garments. Indigo is used as a base colour and then overdyed in specific shade formulas that are drawn from the traditional corporate colours found in wool tailored suiting cloths. This indigo-overdye effect process has been synthesised for the purpose of this project because of the complexities of natural indigo vat dyeing. Industrial dye processes will be used, working in collaboration with fabric colour expert, Steve Whitby from North Shore Dyers in Albany, New Zealand.

Texture


Texture is explored on a series of levels, from the subtle 'face' weaves of the fabrics to systems for draping, folding, gathering, and pleating. Draping is drawn from elements found in woodblock prints of masons at work during the medieval period; folding and pleating follows the non-autoclave,¹¹ principles employed since antiquity in the manufacture of garments such as the vraga. This is a process that I studied at a workshop undertaken for this project in July 2010 in Nicosia, Cyprus, with traditional Cypriot vraga tailor – Antonakis Krasia.

Craft

The construction of the garments follows traditional garment manufacturing practices and contemporary tailoring techniques.


¹¹ 'Autoclave' is a pressurised saturated steam chamber that is used in the permanent pleating process.

VISUAL REFERENCES



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Fig.41 Medieval masons at work from a 12th Century English manuscript. (c1150).



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Fig.42 A group of Nicosia (Cyprus) residents wearing various forms of *vraga* (1879)

3.2. GARMENT DESIGN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

TECHNICAL RESEARCH



Fig.43 Prototype # 001 – The first prototype made was a recreated traditional 'city' vraga following original pattern dimensions. (Shown semi-flat and on a tailors stand).



Fig.44 Prototype #001 - Pleating construction technique detail of 'city' vraga.

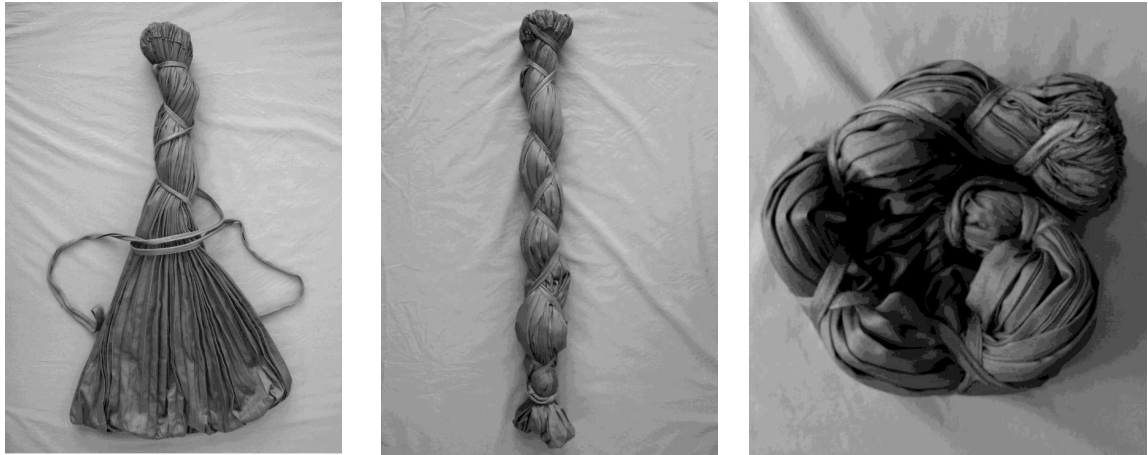


Fig.45 Prototype #001 – ‘Wrapping’ process of ‘city’ vraga.

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Fig.46 A dyers workshop in Nicosia (1913).
(Image showing vraga’s hanging & ‘wrapped’ after dyeing.)

GARMENT DESIGN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

SKETCHING

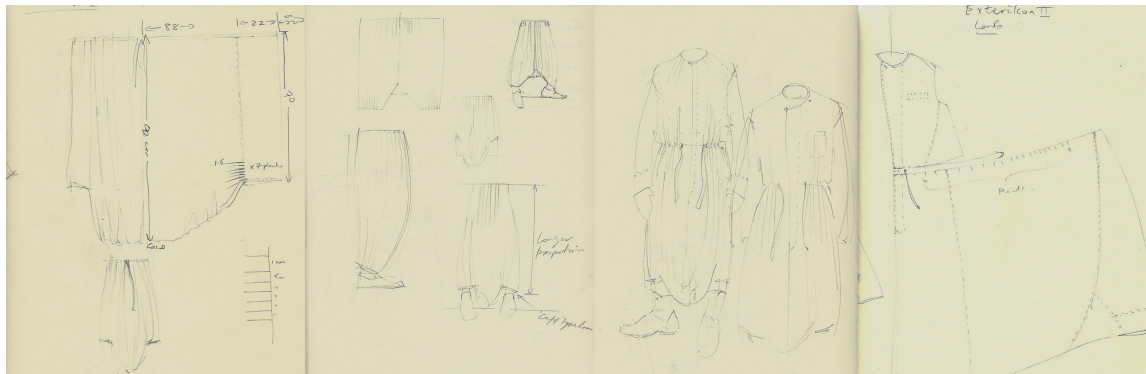


Fig.47 Examples of initial development sketches.

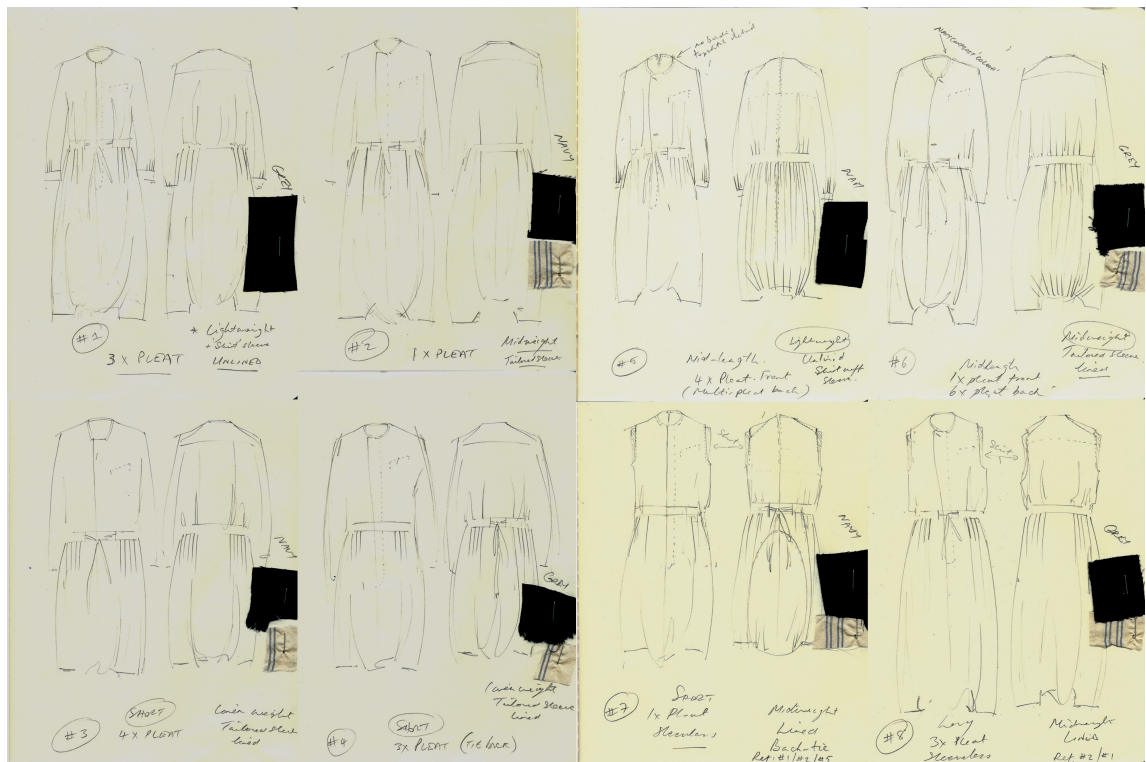


Fig.48 Examples of development sketches for the braccasuits.

2D PATTERN DEVELOPMENT

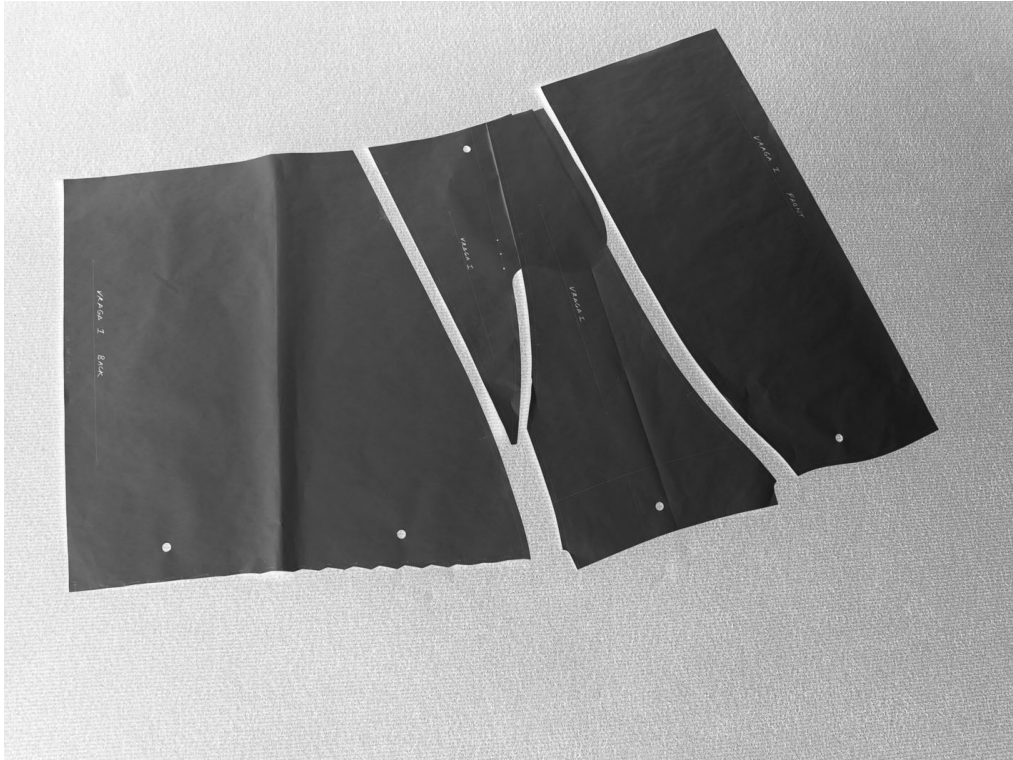


Fig.49 *Bracca I* : Pattern development

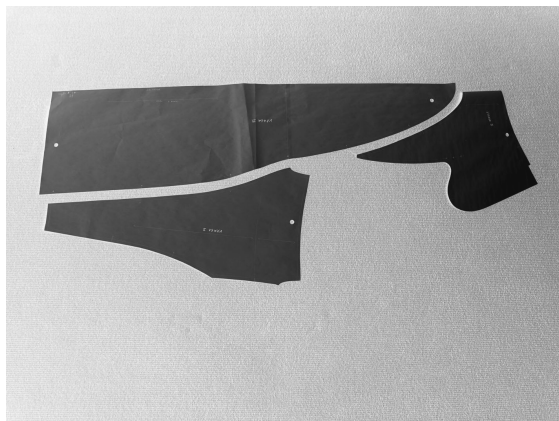


Fig.50 *Bracca II* : Pattern development

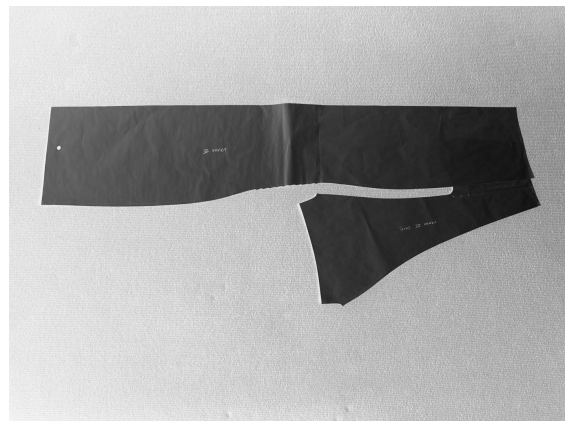


Fig.51 *Bracca III* : Pattern development

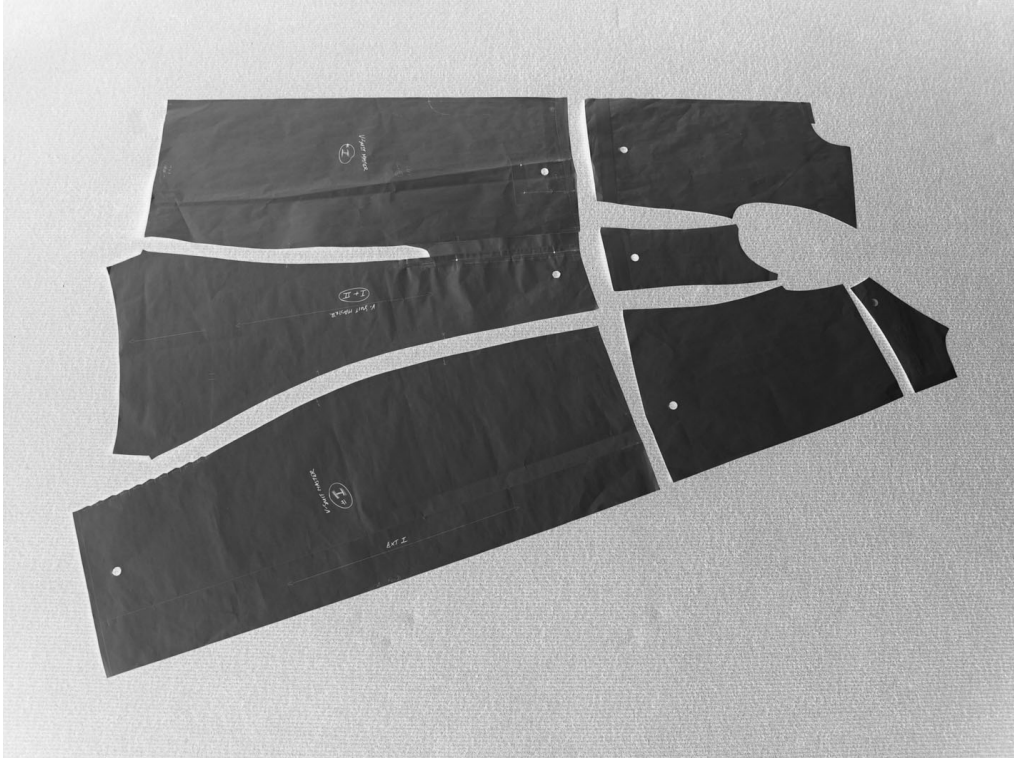


Fig.52 *Braccasuit I* : Pattern development

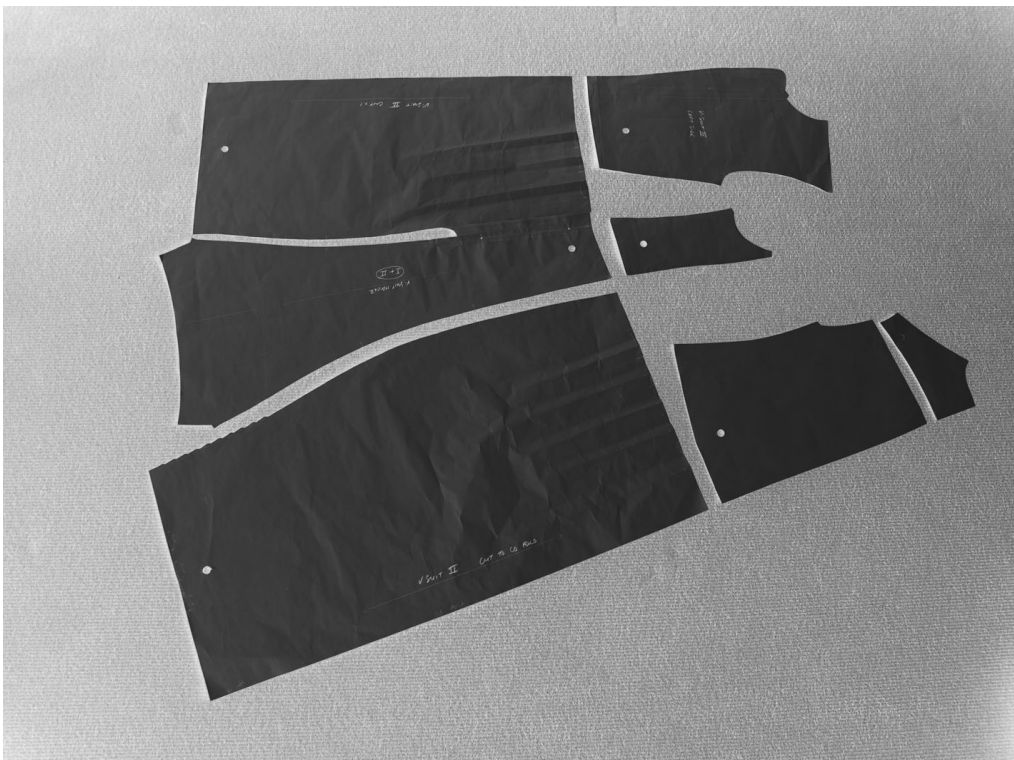


Fig.53 *Braccasuit II* : Pattern development

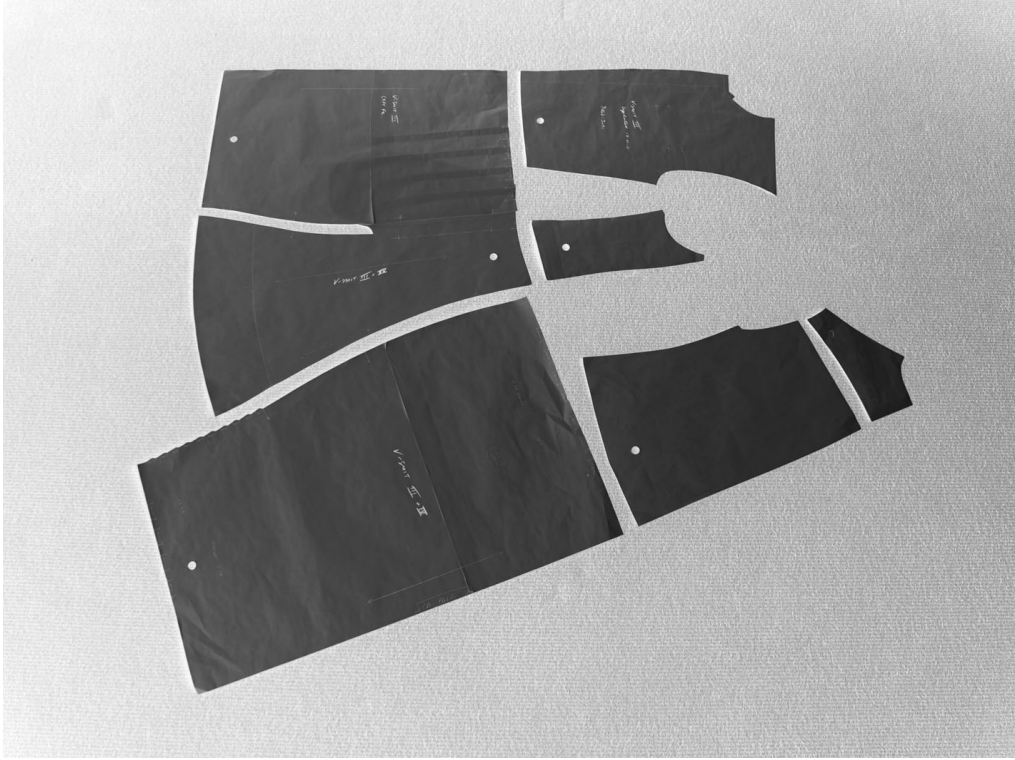


Fig.54 *Braccasuit III* : Pattern development

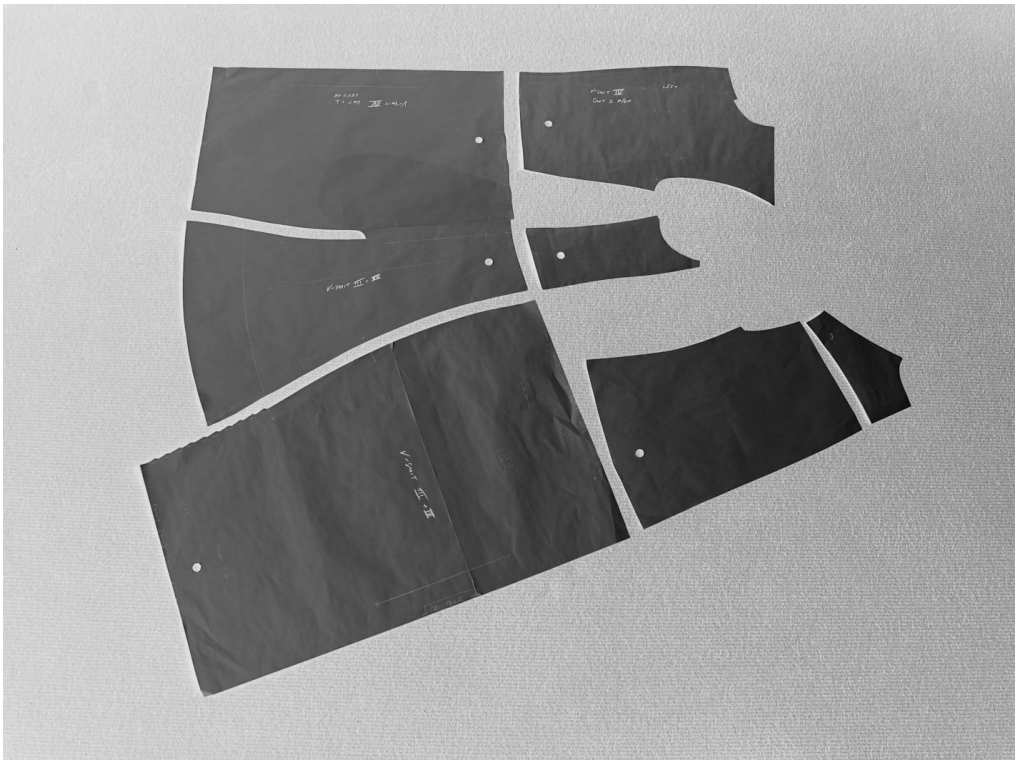


Fig.55 *Braccasuit IV* : Pattern development

3D TOILE DEVELOPMENT



Fig.56 Prototype #002 – This is a development garment from prototype #001, where I began to experiment with a more stylised aesthetic, resulting in a fully gathered front & back ‘bracca’ with inside leg pleat detail and leg definition cutting.



Fig.57 Prototype #003 – Full-gather back seat 'bracca' with under leg pleat detail and leg definition cutting.



Fig.58 Prototype #004 – Full-gather front ‘bracca’ with flat back and leg pocket detail.



Fig.59 Prototype #005 – Full-gather front ‘bracca’ with diagonal flat back seaming and leg pocket detail.



Fig.60 Prototype #006 – Full front & back 'bracca' with square seaming and horizontal leg pocket detail.



Fig.61 Prototype #007 – Flat front & full back gather 'bracca' with deep front pleats and vertical pocket detail.



Fig.62 Prototype #008 – Flat front & back, single pleat all-in-one 'braccasuit', showing front balance realignment.



Fig.63 Prototype #009 – Flat front & back, single pleat all-in-one 'braccasuit', showing rebalanced garment.



Fig.64 Prototype #010 – Tripple pleat all-in-one ‘braccasuit’ with ‘trace’ tailored lapel detail.



Fig.65 Prototype #011 – Short-length all-in-one ‘braccasuit’ with quadruple pleat detail.

3.3. TEXTILE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



Fig.66 Textile colour experiments – overdyeing indigo.



Fig.67 Fabric selection – PFD fabric cards from Crespi, Italy.

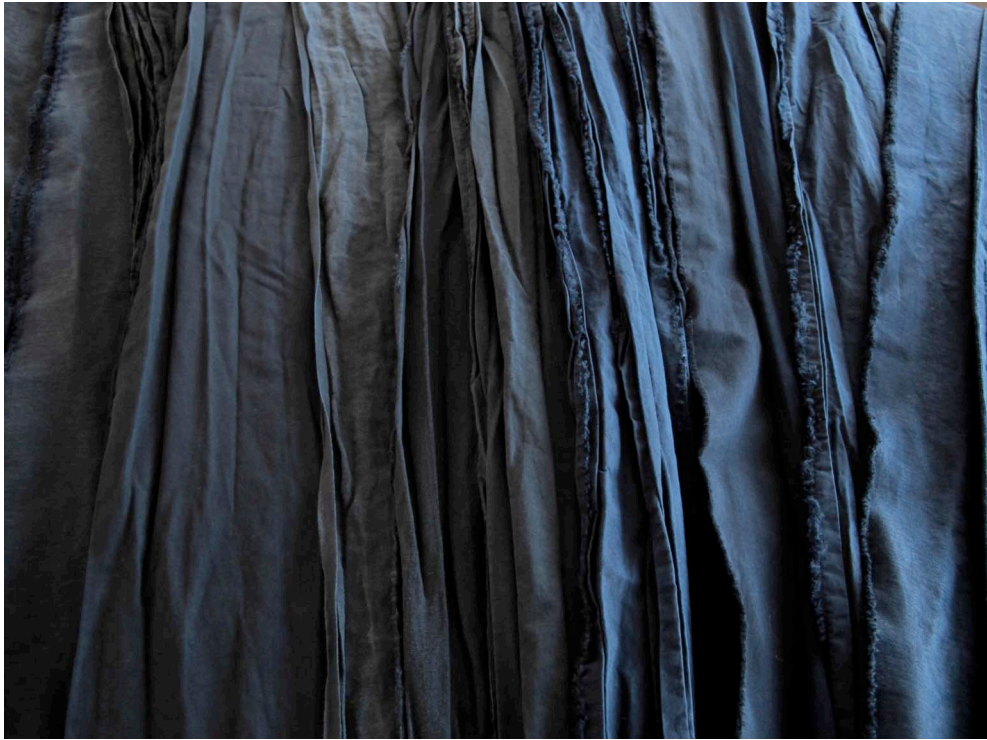


Fig.68 Post-dye shades in actual fabrics (i).



Fig.69 Post-dye shades in actual fabrics (ii).



Fig.70 Post-dye shades in actual fabrics (iii).



Fig.71 Post-dye shades in actual fabrics (iv).

3.4. BRACCASUITS

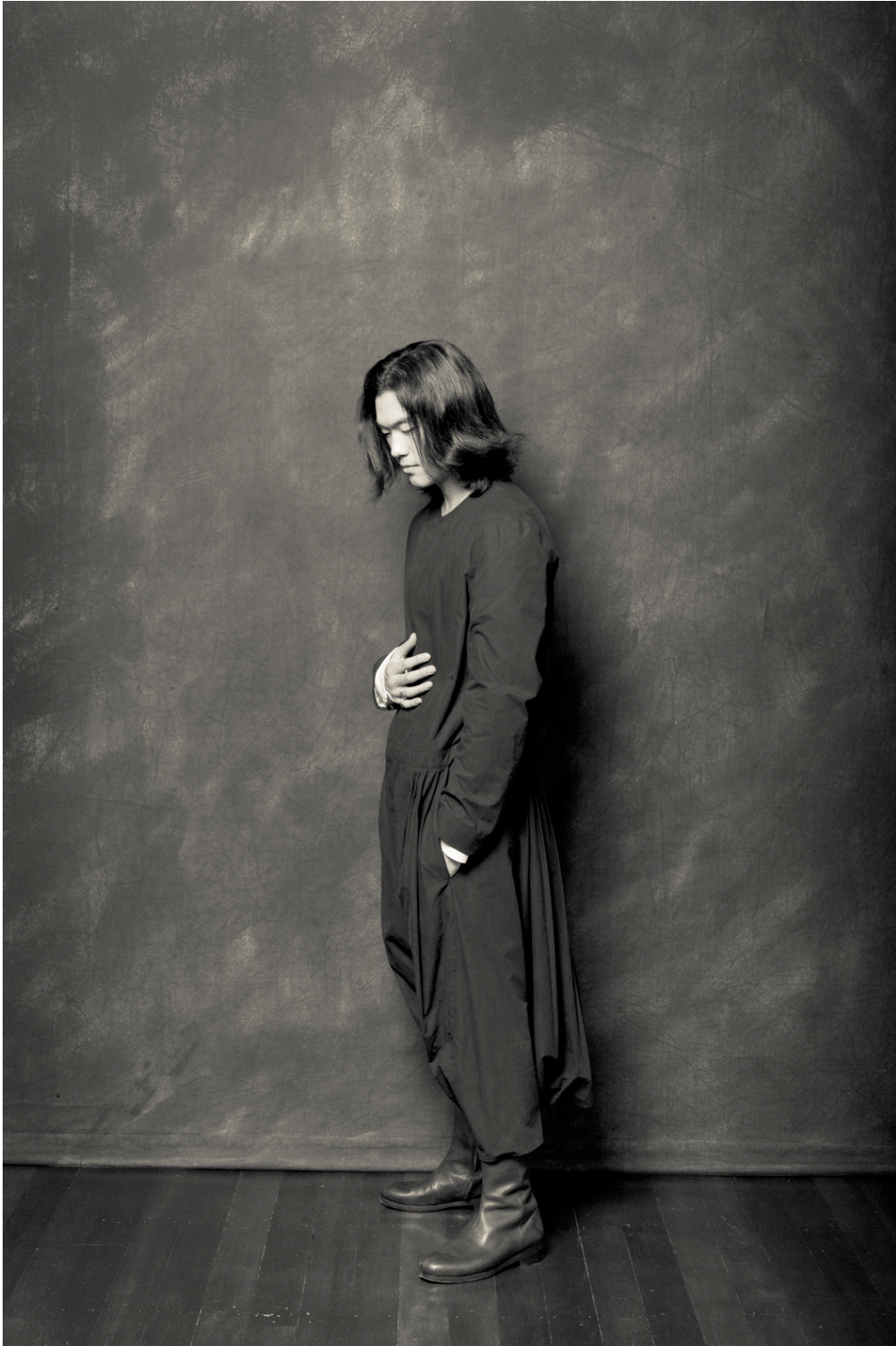


Fig.72 Braccasuit #001



Fig.73 Braccasuit #002



Fig.74 Braccasuit #003



Fig.75 Braccasuit #004



Fig.76 Braccasuit #005

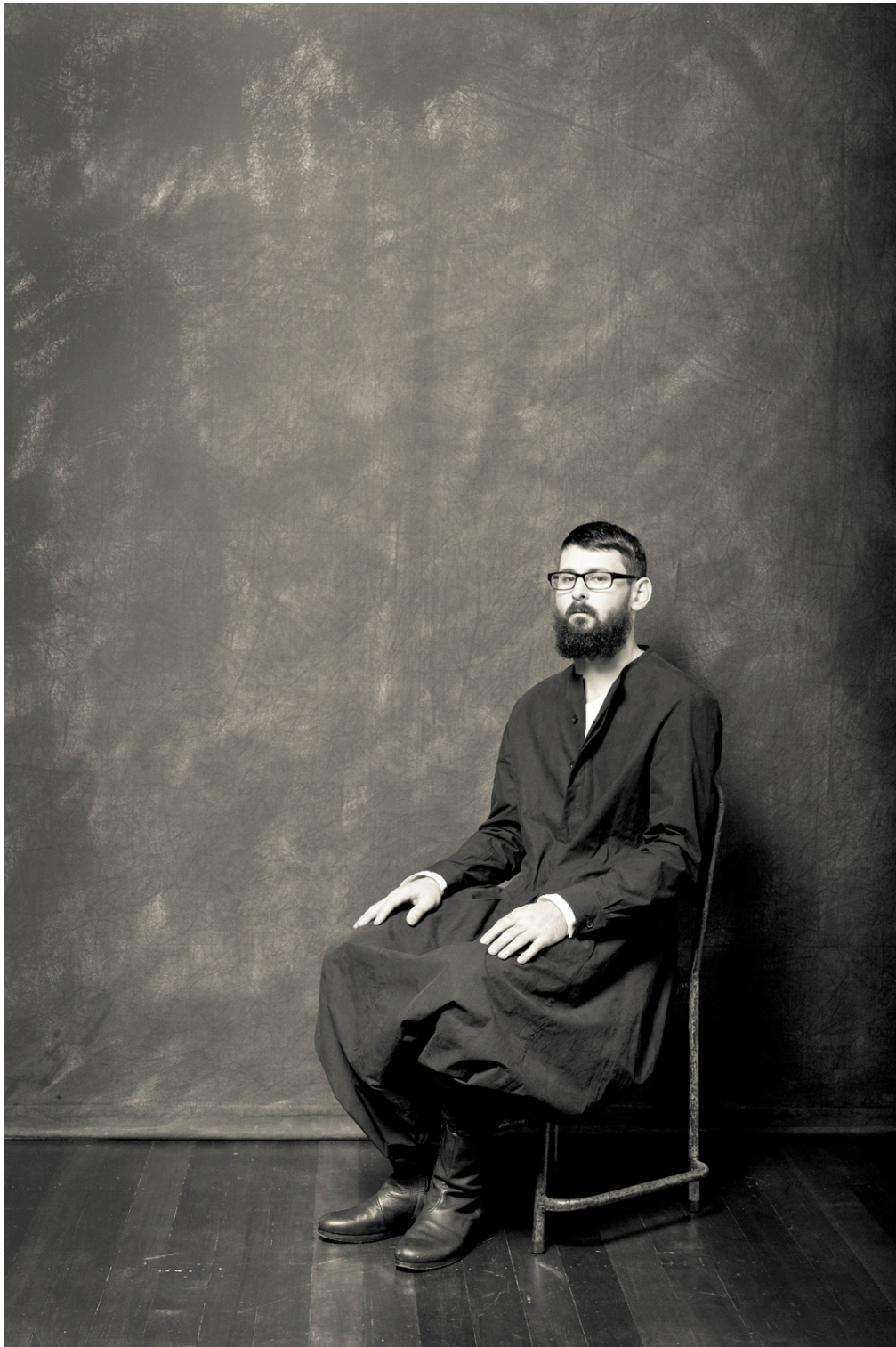


Fig.77 Braccasuit #006



Fig.78 Braccasuit #007



Fig.79 Braccasuit #008

FOUR: METHODOLOGY

This research project is founded on a problem identified through the perspective of a design practitioner and focuses on an issue grounded in a hypothesis that proposes that aesthetic design innovation in menswear design, specifically men's tailoring, has been severely restricted. A body of garments has been designed and produced as a response to this issue.

This chapter will outline a methodological overview of the process of the work, followed by the specific methods used. This type of research explores general theoretical and design ideas that are based on basic investigation as opposed to clinical. The research approach is founded on a non-expressible knowledge type commonly referred to as 'tacit', determined by individual experiences, where a less tangible awareness is added to one's intellectual and practical skill base. These are often the primary factors that give designers their individual style or approach. Tacit knowledge for me has been gained through reflective realisation, often acquired through professional and creative encounters:

A practitioner's reflection can serve as a corrective to overlearning. Through reflection, he can surface and criticize the tacit understandings that have grown up around the repetitive experiences of a specialized practice, and can make new sense of the situations of uncertainty or uniqueness, which he may allow himself to practice (Schön, 1983. p.61).

It is clear that one can formally learn many of the practical skills a fashion designer may use during their career – basic pattern cutting, construction/manufacturing knowledge, range planning and the principles of designing. However, there are a number of other less tangible dimensions to a fashion designer's portfolio. Examples of this include the ability to have a prescient vision (you are in most cases designing for the future), an understanding of colour that is not simply based on the principles of the colour wheel and an affinity with fabric that is not determined by its technical properties. A designer needs to have the ability to read fabric by its handle (its physical touch). Understanding what is happening between

your fingertips by the amount of pressure and movement you apply on the fabric will help define its properties. There are many aspects of this work where my tacit knowledge has been utilised, from abstract, conceptual problem solving to more practical, aesthetic decision making, such as determining the specific length of a sewing stitch.

In terms of methodology this research can be fundamentally termed 'action research', this being a holistic interaction between the engagement of the action and the reflection of that action on the work; it is not about isolating the research and then applying the result (Ibid). Specifically, it is unscientific; the very nature of clothing design is that it is inextricably human-centred, from its conception to its consumption:

Design deals in human interactions with artefacts and situations that contain a great deal of uncertainty. Design research is tied to a domain that derives its creative energy from ambiguities of an intuitive understanding of phenomena. And while we may criticize an imbalance of too much self-expressive art within design problem solving, the traditional root of intuition, inspired guesswork, and holistic thinking should not be lost in a revised version that contains rational judgments and processes to ensure an informed intuition (Swann, 2002. p.51).

Action research is about creating a cycle-based model expressed as creation-consideration (Ibid. p 53), and design practice differs from research in that, in the commercial field, the primary focus is on the result, not the equation. I now recognise that during my years as a professional designer, action research was embedded in, and continuously utilised during the design process. Fashion collections are designed for each season, typically an autumn/winter collection and a spring/summer collection, and for each season the process would begin with a reflection of the previous season to inform the direction of new work. This mechanism would then be employed formally at every defined stage of the design process, from the concept development to final sample production, and also, more significantly during random periods, where interjections of evaluation and re-evaluation could occur at any point in the process.

The methods used to develop this body of work were based on this non-linear format encompassing both research and design. Action plans were determined for each stage but with reflection being continuously employed, these had to be regularly re-evaluated. The overarching component methods included the following -

- Literature review.
- Analysis of historical framework.
- Research trip to Cyprus - The Cyprus Research Centre, Nicosia; The Folk Art Museum, Geroskipou; workshop with traditional Cypriot *vraga* tailor – Antonakis Krasia and The Moufflon Bookshop.
- Evaluation of contextual components.
- Conceptual development of design framework.
- Analysis of physical design characteristics (fabric, colour, construction methods, etc.).
- Visual research.
- Design development drawings.
- Design development patterns.
- Design development toiles (prototyping).
- Sample production.
- Analysis of work.
- Documentation of work.

FIVE: CONCLUSION

The fundamental issue regarding this research was based on establishing whether a new men's tailoring system could be developed and in this regard this work has defined an alternative universal form of clothing.

It became evident early in the research that the investigation method necessitated a broad approach, as the contextualization of the topic was fundamentally complex and extensive. This was due to multiple factors that included the societal impositions placed on tailored clothing; how it was ingrained in the past; and an assumption that there was no great public support for change as it represents the perfect example of clothing modernity: in general fashion terms it is promoted as a piece of classic design. It is also significant to note that issues that this research identified as repressing innovation, such as aspects of nostalgia, have to a certain degree informed the outcome of this work, by looking outside the conventional, nostalgic menswear design scope, allowing this work to take on a unique dimension.

Initial design development was based on a form of re-design, where the design of a suit would have an aesthetic makeover based on the 'golden ratio',¹² to guide selected proportional divisions. This approach was pursued in the belief that the scientific guide would determine new aesthetic design anomalies that were not simply determined by the hand of the designer but influenced, to a certain extent, by a geometrical formula. A series of experimental prototypes were developed using this process. However, even though the appearance of the garments had taken on a new dimension, through the elongation of proportion and subtraction of detailing, the garments remained essentially suit jackets, sitting firmly within the scope of the existing Edwardian. A number of further approaches were also attempted, from severe forms of chest area enhancement structuring, to more brutal forms of clothing design minimalism. Through additional research it then became apparent that a more distinct alternative was required and that the

¹² The '*golden ratio*' is a design system based on segmenting lines according to an irrational mathematical constant of 1.6180339887.

component parts of the suit, the jacket, trousers, shirt and tie had to be dispensed with. It required a credible alternative to conventional men's work clothing. It required that it had a degree of comfort and a strong sense of formality that the traditional suit carries, but it could not be governed by Edwardian aesthetics and values.

A series of outcomes has been established as a result of this research and summarised below, beginning with Part One in 'A Manual for Sartorial Disruption' followed by a framework for future work in Part Two.

Part One.

The Sartorial Condition: This research suggests that the contributing issues in the repression of aesthetic design innovation in men's tailored clothing include a predisposition toward specified nostalgic references, the value placed on authenticity, and the imposition of the values of 19th Century modernity.

Re-thinking the past: A vital outcome of this research has been to determine a new design framework for understanding the past, not simply in terms of how it was but by recognising history's potential.

Tailoring Outside the Tailoring System: This has been the creation of a design process that allows for a parallel system, where a sense of traditional tailoring and its techniques can be implemented on non-Edwardian based garments.

Clothing System for Sartorial Disruption: The research, identification and development of a new type of universal garment - the Braccasuit, demonstrating that an alternative design perspective on tailoring can be delivered.

Marketing: Devaluation of the status capital of product branding mechanisms by dispensing with any form of brand identification and labelling, and also by presenting an anonymous designer profile.

THE EDWARDIAN 1909-2011



Fig.80 The Edwardian suit (c2010)

THE BRACCASUIT 2011



Fig.81 The Braccasuit (prototype #10)

Part 2. (Future work)

A Manifesto: A comprehensive document that will act as an assertion of the intention and ideology for sartorial disruption.

Retail system: The introduction and development of a mobile depository for experimental menswear, 'The Gentleman's Travelling Sartorial Salvation Show'. This will initially be tested at sites in Auckland and Melbourne with a view to it being presented at locations in Tokyo and New York.

Sartorial Disruption Network: This will be the creation of a series of tools (website, blog, e-journal and a magazine) that will act as a nucleus for interested parties to encourage discourse, interventions and collaborations.

In conclusion this creative design research enquiry began as an investigation into a theory based on a view that aesthetic innovation within a specific sector of clothing design had been restricted and followed a method of exploration that centered on provoking the conventions of that institution to instigate dialogue. Whilst this research has focused on the examination of the Edwardian suit system it must also be understood that this work stands as the basis for a critique on the state of design advancement within the broader fashion system. Fashion is typically scrutinized in respect of issues such as sustainability: its ecological consequences, its sociological conditioning, and that it drives overconsumption. However there are some vital questions that should not be ignored and are based on what the future impact of fashions' cyclical process will have on the fashion design system (including fashion education) and how will its overarching interrelationship with the past dictate forthcoming fashion, suggesting opportunities for further research into this area.

SIX: APPENDIX

Examples of Golden Ratio technical design development sketches:

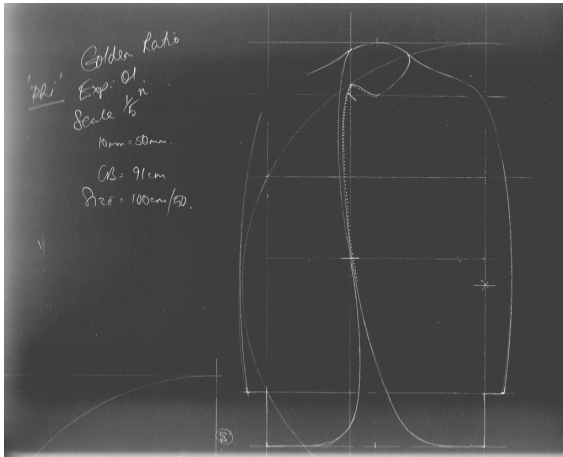


Fig. 82 Golden ratio development (i).

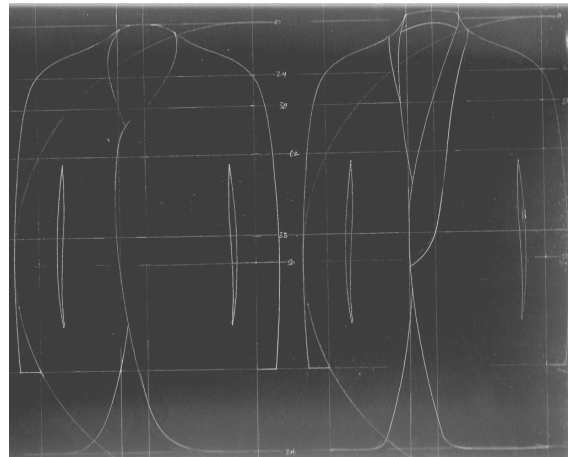


Fig. 83 Golden ratio development (ii).

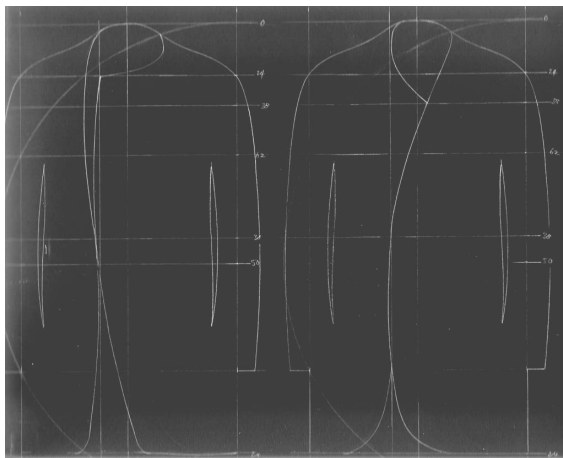


Fig. 84 Golden ratio development (iii).

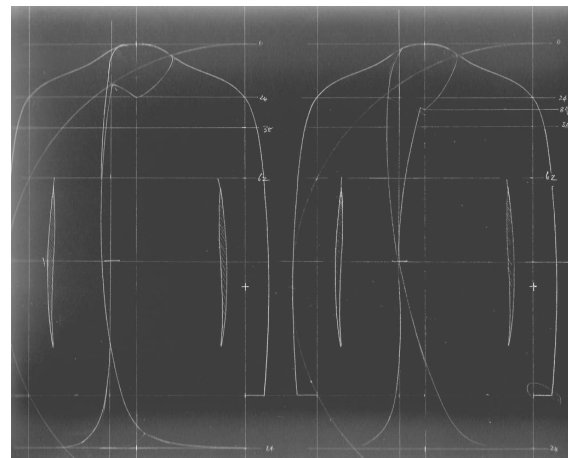


Fig. 85 Golden ratio development (iv).

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Fig. 86 The Cyprus Research Centre, Nicosia, The Moufflon Bookshop (which holds one of the most extensive range of reference material in the Eastern Mediterranean and in the Middle East) and ANTONIK Cypriot *vraga* tailor - Antonakis Krasia



Fig. 87 Images from the workshop with traditional Cypriot *vraga* tailor - Antonakis Krasia, Nicosia, Cyprus, demonstrating the final wrapping process, (2010).

Trace markers: Details from the Edwardian were utilised within the Braccasuit. These included; specific traditional tailoring construction techniques, details such as a protruding 'shirt cuff' (typically 1.00-1.50cm longer than the jacket sleeve), a keyhole buttonhole, the outline of a lapel and the stitch-line of a breast pocket.



Fig. 88 Lapel & breast pocket detail



Fig. 89 Shirt and jacket cuff detail

Edwardian tailored jacket (Details). Andreas Mikellis. 2010.



Fig. 90 Lapel & breast pocket detail



Fig. 91 Shirt and jacket cuff detail

Braccasuits (Details). Andreas Mikellis. 2011.

Exhibition: Images taken at 'The Sartorial Disruption' exhibition (9th – 12th May 2011) held at a disused retail space – 239 Ponsonby Road, Auckland, New Zealand.



Fig. 92 Exhibition space, exterior.



Fig. 93 Exhibition space, window exterior.



Fig. 94 Exhibition space, window exterior.



Fig. 95 Exhibition space, window exterior.



Fig. 96 Exhibition, wrapped braccasuit detail.



Fig. 97 Exhibition, Braccasuits.



Fig. 98 Exhibition, Braccasuits.



Fig. 99 Exhibition, Braccasuit detail.



Fig. 100 Exhibition, Braccasuit.



Fig. 101 Exhibition, Braccasuit.



Fig. 102 Exhibition, Braccasuit.



Fig. 103 Exhibition, Braccasuit.



Fig. 104 Exhibition, Braccasuit detail.



Fig. 105 Exhibition, Braccasuits.



Fig. 106 Exhibition, photographic and illustration display.



Fig. 107 Exhibition, wrapped vraga detail.

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EIGHT: NOTES

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- i ***Bravehearts in Kilts Against Trouser Tyranny***. Retrieved 20th November 2010 from www.kiltmen.com
- ii ***The Militant Guild of Rural Tailors***. Retrieved 7th March 2009 from www.rural-tailor.blogspot.com
- iii ***Teddy Boy***. Definition from Berg Fashion Library/Victoria & Albert Museum. Retrieved 9th September 2010 from www.bergfashionlibrary.com
- iv ***Selvedge denim***. Definition retrieved 14th February 2010 from www.selvedgedenim.org/is-selvedge-denim
- v ***Otaku***: Obsessive collectors of comics, action figures, anime etc. Definition from *Wired* magazine article Issue 14, 07 July 2007.
- vi ***Culture Capital***: Defined by Andrew B. Trigg in *Veblen, Bourdieu, and Conspicuous Consumption*. Journal of Economic Issues Vol. XXXV No.1 March 2001 - as "the accumulated stock of knowledge about the products of artistic and intellectual traditions". Pg:104
- vii ***Margaret Howell***. Retrieved 19th April 2010 from www.margarehowell.jp
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- ix ***Etsy***. Retrieved 7th April 2010 from www.etsy.com
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- xi ***Denham***. Retrieved 5th April 2010 www.store.denhamthejeanmaker.com
- xii ***The Militant Guild of Rural Tailors***. Retrieved 5th April 2010 from www.rural-tailor.blogspot.com
- xiii ***Golden Section***: In mathematics and the arts, two quantities are in the golden ratio if the ratio of the sum of the quantities to the larger quantities is equal to (=) the ratio of the larger quantity to the smaller one, an irrational mathematical constant, approximately 1.6180339887. Definition retrieved 18th May 2009 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_ratio (12/02/2010).
- xiv ***Dynamic symmetry***: "It was an American artist, Jay Hambidge, who coined the term, which he based on a belief that design forms found in nature were applicable to works of art. He concluded that there were two principles of proportion. One, static symmetry – represented by circles, squares and equilateral triangles – is found in nature in crystal forms, seed pods and flowers; the other, dynamic symmetry, is in the growth of shells and in the foliage of plants". Kirke, Betty, *Madeleine Vionnet*, Chronicle Books, 1998.
- xv ***MDRP***: Extract from *The Listener* magazine, reproduced in Burman Barbara, *Better and brighter clothes: The Men's Dress Reform Party, 1929-1940*.