

The paradoxical event of apparel:
Lameness and the bifurcating catwalk.

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The paradox of apparel: Lameness and the bifurcating catwalk.

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*[] a woman is never far from mother
(I mean outside her role functions:
the mother as nonname and as a source of goods).
There is always within her at least a little
of that good mothers milk.
She writes in white ink.*

Cixous, 1976, p.246.

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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 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, except where due acknowledgement is made.”

Annie Tatton

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Abstract

This project explores overlapping concerns between fashion and spatial design by way of a catwalk event. It does this by investigating historical and contemporary presumptions about the spatial tectonics and forms of embodiment mandated by the catwalk as a performative platform central to the fashion system. The focus is on both the appareled body and its site specific placement. Through the devising of a catwalk event, this project aims to elaborate on the paradoxes inherent in the fashion show and their linkage to broader sociocultural economies of gender.

If the spatial operation of the fashion catwalk presupposes the frictionless glide and circulation of apparel and models in a drawn-out transmission whose final end is the unfashionable and discarded garment, the presence of non-proficient, limping bodies on the catwalk presupposes a different transmission route, one whose passage never quite frees itself from the surface and scene of its appearing. In such a scenario the indifference of the catwalk itself finds entanglement with the gestural economy of the bodies it jetties.

I explore the potentialities afforded by such a bifurcation of expectations and support asking: what happens when fashion on the catwalk becomes lame; in what way does the catwalk presuppose the bodies it extends; and what becomes of the fashion system in the face of corporeal disablement?

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Figure 1.
Aimee Mullins artificial limbs including McQueen show carved boots: from Google images.

Introduction

Paradox of Apparel:

This project is an event design for a fashion show that interrogates the spatiality of the catwalk and which seeks to directly implicate the complexity of bodies with apparel design. In this sense it is a collection that reworks a paradox in apparel that both deploys and negates bodies. By this I mean that apparel in the fashion context operates as a quasi-object that both exhibits a kind of indifference to the body, yet relies entirely on it as a substrate for animating its appearance. From the coat hanger to its discarded state on the floor, it is bodies alone that bring apparel to life. Yet the catwalk event is noteworthy, controversially so, for the restricted types of bodies it anticipates, for a kind of negligible body whose 'ghosted' presence is both pivotal and bracketed from the scene of the reveal.

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Figure 2.
Alexander McQueen show: from Google images.

Site Contact/Site Dirt:

To this end a site-specific fashion event is proposed that amplifies and critiques these paradoxes. Contrary to the formulaic presentation of the fashion walk, this project envisages a site-specific response that builds out of the peculiarity of its setting, and leads to an apparel collection tied to a choreographed navigation of this setting. Located in the forecourt of the Dudley Building, or what was originally the Auckland Crippled Children's Society Building in Mount Street during the sixties and seventies, this site provides physical and conceptual terrain apposite of a contestation to the presumptions of the catwalk. An implantation of generic elements of the fashion event here give rise, it is anticipated, to an array of productive perturbations of expectation.

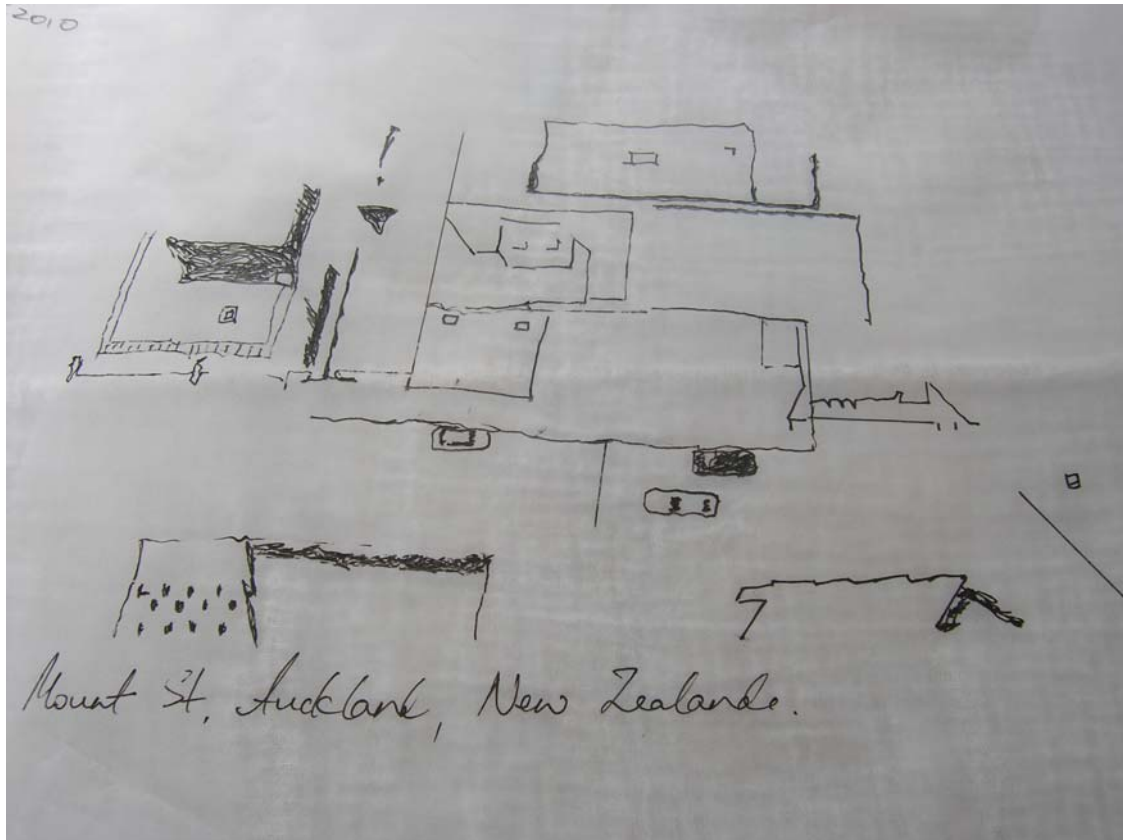


Figure 3
Site drawing: AUT Mount St., Auckland. Annie Tatton 2010.

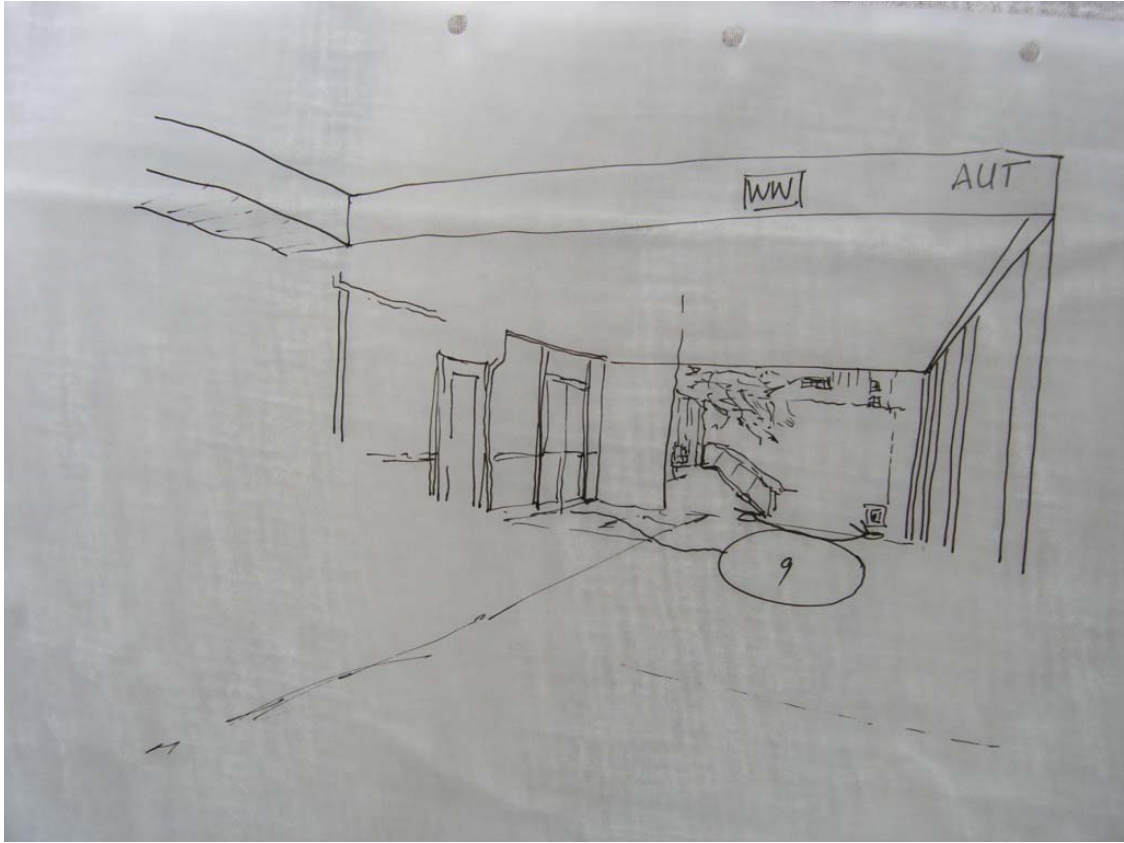


Figure 4
Site drawing: AUT Spatial Design building Carpark. Annie Tatton 2010

Through the interrogation of event, paradox and apparel, and using the catwalk as context, I examine conventions within the disciplines of fashion and spatial design, questioning the given codes determining its practice. By exploring and combining avant-garde fashion and questions of spatiality at the site of the catwalk, I aim to question accepted sensibilities across these disciplines.



Figure 5
AUT catwalk site outside Spatial Design building. Photo Annie Tatton 2010.

The starkest spatial distinction the catwalk exhibits is its elevation. It raises the walker onto a surface prepared otherwise to the ground. In this sense the catwalk typically transcends the ground, conferring passage of a different kind, one that displaces and distances itself from the messy circulations of everyday life. It privileges a high-stepping touch jettied by the prosthetic reach of the platform that in turn conditions and limits the gait of the models it transports. For these reasons in this project, questions of touch, feet and ground relations will necessarily be underscoring.

The high/low distinction implicate in the fashion system finds exemplary expression in the catwalk, an expression that simultaneously disavows the base circulation of money that it must nevertheless consolidate and manage as a moving substrate founding its operations. In this the catwalk can be seen to replicate, at a small scale, the circulatory edict of capitalism that everywhere seeks to 'ease' the passage of persons, images and information - no less than commercial flows - by overcoming the frictionous effects of topography and distance. Incipient capitalism, as Didier Gille has demonstrated, aspires to a reduction of difference sufficient to an instantaneous transfer of value without resistance. (Gille, 1986).

Concomitantly, the catwalk is all surface-glide, a more or less frictionless datum apposite to a standardised gait - "the beautiful walk" - whose imperative is the singular competence of the 'fashionable' body. In this respect, the economy of the beautiful walk is one of the elemental components of a catwalk show. As Nathalie Khan writes, "One of the very basic movements of a catwalk show is that of young, classically beautiful and slim women walking up and down a runway." (Khan, 2000, p.119).

In considering these factors, this project sets out to design a 'show' capable of facilitating other ableisms, other corporealities and movement schemas. In seeking to rethink the spectacle that is the catwalk I aim to investigate the links between the fashion system, its hierarchy of commercial circulations, and its selective gender normative admittances.

Feminist concerns:

Backgrounding this research is consideration of the work of Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous, Gilles Deleuze, Rosi Braidotti, Elizabeth Grosz, Murat Aydemir, Norman O Brown, amongst others. What these writers share, if somewhat differently formulated, is a questioning of libidinal economies and the ontological constructs that support them. Importantly I link the current form and history of the fashion show with broader considerations relative to Late Capitalism and the commodification of apparel and bodies, particularly as these play out in an ongoing male privilege.

The project focuses on feminist concerns particularly raised by Irigaray and Cixous around the issue of language and body utterances. As an embodied subject the experience of speaking in public unwittingly became a part of my own project. When giving a presentation talk I became the breath, I was the 'interval' between the gap of breath and utterance. My body fully lived the painful loss of wind and physical materiality as described in Cixous' the Laugh of the Medusa. As she writes...

Listen to a woman speak at a public gathering (if she hasn't painfully lost her wind). She doesn't 'speak', she throws her trembling body forward; she lets go of herself, she flies; all of her passes into her voice, and it's with her body that she vitally supports the 'logic' of her speech. Her flesh speaks true. She lays herself bare. In fact, she physically materializes what she's thinking; she signifies it with her body. In a certain way she inscribes what she's saying, because she doesn't deny her drives the intractable and impassioned part they have in speaking. Her speech, even when 'theoretical' or political, is never simple or linear or 'objectified', generalized: she draws her story into history. (Cixous, 1976, p.245).

This inability to speak is counterpointed by a desire to write. In the style of *femme ecriture*, (writing the body) used by Cixous and Irigaray's *parler femme* (feminine speak) in language, I invite this (mater)iality into my text as an expression of sexual difference, with respect to women reserving the breath for an otherwise expression of the body, and drawing strength from the original relationship with the mother (mater).

In raising the possibilities of a writing-otherwise, I feel it necessary to admit into this text and my research project generally a range of counter-voices, voices that are less readily amenable to the institutional setting that has generated them, or, as Judith Butler writes... "to what extent does discourse gain the authority to bring about what it names through citing the conventions of authority" (1993, p.13). If these voices arise, as Cixous and Irigaray argue, "in my body", I have chosen to give space to them as a parallel discourse in this text. This language asserts itself as an ongoing conversation or aside within the project (*In italics*).

Cixous stresses the role of the mother's body in feminine writing, and that the rhythms, heartbeat, utterances and contact of the mother's body have a continuing effect in its expression, particularly as a foil to the repression of these bodily utterances, whereby "feminine writing is a place [...] which is not economically or politically indebted to all the vileness and compromise". (Cixous, 1976, p.72).

The connection between the repression of the utterances and the repression of feminine desire is a parallel one. Here she writes of...

A singing from a time before the law, before the symbolic took one's breath away and re-appropriated it into language under its authority of separation. (Cixous, 1976, p.93).

Substance:

As language speaks through the body and is a translation of our thoughts, so it necessarily passes through our bodies. This flow is the signifying operation and determines our relation to the body. The white ink referred to in the opening quote is symbolic of the ongoing channel between the body and its expression in relation to the tactile. While the economy of the catwalk can be said to be largely specular and spectacular, in this project I aim to show another economy at play which is about being in the substance of the female body - a tactile, visceral response aligned with the economy of the gift for which breast feeding is an immemorial gesture. I seek to explore this tactile response on the catwalk and its surrounds by directly implicating bodies, their apparel, and their moving through this lactic substance. Virginia Woolf describes this state of being in the substance:

She seemed to be standing up to the lips in some substance, to move and float and sink in it, yes, for these waters were unfathomably deep [...] some uncommon feeling which held the whole together [...] what she wished to get hold of was that very jar on the nerves, the thing itself before it had been made anything. (Woolf, 2004, pp.221-222).



Figure 6
Alice dress with mucus covering: experiments in studio practice. Photo Annie Tatton, 2007.

Psychic Economies:

Further, this research considers how to extend such thinking explicitly into the domain of the fashion event and the paradox of apparel that it enacts. The notions of jettying, propelling, exposing, and objectifying as actions effected on and through bodies, brings to light a certain making-passive of observed, objectified (and to some extent always feminised) bodies in what may be thought of as a male ejaculative economy.

The suggestion pursued by this research is that if the catwalk transports an erotic, it would be an erotic tied to the phallically defined body. Key in this research is a will to critique, contest and re-think this economy in light of feminist scholarship. This necessarily entails a questioning of the circulations of models and fashion within a broader orbit of circulating capital and the psychical economy on which it rests.

Consistent with this, and in light of Gille Deleuze and Felix Guattari's critique, I have sought a rhizomatic methodology whereby lines of flight are favoured in place of "either-or", ordered structures, and where it is a question of "and...and...and" as an endless experimentation that focuses on metamorphosis, transmutation, and translation. For as Deleuze and Guattari argue, "it is always by rhizome that desire moves and produces" (2004, p.15).

In this project I am interested in the manner by which the creative process finds expression in a crude thrusting forward of, and on, the catwalk. The bodily movement exemplified on the catwalk is of models moving with the pelvis ahead of the frame, tilting towards the bank of cameras waiting at the end of the platform, as if they are mimicking a male thrust. The question is where is women's desire in this?

High/low:

In the manner of assemblage as method, and theorised by Deleuze, (Deleuze, 1987). I have married the high and the low.

Flying is women's gesture – flying in language and making it fly. We have all learned the art of flying and its numerous techniques; for centuries we have only been able to possess anything by flying; we've lived in flight, stealing away, finding, when desired, narrow passageways, and hidden crossovers. They (illes) go by, fly the coop, take pleasure in jumbling the order of space, in disorientating it, in changing around the furniture, dislocating things and values, breaking them all up, emptying structures and turning propriety upside down. (Cixous, 1980, p.254).



Figure 7
Alice Dress stiffened with Polyurethane: experiments in materiality. Photo Annie Tatton 2008.



Figure 8

Studio work in progress. Photo Annie Tatton 2008.

Event 1

thinking differently... (white ink)

Every time we find ourselves confronted or bound by a limitation or an opposition we should ask ourselves what such a situation presupposes. (Deleuze, 2004, p.61).

This chapter explores the conditions under which the geometric rigors and dimensional certainty of spatial extension is transposed into the flux of events. Underwriting, indeed propping up the recognisable certainty of the fashion event is the dramatised platform known as the catwalk. From its first use in the late nineteenth century, the term “catwalk” has described a device for crossing precarious spaces of uncertain footing and potential peril. Historically its use has included the depiction of narrow passages within airships, a bridge set high over exposed surfaces on naval vessels, the fly-galleries spanning the proscenium arch of theatres or, much earlier, the single brick-wide paths spanning the fields of Flanders on the Western Front. As the Oxford English Dictionary suggests, its use as a name for the elevated pathway of fashion shows seems not to have become widespread or iconic until the 1970s.

Everett and Swanson write that one of the earliest ways that apparel was presented to potential customers in the 19th century was to send out fashion dolls. These dolls were miniature scale figurines wearing the latest fashions. The earliest record of this was in 1391 when a wife of a king in France sent a full size figurine to the wife of a king in England. This way she was able to “wear the garment immediately rather than waiting to have it scaled up” (Everett and Swanson, 2004, p.8).

If this represents an early tendency to render the model sustaining apparel’s full body an object of more or less indifferent transport, the fashion show’s contemporary configuration can be traced to the French salons of the nineteenth century and its display of couture. The couture designers showed to clients firstly with mannequins then later moved to live models. “Christian Dior was acknowledged for changing the format of the fashion parade with his legendary collection in 1947” (Everett and Swanson, 2004, p.12). It is claimed that Dior asked his models to step fast, and walk with provocative swinging movements to better transmit the energy and vigour of newly optimistic Post-war youth.

Mary Quant was next to forefront changes to the presentation of apparel. “Quant felt that photographic models rather than runway models knew how to move around in clothes, so she selected nine of them to dance down the stairs and runway at her shop, Knightsbridge Bazaar.” (Everett and Swanson, 2004, p.13). Quant used innovative props and music, dance and choreography to dramatise mood and enliven the audience.

Prior to this, in the 1910s, the French Salon shows were reconfigured as mass consumer events in the US, particularly New York. There they made appearances in department stores as part of a bid to attract women shoppers into the cities. In fact the department store fashion shows were so popular that they caused adjoining parts of the cities they were in to be temporarily closed. In this sense the fashion event, from its early popular inception, entailed the playing out of gender conflicts at the level of public space and a certain contestation of normative male urban circulation and commercial interests. No doubt the Victorian department stores of large English cities provided an expanded public domain in the late nineteenth century for middle class women, as Judith Walkowitz had argued particularly. Envisaged as emporiums of the world they composed, on the one hand, a site of “floating images detached from material referents” through which women were drawn towards and in some senses subjugated to; on the other, the “retail revolution” they facilitated depended on gathering under a single roof both an expanded repertoire of women’s wants and available subject positions and imagined life-ways (Walkowitz, 1992, pp.48-49). The catwalk show, in its way, contributed to the cornucopian spectacle orchestrated by the department store, the catwalk itself delivering a dizzying plenitude of floating images affixed to moving bodies, all drawn close to hand in a single location.

As alcoves in, but apart from city life, they occluded the harassing ground of public space that held women in the nineteenth century double bind of belonging either to the fallen or the virtuous (Walkowitz, 1992, p.50). The spectacle composing the fashion show, like the department stores that popularised them, engineered a sanctified ground set aside from the street and the dubious traffic that circulated there. It also made up a fantasy site for self and other-invention that floated free, to some extent, from the material conditions that underwrote it. Much as the etymology of the word catwalk has historically depicted it as being detachment from a perilous and undependable ground its shift toward what is now its predominant use – an association with the fashion parade – nevertheless continues to carry these associations while conjoining them with an aura derived from the late nineteenth century retail revolution.

When an event such as the fashion catwalk show departs from its singularity by stepping off or away from itself, it falls into multiplicity. The narrow passage which takes careful navigating to stay on becomes unstable. It gives way to ground when the sense of appearance in the form of ostentatious display is seen to be put on with the intention to deceive. Fashion is a group of people acting together. The multitudes that buy and wear apparel are no longer responding to the catwalk, they have become the anonymous crowd, unconscious; the crowd that doesn't know itself and has become unstable in the surge. When the show is over, it becomes devoid of any real value. There is a deficiency, an emptiness; a lack. What happens when the body departs from the garment?

How do clothes perform the body when hanging on a hanger in a store? A false body may be inserted such as a mannequin for display to mimic the body. It is cold and clinical compared to the real body. It is inert, static, and false. It reeks of instrumentalism whereby the clothes are hung on racks like at an abattoir, dead, to be hung, drawn and quartered. The clothes are on death row as the departed ones. They already smell different. This is troubling / disturbing. There is a demonstrated coldness toward the body via separation.

The catwalk is all hype, liveliness and movement. Models topple from their extremely high shoes, (platform upon platform); fabric sequestered to shape and form behaves with textural responses, touches the body and performs in association with the body. The destiny of fashion is corrupted when it steps off the catwalk. The departure is akin to being on the threshold of death. The transition from catwalk to hangers becomes life to death, and de-ascension into anonymity. What happens when fashion steps away from the space of its own performance? It is entirely free of being there, yet it is there tethered by memory. It is always on the brink of teetering towards death. Attempts to revive the body are ongoing via hangers, mannequins, yet leave us in a place of 'no longer fashion'. Apparel becomes dead.



Figure 9.

Pantyhose on hooks: studio work in progress. Photo Annie Tatton 2009.

Despite various historical and critical clues derived from tangentially relevant research, what is clear is that the catwalk, as a performative and spatial element has been markedly under-theorized. This is partly due to the ephemeral nature of fashion performances. Due to their repetitive and formulaic nature, they don't leave fixed or enduring structures behind. This ephemerality of performance no doubt doubles with what Joanne Entwistle suggests is the defining relationship between apparel production and consumption, an undervaluation responding to the presumption that production answers to "the fluctuating (and irrational) desires of women" (Entwistle, 2000, p.2). Often the fashion show is viewed as being frivolous entertainment, and not worthy of serious consideration despite the vast revenue it generates. As Nathalie Khan writes:

the fashion show is an important event, during which nothing is said – at least nothing of substance. (Khan, 2000, p.126).

With these factors in mind, my project has sought to explore certain states of dissolve or disintegration of the catwalk. In drawing from the catwalk questions of ground and grounding, this has necessarily raised issues of its participatory ethics at the level of mobility. As a result I have chosen to examine modes of walk and accessibility in the 'show' I propose for this research.

The models are limping, their legs are deformed, and their dresses are coated in mucus. The fluid economy of the 'good mother's milk', the gift economy, is metaphorically present via a circulating free standing device highlighting the return of the body and its vessels; circulating yet becoming less pure as it traverses the sloping, uneven terrain. The crippled nature of this scenario introduces notions of waste, leakage, seeping efficiency (deficiency) and the rolling away of accepted practices for retrieval; challenging the voice spoken about by Cixous where there is the "milk that could go on forever. Found again." (Boulous Walker, 1998, p.139)

Space/time... (Imperceptible)

In critiquing the notion of the catwalk event as being the critical focal point for apparel getting to market, I have consulted Deleuze's consideration of the event and its deployment of aspects of space and time.

[...] the event in turn, in its impassibility and impenetrability, has no present. It retreats and advances in two directions at once, being the perpetual object of a double question: What is going to happen? What has just happened? The agonizing aspect of the pure event is that it is always and at the same time something which has just happened and something about to happen; never something which is happening. (Deleuze, 2004, p.73).

Here he is alluding to the propensity for events to be composed of complex entanglements of temporality, that the present of the event is never a straightforward presence but a weave of actual and virtual strands of anticipation and persistence.

Transposing this argument, the catwalk event is no less a spectacle shot through with anticipations and persistences. At its most basic level it is structured around seasonality, a looking forward, indeed a kind of imperative that occludes, recycles, reduplicates, calls forward. Its insistent pressuring of temporal arrangements, and any simple renderings of casual, linear time particularly, are its defining features. Fashion incessantly develops this slippage of retreat and advancement via its relentless manufacturing and distribution cycles and its production of desiring and wanting patterns. For instance, while the actual season might be summer, design is forward of this by 12 months, and manufacture and production by 6 months. Within contemporary information society these lead in times have been further reduced to 3 months in stores such as Zara and Top Shop in the UK. While catwalk shows anticipate a season, a production frame, a market, indeed a wearer, by at least 6 months, as an event they are immediately sent via internet to millions of viewers and bloggers, without the wait for look books and buyer appointments.

Seasonality:

Anticipating the endless rolling over of seasonal apparel production, I recognize seasonality in my project by way of a single deciduous tree that punctuates the continuous driveway tarmac. This overhanging tree, having recently been bared as it passed through winter is now leafy green and pressingly colours the space of the anticipated performance – a reminder of the insistent passage of time with its four seasons.



Figure 10
AUT Spatial Design building Carpark: Catwalk site. Photo Annie Tatton 2010.

Much as new buds on this recently wintering tree frame my event, they mark the commencement of a slow seasonal unfolding that will invariably result in their shedding. The catwalk show too is an event of renewal, an inaugurating event in time. Yet it simultaneously seeds within itself a time and material antithesis of the fashionable. It carries within its very manifesting, the image of what it will be in the downward spiral of the garments economic and use-cycles.

Maurice Blanchot writes...

Death has an extreme and definite relation to me and my body and is grounded in me, but it also has no relation to me at all – it is incorporeal; and infinitive, impersonal, grounded only in itself. (Cited in, Deleuze, 1990, p.172).

Similarly apparel is related to the body in the manner of an incorporeal event. It extends, defines and delimits the body, taking its ground from it, and yet is that whose seasonal and fashion-defined presence visits and dies about bodies themselves.

Paradox 1

Applause and non sense:

Paradoxically the fashion event is an abrupt advent that burns its newness brightly only to leave a routinely worn remainder. As Eugenia Sheppard, in the New York Herald Tribune, Jan. 13, 1960 stated, "To call a fashion wearable is the kiss of death. No fashion worth its salt is wearable". It is a kind of impossibility that is yet worn. Much as Shakespeare's Hamlet proclaims "time is out of joint", the catwalk show invokes a dislocating temporality with a long trail of compensatory and ameliorating practices.

Internal to the catwalk event itself, it organises a similar climactic impossibility, creating a cumulative intensity through pause, waiting, and anticipation. At the beginning the models come out quickly. They are mechanical and robotic in their movement with determinant body posture, eyes staring straight ahead, flinging their bodies forth in the mandated beautiful walk only to return, pause again for the final applause and return. Applause then attempts to seal the incessant cycle and return of apparel and model. Yet the cycle is ceaseless; the climax a ruse.

Apparel 1

Radical fashion:

Fashion designers such as Martin Margiela play with the elements of the fashion show as Susannah Frankel describes:

Margiela's models instead of merely strutting up and down a catwalk had been delivered by double-decker bus to various places in Paris where the fashion press had been advised to meet them. Dressed as they were in quite insane, if rather fetching fur wigs, and with shoulder pads pinned to the outside of their clothes, it's small wonder that Parisian passers-by, also filmed on their sides for the purpose of the video and going about their daily work, couldn't help but stop and gawp at the spectacle in disbelief. Oom- pah- pah, oom- pah- pah went the accompanying live Belgian brass band. (Frankel, 2001, p.34).

In my project the site chosen allows passers by, high rise apartment dwellers, and the public, a general admission to view this site specific performance.



Figure 11
AUT site with winter tree and surrounding buildings. Photo Annie Tatton 2010.

Music in fashion shows imparts a noticeable beat designed to animate bodies at a regular, fast pace. It gives a sense of urgency. This orchestrating tool along with other conventions of the catwalk serves to promote a desirous energy in the audience. In this fashion performance it is the domestic rhythm of a dishwasher with its cleansing, fluid repertoire that will accompany the march of models. There is a lilting asymmetry to the beat of the pressured water imitative of a limping movement.



Figure 12
Sound recording the dishwasher. Photo Annie Tatton 2010.

Nomadic wanderings:

The big shows in New York are held in tents, as is NZ Fashion Week. Space in these cases is configured as temporary and cyclic. The presentation of each show is transitory and ephemeral. They pocket and packet an anticipatory, seasonal time pointedly 'out of joint' with the place and time of their staging. Nomadic in quality, fashion both follows the seasons and hunts in a contingent future. Likewise, my show opens to contingency, is outside and exposed to the weather, and to an uncertain reception. Models, make-up and outfits pointedly brave an open sky. The institutional repose of the show is marginalised, destabilised, and deterritorialised by this situational outside.

Catwalk make up... (dissolution)

Nathalie Khan writes:

[...] as spectacle the catwalk helps determine ideals of physical beauty, its impact stretching far beyond the dresses on show. The shows are ritualised, frozen moments, aesthetic performances severed from reality in which not just designers but photographers, models, fashion journalists, make-up artists, and celebrity guests are quintessential components. (Khan, 2000, p.114).

The tradition of the catwalk show is surprisingly regimented given its quest for originality and innovation. Exceptions would include Jean Paul Gaultier who went against the grain by using his 'real curvy' model. Alexander McQueen used a model Aimee Mullins with carved wooden prosthetic legs looking like boots, promoting a felt bodily shock in the departure of normal conventions. Mathew Barney also used Aimee in his Cremaster cycle in different guises enabling an altered image of legs usually only achievable with computer graphic images in films. Because the format of the catwalk is so generic, my project seeks to question the persistent logic of the performances it enacts.

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Figure 13

Aimee Mullins with prosthetic legs in Matthew Barney's Cremaster Cycle. From Google images.

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Figure 14
Alexander McQueen Fashion Show. From Google images

Counter to the long legged slim models as the norm in catwalk shows, in an earlier test event I fitted models with pantyhose filled with small polystyrene balls to create grotesquely shaped legs. In a quest to further test the role of beauty and elegance, I designed and wore this outfit but with a de-heeled shoe for my post graduate presentation. The audience appeared uncertain how to respond to such an explicate appeal to disfigurement. This reaction leant itself to further experiments with grotesqueness and changed body shape. In a former presentation a colleague modeled these pantyhose, commenting that it was interesting and liberating to experience a certain malleability and grotesqueness in one's own body. It seemed to effect a mask behind which some other sense of self might be occluded from scrutiny. If one was beautiful then one may become grotesque, if one was not beautiful then it was possible to become beautiful.



Figure 15
Model wearing pantyhose with polystyrene balls: studio work in progress. Photo Annie Tatton 2010.

In this way Cindy Sherman excels in performing a character (herself) which she photographs in staged guises, and where she may be more or less beautiful according to the layers of masquerade employed. As Deleuze writes:

The mask, the costume, the covered is everywhere the truth of the uncovered. (Deleuze, 2004, p.20).

The catwalk is all hype, liveliness and forced, driven movement. Models topple from their extreme high heels like Lady Gaga, and fabric sequestered to shape and form behaves with textural responses to the air. Glamour, like the old uses of 'magicking', exhorts perfection, extremism. Glamorous things are neither opaque hiding all, nor transparent showing everything, but translucent favourably showing things.

A 'glamour' was originally said to be a spell cast by a witch to make somebody see things in a different way, as defined in The Oxford English Dictionary.

Most recently I have begun to experiment with an 'unbeautiful walk.' What does this look like? How does this influence the fashion line of circulating bodies? The asymmetrically impaired or limping body is a central figure in my explorations, and I have accepted it not as something to be overcome but as something that determines the spatial demarcations of the catwalk event itself.

Physically in high heels a woman is forced to take a stand, strike a pose, because anatomically her centre of gravity has been displaced forward. Her lower back arches, her spine and legs seem to lengthen, and her chest thrusts forward. (O'Keefe, 1996, p.73).

I have cut off the heel of a high heeled shoe and experimented with what this walk looks and feels like. The shoe, bandaged as though wounded, makes its restricted mobilisation visually explicate. Joe Bousquet writes, "My wound existed before me and I was born to embody it" (Cited in Deleuze, 1990, p.169). In this manner the altered shoe invites the body to participate in a preformed choreography of distorted movement.



Figure 16
Shoe with bandage and cut off heel. Photo Annie Tatton 2010.

Being noticed:

In exploring the catwalk as fashion institution, the question of its privileging of the visual as spectacle arises in light of feminist scholarship. There is an historical assumption that the fashion show's ability to exert influence relies on the visual especially as its aim is "to be noticed" as Nathalie Khan writes (2000, p.219).

This is no more evidenced by the bank of photographers, the lighting, the magazine shoots afterwards, yet there is another element forgotten – that of touch. Cixous writes that

[...] a feminine subject position refuses to appropriate and annihilate the other's difference in order to construct the self in a masculine position of mastery. (Cixous, 2004, p.93).

The censorship of touch is implicit in the sense that it is a 'soft' sell. It all too readily reminds of impotence. Whereas the visual becomes the hyper visual.

Irigaray speaks of being always 'two' (Irigaray, 1985). This is a reference to women being in constant touch with each side of their lips, such that the two are always together, or if not together not far apart. In this way women are in touch with their bodies, their sensibilities always being 'of two'. This touch in terms of being in touch with each other, if transported to the catwalk institution, would become one of bodies in rhythm, responding to the ground by foot contact, through a sense of connection from ground, to feet, to legs, to arms, to the heart beat. If these bodies carried apparel as if they were carrying a child and singing to it, and singing their own bodies, how would this spectacle look?



Figure 17
Two lips of corset pants. Photo Annie Tatton 2009.

Paradox 2

Tactile terrain:

The myth of Oedipus tells of an infant whose ankles were bound together, and whose ankles consequently became swollen. The resulting term oedema is still used to describe swollen fluid filled cells especially on the legs. This 'hobbling' was supposed to inhibit the child from fulfilling the prophecy of killing his father and marrying his mother. The catwalk similarly is bound in its prophecy to deliver its destiny. Its promise is to slip the fates of incest proving itself invincible. Its structure as a level mono platform projecting out in a hyper visual display, affords no vulnerability. A sloping site, the site I have chosen to stage this project's fashion event, is inclined, composed of rough, dirty asphalt and consequently demands a heightened sensitivity to ground and its navigation. The path must be approached carefully with all senses alert to obstacles and deviations. The entrance of this previous Crippled Children Society building is complicated by disturbances and falling ground. It takes a body cognisant of its tactile abilities and the forces necessary to tackling its terrain. Swollen ankles and legs are paradoxically accelerating the fates.



Figure 18
AUT Catwalk site with glass bottles: work in progress. Photo Annie Tatton 2010.

With this uncertainty of stride and the possibility of stumbling or falling, my aim is to investigate 'the laugh of the stride.' This possibility aligns with what in eighteenth century Europe became known as the carnivalesque but which before that entailed the reverse crowning of ugly and deformed characters in ancient Greece. In that context it was the most adject who were crowned king for a year, and who were then paraded out of the polis into exile or death as a sacrificial surrogate (Vernant & Vidal-Naquet, 1990,

p.128). Sophocles' Oedipus, the lame and limping aristocratic figure, suffers a similar fate by being forced into wandering exile in order to save Thebes from the plague. With the democratization of Greek culture this sacrificial impetus is transformed in light of the citizen's shared equality. The impaired, the differentiated person, whether the most high or the lowest, is made a sacrificial representative of what could not be equalised; made equivalent as a citizen. In this sense, the most high and the most low were brought together as that which could not circulate in the city of equals (Vernant & Vidal-Naquet, 1990, p.135). In a somewhat displaced context, the context of late capitalism, only what is equal, or is given a value in the universal measure of money, can circulate in the commercial channels composing modern mobility. In this sense the Catwalk violently enacts an uneasy pack against the high-low twins of exceptionality, unfettered originality and the grotesque. It makes the 'beautiful' a standard measure for which only the normatively beautiful and able bodies of models can circulate on high.

Mergings:

With these factors in mind, my project undertakes a range of experiments in which the ground and stability of the catwalk are challenged. Various mergings between garment and supporting or background surface have been explored, as have the normative conventions associated with backstage/front-of-house distinction. Along with this work, a range of experimental garments in soft, flesh coloured foam has been developed that dissolves the demarcation between garment and body leading to an inversion of the body and its normal covering. In these works I am interested in how the skin itself might become a kind of apparel.



Figure 19
Skin toned dresses and pantyhose: Studio work in progress. Photo Annie Tatton 2010.



Figure 20
Gabriel in Skin toned dress: Studio work in progress. Photo Annie Tatton 2010.

Masquerade/masks:

There is something about the surface of fashion that needs discussing here. It is the prepared surface - the hair, make-up, story, veil, and the screen or mask which is what is being marketed in the catwalk show. The messy background of making and making-up is what gets occluded in the mechanics of masking defining the show. In my show I pointedly put this mechanics into view. In doing so I aim to make apparent not simply some base, bared substrate beyond performance but, as Deleuze says in *Difference and Repetition*, "the ceaseless series of masks that make up that trouble of the performance full stop" (Deleuze, 2004, p. 357).

Alexandra Warwick and Dani Cavallaro similarly describe the mask as a garment "that advertises [that] it has something to hide; but the nature of what is hidden is not fixed, depending on the context in which it is worn" (Warwick and Cavallaro, 1998, p.130). Paradoxically the catwalk event emphasizes and occludes the visibility of the apparel on the body with its mask of ambiguity. By this I mean apparel is not self sustaining, but lives on what it excludes in the show which is the body.

Crutches... (Crippled Children Society)

Mobility for women is historically a story of controlled disablement whereby bound feet indicating enforced passivity, clothing restricting steps (hobble skirts), restricted pathways and passages, high heels, all keep women in varying ways from participating fully in life. My aim in setting up limping as a bodily expression of disablement through the removal of one shoe heel makes plain this otherwise routine, normative disfiguring. Immediately obvious is that the body is made asymmetrical, or at least noticeably more asymmetrical. In fact our bodies are never entirely symmetrical, yet studies have purported to show that the more symmetrical the body, the more desirable it is perceived to be. By this reasoning asymmetry can be thought to bifurcate the body, leaving an uneven register with which to navigate the world. The word bifurcation comes from Latin meaning divided into two forks, from the Oxford English Dictionary. Thus bifurcation leads to a false dilemma whereby the division is either/or, a form of logical division where the principle of contradiction in the division is both exhaustive and inclusive. Paradoxically the body when it is dressed is rendered symmetrical, clothing patterns being always cut on the fold, or cut 2, so the parts are mirror images of each other. As Deleuze writes,

The event is therefore a reciprocally determining open and bifurcating process along two parallel but irreducible sides of reality. (Deleuze, 2004, p.238).

Crutches are used to support the human body when there is trauma of some sort to the legs and some form of ongoing mobilisation is necessary. The trauma is not meant to be a barrier to getting about. The human machine is not allowed to be stopped. In various earlier tests I made crutches that were made from flimsy aluminium which would not support a body's weight. These collapsing crutches were themselves frail. A pendulum action usually accompanies the action of crutches whereby the body is suspended from below the armpits and is moved by swinging, flinging the weight of the body forwards. My crutches in turn were themselves bandaged with pink Elastoplast over polystyrene and needed to be handled very gently to avoid collapse. I included fence strainer ratchets to increase tension. The wire is slack; the strainer moves a notch or two and pulls the wire tight. The movement is somewhat torturous requiring force and deliberate intervention. The legs become unattached no longer connected to the body. They are very weighty needing assistance to remain in the picture. The fold to infinity has become protracted barely holding together. The legs are held by their weight and held by the strainer. They are slack and immobilised. The crutches are supporting a leg that is disappearing, the feet becoming smaller and smaller. They are crippled crutches with disembodied legs.

The crutch of a garment comes between the legs; it is the most obvious point of bifurcation. Gravity pulls the crutch down. The weight is unbearable. Where is the support? "Cotton rich" apparently helps. Menstrual pads stem the flow of blood to the outside, held up by the crutch which is falling. 'Crutch grabs' ratchet, and tension the

human body. The body is tempered by pink fleshy garments with lots of elastic. Foundation is mentioned, as if the body could not exist without this support. Foundation garments have large crutches. They are a bridge and an envelope/vessel for the legs.

Chairs have legs supporting body weight. When sitting on a chair the legs may rest, or be swung out depending on the length. They may fold up. The foundation garment is attached to the wall with a metal holder designed for plumbing pipes. The internal view moves from the exterior slowly inwards, expressing the garment as a vessel/receptacle for the body. The crotch is viewed as a structure. Not as the swish, swish of nylon and elastic all rosy pink.

Metal is introduced as a foil to soft flesh. It is hard, shiny, reflective and unforgiving. It is a barrier to mobility. Poles, as installed, are polarised – north and south. There is no unfolding of poles. These poles assert their position and there is no moving them. They aid and abet the immobilisation of the chairs. They create a barrier to the human body requiring the legs to step up and over them. They are ratcheted between walls, and between floor and ceiling without compromise. Small movements by incremental pulling of levers, threatens either securement or collapse.

Vitality versus mortality – as in garments on the catwalk versus garments on a rack, or, off the body at the end of the day and in a crumpled heap. The corset pants are unable to be revived even with props and instruments. They are designed for the body and crumple without its presence. Clear transparent Perspex chairs where a body normally sits become an extension of the body substituting bones. Auto-poles extend and adapt to spaces seeking to support and modify the garment's existence, but this is always tenuous, fragile.

These poles are covered in pantyhose. Pantyhose have visible crutches and very stretchy legs. The chairs are also having pantyhose. The pantyhose legs are disattached from human legs and interact with chair legs instead. The back of the chair is the pelvis from the waist down. Vessels inhabit the feet. These glass vessels are transparent and shiny. They have qualities of metal. Angular and crippled shapes result around the feet.

Hose were historically garments worn by men, covering the legs and reaching up to the waist, and were accompanied by 'doublets'. Hose include stockings, socks and tights collectively. A hose is also a flexible pipe for directing liquids, gases or waste. Here instead pink wax inhabits the transparent cut glass jug and saucer, while sitting on the drain pipe. Vessels attempt to contain liquids, much as legs contain blood. Adipocere is the wax like fatty substance formed during the decomposition of corpses – sometimes called "grave wax". As we imbibe from life we drain our fluids towards death hoping to stem the flow with a wax seal.

"Of course all life is a process of breaking down" writes Fitzgerald. (Cited in Deleuze, 2004, p.176). Gauze fabric is used to heal wounds and bandage bodies on the journey back from breakdown. Bodies are bound. Waste/waist is directed through pipes and hoses. Legs direct movement, running from decomposition and breakdown. Legs are unfolding like flip boards on cartoon strips, going as fast as possible, yet becoming wounded, disattached. Movement in both directions at the same time is a paradox as in Alice falling down the rabbit hole, and as Irigaray puts it, she "has let herself be used as a bridge-being at the end of which is nothing: this passage is but an eternal return to the same" (1999, p.24).

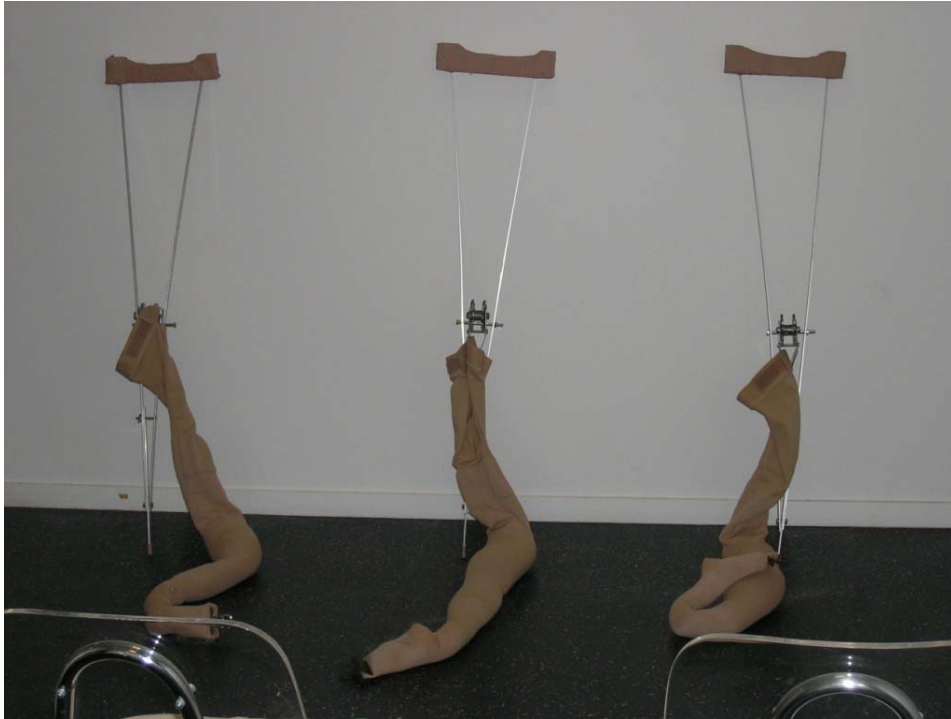


Figure 21
Porte Cochere exhibition: Legs and pantyhose with crutches. Photo Annie Tatton 2009.



Figure 22
Porte Cochere exhibition: Chairs and pantyhose. Photo Annie Tatton 2009.

Event 2

Accessible Route... (By Law):

My project site outside the old Crippled Children Society building on Mount Street sits adjacent to the legally defined "accessible route" linking the street to all its interior spaces. In accordance with the New Zealand Building Code no step greater than 20cm can occur anywhere along this route, or a gradient greater than one in twelve. All its conjoining surfaces must exhibit mandatory slip resistances, visually defined limits and barriers and handrails to prevent falling. It composes a route of universal, egalitarian passage untroubled by defects, difficulties and resistances. By contrast the site of my fashion event steps off this accessible, route following a line of fall in excess of the reasonably egalitarian. It is other than universally reachable, an open terrain beyond the legislatively known. The sanctioned terrain of variously abled bodies institutes a measure in which all 'make their own way'. Society in this well-meaning way unburdens itself of the friction of dependent bodies. In this project, models are impelled to traverse inaccessible gradients, thrust out across a surface already in fall. Moving forward, the elegance of vertical posture gives way to a leaning gait countering the gradient. The effortless glide of the 'beautiful walk', out and back, is restructured according to a too-quick decent and a laboured returning rise. These efforts are witnessed by an audience forced into an impeded stance, bent-leg opposing straight.

Realm of the other... (Outside):

Inside-outside oppositions typical of the backstage dressing room are contested in this project's fashion show via an encircling gauze curtain. Conventions dictate a bipolar approach to the catwalk show whereby models, designers, dressers, make-up artists, photographers and producers are hidden behind the scenes, emerging onto the catwalk space itself only in a prepared reveal. The notion of the 'reveal' reveals a stark divide between variously imperfect people in the chaos of backstage and the perfection and glamour audience-side. It is these backstage realities that my project causes the catwalk, no longer to mediate and demarcate, but to fluidly confront. As Luce Irigaray suggests "fluids, unlike objects, have no definite borders; they are unstable" (cited in Grosz, 1994, p.204). It is, as I hope to demonstrate, the object-status of the catwalk itself that is at stake here, drawn to dissolve as it is into the backstage, the sloping ground, the impeded audience and beyond into the drainage of the city itself.



Figure 23
Mock up of backstage dressing room fashion show: Studio work in progress. Photo Annie Tatton 2010.

Paradox 3

Jetties/racks:

Derrida refers to the jetty as a double movement in the sense of “a movement of undecidability which is the condition of something happening” (cited in, Thomson, 2005, p.190).

I distinguish on the one hand, the force of the movement which throws something or throws itself (jette or se jette) forwards and backwards at the same time prior to any subject, object or project, prior to any rejection or abjection, from on the other hand its institutional and protective consolidation which can be compared to the jetty, the pier in a low tide for boats at anchor or for swimmers. Of course these two functions of the jetty are ideally distinct, but in fact they are difficult to dissociate, if not in dissociable. (Derrida, 1984, p.191).

The catwalk paradoxically is the jetty and jetties the body. Considering Derrida's take on the jetty, it is these paradoxical spatial questions inherent in the jetty both as a movement and as a structure in this fashion show that I will develop further here.

Because fashion as a casting out or projection into the field of commodities and communications can be thought to start with the catwalk, I examined scaffolding and stilt structures as a re-figuration for the commodified cycle binding haute couture to the hordes of mall shoppers.

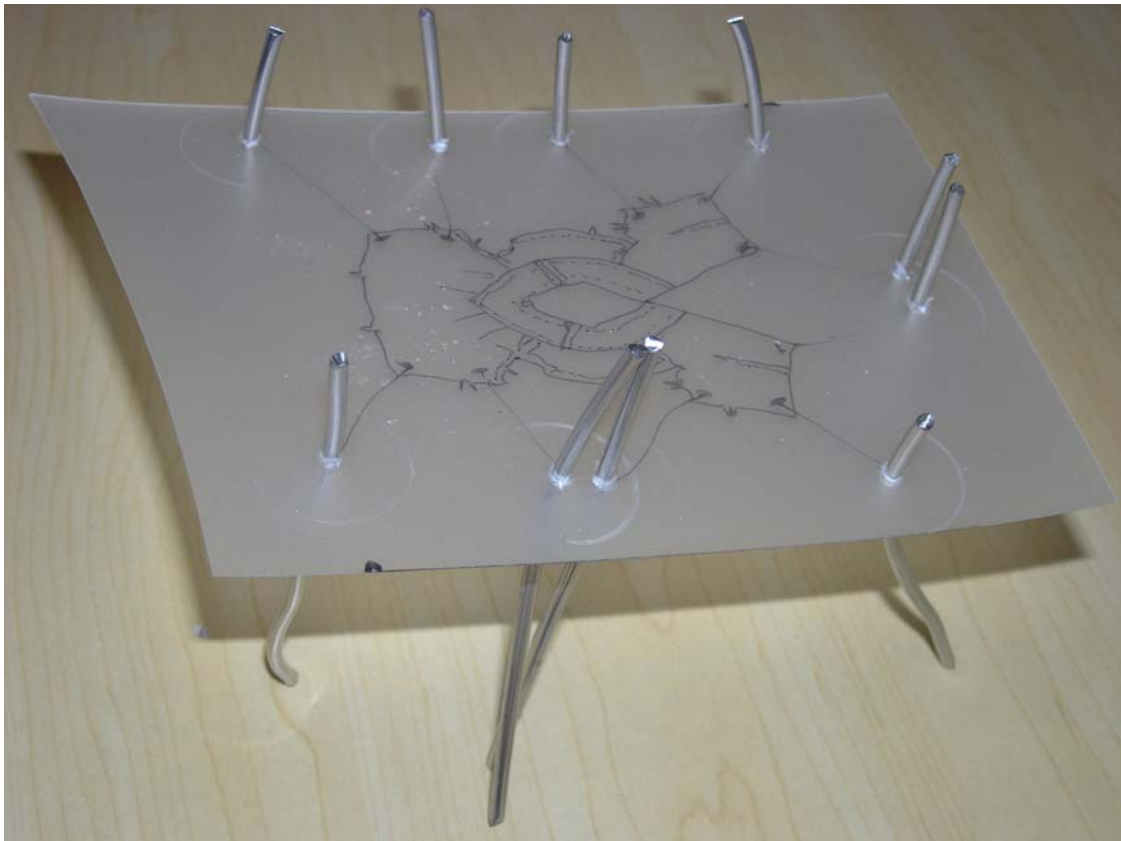


Figure 24
Model of proposed Catwalk jetty/platform. Photo Annie Tatton 2010.

Racks provide storage and hanging space for garments. This form of scaffolding, (catafalque) emphasises the 'besideness/alongsideness' of the body in respect to apparel. Instrumentally it provides a prop, a siege machine against disorder. Apparel similarly makes ready...prepares the wearer for the onslaught, the siege-effect of the social gaze. Racks also suggest torture and constraint. Yet stepping out of apparel instantly leaves them lifeless, crumpled on the floor. This postural lapse in clothing has a strange other life beyond the conscious. It is an unconsciousness of apparel. Fluidly, fabric falls into mourning.

Ultimately the decision not to continue with a scaffolding type of catwalk for this project was made because underpinning this project's focus is an emphasis on ground, and a drawing of feet and legs into the disfiguring effects.

The implied sanctity of apparel is challenged by undoing the sanctity of the catwalk and by depositing it on the ground. Hence this project undertakes a reverse sanctification of terrain, including, as will be examined below, a kind of milky baptism.

Event 3

Getting to Market... (Overcoming topography):

"For all the fizz it gives off, fashion is first of all a business and a curiously conformist one at that", says Guy Trebay in the New York Times (Trebay, 2003). Its rules and rigid codes see to that. Akin to the infamous pornographic money shot, the spectacle is photographed, by a predominantly male photography pack opportunistically overlooking the furthestmost extent of the jettied catwalk. A flood of flashlight seals the spectacle in up-close detail into media machinery that circulates its frozen spectacle interminably. To think of this as an 'ejaculatory' mechanics is not farfetched in the context of a penetrating catwalk, a receptive audience, exuberant one-off displays, cumulative finales, and the inevitable pay off.

In capitalism one of the determining mechanisms is the overcoming of topographic differences by a consumption 'machine' grinding across and equalising all terrain. In an economic sense fashion operates along these parameters too, with thin models prey to the terrain of commerce and the jettying out of the catwalk, not just across a crowded room but beyond into factories in China and elsewhere. The audience intoxicated on dreams of glamour overlooks the dirt and grime back grounding this scene. My research seeks amidst this another economy, one turning on a different fluidity.

Fluid economy... (Mucus):

Boulous Walker writes that "the breast acts as a privileged topos of female expression" (1998, p.39). She goes on to say "We need to re-chart the maternal as a terrain of body and word" (1998, p.140).

Irigaray's work arguably does both. In her writing we witness a metonymic displacement from the mother's breast towards the ambiguous terrain of the labia. The uncertain 'lips' of Irigaray's poetic texts evoke a mother whose sexuality is always tied to speech, rather than the invisible (non signifying?) ink of the breast.

Using the metaphor of breast milk I seek to situate this catwalk show firmly with the materiality of the body, a feminine economy of the body. The recycled bottles I use to precariously mark out a space of the catwalk on sloping, uneven terrain, critically invoke milk. The bottle's shape no less explicitly elicits a feminine parallel with women's cervix. In another sense, to bottle up means to suppress, check, contain, conceal, curb, restrain, cover up, withhold, stifle, repress, smother, keep secret, shut in, keep back, and sweep under the carpet. In my catwalk event it is intended that the narrowed neck of the gathered milk bottles not hold their contents intact but roll and spill through the action of modeled feet. Terrain in this sense is made inseparable from a milky ground. The slipped bottles in turn will litter the lower reaches of the slope.



Figure 25
AUT Catwalk site with milk bottles: Work in progress. Photo Annie Tatton 2010.



Figure 26
AUT Catwalk slope with spilt milk bottle: Work in progress. Photo Annie Tatton 2010.

Again following Irigaray, “a metaphysics generated from feminine desire, might conceptualise being as fluid rather than as solid substances, of things” (cited in Grosz, 1994, p.204). She similarly writes “any thinking of or about the female has to think through the mucus” (Irigaray, 1999, p 93). And similarly: “No thinking of or about sexual difference that would not be traditionally hierarchical is possible without thinking through the mucus” (Irigaray, 1999, p.94). Reading this into the scene of the catwalk it is clear that the latter solidifies the same in its circulations ironically composing an impassable as opposed to what Hilary Robinson describes as “the morphology of mucus – its (now) form, its other translucency, its resistance to being mastered by either subject, its specificity to each woman, and its mediation of the woman to herself” (Robinson, 2006, p.106).



Figure 27
Catwalk site with milk trail: Experiments. Photo Annie Tatton 2010.

Given this, the intention is to produce a catwalk show indicative of a fluid economy where the milk, as white ink, inscribes its difference, indeed exhausts itself, on dirtied terrain. Yet its capture by ‘booms’ at the low point of the slope allows for collection and deposit into vats that accumulate visibly contaminated liquids turning on the back of a circulating ‘filthy lucre’, dirty money circulating as referenced back to Norman O Brown’s “Money inherits the infantile magic of excrement and then is able to breed and have children: interest is an increment”.... (1985, p.279) - beginning with the pure (white) and becoming tainted, coloured as it goes round. This circulating system of merchandise reproduces a guarantee for the future. Irigaray writes:

The (male) subject collects up and stitches together the scattered pieces of female merchandise (scattered in silence, in inconsequential chatter, or in madness) and turns them into coins that have an established value in the marketplace. What needs to be done instead of course if she is to speak and be understood. And understand and express herself, is to suspend and melt down all systems of credit. In every sense the credit, the credibility, that sustains all the current forms of monopoly, needs to be questioned. (Irigaray, 1985, p.234).

Apparel 2

Preserving Phallogocentricity:

Irigaray has questioned “why sperm is never treated as object a.....and if in the dynamics of desire.....a reckoning with sperm-fluid as an obstacle to the generalisation of an economy restricted to solids remains in suspension” (Irigaray, 1985, p.215).

Waste of body fluids in the ‘cum shot’ is part of the production cycle within phallogocentric parameters. Once the sperm is abjected, it is ‘out of sight, out of mind’. The economy of desire is quiet for a time. Once the female body is ‘taken’ it is discarded until the next cycle of desire. The seasonality of fashion is erected to spurt in a temporal cycle.

On my project site, the clear transparent glass/Perspex is reminiscent of a laboratory slide where evidence of ejaculation or bodily fluids is there for public view. A catwalk show as event is evidence of ‘purity’, beauty and cleanliness, untainted, unsoiled. What room is there for the passage or interval of mucus between men and women in public?



Figure 28
Vaseline and Perspex slide: Experiments. Photo Annie Tatton 2010.

Andres Serrano's depiction of frozen sperm (“a glacial mass of frozen sperm on a dark surface pane”) in Murat Aydemir's Bliss, “offers only the semen that, without the blood that grants it life, is stuck in a state of immobility and inertia” (Aydemir, 2007, p.27). Previous work (“the polar opposite”) depicts “two fluids in an intimate, viscous and interacting tension” (2007, p.27). In my work I seek to reinstate the subordinate and the tactile to prominent status with the creation of an apparel collection which is wearable and unwearable in its materiality; recognisable but unrecognisable; transparent yet opaque.

An installation set up like a laboratory – clinical, institutional lino, white walls, corsets like straight jackets, garments on the floor, an unravelling – leaving a trail of bodily presence without the body. Leaving fluids, fabric and empty shells discarded, but also leaving evidence like DNA in the horizontal, and below the radar. Alice is on a journey where gravity has her falling off the catwalk.

Murat Aydemir in his book 'Images of Bliss' writes of Aristotle's "governing oppositions" (Aydemir, 2007, p.29), semen versus menstrual blood. The mucus, as interval for passage between the two sexes, is ignored. Yet it is essential to the language and colour (chroma soma) (Irigaray's term) of women's desire (Irigaray, 2004). Typically it is ignored in the oedipal economy. Mucus changes its makeup and character according to the cycles of its body's wearer. It may be transparent like glass, or cloudy; it may be stretchy, and unbreakable; or it may plug up the cervix allowing no passage of leaking amniotic fluid out. I seek to give mucus a place in this catwalk show.

Body schema:

My work has been informed along the way by Mathew Barney who has an incredible mastery of materials including prosthetic plastics. He performs space offering a new imagery of bodies, and rethinking gender. Plastic thinking re-figures and re-maps the body. It allows other possibilities. Fashion seeks to plasticise society into an ever desirous mode of being. Plastic surgery is prosthetic integration mediating the body with space, whereby modifications such as skin grafts, flaps, implants, extensions, all alter spatial/bodily relations. In my project I use silicone latex and wax to coat the apparel thereby employing the plastic aspect of fashion, and using it as an extension of the body into the fabric.

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Figure 29

Matthew Barney: Plastic molding of bodies. Photo Annie Tatton from *In Vogue*, 2006.

Apparel 3

Materiality:

Latterly in this project, the construction of apparel via pattern making and draping has required reverse techniques including cutting the patterns, burning the cut edges to create a melted fray-less edge, then sewing the seams. Coating the fabric with silicone latex and wax has occurred directly on the mannequin, as the process of handling fluid substances to a solid state required quick work, and a moldable shape on which to graft the plasticised material.

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

Figure 30
Matthew Barney from the Cremaster Cycle: Resin as material. (From Google images).



Figure 31
Wax coated fabric with burnt edges: Studio work in progress. Photo Annie Tatton.

Silicone becomes a metaphor for the materiality of the body. Sticky substances coat the fabric, going from soft to hard. Moistness glistens and looks to slide down in gravity. Wax provides protection and weatherproofs the fabric.



Figure 32
Wax coated fabric: Studio work in progress. Photo Annie Tatton 2010.

Conclusion:

The pursuit of a catwalk event has opened the way for a series of experimental performances that have sought to explore and question practices and spaces of a male privilege linked to the fashion cycle.

In this project I've been led to wonder what if the body's manifest imperfections, its limping asymmetries, and its postural incompleteness were not masked? What if the pinnacle of the fashion address admitted other bodies, other competencies, other mobilities? The question arises as to the complicity between catwalk spatiality and perfected bodies. What if the catwalk structure/jetty becomes two? What if the support and expectations are bifurcated? The asymmetrical limping body exacerbates and highlights imperfection and disablement. What issues of power are present to do with ableism? As a woman and always being metaphorically 'two', I ask how this body feels.

The felt body, the nomadic existence and the expression of democratised minorities have been key concerns in the research. This project questions the authority of the catwalk and its associated economy in the sense that "whatever is present is not self sustaining but lives on what it excludes" (Iser, 2006, p.120).

Judy Pfaff in her work *Life and Limb* writes:

If I am being 'worn' I am not empty, a 'void'. My instrument is paradox. It looks like bones or metal supports and conveys increasing variations of being 'worn' across the bridge. In this way I become unlimited. (Cited in Princenthal, 1998, pp.100-105).



Figure 33
Studio work in progress: Jacket stiffened with wax application. Photo Annie Tatton 2010.

While the principal research methodologies of this project have not altered, a shift in emphasis away from installation toward a performance-based approach occurred during this project. This enabled a direct interrogation of the overlap of spatial and fashion practices and provided a substantive focus for the critical aspects of the project. This also allowed a more explicate exploration of the politics associated with fashion performance, including questions of disablement/poverty and gender concerns of bodies and their spectatorship and consumption. This necessitated the collaborative involvement of live models in a different transmission route.



Figure 34
Maria at Catwalk site with jacket. Photo Annie Tatton 2010.

This catwalk of milk-filled glass bottles (of 'the good mother') is a space of 'risk'. It operates between the known and the unmapped, by embracing the uncontained, the spilled and the formless. It challenges normative practices within the fashion industry with its apparel being paradoxically transparent and opaque, wearable and unwearable, commercial and non commercial, on trend and off trend, practical and impractical.

In designing a 'show' to facilitate other ableisms, other corporealities and movement schemas, I seek to rethink the spectacle that is the catwalk.

The noise of liquid flowing through pipes and conduits becomes music. The lights show up a hidden realm of body fluids, mucus and milk. The bodies are disabled but curiously enabled.

The dressing and undressing of life occurs in the open, outside, much as a wound is cleaned and dressed with gauze.

Between the body and the apparel there is an 'amorous exchange' of felt and acknowledged sensations.

The seasons change in a moment of time.

We, the collaborative collection, have written in white ink.

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Appendix:

All photos in appendix taken by Francis Turner Nov.2010



Figure 1. Dress Rehearsal with models at AUT Spatial Design building Oct. 2010.



Figure 2. Dress Rehearsal AUT Oct. 2010 The Catwalk outside.



Figure 3. Final Show AUT Nov.2010 preparation. The Catwalk 'line of sight' Perspex box.



Figure 4. Models getting dressed for the final performance.



Figure 5. The 'virtual' sloping Catwalk with milk bottles.



Figure 6. Models preparing in the dressing room.



Figure 7. Models preparing showing hair styling.



Figure 8. Models backstage preparing for the show.



Figure 9. Milk being released into Perspex 'line of sight' virtual Catwalk structure.

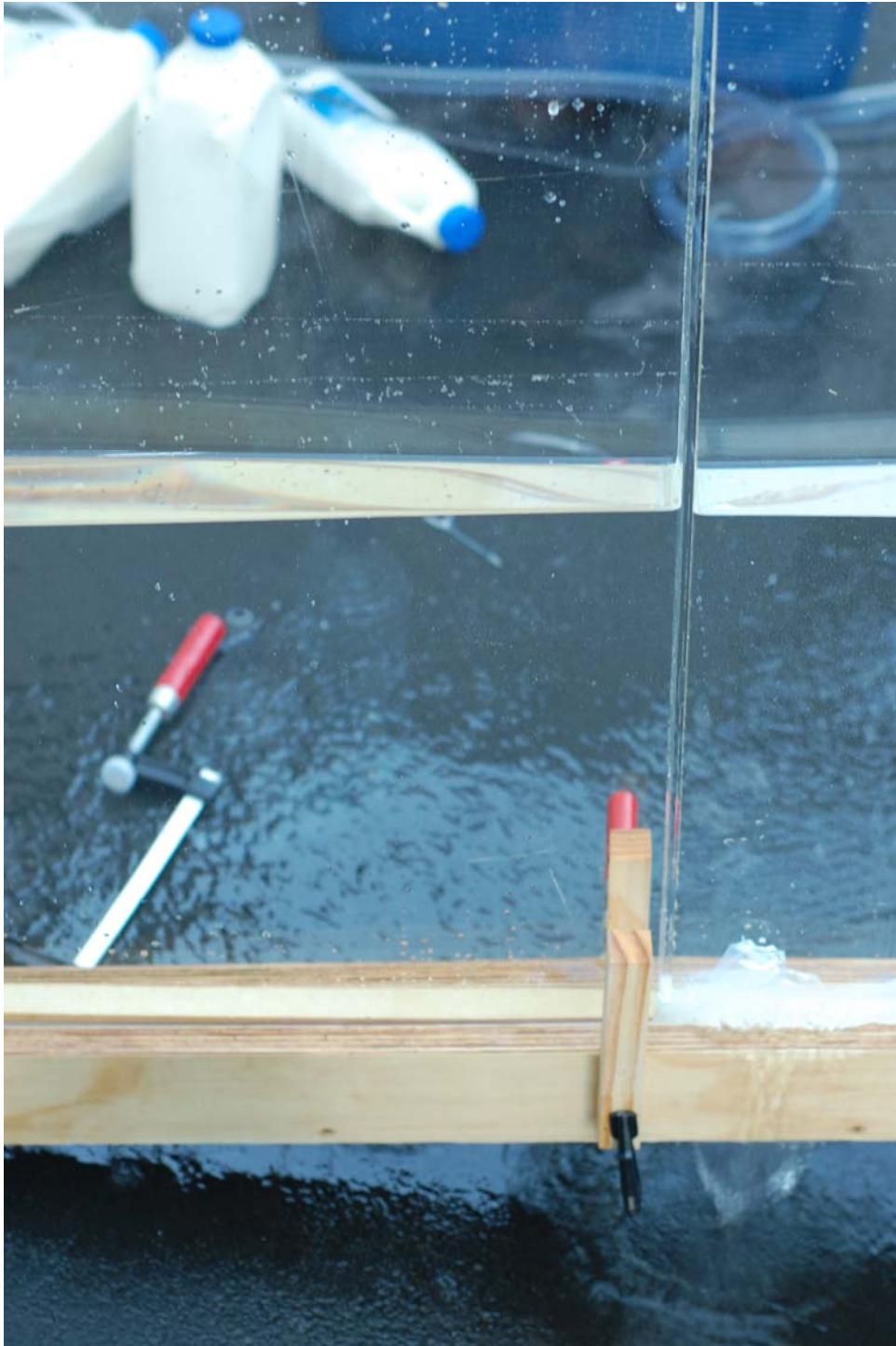


Figure 10. Perspex box with leaking fluids.



Figure 11. Audrey modeling bandaged shoe with no heel.



Figure 12. Penny modeling bandaged shoe with no heel and silicone coated dress.



Figure 13. Esther modeling bandaged shoe with no heel.



Figure 14. Maiara modeling bandaged shoe with no heel.



Figure15. Esther modeling on Catwalk slope with spilt milk.



Figure 16. Close up of model with legs and spilt milk.



Figure 17. Close up of model walk and glass milk bottles.



Figure 18. Eloise in close up of silicone texture of dress.



Figure 19. The Catwalk begins to disintegrate becoming messy.



Figure 20. The Catwalk disintegrates further and the models become disarrayed.

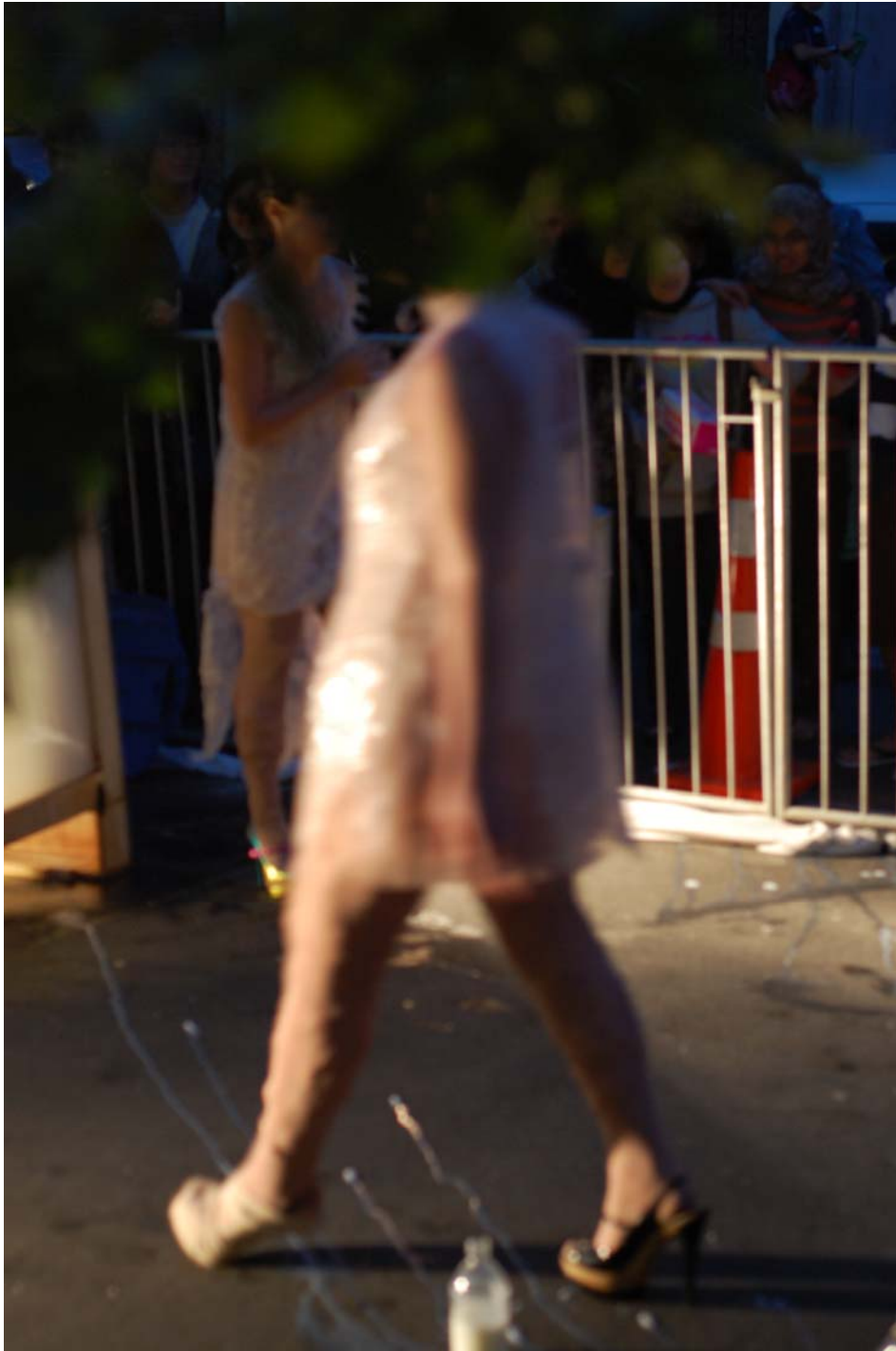


Figure 21. The models limp markedly on their disabled shoes.

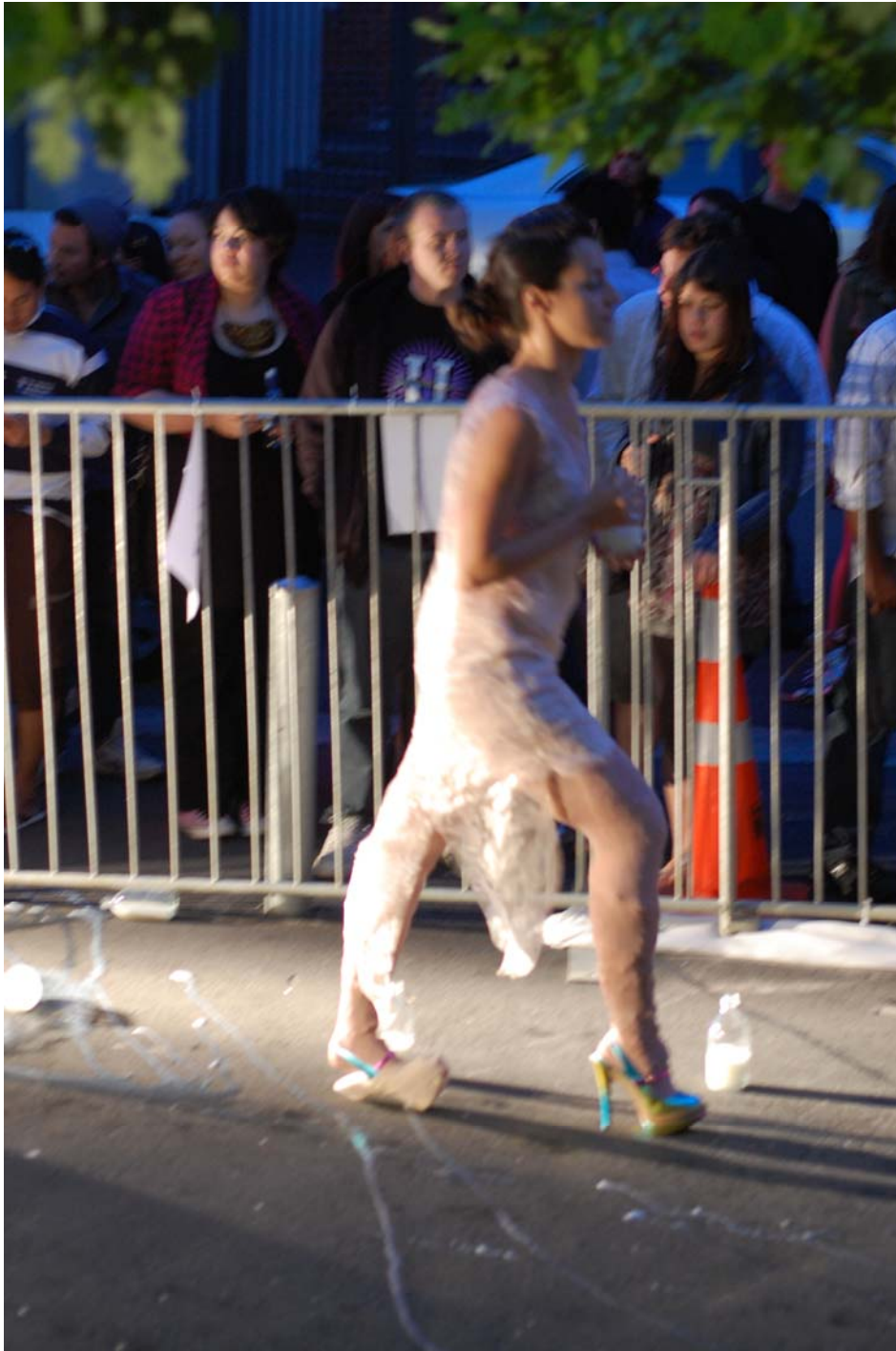


Figure 22. Model limping on a Catwalk of bifurcating expectations with gathering crowd.

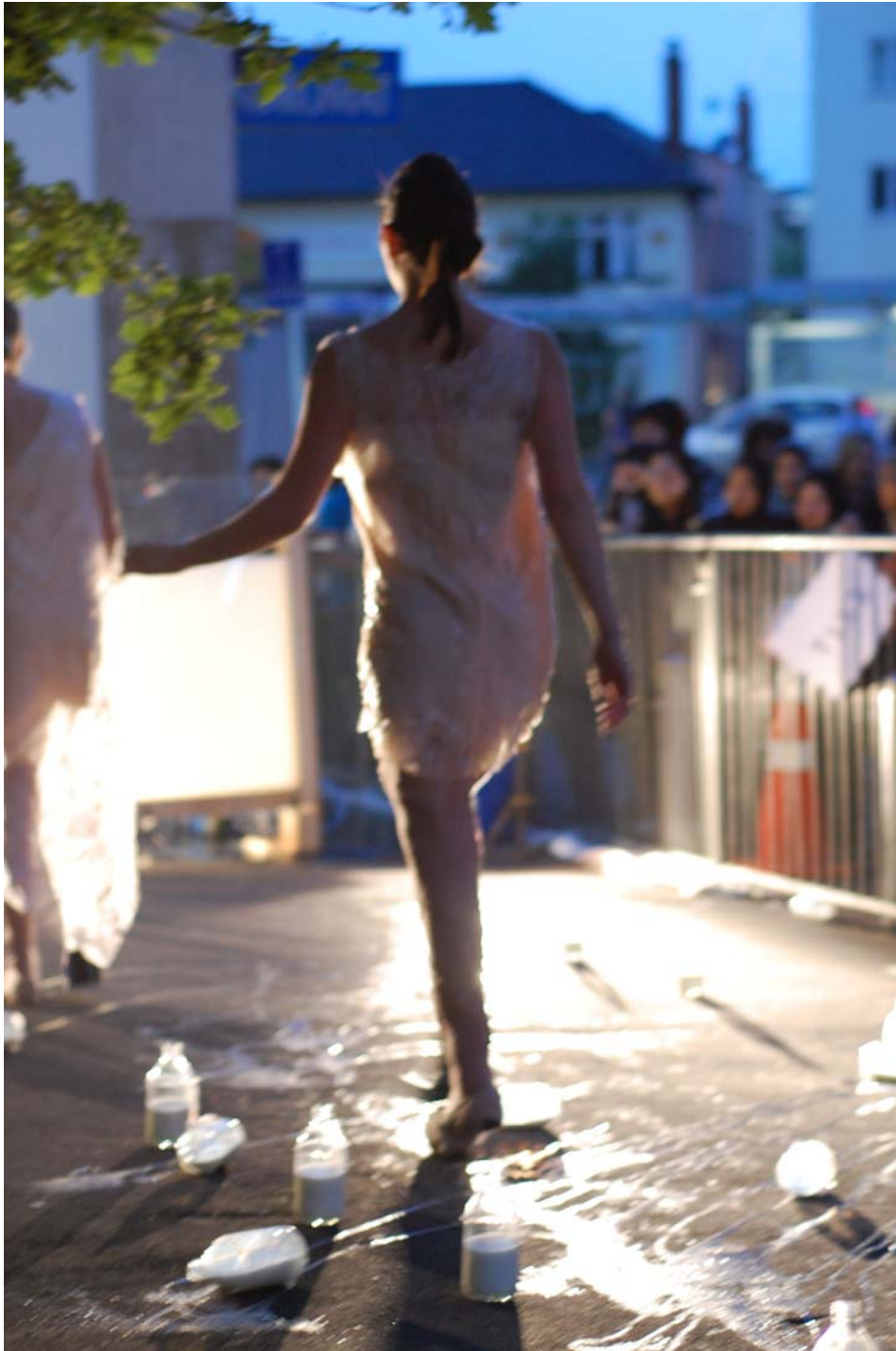


Figure 23. Model walking in milky fluid with a heel-less shoe.



Figure 24. The virtual Catwalk disintegrates further into a milky morass.



Figure 25. Close up of milk, legs and dress texture.



Figure 26. Close up of movement of model limping in milky morass.



Figure 27. Models displaying chaos in their order.



Figure 28. Models leave the virtual Catwalk.



Figure 29. Models return to the disintegrated Catwalk.



Figure 30. The final scene of the disrupted catwalk.

Images:

Figure 35. p.8

Aimee Mullins artificial limbs including McQueen show carved boots: from Google images.

http://www.google.co.nz/imgres?imgurl=http://s3.hubimg.com/u/3654838_f520.jpg&imgrefurl=http://hubpages.com/hub/Are-Breast-Implants-Considered-Prosthetics-Like-Artificial-Limbs-Also&usq=__ofdN7qFZCaDzDB7WHakWX4QvnbQ=&h=390&w=520&sz=55&hl=en&start=39&sig2=STQvNbl5COh2HV9a8Fyefq&zoom=1&tbnid=bB_h0oNwBegKVM:&tbnh=160&tbnw=209&ei=2GnITZG3MozSuwPS17TsBQ&prev=/search%3Fq%3Daimee%2Bmullins%2Bboots%2Baalexander%2Bmcqueen%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DG%26rlz%3D1C1CHMR_enNZ343NZ344%26biw%3D1024%26bih%3D677%26tbm%3Disch0,11050,1105&itbs=1&iact=hc&vpx=724&vpy=318&dur=2884&hovh=194&hovw=259&tx=200&ty=125&page=3&ndsp=12&ved=1t:429,r:7,s:39&biw=1024&bih=677

Figure 36. p.9

Alexander McQueen show: from Google images.

http://www.google.co.nz/imgres?imgurl=http://www.dangerousminds.net/images/uploads/alexandermcqueen211111111111Paris_cover_thumb.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.dangerousminds.net/comments/alexander_mcqueens_spring_2010_shoe_collection/&usq=__747HjI0VbOmnMktWUHxhIJemdVI=&h=373&w=465&sz=59&hl=en&start=13&sig2=1le61XSLpHPs8vFymFYTyw&zoom=1&tbnid=YN40LVF4c1531M:&tbnh=103&tbnw=128&ei=6GvITdGiJo2ougO35oyGBQ&prev=/search%3Fq%3Dalexander%2Bmcqueen%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DG%26rlz%3D1C1CHMR_enNZ343NZ344%26biw%3D1024%26bih%3D677%26tbm%3Disch&chk=sbg&itbs=1

Figure 37. p.10

Site drawing: AUT Mount St., Auckland. Annie Tatton 2010.

Figure 38. p.11

Site drawing: AUT Spatial Design building Carpark. Annie Tatton 2010.

Figure 39. p.12

AUT catwalk site outside Spatial Design building. Annie Tatton 2010.

Figure 40. p.14

Alice dress with mucus covering: experiments in studio practice. Annie Tatton, 2007.

Figure 41. p.16

Alice Dress stiffened with Polyurethane: experiments in materiality. Annie Tatton 2008.

Figure 42. p.17

Studio work in progress. Annie Tatton 2008.

Figure 43. p.20

Panty hose on hooks: studio work in progress. Annie Tatton 2009.

Figure 44. p. 22

AUT Spatial Design building Carpark: Catwalk site. Annie Tatton 2010.

Figure 45. p. 24

AUT site with winter tree and surrounding buildings. Annie Tatton 2010.

Figure 46. p. 25

Sound recording the dishwasher. Annie Tatton 2010.

Figure 13. p.26

Aimee Mullins with prosthetic legs in Matthew Barney's Cremaster Cycle. From Google images.
<http://www.google.co.nz/imgres?imgurl=http://norwegiancatwalk.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/aimee-mullins-matthew-barney.jpg%3Fw%3D700&imgrefurl=http://co>

Figure 14. p.27
Alexander McQueen Fashion Show. From Google images.
http://www.google.co.nz/imgres?imgurl=http://www.dangerousminds.net/images/uploads/alexandermcqueen2111111111111111Paris_cover_thumb.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.dangerousminds.net/comments/alexander_mcqueens_spring_2010_shoe_collection/&usq=747HjI0VbOmnMktWUHxhJemdVI=&h=373&w=465&sz=59&hl=en&start=13&sig2=1Ie61XSLpHPs8vFymFYTyw&zoom=1&tbnid=YN40LVF4c1531M:&tbnh=103&tbnw=128&ei=6GvITdGiJo2ougO35oyGBQ&prev=/search%3Fq%3Dalexander%2Bmcqueen%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DG%26rlz%3D1C1CHMR_enN343NZ344%26biw%3D1024%26bih%3D677%26tbn%3Dsch&chk=sbg&itbs=1

Figure 47. p.28
Model wearing pantyhose with polystyrene balls: studio work in progress. Annie Tatton 2010.

Figure 48. p.29
Shoe with bandage and cut off heel. Annie Tatton 2010.

Figure 49. p.30
Two lips of corset pants. Annie Tatton 2009.

Figure 50. p.31
AUT Catwalk site with glass bottles: work in progress. Annie Tatton 2010.

Figure 51. p.32
Skin toned dresses and pantyhose: Studio work in progress. Annie Tatton 2010.

Figure 52. p.33
Gabriel in Skin toned dress: Studio work in progress. Annie Tatton 2010.

Figure 53. p.36
Porte Cochere exhibition: Legs and pantyhose with crutches. Annie Tatton 2009.

Figure 54. p.36
Porte Cochere exhibition: Chairs and pantyhose. Annie Tatton 2009.

Figure 55. p.38
Mock up of backstage dressing room fashion show: Studio work in progress. Annie Tatton 201

Figure 24. p.39
Model of proposed Catwalk jetty/platform. Annie Tatton 2010.

Figure 56. p. 41
AUT Catwalk site with milk bottles: Work in progress. Annie Tatton 2010.

Figure 57. p.41
AUT Catwalk slope with spilt milk bottle: Work in progress. Annie Tatton 2010.

Figure 58. p.42
Catwalk site with milk trail: Experiments. Annie Tatton 2010.

Figure 59. p. 43
Vaseline and Perspex slide: Experiments. Annie Tatton 2010.

Figure 60. p.44

Matthew Barney: Plastic molding of bodies. Photo Annie Tatton from In Vogue, 2006. Angeletti, N. & Oliva, A. In Vogue: The illustrated history of the world's most famous fashion magazine. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc.

Figure 30. p.45

Mathew Barney: The Cremaster cycle. From Google images

http://www.google.co.nz/imgres?imgurl=http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_J8sM4dhSJEk/SXoAAeP8p9I/AAAAAAAAADdo/ISh_SnGDPp4/s400/Barney_drawing_restraint_vaseline.jpg&imgrefurl=http://halfamobiusstrip.blogspot.com/2009_01_01_archive.html&usq=__xjGc9a_9KRJ2ZIJdQUtd9JuvS9w=&h=300&w=400&sz=19&hl=en&start=161&sig2=N5aAY5qXP3wI1L9YrKf7DQ&zoom=1&tbnid=cKHoliLXiMUzJM:&tbnh=153&tbnw=213&ei=WajuTfiHApDzrQfV1NXIBQ&prev=/search%3Fq%3Ddrawing%2Brestraint%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DX%26rlz%3D1C1CHMR_enNZ343NZ344%26biw%3D1024%26bih%3D677%26tbnid%3Disch&itbs=1&iact=hc&vpx=370&vpy=120&dur=531&hovh=194&hovw=259&tx=93&ty=106&page=12&ndsp=12&ved=1t:429,r:1,s:161&biw=1024&bih=677

Figure 61. p. 46

Wax coated fabric with burnt edges: Studio work in progress. Annie Tatton.

Figure 62. p. 47

Wax coated fabric: Studio work in progress. Annie Tatton 2010.

Figure 63. p. 48

Studio work in progress: Jacket stiffened with wax application. Annie Tatton 2010.

Figure 64. p. 49

Maria at Catwalk site with jacket. Annie Tatton 2010.