



## Designer delectables; exploring the design practice of haute couture and haute cuisine

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores design practice across two domains: haute couture (fashion), and haute cuisine (food). A case study approach was taken using the voice of practitioners as the focus through in-depth qualitative interviews. The cross-domain approach revealed similarities in design practice through four design themes: visualization, 'conversations' with materials, co-creation and 'pushing boundaries'. The data also revealed innovations within the four themes that could apply to other design domains, for example visualization (haute couture) and co-creation (haute cuisine). The practitioners also provided valuable and nuanced insights into their design practice – 'You have to live something to do it'. These insights from practitioners and their practice reveal how the two domains hold similarities in design practice and provide a deeper understanding of design processes, and designerly thinking, from which creativity and innovation can emerge.

The media has created stereotypes of chefs and couturiers. Haute cuisine chefs are presented as creative, yet combustible personalities (epitomized by the likes of Gordon Ramsay and Marco Pierre White). Couturiers have been portrayed as reclusive, eccentric, and eclectic. The late Karl Lagerfeld's dress sensibilities, his obsession with his cat, Choupette, and her luxury lifestyle illustrate the point. The late Gianni Versace's luxurious and ostentatious lifestyle has added to that rhetoric, and similarly, Alexander McQueen's seasonal shows took fashion to a new level.

While the stereotypes provide convenient ways for us to understand creative personalities in these fields, other haute cuisine chefs and couturiers simply get on with what they do best: designing fine food and fashion, without fanfare. Many of them, and their design creations, sit far from the food and fashion capitals of Europe, the Americas, or Scandinavia. In recognition of this global diversity, this study explores Aotearoa New Zealand, as a case study of a country not widely recognized for either its haute cuisine or haute couture, but as a place where design innovation might escape the norms of the established 'old world'. The study is located within Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland and explores how an haute cuisine chef (Geoff Scott) and an haute couturier (Adrienne Winkelmann) bring together constructs of food and fashion within considerations of design in Aotearoa New Zealand. Through this

approach, the study seeks to place both haute cuisiniers (chefs) and haute couturiers as arbiters of aspirant taste congruent to Bourdieu's (1984) constructs of class and distinction.

The narrative begins with a brief exploration of the historical influences of France within food and fashion and then provides an overview of their early beginnings in Aotearoa New Zealand. From those discussions the two study participants are introduced – haute couturier Adrienne Winkelmann and haute cuisine chef Geoff Scott – and their designerly processes are detailed. Similarities and differences are explored in the way that each designer creates their work, and through discussion, conclusions are drawn regarding the practice and process of design and the concept of designerly thinking (Cross 1982).

The rise of haute couture and cuisine did not occur by accident. It occurred by design in France. During the reign of Louis XIV (1643–1715), artisans in the kitchen and design cutting rooms of Paris changed France's image into one of style, sophistication, and elegance. The emphasis on style at the French court along with seasonal change prompted new collections: 'the styles of, say the winter of 1678 absolutely had to be different from those of the winter of 1677' (de Jean 2005, 38). Soon, a new word to the French and global lexicons, derived from the Latin *consuere* 'to sew together' the word *couturier* became common. In this way France staked its claim as the progenitor of style, sophistication, and taste

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(Mendes and Rees-Roberts 2015).

French cuisine mirrored the development of French fashion. French food became equally renowned for its taste, style, and sophistication. The publication of *Le cuisinier français* (Williams 2013, 48) by La Varenne in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was the genesis of haute cuisine. Like fashion, this promoted another top-down model of aspirant food desire. After the publication of La Varenne's book, French haute cuisine displaced the cuisine of countries, particularly Italy, and in doing so established France as the epicenter of culinary design and practice (Williams 2013).

Compared to France, Aotearoa New Zealand, colonized by the British in the 1840s (Neill 2018), is a young country. Before European arrivals, Māori (Aotearoa New Zealand's first people) culture included trade and exchange; however, with colonization came more extended commerce (Hunter 2007). Food and fashion played early roles in the colonized nation's commercial infrastructure. For many female settlers, Aotearoa New Zealand offered the opportunity to break free from the class and labor restraints that permeated England. Brookes (2016) claims that 'women began their own businesses or assisted their husbands breaking in the land'. Like settler men, settler women were innovative by necessity. Aotearoa New Zealand's 'tyranny of distance' (Blainey 1966) ensured that a can-do, innovative spirit became a pan-gendered settler trait. Reflecting that, settler women turned empty boxes into 'dressing tables, washstands, ottomans, and "lounges"' (couches; Brookes 2016).

Fashion and design provided further opportunities. 'Millinery, toy and grocery shops' were often owned and operated by settler women (Brookes 2016). Additionally, 'dressmakers were in high demand; indeed, sewing was second, in terms of women's employment, only to domestic service' (Brookes 2016). Those skills and opportunities created Aotearoa New Zealand's early fashion industry. In settler Aotearoa New Zealand, 'customers could get feathers cleaned, dyed, curled, and dressed in the French style in all the fashionable shades (including black)' (Brookes 2016). Brookes (2016) findings challenge Swarbrick's (*Te Ara, The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, s. v. 'creative life', <https://teara.govt.nz/en/creative-life/page-3>) opinion that:

once the words 'New Zealand' and 'fashion' were rarely seen in the same sentence. Half a world away from the world's fashion capitals, New Zealanders were always a season behind that latest trends, and the rigors of climate and occupation often made comfort more important than style.

Food, in Aotearoa New Zealand's early settler culture, reflected the tastes of home mediated by what was locally available to eat. Māori supplied settler newcomers 'with trade, from flax fiber to potatoes, fish and fruit' (Brookes 2016). Food, its sale, trade and exchange between Māori and early settlers represented as much a medium of communication as it did nutrition. With the country's increasing infrastructure, commercial base and the founding of main centers and cities, a vibrant food culture soon emerged. As Rowland (2010) observed in her history of dining and restaurants in Aotearoa New Zealand, by the 1880s–1890s, cuisine trends in Wellington and Dunedin were only about three or four months behind that of New York City – a time lag equal to the travel times of the day. Indeed, Aotearoa New Zealand at that time enjoyed 'a "Golden Age" of glittering hotels and lavish restaurants where service, food and décor were not limited so much by cost, or even taste, but by imagination and ostentation' (Rowland 2010). Rowland (2010) provides compelling evidence that, since the 1880s, New Zealand's restaurant scene has always been vibrant and cutting edge.

## 1. Literature and theory

While much has been written on the impact of place, décor, and design, and how they affect customer perceptions of service and product anticipation and enjoyment in hospitality and tourism industries (Bitner 1992; Foxall and Greenley 1999; Heide et al. 2007; Harkison et al., 2018; Lockwood and Pyun 2020; Phillips 2004), literature exploring the commonality and differences in approaches to design and design

thinking in experience industries has been lacking (Kleinsmann et al., 2017; Hemmington 2007; Bødker and Browning 2013; Petermans et al., 2013). Supporting the case for inter-domain thinking, Hall (2020) suggests, 'a temporal model of knowledge production and exchange across domains' and proposes a conceptual model of inter-domain collaboration that might address some of the problems of design thinking in the 'Anthropocene'.

The lack of inter-domain thinking in service and experience design is surprising given that service design has been a developing and important area of study in recent years (Fokkinga and Desmet 2013; Hassenzähl et al., 2013; Karana et al., 2015; Corsten and Prick 2020; Sun 2020; Park-Lee 2020), and given that, 'Service design has the potential to foster the development of superior services experiences, supporting the value co-creating interactions between the service provider and user' (Kunneman and Alves da Motta Filho 2020).

Indeed Suoheimo et al. (2021) suggest a service design approach to 'wicked problems', suggesting that the fundamental nature of service design is in 'co-creation and participatory methods' and that it is 'essential that the holistic view is applied'. Innovations in design thinking that evolve from experience but transcend specific applications are needed in developing approaches to the handling of 'wicked problems' most of which relate to social challenge, change, complex systems, and sustainability.

It has been argued that fashion design is 'uncritical' (Chun 2021) and is under-developed (Nixon and Blakley, 2012; Finn, 2014; Chun 2021), but evolving. As part of this evolution a wide range of research perspectives has been explored including sustainability (Pan et al., 2015; Laitala et al., 2015), design thinking (Lawson 2005), materials (Karana et al., 2015), dressmaking practice (Chun 2021), practitioner research (Finn 2014), wearables (Tomico et al., 2017), computational materials for fashion (Genç et al., 2018), and fashion branding (Arunyanart and Utiswannakul, 2019). Despite this, Finn (2014) argues that research on fashion tends to 'stay on the social and symbolic level' and generally fails to incorporate the actual practice of fashion designers. This is supported by Chun (2021) who observes that despite the fact that fashion design is a practice-based discipline, 'the voice of fashion designers is often absent in empirical studies on design practice' (Chun 2021).

Food design is a relatively new and significant discipline (Lee et al., 2020). This is reflected in the fact that an International Food Design Society was established in 2009, and an International Journal of Food Design was established in 2016 (Zampollo 2016). At its most basic, food design is about food itself, however some definitions also include contexts around food and eating (Zampollo 2016). Vogelzang and Schouwenberg, (2008) provide a useful distinction between food design and eating design, saying that food design is about the 'literal design of food' whereas eating design is the 'practice of designers working on the subject of food' which would include the wider field including science, psychology, nature, culture, and society. Zampollo (2016) goes further identifying the sub-disciplines: Design with Food, Design for Food, Food Space Design, Food Product Design, Design about Food, and Eating Design (Zampollo 2013). From a practitioner perspective, Bordewijk and Schifferstei (2020) identify five overarching themes; perishability, sustainability, safety and nutrition, sensory stimulation, and culture and preparation practice. These themes locate the practice of food design firmly within the domain of professional chefs who will have familiarity and considerable experience with all five themes (Christensen-Yule et al., 2013).

As discussed, design thinking across domains is 'lacking' (Hall 2020), and the 'voice of practitioners' is often silent (Chun 2021). These gaps in design research provide an opportunity for innovation in design thinking from the ground up and across domains. This article parallels the creative processes of food design and fashion design by looking at practitioners - cuisiniers and couturiers – as a case study of a cross-domain approach. The design focus is on haute couture and haute cuisine, drawing on the old 17<sup>th</sup> century English saying 'put on your best bib and tucker' – 'bib' being linen worn over the chest to keep clothes clean while eating, and 'tucker' being fancy lace worn around the neck

on special occasions; but ‘tucker’ also meaning food in New Zealand slang (Badcock, 2017). The metaphor ‘best bib and tucker’ is used to align food and fashion as part of the comparison of the creative processes involved in creating haute bib-and-tucker experiences through haute cuisine and haute couture.

The case study approach to exploring experienced expert designers is not unusual (Crilly 2019). As Roy (1993) states, ‘Case studies of creative designers and innovators can reveal much useful understanding and insight’. In particular, he notes that such an approach can explore the product development process, the role of creative thinking and the problems faced by designers. In a literature review of case study research in design Crilly (2019) suggests that more of ‘such studies are necessary’ to enable connections and contrasts to be made and to promote methodological diversity within research.

Some researchers have focused on the design of specific products such as Crilly and Moroşanu Firth (2019) who used the case study approach to explore the design of three ‘novel’ products: a hand saw, an electrical plug, and a bicycle wheel. Others have explored the designers themselves including Cross and Clayburn Cross (1996) who researched Gordon Murray, the racing car designer, Grigg (2020) who studied the practice of the graphic designer David Lancashire, and Roy, (1993) who interviewed product designers James Dyson, and Mark Sanders. In addition, Bresciani (2019) looked at the design process, specifically design visualisations, through a small sample of design experts and researchers.

Building on this line of thinking and the case study approach, Cross (1982) notes that there has been ‘a number’ of observational studies of how designers work and that these studies tend to support the view that there is a ‘distinct designerly form of activity’. He quotes the studies of Lawson (1979, 1980), whose experiments with architecture and science students suggested that whilst scientists problem-solve by analysis, designers tend to problem-solve by synthesis. Cross (1982) suggests that this is because design problems are ‘ill-defined or ill-structured’, or ‘wicked’ (Rittel and Webber 1973), and as such there are no correct solutions; as Gregory states, design is constructive (1966). Cross (1982) develops this further by suggesting that design is constructive, normative, and creative.

In developing the concept of ‘designerly ways of knowing’, Cross, (1982) suggests that design has its own distinct ‘things to know, ways of knowing them, and ways of finding out about them.’ It is within this context that this study explores designerly forms of activity in haute couture and haute cuisine, and in doing so seeks to contribute to designerly ways of knowing and thinking.

## 2. Research approach

To understand how Winkelmann and Scott approached their fashion and food design work, the focus is on ‘what they did’ and ‘how they did it’. This approach aligns with what Button (2000) calls ethnomethodology and which Lloyd (2019) characterises as looking at the ‘particular practices of how particular things are achieved’.

The participants were interviewed using a range of structured, semi-structured and unstructured questions. Each interview lasted approximately 1–1.5 hours and was audio recorded. The interview recordings were transcribed, and a copy of their transcription provided to Winkelmann and Scott. This was an important step, because providing participants with a copy of their transcribed interview enabled them to add to, delete from and expand upon the comments they had already made. That process also reinforced the research relationship with them and allowed the researchers to ask additional questions and to clarify anything that was unclear. It was from the participants’ amended transcripts that the data was located.

The transcripts were analysed by reading and re-reading them and noting points that stood out within each reading. That provided initial coding which in turn promoted theme identification. Those processes reflected the principles of Vaismoradi et al. (2016); Vaismoradi et al.

(2013) thematic analysis. It revealed five key themes, distilled from 15 sub-themes. Initially, the five themes were categorised as ‘wonder,’ ‘change,’ ‘others,’ ‘combination,’ and ‘completion.’ However, given the depth of data provided by our participants, those categorisations failed to capture what our participants ‘did’ and ‘how they did it’ in convincing ways. Refining that doubt promoted putting the thematically analysed data through NVIVO’s word frequency function. That revealed two things. Firstly, it validated the use of thematic analysis and its distillation of the initial themes. Secondly, NVIVO refined our initial theming to the words of our participants. That in turn, reinforced the choice of qualitative description as base methodology because in Sandelowski’s (2000) words, qualitative description provides a ‘comprehensive summary of events [expressed] in the everyday terms of those events.’ Additionally, using NVIVO to refine thematic analysis not only provided a ‘method of choice when straight descriptions of phenomena are desired’ (Sandelowski, 2000), but also highlighted ‘a vehicle for the voices of those experiencing the phenomena of interest’ (Bradshaw et al., 2017) to be the drivers of research and its findings. Table 1 details the process, of refinement and how NVIVO consolidated thematic analysis for each participant input with examples. This process facilitated the research’s findings and discussion.

## 3. The participants: Adrienne Winkelmann and Geoff Scott

Adrienne Winkelmann qualified in design and business studies at the Auckland Institute of Technology (Auckland University of Technology). In beginning her career in couture over thirty years ago, Winkelmann entered the workforce as a cutter for a high production men’s shirt company. There, she soon realised that ‘mass production was not for me’. As she recounted: ‘cutting one shirt was the same 600 shirts later, but the experience did give me some inkling into streamlining production and cost effectiveness’. Her incompatibility with mass production prompted her to open her own bespoke couturier. Trading as Adrienne Winkelmann, she attracted a distinguished clientele and has developed, albeit in Aotearoa New Zealand, a *maison* in the French couturier style. As well as local clients, Winkelmann dresses several of the world’s political power brokers, including Condoleezza Rice (US Secretary of State under President George W. Bush) and Helen Clark (Former Prime Minister of Aotearoa New Zealand). She prides herself on being an independent spirit, creating unique garments that reflect and advance her distinctive and recognizable style: power dressing with an emphasis on the female form. Her clients wear bespoke high-end fashion that not only reflects their values as consumers, but also the design values of Winkelmann’s *maison* (Barrière and Delabuyère 2011).

Geoff Scott gained his London City and Guilds culinary qualifications from AUT’s School of Hospitality and Tourism. During study and after qualifying, Scott worked in many of Auckland city’s top restaurants. There, he moved from *partie* to *partie* (‘*partie*’ is a section of a kitchen where specific tasks are undertaken. Parties emerged within Escoffier’s revision of classical French cuisine) gaining increasing skills and knowledge as he progressed. Like many young New Zealanders, Scott decided to round out his knowledge by working in the United Kingdom and then other parts of Europe. In the United Kingdom, he worked his way through several top kitchens including the Roux brothers Waterside Inn and Le Gavroche restaurants. Crowning his overseas experience was his time at Alain Ducasse’s L’Hotel de Paris, Louis XV, Monaco restaurant. For Scott, Ducasse epitomized fine dining at Michelin Star level. That was augmented by Ducasse’s attitudes toward food, specifically how chefs could think and feel about cuisine. As he recalled: ‘Ducasse influenced me greatly. He is still with me now, all these years later. His visuality with food and his great love and respect for produce have had the most influence on my cooking style’.

## 4. Findings

In analyzing the data four common design themes emerged. This

**Table 1**  
Process of analysis: Integrating thematic analysis and NVIVO Functionality.

<p>Reading, multiple re-reading of participant verified interview transcriptions.</p>	<p><b>Initial Coding: WONDER: NVIVO Replacement VISUALISATION</b> Winkelmann: Example: "I wonder how visual the design impacts the fabric?" NVIVO OCCURRENCE of Visualisation and variation word use 18. Scott: Example: "I wonder about taste, and how customers visually perceive a plate of food?" NVIVO OCCURRENCE of Visualisation and variation word use 22.</p>
<p>Coding, Theming, Identification of 5 themes distilled from 15 sub themes.</p>	<p><b>Initial Coding: CHANGE: NVIVO Replacement 'CONVERSATIONS' WITH MATERIALS'</b> Winkelmann: Example: "I'm not concerned about language, am I changing a design or innovating?" NVIVO OCCURRENCE of Innovation and variation word use 14. Scott: Example: "My point of difference in food is about innovation, creating change and a point of difference." NVIVO OCCURRENCE of Innovation and variation word use 16.</p>
<p>Consideration of analysis lack.</p>	<p><b>Initial Coding: OTHERS: NVIVO Replacement CO-CREATION</b> Winkelmann: Example: "Others are part of my co creative process, I value those inputs", NVIVO OCCURRENCE of co-creation and variation word use 20. Scott: Example: "While an idea is mine the opinion of others advances the dish via co-creation."</p>
<p>Themed interviews processed in NVIVO word frequency function considering 'wonder,' 'change,' 'others,' 'combination,' and 'completion.'</p>	<p><b>Initial Coding: COMBINATION: NVIVO Replacement CO-CREATION</b> Winkelmann: Example: "Design is a combination, it's what I create bearing in mind what will sell." NVIVO OCCURRENCE of combination and variation word use 19. Scott: Example: "Food must be considered in combination with what other things a diner enjoys, wine is an obvious example." NVIVO OCCURRENCE of co-creation and variation word use 24.</p>
	<p><b>Initial Coding: COMPLETION: NVIVO Replacement 'Pushing Boundaries'</b> Winkelmann: Example: "Completing a season can be seen as an ongoing evaluation of my line." NVIVO OCCURRENCE of evaluation and variation word use 17. Scott: Example: "When my food is complete, and I think it's finished, it's not. Customers evaluate my food with every bite." NVIVO OCCURRENCE of evaluation and variation word use 15.</p>

Source: Adapted from Vaismoradi et al. (2016); Vaismoradi et al. (2013).

reinforced the initial belief that the two constructs within the 'bib and tucker' metaphor (high-end clothing and high-end food) were to some extent congruent. These results reflected the realization that the design processes both participants described were embodied and enacted in similar ways. To demonstrate this, the findings are presented in the sequence that the participants used to produce their individual creations; visualization, 'conversations' with materials, co-creation, and 'pushing boundaries'.

While this section extends the four design themes gleaned from the participants, it is also important to acknowledge and illuminate the ways that they did not agree with one another. Disagreement appeared early on in our research. To begin, it was not until the researchers actively engaged the participants that they realised that couture and culinary design held commonality. Until a discussion about the shared language between those industries took place, the research participants held little realization of commonality and were sceptical about their participation. For example, the shared language includes words such as velouté which is a velvet smooth sauce, like velvet fabric; mushroom is a fungi, and darning tool; truss is to tie a bird before cooking, and also undergarment; cordon is a ribbon of sauce, and also a fastening braid.

While both participants agreed to take part in the research, demarcating further difference was their reluctant sharing of their design processes. That obstacle was overcome in large part by the relationship built between the researchers and the participants, and the opportunities the researchers provided for the participants to have an on-going voice in the research process. Exemplifying that was the participants ability to review, retract, or add to their narratives. That option assuaged their fears about any commercial sensitivities linked to their products and the

design processes that created them.

Both participants were socio-temporally aware, albeit in different ways. Winkelmann realised the permanence of her work within seasonal/yearly collections. Even though those items 'dated' for Winkelmann they provided a 'library of knowledge and springboard for future design.' For Scott, his food presented on both plate and menu lacked comparative permanence. Unlike the permanence of materiality, Scott's food was enjoyed in an ephemeral moment. Despite that Scott acknowledged that he and his customers, particularly his Wednesday night customers, held 'active food memories' that often evoked 'positive memories of times gone by, enjoyed over meals at my restaurant.'

Another compounding similarity, that potentialized difference, was the character of our participants. Both were outspoken and strong willed. As researchers it was decided that interviewing them separately would not only maximise their opinions, experience, and processes, but in doing so potentialize difference. As this research reveals, our participants narratives held more similarity than difference. Those similarities were best exemplified within the four design themes that Winkelmann and Scott held in common.

#### 4.1. Visualization

For Winkelmann, visualization incorporated a future view of creativity, tempered by retrospection. She relied on her previous experience and her personal experiences; 'I have always lived design ... looking at magazines, people, color, and shape. It is the life I live. You have to live something to do it'. Additionally, fabrics and materials were a potent motivator in terms of texture, feel and color; 'I visualize the fabric or a

theme. The fabric must speak to me. It must be beautiful to handle, with a color intensity that excites me'. From that visualization, Winkelmann initiates her designs with sketches, patterns, and prototypes; 'sketched designs of fabric and shapes, cutting patterns, matching colors, and accessory details, making prototypes of garments [in my imagination]. It's a highly visual process'. Silk fabrics provided an exemplar, 'a 90% silk fabric will drape in a completely different way, to other fabrics and indeed silk material with a lesser silk content. It's about texture, and touch, and my past knowledge of visualizing possibilities.'

Scott began his process of visualization by considering seasonality, visualizing flavours and flavour combinations. He asked himself; 'What does the season mean to me? [Then,] how can I transfer those thoughts into seasonal ideas and gourmet flavor combinations. In that way, I have an idea, visualize it, then work on it'. Consequently, he would put together combinations of food and new food creations like a jigsaw puzzle; 'It's about the little pieces. They combine like a jigsaw puzzle to make the perfect picture of a seasonal menu'. To help him make sense of that puzzle, Scott relied on his senses, and like Winkelmann his relationship and feel for materials and ingredients; 'my senses of, smell, touch, and [ability to] dream'. The way in which Scott visualized New Zealand's indigenous kingfish provides insight. As Scott commented:

it's a texturally fleshed fish, nice and firm, so I visualize that and wonder, what would complement that texture and its stronger taste? Earthy flavours like asparagus, or even truffle are my taste and visualization starting points, counterpointed with something acidic, like lime and mint. I also visit supermarkets [and] suppliers and get them to show me new products. That always gets me excited.'

#### 4.2. 'Conversations' with materials

For both Winkelmann and Scott, innovation proceeds from visualization leading to their development of food or fashion design prototypes. At this stage, Adrienne experienced:

intense periods of concentration. I become totally absorbed in the garment's creation. My innovations follow a process. It starts with me and a fabric or a design and then it widens. But it is very intense, I am taken over by what I am doing.

Within Winkelmann's design innovation a new design 'must have the x-factor'. For her, this was achieved by considering fabric; 'color, vibrancy, drape shape and [or] print' and how [the fabric] 'inspires its design'. She held what she called 'conversations with the fabric'. Her conversations negotiated her perceptions of the fabric's potential and how 'I see the fabric [and] what the fabric will do'. This innovative play with the fabric needed to culminate in not only a 'good design' but also, to reflect the values of her 30 years of couture; a 'strong design'. She used her past designs as iterative templates that were 'revised and made new through my ability to redesign and innovate with exciting new fabrics'. A Winkelmann jacket provides insight. 'My strong design reflects a highly tailored look that's been a constant throughout my career. Recently, that strength has innovated to include stylistically arranged large coloured semi-precious and paste jewels.' Those innovations created a range of 'strongly designed evening wear jackets, that could also stand day wear.'

Scott likened his innovation process to making bread; 'for me each step is a building block on the other. Like bread, miss or shortcut a step and your bread won't reach its potential. It's the same thinking for me in innovating ingredients to create something new'. In using bread metaphorically, Scott revealed how he could turn ordinary ingredients into extraordinary creations. That thinking reflected the culinary influences of Alain Ducasse. Through innovation he was mindful of; 'previous dishes, flavor profiles and culinary knowledge. I think about three or four key products. How are they cut, shaped, and cooked alongside what I have done with them in the past when I create my idea prototype'. In those ways Scott admitted that:

the influence of classical French food, and its interpretation at Michelin star level, provides me a set of guidelines. Like railway tracks they guide me within my quest for culinary innovation at haute cuisine level, even when I'm using local products like kingfish.

#### 4.3. Co-creation

From the imagined prototype, sketch, or active play with fabric or food, the participants co-creation phase bridged the gap from visualized concept to the actualization of a design, using the input from trusted colleagues. For Winkelmann this meant opening herself up to others, particularly the trusted members of her team, her design assistant and pattern cutters. Together, after the initial introduction of the new concept, the team's work strengthened the design. That work began with the resolution of any practical difficulties the new design concept included. Within that process Winkelmann encouraged and facilitated honest staff feedback, which combined with their own skill-based knowledge, moved the design forward.

As she related; 'Much of their input reflects our long-term relationship. They know what I bring with the design and then they contribute a lot to it. In a way, I too know what they will bring'. Clearly both Winkelmann and her staff rely on the years of trust and knowledge built up over many seasonal design portfolios and their design co-creations. Yet, within co-creation, Winkelmann recognized a power dynamic, 'while I know what others can bring to the process, ultimately co-creation ends with me. If I agree with the creative input of others we move ahead. If I don't then, it's my way, or more co-creation.'

Interestingly, Scott followed a similar process albeit within a wider circle of input; 'Of course, my kitchen staff comment. I also ask my front of house staff. They deal directly with my customers. That's important. Sometimes I ask my suppliers, especially if they supply me unique products'. For Scott, co-creation resulted in changes that he readily accepted. He commented:

There is a reworking quite often, and sometimes a dish ends up quite a way from when I first visualized it or its combination of key ingredients. Sometimes, as I look back on things, I wonder if I have not lost a part of myself in co-creation. I counter those thoughts by putting the experience of my customers first, in knowing they enjoy the food they consume at my restaurant.

Thus, for both Scott and Winkelmann, their initial design was co-created within a wider circle of consultation that refined their initial visualizations and innovations. While Scott encouraged a larger group negotiation of his concept, both designers recognized the important ways in which others could refine and add to, an initial visualization/innovation. To make co-creation possible, Winkelmann and Scott suspended their creative egos and placed the new design 'front and foremost'. This enabled co-creation to occur that reinforced their respective teams, brands, and identities as market leaders.

Co-creating their designs with their staff (and others) not only improved the design but helped both designers to develop a team whose shared goal was the success of the business. Reflecting that and how combination impacted progress, Winkelmann commented:

I take on my staff's ideas. They expand and sometimes trim back my design. However, I go back to basics. For me that's about the strength of the design, its fabric and overriding all of that, will it sell? As a designer I need to push the boundaries, that's what my clients want, and that's my job. There is no use having a full collection that no-one will buy. I combine my ideas, my experiences of living design, my travel, buying trips. Inspiration is all around me. I need to combine it into a collection that will sell.

Reflecting that has been Winkelmann's foray into exclusive Italian footwear. While her footwear is exclusive, it has been designed by someone else. Consequently, 'my combinations need to work, and the

range of shoes need to accessorise my couture, not overpower it. I am very considerate about which shoes we choose, and already have ideas, built through co-creation with staff about which footwear might best suit which design [clothes design].'

For Scott, the co-creation step was equally focused. Again, he metaphorically likened it to making bread with each step in the process being pivotal and contingent. He also considered his mentor's voice. What would Alain Ducasse think about him and his team's idea?

This bit is about mixing the bread dough, developing the gluten for a great rise and texture. I consider and talk through all the suggestions I get. Then, I think Alain Ducasse [what would he think?]. My style of food, it's not over complicated, it's about simplicity, getting the most out of the food. You know, at this stage I know it's right when the dish is like putting a coin in a parking machine, it fits, it feels right, it works.

Scott's considerations of combination, reflected his earlier 'train-track' metaphor in as much as Scott reflected that combination was considered 'in light of my classical French culinary training, particularly my time with Ducasse.'

The designers' consultations with others not only refined their initial visualizations and innovations, but within co-creation refined that design into a concept that was simultaneously achievable yet extended the specific design needs of its designer and their established brand. In those ways, and through co-creation, a new design template was created that facilitated later design considerations. Additionally, co-creation helped to build team spirit and opportunities for co-creation.

However, combining the designers' thinking with that of trusted others was not enough in itself. The *haute cuisiniere* and *couturier* needed to evaluate their combinations within wider constructs of existing brand and business reputation. They achieved that in their final evaluation phase: 'pushing boundaries'.

#### 4.4. 'Pushing boundaries'

For Scott and Winkelmann, 'pushing boundaries' incorporated their processes of evaluation and reflection as they considered how the new design of food or *couture* 'sat' within their brand, reputation, past collections, and customer expectations. Scott began by asking himself a simple question: 'Will the dish combination be something that my customers will enjoy?' To tease that out he offered his customers a special experimental menu each Wednesday night:

On Wednesday nights I try out these dishes on paying customers with what I call an Experimental Menu. The Experimental Menu is great. I get to test dishes, get feedback, improve the dishes and their production, plus it's great for regular customers. Many regulars enjoy this night, it's a break from the regular seasonal menu, so it encourages regulars. Their opinions matter most. I am always surprised. Often, I think 'yes we have it right', then a regular will say something profound and I go wow, yes ... that's exactly what this dish needs. And so, the combination changes and we revise. Possibly it's used again next Wednesday ... or it's a menu contender for our next seasonal menu.

Scott's Wednesday night experiments held additional benefit. By asking his regular customers their opinions, he deepened his business relationship with them. In that way, some of Scott's customers became "shareholders" in his menus. From that 'shareholding' perspective they developed their own palates and in doing so their culinary and social capitals. Consequently, through the design of new dishes and guest participation within their creation, Scott engaged in a deeper and more meaningful relationship with many of his regular customers. That relationship 'worked' for Geoff in an interesting way too:

My restaurant is based on repeat customers, I can tell you 'to the menu' when certain regular customers started coming to Vinnies. I

wear that knowledge as a mental badge of pride. My team and I must be doing something right, otherwise I'd have an empty restaurant.

Similarly, Winkelmann considered her brand: Adrienne Winkelmann. She did that by reflecting upon previous designs and past retail and collection successes, along with how her new design creation might fit within her retail sales, brand, and marketing scope. Within a succession of concise statements, Winkelmann reflected upon how she achieved that; 'How does the fabric and design sit together? How does it drape? Is the design a strong design, and again, will it sell?'

She preferred; 'Powerful clean-lined, uncluttered collections that project power, style, and sophistication. They are a natural part of the Adrienne Winkelmann brand'. Winkelmann also tempered that within wider considerations: that a designer needed to push the boundaries of existing thought and design considerations. She added; 'As a designer, I must push the boundaries, my own boundaries, the industry's boundaries, and my customers' boundaries, that's what they expect'. Emphasizing the importance of evaluation, and echoing Scott's considerations, Winkelmann said: 'My customers are vitally important. Many have been with me since day one.'

While all the steps that our designers engaged were important processes in creating a new food or fashion design, evaluation and the notion of 'pushing boundaries' could be considered to be the most important step. Its importance reflected the designers' perceptions of how their new creations 'sat' within existing structures and products. Consequently, evaluation reflected how the designers maintained their brand image, yet also extended it with their desire to 'push the boundaries'. It is within that amalgam that each of the designers created and maintained their own and their customers' distinction.

## 5. Discussion

As Chun (2021) states, 'the voice of fashion designers is often absent in empirical studies on design practice'. The voice of the practitioner has been central to this study, and practitioners are likely sources of the detail in practice that will lead to innovation. The practitioners in this study have provided valuable and nuanced insights into design practice. Winkelmann stated, 'You have to live something to do it', and as Lloyd (2019) notes, 'You make it, and you try it out, in other words. That is the route to thinking like a designer.' Examples of these nuanced perspectives are manifest in the data, for example; 'The fabric must speak to me.' (Winkelmann), 'my senses of, smell, touch, and [ability to] dream' (Scott), 'conversations with the fabric' (Winkelmann), 'I know it's right when the dish is like putting a coin in a parking machine, it fits, it feels right, it works' (Scott). It is these insights from practitioners and their actual practice (Finn 2014) that provides a deeper understanding of the design process, and it is from this depth of understanding that a ground up approach to designerly thinking can evolve.

As discussed earlier, the case study approach to exploring experienced expert designers has been adopted by several researchers (Crilly 2019; Crilly and Moroşanu Firth, 2019; Cross and Clayburn Cross 1996; Grigg 2020; Roy 1993; Bresciani 2019) and it has been noted that such an approach can explore the product development process, the role of creative thinking and the problems faced by designers (Roy 1993). Indeed, it has been suggested from observational studies that there is a 'distinct designerly form of activity' (Cross 1982) which might be characterized as constructive, normative and creative (Gregory 1966; Cross 1982), and that seeks to address ill-defined 'wicked' problems (Rittel and Webber 1973).

It is in the light of this previous research that our findings can be explored. In particular, three of our four themes have been identified by previous research, although they are often described and labelled differently. The three common themes are visualization, co-creation and 'pushing boundaries'.

Visualization was studied specifically by Bresciani (2019) who looked at visualization in the design process through a small sample of

design experts and researchers. She went as far as to suggest that ‘design thinking is predominantly visual’ and that a variety of visualizations from sketches to analytic diagrams can support designers’ work. Crilly (2019) also identified the ‘iterative sketching, model making and testing’ used to develop ideas although he characterized this as ‘ideation’ as opposed to visualization. Roy (1993) referred to a process of ‘visual brainstorming’. For our respondents visualization included sketches, patterns and prototypes (Winkelmann), and recipes (Scott), but also extended further with mental ‘jigsaws’ and a feel for materials and ingredients; ‘my senses of, smell, touch, and [ability to] dream’ (Scott).

This approach to visualization is particularly interesting because it feeds directly into the theme that has not generally been identified in previous research; ‘conversations with materials’. This theme is, in part, about innovation and creativity, which is widely identified in other research studies (for example: Roy 1993; Crilly 2019; Crilly and Moroşanu Firth 2019), however in our research, creativity was driven by ‘conversations’ with materials – fabrics, food ingredients and to some extent tools and machines. The exception in extant literature is Grigg (2020) who examined ‘material literacy’ in graphic design practice; ‘material literacy’ being defined as the idea that designers interpret meanings in materials and their properties. For example, Winkelmann talks about the “color, vibrancy, drape shape and print” and how the fabric ‘inspires its design’. In Grigg’s (2020) study it was found that in both cases practitioners tacitly sought material properties to assist in the deciphering of graphic design problems.

Co-creation appears as a finding in several studies, although it is rarely identified as co-creation, although Björklund et al. (2020) refer to co-creators in their study of designers in design agencies. In many previous studies it is described as collaboration (Roy 1993; Bresciani 2019), or teamwork (Cross and Clayburn Cross 1996) with internal and external partners, and in this study collaboration was a second order theme in the data analysis. We focused on co-creation for this theme because it signifies a deeper approach to design between designers and colleagues and customers where concepts can be ‘strengthened’ or even trimmed back (Winkelmann). As Scott observed, as a result of this co-creating process there is a ‘reworking quite often, and sometimes a dish ends up quite a way from when I first visualized it’.

Our final theme is characterized as ‘Pushing boundaries’; pushing boundaries in the sense that both designers seek to stretch their creations into new and exciting areas, however this theme also includes the need to stay within what might be seen as their ‘brand’ or reputation, and their customer base. This involves the processes of review and evaluation, which most of the previous studies have also identified (Roy 1993; Crilly 2019; Crilly and Moroşanu Firth 2019; Bresciani 2019). Crilly (2019) identified processes that he called ‘implementation and refinement’, and Björklund et al. (2020) refer to building ‘something unheard of’ in the sense of pushing boundaries.

## 6. Conclusion

Fashion design and food design are relatively new areas of design research, and it has been argued that both are underdeveloped and uncritical in their approach (Nixon and Blakley, 2012; Lee et al., 2020; Chun 2021). This study has traced the creative patterns of an haute cuisine chef and an haute couturier in Tamaki Makaurau Auckland, New Zealand within considerations of the metaphor, ‘best bib and tucker’. The findings revealed that although there were some variations of practice, in general the designers followed a similar design process consisting of four key sequential themes; visualization, ‘conversations’ with materials, co-creation, and ‘pushing boundaries’. These themes align the creative processes of the two participants and help to elevate the design thinking of both the haute cuisine creative process used by chefs as well as the process associated with haute couturiers. That similarity is reinforced by the history of both domains within their shared French origin; however, what has been emphasized here is their

contemporary connectedness in terms of design and designerly thinking.

The four themes identified in this study build on and extend current thinking. While the substantive content of all four themes has been discussed in previous research, our nuanced perspective provides new insights on design thinking. This could be a result of our choice of respondents, both of whom are in what might be characterized as artistic and aesthetic fields of design, compared with most previous research which has investigated product, industrial and architectural design where the primary output is functional products. For both of our designers, the ‘feel’ for materials and ingredients is central to the process of visualization and the use of unusual techniques such as the mental jigsaw is particularly interesting. The central role of materials in the design process extends into our second theme ‘conversations’ with materials – a theme that is rarely discussed in previous studies. This is an aspect of design that could be researched further in terms of the role of materials, including tools, in the design process. Co-creation and ‘pushing boundaries’ have both been explored in other studies, usually in the form of collaboration and teamwork, and review and evaluation. That said, our themes reveal slightly different approaches which could also be interrogated further.

The cross-domain approach, where data and themes have been drawn together, has revealed a design process that should be considered in other product/service/experience domains. It has revealed approaches and techniques within the four-step design process that could be innovations in other domains, for example visualization as in haute couture could be developed further in haute cuisine, as could co-creation with consumers as in haute cuisine which could be applied to haute couture; especially given Winkelmann’s concern to design a ‘collection that will sell’. This supports the case for inter-domain thinking towards a ‘temporal model of knowledge production and exchange across domains’ as suggested by Hall (2020). However, as attractive as generalization might be, it is also important to retain the nuance and detail within domains as a source of creativity and innovation.

This case study has explored approaches that have the potential to progress both design domains, however, the limitations of this study (small sample, geographical location, cultural context, limited design domains), provide opportunities for further research that builds on the current study. Further research is required, particularly research that extends the findings of this study both qualitatively and quantitatively. In addition, modeling of the design process and design practice within and across domains would facilitate critical debate (Tessier, 2022). Studies located in different geographical and cultural contexts would also extend understanding of alternative approaches and philosophies of design. It is possible that this designerly thinking approach could be a way forward in addressing the ‘wicked problems’ of the design world (Suoheimo et al., 2021).

As discussed previously, Cross (1982) explored the concept of ‘designerly ways of knowing’, suggesting that design has its own distinct ‘things to know, ways of knowing them, and ways of finding out about them.’ It is within this context that this study explored designerly forms of activity in haute couture and haute cuisine, and in doing so seeks to contribute to designerly ways of knowing and thinking. Cross (1982) noted further that studies tend to support the view that there is a ‘distinct designerly form of activity’. Lawson (1979; 1980) suggested that designers tend to problem-solve by synthesis, as opposed to scientific analysis. Our research tends to support this view where designers synthesise concepts through visualization, particularly through creativity with materials, and through collaboration (co-creation) with diverse groups. This is also consistent with the view that design is constructive, normative and creative (Cross 1982; Gregory 1966) through the interplay between makers and materials.

In this study, the connection was not found in France, the original home of haute cuisine and haute couture, but within the new-world cuisine and couture of Aotearoa New Zealand. It is suggested that this contemporary association and New Zealand’s geographical distance permits an innovative new view around our four themes that highlights

the commonalities that exist between these complementary domains, where the saying, ‘put on your best bib and tucker, we’re going out somewhere nice for dinner’ is still a common part of vernacular language.

## Implication

The implications for gastronomy include the fact that our paper aligns two constructs that are often taken for granted. The parallel analysis of haute cuisine and haute couture illuminates their similarities and differences and provides opportunities for innovation and support for design practice in gastronomy. This paper provides a starting point for further exploration of design practice and design ways of thinking in gastronomy.

## Declaration of competing interest

We state that there are no conflicts of interest in our work. All participants willingly participated. Ethics consent was applied for and approved through university process.

## Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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