

Resurgence

Sue Walker 2008

This exegesis is submitted to Auckland University of Technology in partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Art and Design.

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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 written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements.

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Abstract

Resurgence

The purpose and underlying motivation for this project was to examine the procedure of garment construction methods, by specifically choosing to abandon traditional rules and standards that are associated with mass production. I chose to explore domestic hand-craft made by women in New Zealand in their domestic situation, focusing on hand-stitched techniques from the past reflecting a nostalgic value which potentially contributed to the garment's construction process. The project sought to utilize the re-using of materials by incorporating previously made hand-craft; and looked at the remaking of second-hand garments by means of deconstruction¹ and reconstruction. Traditional hand-craft, in this context, refers to the use of craft forms not governed by principles of efficiency, mass production or technology, allowing the garments to contain unique 'one of a kind' hand-made qualities. My studio practice specifically focused on exploring the relationship between hand-craft and garment construction, by researching their application and integration into the garment's structure, along with disrupting the orderly traditional production process. I was not focusing on the finished garment's design. The project provided an opportunity to refocus my attention on the hand-made, as I perceived that the skills required to produce these were being extinguished by modern lifestyles. Exploration promoted new discoveries by exposing the construction process and revealing unpredicted combinations. The project explored these ideas, resulting in a range of women's garments that revealed, as part of their construction, hand-work which offered a modern variation of nostalgia. This project comprised of 80% practical work and will be accompanied by an exegesis with a value of 20%.

¹ In terms of this study deconstruction is identified as the working against traditional fashion methods. It encompasses recycling, reassembling, remaking, and demolishing the established rules.

Introduction

This project developed from my teaching role as a garment construction tutor, a discipline that contains technical methods and rules. The research encouraged challenges and thought processes associated with the garment's construction as well as looking at discarding rules normally applied to the operations of the garment's construction. Constructing garments has been my practice for the past thirty years and, as a tutor within the fashion industry, I saw the need to research ideas that could promote new ideas within the garment's structure. From my personal experience it appears as if fashion is constantly being faced with challenges and change and, although traditional skills are beneficial to the garment construction process, there is opportunity to introduce subversive elements.

My project explored ways of examining and deconstructing the entrenched conventions; it changed the rules to encourage individual and original ideas relating to stitch and the construction process. I required some freedom to research these new ideas, so I decided to remove the customer from the equation. As a result, the finished garments were engaged with the research topic, and will finally be exhibited for display purposes only on tailor's models, as opposed to being worn by live models.

During the initial stages of the research I explored creative options that applied to stitch and the garment construction process, and I questioned how I could apply this stitching. The question being, was the applied stitch superfluous or essential; surface or embedded; purposeless or functional? In relating this research back to the garment, my practice supported the idea of using the stitch as an essential element of the garment; in this way stitch can be both functional (in that it holds the garment together) and at the same time retain a decorative position.

As my project developed I explored the idea of introducing women's domestic hand-craft into the garment's construction. The addition of women's domestic hand-craft encouraged me to apply hand-stitch and to experiment with the remaking of second-hand garments. In remaking second-hand garments the limited resources of the existing garment challenged the construction process of the new garment, forcing the application of non-traditional methods. Incorporating women's hand-craft as a component of the garment placed the hand-craft in a public space and removed it from its original context, the domestic setting within the home. Hand-craft introduced new innovative ideas into the garment's construction process and my experiments encouraged the use of random and haphazard stitching, creating juxtaposition alongside the neat and precise stitching of the formerly made hand-craft, allowing the garments to contain and demonstrate subversive elements.

During the progression of these thoughts, and after further researching women's domestic hand-craft, I decided that all the garments would be made from used clothing and used resources, and would include a piece of previously made hand-craft. My applied stitching was not at all uniform or precise; I wanted the stitching to freely work its way through the garment's construction, expressing itself in an unruly manner, and breaking down the traditional rules of each stitch being the same length. Practicing in this way forced me to think more imaginatively about how to produce new ideas within the garment construction process. The remade garments' silhouettes were restricted by the limited pieces and size and shapes of the unpicked pieces of fabric that had been salvaged from the used garment. Although this imposed limits on the style of the remade garment, the stitching was free of restrictions as it wandered its way through the garment's structure. While experimenting with different types of hand-craft, I was asking myself what could they offer the construction process when applied to a garment?

When I re-make garments from used discarded garments and hand-craft it renders each re-made garment incapable of reproduction; new, old and exclusive. Experimenting with re-making broke down my reticence to explore new ideas associated with the garment construction process, and garments and hand-craft were transformed from one function to another. Each garment I have experimented with now contains layers of meaning that speak to the experiences of a diverse audience.

This exegesis provides an overview of critical and practice based ideas and theoretical concepts that informed the final work presented for this thesis. The presentation of a variety of garments critically examined the notion of introducing subversive elements such as frayed edges, uneven stitching, distortion, using the wrong side of fabrics and the remaking of second hand garments and hand-craft into the new garments' construction. Experiments examined and demolished the entrenched conventions, undoing the rules and reforming the methods of the garment construction process.

The exegesis is structured as follows:

- Chapter One: contains an outline of theoretical discussion seen as relevant to my project.
- Chapter Two: is a discussion of the research methodology used in my practice.
- Chapter Three: contains my project's development and process.

Chapter 1

1. *Literature Review*

The theory that supports this project draws on historical studies, feminist theory and fashion theory.

1.1 *The History of Domestic Hand-Craft in New Zealand*

In terms of hand-craft history my project was informed by reading “The Women of New Zealand” written by Helen Simpson (1940) and “Thrift to Fantasy” by Rosemary McLeod (2000).

Simpson’s research on hand-craft history in early New Zealand describes the lives of women in New Zealand and their position in society during the years 1846-1940. Her research talked about how women implemented their resourcefulness, with one woman, “*setting the fashion by making her boy a three piece suit from three-bushel sacks*” (Simpson, 1940, p.91). Clothing and fabrics were scarce for the early settlers in the late 1800s; the re-making of items was a skill that was readily employed. She discussed how after a hard day’s domestic work, women would have the chore of patching and darning, to extend the life of clothes that wore out rapidly, due to the necessity of excessive manual labour. Simpson discussed how women learnt these skills from joining associations that were connected to religion and charity work.

The Onehunga Ladies Benevolent Society 1863 and the Young Women’s Christian Association 1878 were among the first, giving women the knowledge and domestic skills that they needed to make ends meet. These were not the only ways of learning, skills were handed down by families and sewing was taught in schools. Hand-craft skills were learned and women’s

and children's craft were sold to raise money for charity. Simpson (1940, p.133) states "*Every spare moment of time was occupied in the making of articles, some of them beautiful, and some useful, but many which were saleable surely only on the score of charity*". This quote particularly interested me, as in my practice I use uneven free stitching that allows itself to make its own statement. I am not concerned with the outcome being beautiful or useful, but unique and individual.

I want my practice to entice the current generation to participate by removing complicated traditional standards; just as the woman who made the suit from the sacks inspired my thoughts on re-making second-hand resources.

McLeod's book "*Thrift to Fantasy*" allowed me to appreciate the reasons why New Zealand women made hand-craft, particularly between the years 1930 to 1950. Their hand-work recorded their lives and values. Women stayed at home and ran households that depended on thrift, resourcefulness and domestic skills. They did not decide to make history themselves, but their hand-work did it for them, revealing the social and personal history of the maker. While reading McLeod's book I reminisced about my own upbringing and how my spare time was used making a variety of hand-crafted items; this enabled me to approach McLeod's book with a sense of nostalgic familiarity. My childhood home housed so many of the items visible in her personal collection; oven cloths made from sacking and edged with re-cycled fabric scraps, crochet doilies, embroidered table-cloths and clothes re-made from second hand clothing.

McLeod's hand-craft collection consisted of similar items to those I have gathered from the opportunity shops and sales (refer to figs. 1.1:1, 1.1:2, 1.1:3, 1.1:4, 1.1:5, 1.1:6.), some of which I have chosen to incorporate into my garments, giving them an extended life. McLeod observes that domestic hand-crafts are traditionally undervalued by their makers. This led me to consider the existence of hand-crafts within the garment. My ideas were supported by a recent article written by Schaer (2006) where she stated, "*Customers are looking for something different, hand-made and quirky*" (Schaer, 2006, p.4). However, when McLeod talks about hand-craft radiating a sense of value, originality and resourcefulness, my ideas were reinforced as I thought about incorporating them into the garment's construction.



Fig. 1.1:1 Feb. 2007. Sue Walker.
Yesterdays treasures handcraft-sale Palmerston
North, collecting resources.



Fig. 1.1:2 Feb. 2007. Sue Walker.
Yesterdays treasures handcraft-sale Palmerston
North, collecting resources.



Fig 1.1:3 Feb. 2007. Sue Walker.
Yesterdays treasures handcraft-sale Palmerston
North, collecting resources.



Fig. 1.1:4 Feb. 2007. Sue Walker.
Yesterdays treasures handcraft-sale Palmerston
North, collecting resources. Sign from behind
sewing machine in previous image.



Fig. 1.1:5 Feb. 2007. Sue Walker.
Yesterdays treasures handcraft-sale Palmerston
North, collecting resources.



Fig. 1.1:6 Feb. 2007. Sue Walker.
Yesterdays treasures handcraft-sale Palmerston
North, collecting resources.



Fig. 1.1:7 Feb. 2007. Sue Walker.
Yesterdays treasures handcraft-sale Palmerston
North, collecting resources.



Fig. 1.1.8 Feb. 2007. Sue Walker.
Yesterdays treasures handcraft-sale Palmerston
North, collecting resources.

1.2 Women and Hand-Craft

Rozsika Parker explained in *“The Subversive Stitch”* the associations connecting historical feminine notions to embroidery, when it was expected that all women of all social classes would practice some form of hand-crafted needle-work. She described embroidery equally as a place of the creation of the feminine that additionally catered for creativity, and enjoyment for those who enjoyed the art, and as confrontation against such creations for those who rebelled against it. Parker (1984) stated, *“The manner in which embroidery signifies both self-containment and submission is the key to understanding women’s relationship to the art”* (p. 11). Parker (1984) also expressed that, *“Paradoxically, while embroidery was employed to inculcate femininity in women, it also enabled them to negotiate the constraints of femininity”* (p. 11). Women stitched subversive elements into their work, depicting femininity not as frailty but as strength, and they managed to make meanings of their own in the very medium that was intended to restrain their power. I was inspired by these subversive elements and used my practice to experiment with allowing my garments’ construction of seams and darts to stand out and be seen rather than hidden away. I wanted my practice to rebel against the established rules associated with hand-crafted stitch and traditional garment construction. Stitching garments in this rebellious manner can change the concept associated with femininity, characterized by Parker (1984) as, *“mindless, decorative and delicate; like icing on a cake, good to look at, adding taste and status, but devoid of any significant content”* (p.6). Parker’s writing has facilitated my current practice to research the idea of negotiating the restraints associated with exploring the concepts of rupturing, exposing and misalignment associated with stitch and the garments’ construction process.

1.3 *Fashion Theory*

While not speaking directly about fashion, Michael Carter's *Putting a Face on Things* (1997) influenced a reframing of my project. This reading assisted with the identification of an addition such as ornamentation, decoration or, in my case, stitch. I gained an understanding of ergon, the addition that is built-in and essential to the work actually holding something together; and the parergon, the supplement, the add-on that was applied to something (like a motif). My practice work explored the options of incorporating stitched hand-craft as an intrinsic or ergon element within the garment, the stitch being necessary as it holds the garment together. Michael Carter (1997) quotes from Derrida, "*the ergon that is the work in its essence*" (Derrida in Carter, 1997, p.119).

Diana Crane, a Professor of Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, has written extensively about fashion identity and social change. Crane's (1999) article promoted my understanding of perspectives relating to avant-garde and postmodernism.

Crane described avant-garde postmodernism as breaking the rules and using inconsistent, out of place mixes of concept that are not always instantaneously received by the public. She explains postmodernist design as engaging with altering the normal purpose given to particular objects. Garments can accommodate objects that contain meanings when used out of their original context. For example, using a tablecloth to make a dress, or remaking one garment into another, changes the normal meanings ascribed to the garment and to the original object.

Crane emphasized four dominant themes attached to fashion in Postmodernist times: masculinity-femininity, luxury-pauperism, futurity-tradition, and concealment-nudity. She discussed how futurity and tradition often used emphasis from past history, or it could be a journey from past to present or old to new. In regard to this theme Crane discussed how the basis of traditional skills can be used to explore new ideas of application. A garment that has had a history fits with the futurity and tradition theme when it starts another life as a new garment.

Crane (1999, p.10) states, *“Futurity-tradition was one of the most prevalent themes: a postmodern blurring of time periods, often with the emphasis on nostalgia for the past, the passage from old to new, past to present, ethnic to contemporary”*.

Crane’s writing informed my project from her explanation of postmodernism. It encouraged me to experiment with the artistic form that involved courageous decisions like mixing unusual elements and erasing traditional regulations.

My project was also informed by the research of Gill (1998), a tutor of design studies for the University of Western Sydney. She described and categorized postmodernist fashion practice as “Fashion Deconstruction”. Gill described the deconstruction look as *“unfinished,” “coming apart,” “recycled,” “transparent” or “grunge”* (Gill 1998, p.26). Gill discussed how designers like Margiela, Rei Kawakubo, Lagerfeld, Demeulemeester and Dries Van Noten focus more on the constructed mechanics of the garment’s structure, *“bringing the secrets to the surface”* (Gill, 1998, p.27). Gill’s article talked about the recognition of the garment’s “structure” as strength when the traditional rules are challenged and a conflicting viewpoint is obtained. She highlighted the opportunity to break new ground associated with the labour of the forming or deforming of the garment’s structure.

1.4 *Hand-Craft as Fashion*

In my search for contextual and background material, I discovered Mathews, an Australian designer who embraces handcraft skills from the past. Her aim is to keep old craft skills alive and apply them to garments. Mathews' work is uncontrolled and not limited or restricted by templates. She states, "*I don't want it to be exacting, I like to let people put their little bit of handwriting into something*" (Mathews in Ham, 2004, p.2). Mathews used a team of elderly church workers and allowed them the freedom to apply stitching to the garment that was not always precise and orderly. Her approach employed domestic hand-work made by the ordinary person.

Mathews' work fosters uninhibited qualities and expresses freedom that diminishes the constraints associated with domestic hand-craft. Her garments contain nostalgic value because they include representation of time-consuming techniques that are being diminished due to current trends.

European designer Martin Margiela occupies a unique position in the contemporary fashion world. His preference for dismantling garments is symbolized by the deconstruction of used and recycled clothes and objects (refer to fig1.1:4). Evans explains how, "*Two dresses are cut up and spliced to form one asymmetrical dress*" (Evans, 1998, p.75). When Margiela fused the two separate dresses together to make one, his work engaged with the mixing of two second-hand garments and supported the challenge of working with limited fabric.

In remaking garments Margiela turns the usually hidden seams to the outside of the garment. Gill's (1998) article states, "*Margiela sells linings extracted from recovered "vintage" dresses, giving these linings a chance of a new-old life "on the outside," that is, as lining-dresses in their own right*" (Gill, 1998, p.27). Learning about Margiela's methodology gave me the confidence to break down some of my entrenched rules. I was trying to experience the freedom that is apparent in his work. Margiela's work raises notions of investigating the unconventional. He changes the rules to make something fresh and modern; oversized fastenings and large stitches are applied and wield a look of the unfinished, deconstructing the aura of the designer garment, and at the same time, encouraging innovation.

Rovine (2005) describes how Paris based fashion designer Kouyate's work, "*celebrates edges, literally as well as figuratively. His work incorporates both a cutting edge of fashion and the frayed edges of the past*" (Rovine, 2005, p.215). Kouyate's work engages with recycled clothing.

He concentrates on applying stitches to the exterior, focusing on the garment's structure by displaying the garment's mechanics with exposed seams and loose threads. His remade garments combine mixed notions that preserve histories of



Fig 1.1:4. July 2007. Martin Margiela Jacket constructed from vintage sports bags. Retrieved from <http://www.maisonmartinmargiela.com>

the past, in addition to meeting the demands of current fashion. When he creates he resists the notion of haute couture; he uses garments constructed from used clothing that has been discarded. Kouyate remakes second hand clothing that is salvaged from some former life or context of use; he constantly repositions recycled garments; t-shirts into dresses, trousers into waistcoats.

Kouyate's practice has motivated my experimentation to respond to and explore further the composition of the garment, to investigate the mechanics of the garment's construction, and to transform second-hand garments using techniques that recognize no boundaries.

Chapter 2

2. *Research Methods*

This chapter outlines and explains the research methods used within this project. The project is practice based research and consists of an exegesis and a body of practical work.

The primary research method that I have used in this project is creative research. Creative production was undertaken by applying creative research methods to the act of constructing garments; garments contained characteristics that were achieved by exploring and experimenting, and the focus was on their structural process.

I was experimenting with breaking down the traditional rules relating to garment construction. I found the creative experimentation an interactive experience that allowed me to discover new methods of construction that were not bound by the traditional rules that had entrenched my thinking over the past thirty years.

As I experimented in a creative manner, darts and seams formed on the outside of the garment and raw edges and seams were randomly stitched and left to fray, making a statement of their own. Darts were unevenly placed; their usual role was fulfilled in the placing of the small pieces of fabric that I used from the second-hand garment, which contributed line and shape into the new garments structure.

While I worked with the garments, I made decisions that allowed my project to develop and strengthen; not all experiments were successful, but most of them led me to other ideas and research. Practicing in this way engaged me in a reflective conversation with my practice, allowing me to ask questions about my practice concerning my direction.

This research project engages with and utilizes four methods. They are:

1. Heuristics
2. Reflective Practice
3. Visual Diary
4. Moulaging



Fig.2.1:1. June 2007. Sue Walker. Exposed darts.

2.1 *Heuristics*

Heuristics in the creative field involves using knowledge gained through experience and is more about discovery than actual proof. Kleining and Witt (2001) state, “*In much creative work the ability to question the potential idea in many ways, using intuition and empathetic insight is very helpful*” (Kleining & Witt, 2001, p.2-3).

The heuristic approach allowed me to explore the research question using a variety of techniques in the construction of the garments; darts are asymmetrical and have been exposed (refer to fig.2.1:1) and pleats have formed pockets (refer to fig.2.1:2). This methodology provided me with the freedom to experiment with ideas that would not have been a traditional option.



Fig.2.1:2.Aug. 2007. Sue Walker. Pleats form pockets.

The utilization of heuristics in this creative domain requires drawing on knowledge gained by research and experience and is more about exploring than real evidence, leaving me open to the discovery of new concepts throughout the project. For example: when exploring the structure of the garments I discovered that darts positioned themselves in unusual places and I was stimulated by how the darts performed and shaped the garment's composition as they challenged the traditional garment construction methods. The majority of darts formed randomly, and their placement manipulated the garment's structure.

Throughout the project, the main focus was on the garment's structure and construction, not the overall design. As the project progressed and changes were made, I encountered new areas of focus particularly around the deconstruction and re-assembling of second-hand garments (refer to fig 2.1:3) and hand-craft, into new garments (refer to fig 2.1:4). This involved positioning the darts, seams, fastenings and some of the original structure into unexpected locations, resulting in unforeseen combinations that literally abandoned some of the traditional garment construction processes.



Fig.2.1:3 June 2007.
Sue Walker. Second-
hand suspender.



Fig.2.1:4 June 2007. Sue Walker. Re-made garment focusing on the structure.

While I was committed to exploring the garment construction process, the heuristic methodology allowed me to focus on the direction of new learning and discovery. This form of research methodology fosters intuition and has no linear structure. It supported my investigation and practice as the garment and I interacted, and I was able to draw on prior knowledge and skills while, at the same time, I was encouraged to create new learning.

Working in this way my explorations and resulting procedures were identified as problem solving without using any pre-existing formula. My ideas and chances of discovery increased when I challenged myself to introduce a variety of previously made hand-crafted pieces into the garment's structure (refer to figs. 2.1:5 and 2.1:6) Operating in this way encouraged my explorations to achieve productive outcomes; they developed out of the ordinary connections within the new garment encouraging my research question to change direction on several occasions. Scrivener (2000) describes how, *"the project's topic of interest and goal may change as the work progresses"* (Scrivener, 2000, p.4). As the project progressed, changes were



Fig.2.1:5 July 2007. Sue Walker.
Introducing previously made hand-craft.

made as a result of questioning and analyzing each stage of my experimentation.



Fig.2.1:6 June 2007. Sue Walker.
Introducing previously made hand-craft.



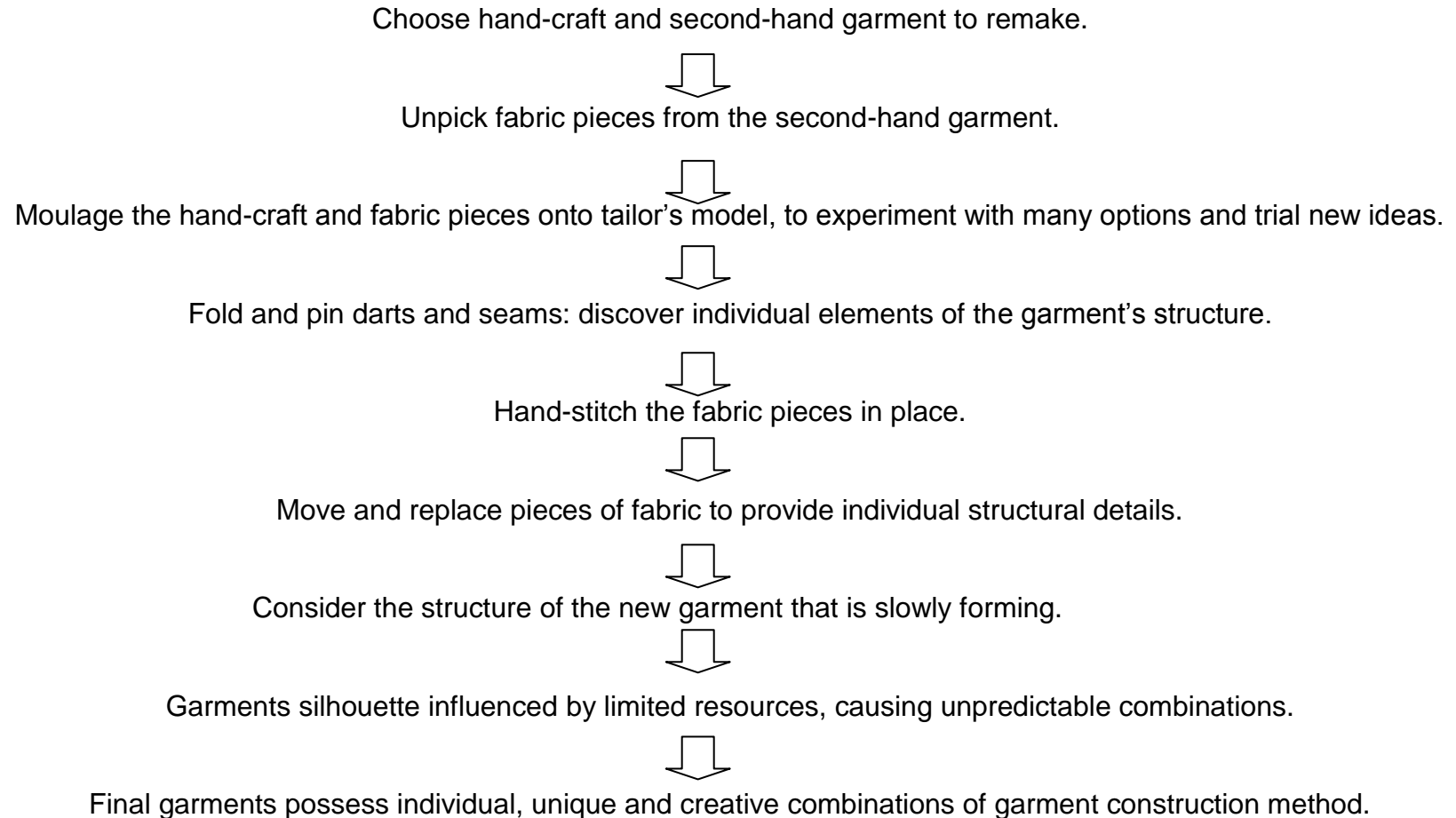
Fig.2.1:7 Aug. 2006. Sue Walker. Garment
signifies domesticity.

My focus changed to one of producing garments that contained ideas which signified women's domesticity, creativity and resourcefulness (refer to figs. 2.1:7 and 2.1:8). For example, this progression and re-evaluation led to the integration of ready made hand-craft used for inspiration, bringing about a combination of incompatible themes. While stitching garments together in a random non-conformist manner, my applied hand-work was unrestrained as it sat alongside the neat and orderly hand-work of the previous maker. This way of working permitted combinations of stitching and promoted development and intensification within the project. This heuristic approach allowed me to develop and discover connections and associations within the garment. Heuristics encouraged the freedom I needed to explore the garment in a manner that was new and out of the ordinary. This methodology enabled me to work in a manner that extended my learning by applying creative thinking that was driven by exploration and the lack of restrictions.



Fig.2.1:8. Sept. 2006. Sue Walker.
Garment signifies domesticity.

Fig: 2.1:9 Creative Research



2.2 *Reflective Practice*

Through reflective practice I found a methodology that encouraged me to stop, reflect, and consider how the garments were forming (refer to fig. 2.2:1) and then make changes (refer to fig.2.2:2). This led me to realize that my process of research was not flowing in one direction. I experienced a two way conversation as I concentrated on the garment's structure forming around the tailor's model. My practice followed a cyclical approach; first action, then reflection, and then another action. Schön (1983), describes how,

“The practitioner allows himself to reflect on the phenomenon before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behavior. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation” (Schön,1983, p.68).



Fig.2.2:1 Aug. 2007. Sue Walker. Reflect and consider the garments form.



Fig.2.2:2 Aug. 2007. Sue Walker.
Making changes from reflection.

This experimentation changed my original focus when I questioned how I could incorporate new ideas into the garments' structure. On reflection about my experimentation, I concluded that not all the garments produced the outcomes I needed to move the project forward and, as a result, I changed my direction. I asked myself how could I combine hand-craft into the garment's structure and at the same time reinvent traditional techniques? This question prompted me to continue making more garments and led to new reflections.

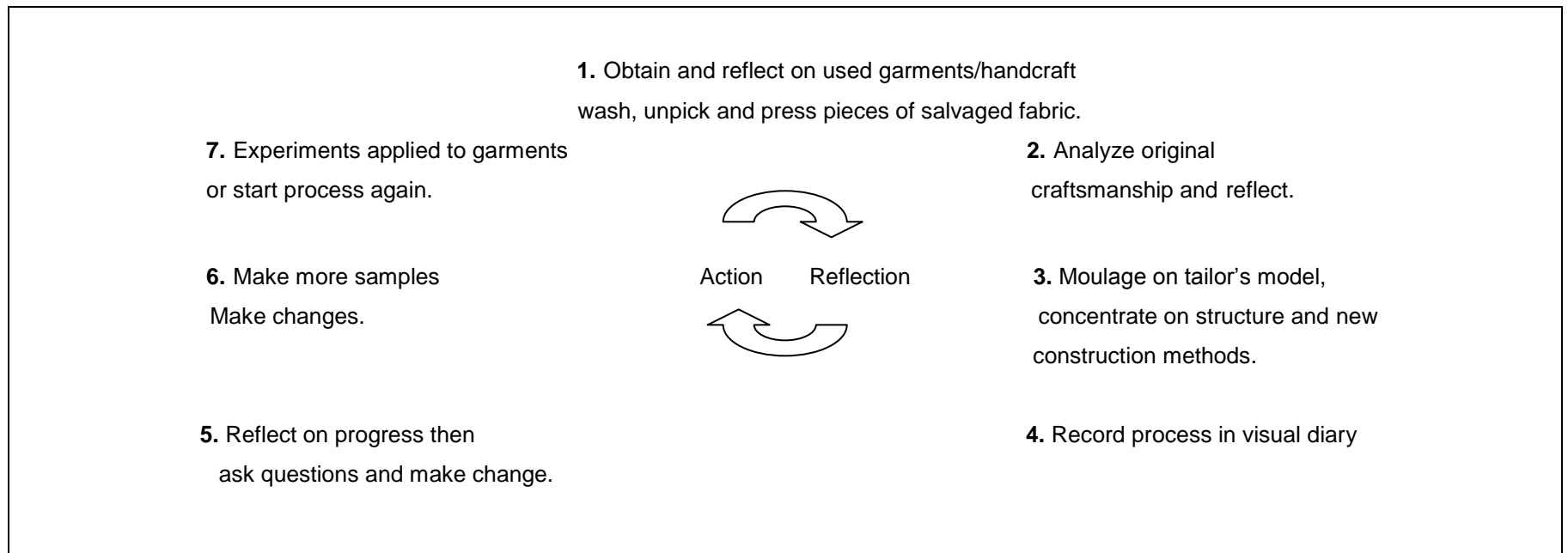
As my research exploration progressed, each new garment created new questions in the form of a reflective conversation. I gathered my learning from these reflective experiments that explored the garment's construction and, in turn, these explorations were investigated further by reading theory and articles that related to my project's topic. When I stopped, contemplated and asked questions of my work (refer to fig 2.2:3), I then made notes and planned new concepts that developed and related to my objectives. I then started the process again and again. As I reframed the project it strengthened, and I continually analysed and reflected upon the development of the garments.



Fig.2.2:3. Aug. 2007. Sue Walker. Questioning the position of the dart and manipulating it to a more innovative position in the side seam.

Reflective practice was a beneficial tool (refer to fig.2.2:4) for critical thinking and aided in positioning the project for making decisions; it supported a change in my ingrained habitual actions and led to further development of my work.

Fig: 2.2:4 Reflective Practice 2006



2.3 Visual Diary

Documenting my work and ideas in my visual diary was a valuable process and an aid to reflective practice and the heuristic approach. This visual diary helped me to keep track of my thoughts and reflections and assisted me in defining my project (refer to fig. 2.3:1). When I looked back through my visual diary I discovered new insights that triggered further exploration in my research. Maintaining the visual diary allowed me to record information relevant to the various stages of the concept development. Newbury added the importance of how *“the role the diary can play as a coherent central record of project ideas, information and activities, and its use as a stimulus for creative thinking”* (Newbury, 2001, p.8).

My diary contained ideas, references to theory, websites, and inspirations, articles, my test samples and photographs and samples of women's domestic hand-craft (refer to fig. 2.3:2). I found the diary supported my understanding as a visual learner and it contained many hidden inspirations I often didn't see the first time. The diary was not

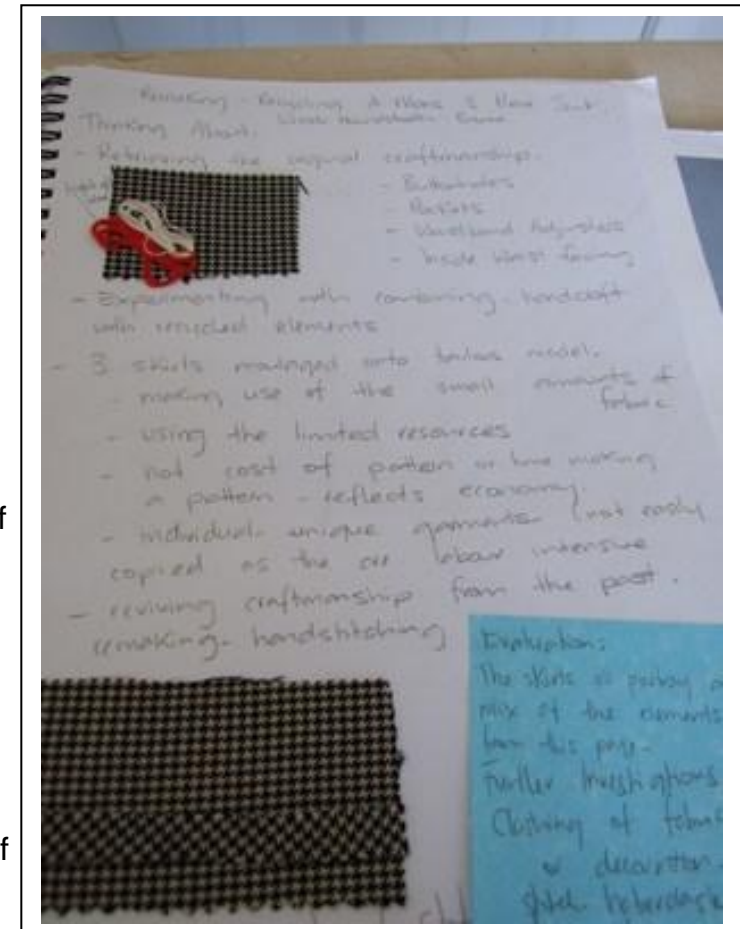


Fig.2.3:1. Nov. 2006. Sue Walker. Tracking thoughts and reflections.

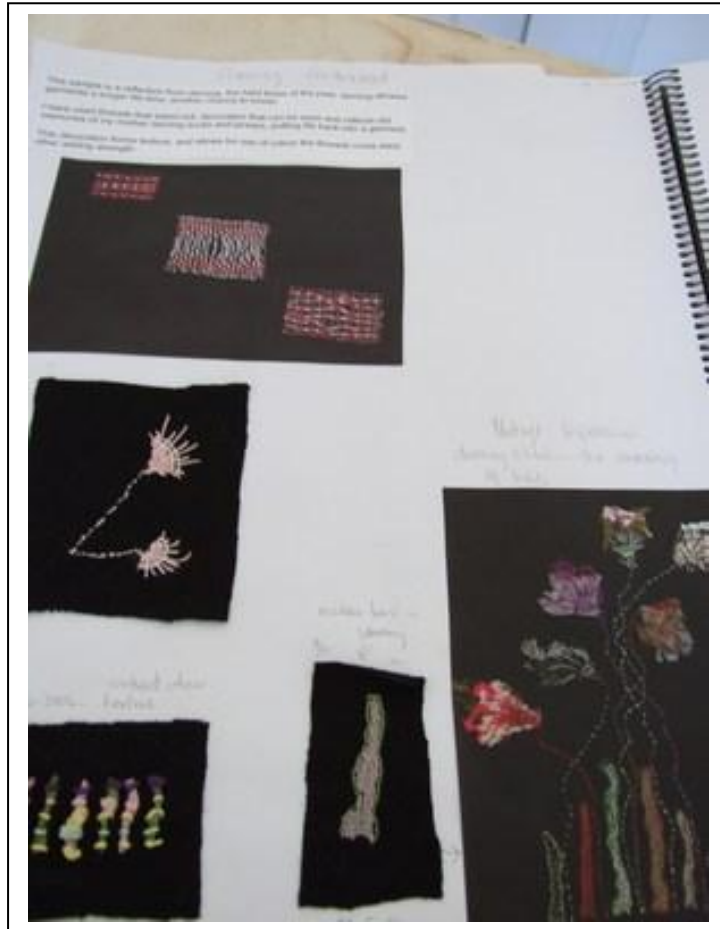


Fig.2.3:2. Aug. 2006. Sue Walker. My test samples in visual diary.



Fig.2.3:3 Nov. 2006. Sue Walker. Recording process in visual diary.

presented in any linear fashion; for example, I attached the objects at the time of collection.

Some of the objects were fastened temporarily, as they could possibly be used for further experiments relating to exploration within the project. Mauries (1996) discusses how Christian Lacroix, couture fashion designer, *“records his research in scrapbooks by way of collages, sketches and notes down all his working processes that can be referred to at a later date for inspiration and clarification”* (Mauries, 1996, p.15). My diary is also used to gather information about designers and artists who inspire me or who work within a similar approach.

I have placed smaller practical samples in my visual diary along with recording the process and garment development (refer to figs.2.3:3 and 2.3:4). I have used many of these samples to further develop and tease out new ways of dealing with the garment’s structural processes. These small stitched samplers helped me further explore new options of construction and ideas development within my practice. They were specifically used as a research tool and for idea



Fig.2.3:4 Nov. 2006. Sue Walker. Recording process in visual diary.

generation without any need to apply or use them within the garments. This analysis and reflection triggered new ideas allowing development and growth to take place within my project.

In my workspace I have several pin boards (refer to figs. 2.3:5 and 2.3:6), that have become an extension to the visual diary, giving me a place to store inspirational pieces of fabric, hand-craft, sewing notions and small hand-stitched experiments. Having these boards helped me interact with my project many times each day, as I was in direct contact with them and they constantly encouraged new ideas. It would be pointless to have these pieces filed away out of sight, as having them visible is an important generator of my ideas in practice. These collected pieces may not be constantly relevant, but they triggered new discovery, ideas and experiments that helped maintain my heuristic approach.



Fig.2.3:5. Sept. 2007.
Sue Walker. Pin boards
in studio.



Fig.2.3:6. Sept. 2007. Sue Walker.
Pin boards in studio.

2.4 *Moulage Experiments*

While exploring the garment's structure I made the decision to experiment with draping, pinning and moving the fabric pieces over the tailor's model as it helped me consider the mechanics and shape of the garment and promoted new ideas (refer to figs. 2.4:1, 2.4:2, 2.4:3 and 2.4:4.). This method of working is termed moulaging². As a garment constructor I found moulaging a useful tool as it allowed me to concentrate on the garment's structural elements and it produced new ideas. I moved the fabric many times before deciding on the best option; I moulaged, left it for a day or two, then returned to reflect on my practice and make decisions. Moulaging is different to the traditional method of constructing a garment from a paper pattern; it allowed me to be more spontaneous and changes could be trialed quickly. In addition, moulaging allowed for the silhouette of the garment to form, and therefore it supported the garment's design abilities.

² Moulaging represents the draping, pinning and molding of fabric pieces over the tailor's model by folding and manipulating the fabric to form the structure and shape of the garment.



Fig. 2.4:1. June 2007. Sue Walker. Moulaging /stitching darts.



Fig.2.4:3. June 2007. Sue Walker.
Moulaging side dart.



Fig. 2.4:2. June 2007. Sue Walker.
Moulaging dress front.



Fig.2.4:4. June 2007. Sue Walker.
Moulaging shape into side.



Fig.2.4:5. June 2007. Sue Walker.
Frayed darts intersect across each other.

It also maintained a reflective process when the options are explored and reflected upon. The practice of moulaging distributed control between me, the garment, and the tailor's model, forming the end result. Operating in this way I was constantly evaluating my practice work. Moulaging allows for the exploration of many options when pinning and re-pinning the fabric pieces to develop a new garment from existing hand-craft and the second-hand garments.

My initial reason for employing moulage was arrived at purely by accident while I was endeavoring to examine strategies related to the garment's structure. While using the moulage technique to mold the fabric over the tailor's model I discovered that details such as seams and darts within the construction formed in unusual positions (refer to figs 2.4:5, 2.4:6, 2.4:7 and 2.4:8). This process supported new concepts in the garment's structure, revealing stitching, darts and seams that would usually be hidden inside the garment. Within my past practice I have been influenced by traditional rules of garment construction, so I found these discoveries innovative and ground breaking, supporting an original inquiry into the process of the mechanics of garment's construction. When reflecting on this I



Fig.2.4:6. June 2007. Sue Walker.
Two large asymmetrical darts.

realized that moulage had allowed my garments to form characteristics and alternatives that made statements through exploration, and tapped into new areas of my creative potential.



Fig.2.4:7. June 2007. Sue Walker. Trialing the use of Suspender clip fastenings.



Fig.2.4:8. June 2007. Sue Walker. Large dart gives shape to the bust.

CHAPTER 3

Traditional garment construction practice applies quite distinct rules to the making of garments, such as; maintaining regular seam allowances, using even symmetrical darts, finishing raw edges, stabilising areas that could stretch, using 'expected' fastenings such as zips, or buttons and buttonholes and positioning the workings of the garment to the inside. My experience as a constructor has formerly abided by these conventions and traditions. In this project, I wanted to disrupt these conventions to uncover a new method of working that would increase my knowledge and creativity associated with garment construction.

Project Development and Process

3.1 Project 1. *Early practice work*

My initial approach to this project was to think about stitch as an example of detail in the construction of garments. As a starting point, I researched subject matter that related to the history of the sewing machine from the 1880s to the 1920s. I was drawn to the embossed decorative images that adorned the bodies of early sewing machines

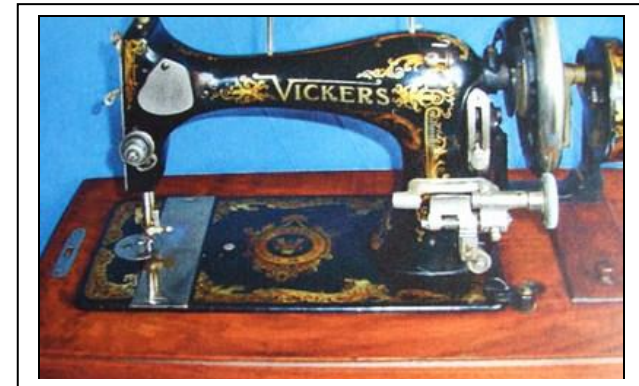


Fig.3.1:1 March 2006. Image of Vickers' sewing machine (1920) with elaborate decoration. Retrieved from, <http://website.lineone.net/~lindave/ther.htm>

(refer to fig. 3.1:1). These images provided a source of inspiration and I developed a range of stitched samples based on these images that tested a variety of fabric and threads and designs.

I experimented with both machine and hand-stitched samples (refer to figs. 3.1:2, 3.1:3, 3.1:4 and 3.1:5) to enable me to evaluate the qualities of both methods. I observed from my experiments that my work in this instance was too controlled and organized. I needed to learn to appraise this work to generate progression and development. When I questioned myself about my project's main objective, I determined that I needed to adhere less to the traditional techniques in order to incorporate new ideas that would support less control and structure so that I could develop work that demonstrated more individual and original qualities.

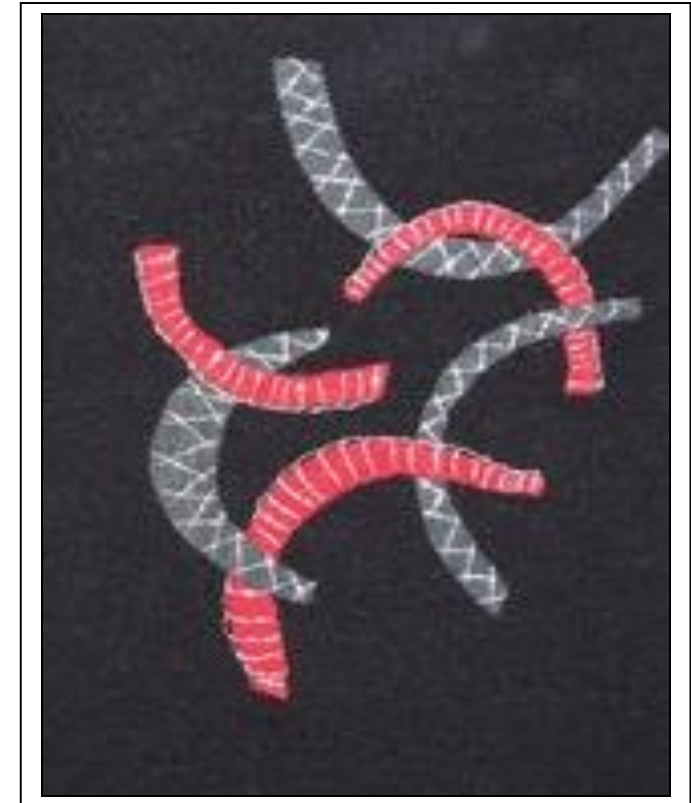


Fig.3.1:2 March 2006.
Sue Walker. Size:
9x12cm.



Fig.3.1:3 March 2006. Sue Walker. Size: 6x9cm.



Fig.3.1:4 March 2006. Sue Walker. Size: 12x12cm.



Fig.3.1:5 March 2006. Sue Walker. Size: 7x8cm.

3.2 Project 2. *Focusing on Stitch Detail*

The evaluation of my work led me to experiment with stitched samples on larger pieces of fabric (refer to figs. 3.2:1, 3.2:2 and 3.2.3) with the idea of incorporating these into a garment. The detail in this new work was less elaborate than the experiments in project one. I focused on stitching only one or two features, as I found the decorative images that adorned the sewing machines complex and over-decorated. This led to sampling that was less structured and I could feel my confidence growing within the work. At this time I was searching all avenues so I explored the idea of adding other textiles to some of the samples. I was trying to establish a combination of ideas that would lead to new experimentation and direction to develop my ideas in relation to making garments.



Fig.3.2:1 April 2006. Sue Walker. Exploring hand-stitch and beads.



Fig.3.2:2 June 2006. Sue Walker.
Exploring textile ink and hand-stitch.

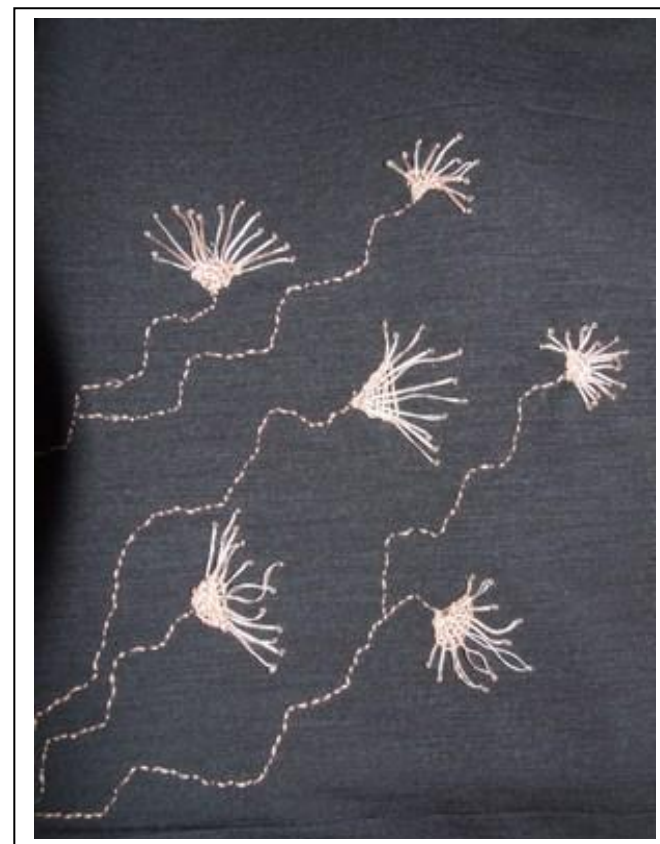


Fig.3.2:3 May 2006 Sue Walker. Exploring
hand-stitch appliqué and beads.

A series of experiments explored the application of threads, buttons, beads, textile ink, doilies³ and small pieces of fabric; I made some of these samples into garments (refer to figs 3.2:4, 3.2:5 and 3.2:6). When evaluating this portion of my practice, I realized that the stitched details were motif-like applications on the surface of the garments and did not develop new learning that supported the building of the garment's construction. I now needed to focus my attention back onto the garment, as these experiments were purely decorative and that was not what I was trying to achieve with the project.



Fig. 3.2:4 July 2006. Sue Walker. Garment 1,

³ A doily is a small ornamental mat made of linen or crochet mainly used to cover a dressing table.



Fig. 3.2:5 July 2006. Sue Walker. Garment 2,



Fig. 3.2:6 July 2006. Sue Walker. Garment 3,

My ongoing research identified articles that related to the traditional applications of women's domestic hand-craft, and I began to come to terms with an issue that I had already recognized in my role as a garment construction tutor. The issue was that domestic hand-craft skills were no longer being taught as a compulsory subject in schools and that these stitching techniques were no longer being utilized within our busy lifestyles. There is the risk that these craft skills will be lost in the near future. Reframing my project, I saw the potential for retrieving some of these techniques and applying them to the garment's structure. My idea was to somehow make use of these skills in a way that would encourage new participation by the current generation, and also destroy the conventions associated with hand-stitching through the process of breaking the rules. I began experimenting with this practice in Project Three.

3.3 Project 3. *Concentrating on the Garment's Structure*

The next series of experiments pursued the idea of re-making used garments. Re-making was one of the skills that had been discussed by Simpson (1940) and used by women within New Zealand during times of hardship and limited resources. I decided to focus attention back onto the garment by trying to incorporate my ideas directly into the garment's construction. At this stage I worked with machine stitching; it was less time consuming and it increased the pace of the exploration process. I worked on a discarded nurse's uniform from the 1970s (refer to fig. 3.3:1). I chose the nurse's uniform because its construction included all the technical standards I have conformed to over the past thirty years, and I had a desire to reinvent them. My experimentation patched the nurse's uniform over the shape of a traditional waist-coat pattern, repositioning the pockets, sleeves, and collar (refer to figs.3.3:2 and 3.3:3).



Fig.3.3:1 Aug. 2006.
Used nurse's uniform.



Fig. 3.3:2 Aug. 2006.
Sue Walker. Front
view version 1.



Fig. 3.3:3 Aug. 2006.
Sue Walker. Back view
version 1.

Although the nurse's uniform was now remade into a waist-coat the constraints of the technical rules were still visible and I was disappointed with the traditional shape of the garment. My work showed restraint with limited freedom.

On reflection, I felt that the problem with constraints was mostly caused by the shape of the garment itself, as the waist-coat did not possess many features that permitted the exploration of new ideas, but what it did do was make me realize that I needed to look at other ways of taking into account the silhouette of the garment.

My role as a tutor within the fashion industry is associated with garment construction - I am not a designer, and I am inspired by the garment's production process. In attempting the same experiment again I made use of the tailor's model and mouldaged the nurse's uniform over the three dimensional form to construct another waist-coat. The shape of the tailor's model now directed the placing of fabric pieces. I found myself intrigued by ideas that were drawn from the mechanics of the garment's construction in this second experiment. The hem and collar were formed asymmetrically with darts positioned in unconventional places, and I experimented with



Fig. 3.3:4 Aug. 2006. Sue Walker. Version 2: front view.

unfinished edges (refer to figs 3.3:4 and 3.3:5). Reflecting on my work I could now see a progression, leading to more original ideas developing within this garment. I decided to continue with mouldaging and experiment with it further in Project Four.



Fig.3.3:5 Aug. 2006. Sue Walker. Version 2: back view.

3.4 Project 4. *Incorporating Hand-Craft into the Practice*

My next experiment explored the idea of combining the remaking of a used garment with previously made hand-craft, and incorporating some hand-stitching. My intention was to relax the tedious rules associated with hand-stitching by applying hand-stitching randomly and unevenly on the remade garment. My used garment was a man's three-piece suit, selected from an opportunity shop (refer to figs. 3.4:1. and 3.4:2). I decided to use this particular suit because I was drawn to it as an example of fine craftsmanship. Key-hole buttonholes, welt pockets, adjuster clips, the decorative inner waist band and the quality wool fabric were characteristics that made this well-worn suit, (at the end of its life) noticeable, and potentially usable, when considering the structure of a new garment.



Fig. 3.4:1 Sept. 2006. Sue Walker. Man's suit jacket.



Fig. 3.4:2 Sept. 2006. Sue Walker. Man's suit trousers.

I unpicked the seams that held the suit together (refer to 3.4:3), retaining the original welt pockets and the key-hole buttonholes. I thought about how I could give these features another life by using them in the production of a new garment. As I moulaged the small pieces of fabric over the tailor's model, I tried to encourage the fabric to form in ways that would provide a non-traditional shape within the structure of the garment, as I was looking for features that I would not normally create in my traditional method of constructing garments (refer to figs. 3.4:4). Moulaging encouraged me to explore many options as I pinned, draped and re-pinned and re-draped until I had a result that I thought highlighted my experiments regarding the shape of the garment's structure. I was working on the lower half of the tailor's model and decided to make one skirt, which then multiplied into three skirts. I was keen to use up all of my resources taken from the suit as I was considering the aspects and the hardships women experienced when times were tough during the domestic years of 1900 to 1950 within New Zealand, and women had limited choice and produced little waste in the making of garments and textile crafts.



Fig 3.4:3 Sept. 2006.
Sue Walker.
Unpicking the suit.



Fig.3.4:4 Oct. 2006. Sue Walker.
Draping and pinning the fabric
pieces over the tailor's model.



Fig. 3.4:5 Oct. 2006. Sue Walker.
Moulaging and reflecting on the
structure and shape of the skirt.

I found that these aspects of resource limitations challenged me to expand my thinking around how I could make the garments achieve my objectives. I used a large portion of the lower half of the jacket to shape one of the skirts (refer to fig. 3.4:8). I then inserted a feminine element into the yoke of the skirt by adding a portion of a previously made crochet table-cloth (refer to figs. 3.4:6 and 3.4:7). This idea challenged the masculinity that was evident in the suit.



Fig 3.4:6 Oct. 2006. Sue Walker. Positioning and cutting the table-cloth to incorporate into the skirt.



Fig 3.4:7 Oct. 2006. Sue Walker. Placing the cut out section of table-cloth onto the tailor's model.



Fig. 3.4:8 Nov. 2006. Sue Walker. Skirt 1, uses the lower section of the man's suit jacket.

Making the second skirt, I discovered that the hem line could be determined by using the original shape of the trouser crutch (refer to fig.3.4:9), which supported the idea of a “one off” individual garment (refer to fig. 3.4:11). The waist-band lining was reversed and applied to the outside of the skirt (refer to fig. 3.4:10), and then I discreetly inserted some old hand-made lace edging underneath it. I was experimenting with finding a new use for the abandoned hand-work within the structure of the garment, and also re-using the quality craftsmanship from the original suit as they added character to the garment’s composition.

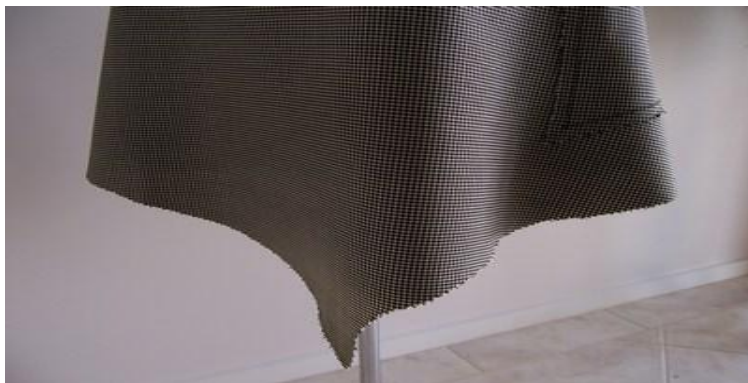


Fig. 3.4:9 Nov. 2006. Sue Walker. Using the trouser crutch shape to produce an asymmetrical hem line.



Fig. 3.4:10 Nov. 2006. Sue Walker. Reversing the waist-band facing to the outside of this new garment.



Fig. 3.4:11 Nov. 2006. Sue Walker. Skirt 2, made from the man's suit trousers.

In the third skirt, the waist coat fronts were re-used as front panels (refer to fig. 3.4:14), positioned now on an angle, and the pockets were repositioned (refer to fig. 3.4:12). The back of this skirt contained sections of the original trousers (refer to fig. 3.4:13), plus sections of the jacket sleeves that were used to extend the skirt's length. The original trouser waist-band was now utilized as an adjustable shoulder strap.



Fig 3.4:12 Nov. 2006. Sue Walker. Repositioning the waist to make pockets useable in skirt.



Fig 3.4:13 Nov. 2006. Sue Walker. Hand-stitched detail on skirt back.



Fig 3.4:14 Nov. 2006. Sue Walker. Skirt 3, made from pieces of the waist-coat, trousers and jacket of the man's suit.

All of the skirts contained a variety of raw edges, and bias strips were used as an experimental seam finish adding detail to the construction process. These bias strips also covered up soiled and worn areas near the pockets (refer to figs. 3.4:16 and 3.4:18). Hand-stitching was applied; some of it intrinsic and some extrinsic to the garments' structures (refer to fig. 3.4:15). I was exploring the idea of using hand-stitching that was uneven in width and length. The stitching rambled its way around the three skirts' structures and contained an individual uniqueness. On evaluation, this experiment allowed me to engage with many aspects of the garment's construction process. Focusing on the garments' structures encouraged me to think about employing the previously made handcraft and my hand-stitching intrinsically into the panels and seams, so these elements were engaging with the structural process of the garment. I continued to explore the inclusion of previously made hand-craft into the garment with Project Five.



Fig. 3.4:15 Nov. 2006.
Sue Walker. Hand-
stitched detail on skirt
pocket.



Fig. 3.4:16 Nov. 2006.
Sue Walker. Raw edged
bias strips used as a
seam finish.



Fig. 3.4:18 Nov. 2006.
Sue Walker. Hand-
stitched detail used to
attach bias strips.



Fig.3.4:17 Nov. 2006. Sue Walker.
Hand- stitching used secure pleats.

3.5 Project 5. *Exposing the Silences of Domestic Hand-Craft*

Furthering the concept of including some previously made hand-craft, I chose to experiment with a cross-stitched linen tablecloth (refer to fig. 3.5:1). My ideas at this time were surrounding issues related to using women's domestic hand-craft as part of a garment. I was eager to remove the hand-craft from the domestic setting where it normally resided. My main thoughts revolved around the recognition the table-cloth would gain as it entered a public space when situated within the garment. I wanted to make a visible statement about re-using women's hand-craft that was constantly being abandoned and had little monetary value. I combined the table-cloth with a second-hand linen dress (refer to fig. 3.5.2), as the table-cloth was too small to make an entire garment. I chose this particular dress for two reasons; firstly, it had structured pleats down the centre front; I wanted to remove them because of their predictable positioning. Secondly, I was drawn to the weft and warp threads of the linen fabric as they crisscrossed each other, and I believed that this element of the fabric had compatibility with the cross-stitching on the table cloth as they both contained the overlapping of threads.



Fig.3.5:1 Feb.2007.
Sue Walker. Cross
stitched table-cloth.

When unpicking the original dress I decided not to remove the centre front pleats as I felt these existing pleats would intensify the new garment's structure; and continually draped the pleats over the tailor's model until they produced attributes that supported the garment's construction. Eventually I decided to use the pleats along the top edge of the waist line, as they produced stability and an asymmetrical line that supported the waistline and produced shape (refer to figs. 3.5:5, 3.5:6, 3.5:7, 3.5:8, 3.5:9). I then went on to position the remaining pieces of fabric and the table-cloth until I had formed a skirt where I allowed the seams to be exposed on the outside of the garment. I joined them together with random hand-stitched cross-stitches (refer to fig. 3.5:3), using a variety of colours that were inspired by threads from the original table-cloth. On reflection, this experiment had employed the hand-stitched cross-stitches intrinsically into the seams of the skirt, and this was a positive outcome as it talked more about the mechanics of the garment. I realized that I needed to explore more innovative possibilities of incorporating previously made hand-craft into the garment, when I noticed that I had positioned the table-cloth in the centre of the skirt (refer to fig. 3.5:4).



Fig.3.5:2 Feb.2007.
Sue Walker. Original
second-hand dress.

This placement could be considered a conventional and expected outcome; exactly what I wanted to avoid. I wanted to be able to focus and explore additional innovative ideas within the garment's structure. Project six needed to position my focus on merging the mechanics and structure of the garment together.



Fig. 3.5:3 Mar. 2007.
Sue Walker. Testing
small cross stitched
sample on seam.



Fig. 3.5:4 Mar. 2007.
Sue Walker. Final re-
made skirt.



Fig. 3.5:5 Mar. 2007. Sue Walker.
Moulaging the skirt silhouette.



Fig. 3.5:6 Mar. 2007. Sue Walker.
Trialing different options.



Fig. 3.5:7 Mar. 2007. Sue Walker.
Incorporating the use of a belt.



Fig. 3.5:8 Mar. 2007. Sue Walker.
Moulaging the skirt's silhouette.



Fig. 3.5:9 Mar. 2007. Sue Walker.
Moulaging the skirt's silhouette.

3.6 Project 6. *Revealing the Mechanics of the Garment*

Thinking more about how I could incorporate domestic hand-craft effectively into the work and, at the same time experiment with the garment's structure, I draped the whole of the table cloth over the tailor's model (refer to figs. 3.6:1 and 3.6:2). I wanted the cloth to dominate the garment; by molding it over the bust, waist, and hips it attained shape. As I worked the table-cloth over the tailor's model, darts formed in the most unusual places (refer to fig.3.6:3). They varied in length, width and shape and, using a variety of hand-stitches, I stitched the darts, seams and edges in place randomly. I was not concerned with achieving a precise uniform stitch and non-conformity was evident in the garment's composition. The positioning of these darts talked about the "one off" individual structure of the garment. I allowed them to sit on the outside of the garment and not be hidden, as they would have been traditionally situated on the inside. An existing tear in the table-cloth was consumed by one of these darts. The raw threads from the tear prompted me to cut the entire edge of the dart; the tear now no longer existed, and it was lost in the frayed edges (refer to fig. 3.6:4).



Fig.3.6:1 Apr. 2007. Sue Walker.
Side view moulaging table-cloth.

In reflecting on my practice I could see new elements that challenged my usual way of making garments, as the frayed edges and exposed darts were random and unevenly placed within the work this garment contained methods of construction that were new to my practice. I contemplated how I could fasten the garment and decided to use suspender clips as a fastening at the bust and waistline (refer to figs 3.6:5 and 3.6:6). I chose the suspender clips because typically they would have been hidden on the inside, being situated on women's under-garments. Traditionally a woman's domestic hand-craft would have resided inside the home, and I was now allowing both of these items a new life on the outside. The success of this garment's creative construction process exposed the workings of the garment; it gave me the courage I needed to confront new methods of construction.



Fig.3.6:2 Apr. 2007. Sue Walker. Back view moulaging table-cloth.



Fig. 3.6:3 Apr. 2007. Sue Walker. Hand-stitching bust dart.



Fig.3.6:4 Apr. 2007. Sue Walker. Incorporating an existing tear into dart.



Fig 3.6:5 Apr. 2007. Sue Walker.
Suspender clips used as fastenings.



Fig. 3.6:6 Apr. 2007. Sue Walker. Side
view showing skirt inserted as a panel.

3.7 Project 7. *A New Life on the Outside*

While exploring the options of working hand-craft into the mechanics of the garment, the next experiment involved using the table-cloth inside out (refer to fig 3.7:1). As I draped the cloth over the tailor's model the floral cross-stitching that dictated the "right side" and the normally displayed side was lost. I was now confronted with uneven stitching that was disorganised, with loose threads hanging in irregular places. The cross-stitched table-cloth now appeared to possess an unstructured element. It supported my ideas about breaking down traditional rules. Because of the size limitations of the table-cloth, I decided to attach another table-cloth to enable the construction of a dress, thus allowing me to experience the joining together of two pieces of hand-craft (refer to fig 3.7:3). The two cloths were joined together under the bust with a seam that resisted traditional direction when it faced upwards; this seam would normally face downwards. The seam also included the hand-stitched darts that flowed through the garment irregularly.



Fig. 3.7:1 May 2007. Sue Walker. Right side of original table-cloth.



Fig. 3.7:2 May 2007. Sue Walker. Moulaging table-cloth on tailor's model.



Fig. 3.7:3 May 2007. Sue Walker. Moulaging darts to form shape.

The side seam shaping in the dress was created by two oversized external darts that had been slashed (refer to fig. 3.7:5). Exploring stitch and colour, I decided to stitch the side darts down by applying large horizontal stitches that merged together to create new details (refer to fig. 3.7:6). In keeping with using limited resources, I cut away the original hand-stitched edging that had finished the outer edges of the cloth and re-used it around the edges of the armholes and neckline to prevent continual fraying (refer to fig. 3.7:4).

This garment contained similar qualities to project six. The success of it was evident in how the stitching and the construction details merged together, to form innovative construction methods. The garment used no facings to finish edges; the edges were finished, and prevented from continual future fraying by reusing the edging from the table-cloth. The darts made a statement on the front and back of the bodice: the darts stood up proud as an unexpected feature, on the right-side of the garment.



Fig. 3.7:4 June 2007. Sue Walker. Table-cloth edging applied around arm-holes.



Fig. 3.7:5 June 2007. Sue Walker. Oversized darts.



Fig. 3.7:6 June 2007. Sue Walker. Hand-stitched horizontal side darts.

3.8 Project 8. *Manipulating Crochet*

In evaluating my work I thought that the inclusion of previously-made hand-craft was allowing me to experience an approach that disrupted my usual way of practice. I was exploring the idea of using hand-craft out of its usual context. By inserting it into the garment it allowed me to challenge and initiate a major shift in my garment construction practice. This led to exploring the idea of incorporating a hand-crafted crochet cloth into a garment. When I draped the crochet cloth over the tailor's model it reacted like knit fabric⁴. In moulaging the crochet, many potential new options became apparent as the crochet embraced the tailor's model (refer to fig.3.8:1). The crochet's composition indicated that the garment would need less structure and, applying prior knowledge, I knew that any stitching would need to flex with the garment since there were no seams, darts or fastenings. I then decided to combine the crochet with a woman's woollen singlet (refer to fig.3.8:2).



Fig.3.8:1 July 2007. Sue Walker. Draping the crochet table-cloth on tailor's model.

⁴ Knit fabric, due to knitted method of construction, has stretch potential. Woven fabric that does not incorporate elastomeric has limited stretch qualities unless cut on the bias grain; if elastomeric is included, it has some stretch capabilities.



Fig. 3.8:2 July 2007. Sue Walker. Combining the singlet and table-cloth on tailor's model.

The singlet, which is normally worn as an under-garment, brought with it the connotation of a secret; it was now beginning a new life on the outside, as was the crocheted hand-craft. I positioned the singlet upside down on the tailor's model to encourage and encounter new experimentation. I turned the hem of the singlet down over the bust to create an uneven angle (refer to fig. 3.8:3). I cut the neckline and armhole area from the singlet, repositioned it on the chest and shoulder region, and decided to cut away the excess fabric in the bodice leaving just enough to finish the edges.

My focus at this point concentrated on the stitched detail that I had applied around the neckline and armhole to hold down raw edges (refer to fig 3.8:5). I then applied the crochet cloth to the singlet and stitched around its curved edges with an irregular chain stitch. On reflection, this stitching produced a severe line that didn't promote integration between the two items, as I wanted them to amalgamate and assimilate into one garment. I decide to rip holes in the crochet's scalloped edging and then re-stitched these holes (refer to fig.3.8:4). This idea aided in the blending of two items, allowing them to become one. At this stage, I softened the turned down edge at the



Fig.3.8:3 Aug. 2007. Sue Walker. Hem of singlet moulded down over bust-line.

bust line by ripping the fabric with a quick unpick⁵. I discovered when evaluating this experiment, I was distressed by the cutting up of such an exquisite piece of handcraft. It was difficult to cut into the tablecloth and my work was inhibited by my emotional response. The recognition of this response actually activated progression and development within my practice, by forcing me to release my predetermined thoughts and allow uncontrolled experiments to emerge.



Fig. 3.8:4 Aug. 2007. Sue Walker. Hand-stitching that combines table-cloth and singlet.

⁵ Quick-unpick, a small hand tool with a sharp point that unpicks stitches.



Fig.3.8:5 Aug. 2007. Sue Walker. Stitched detail on garment.

3.9 Project 9. *Distorted Structure*

My next experimentation led me to confront the difficulties inherent in working with a piece of hand-crafted wool tapestry. I chose to work with this particular piece as it was bulky and would force me to explore ways of reducing this problem within the garment. Problems arose almost immediately when I tried to work the tapestry over the curved tailor's model. I was experiencing a fabric that was difficult to control; it was extremely stiff and wouldn't mold into any shape. I tried to dart the tapestry over the bust, but this only increased the bulk. I then explored slashing and butting the dart. While working on that idea, I thought about the wool content⁶ in the tapestry and applied my previous knowledge. As a result I pinned and steamed the shape over the tailor's model and created enough shape to accommodate the bust (refer to figs.3.9:1 and 3.9:2).



Fig. 3.9:1 Sept. 2007. Sue Walker. Steaming the tapestry to form bust shaping.

⁶ Wool content fibre properties allow it to be steamed and stretched or shrunk into shapes that are permanent when the wool dries.



Fig. 3.9:2 Sept. 2007. Sue Walker. Bra back attached to tapestry.



Fig. 3.9:3 Sept. 2007. Sue Walker. Used jacket.

I attached the back of a bra to the tapestry. The bra back held the tapestry and supported its role in the operation of the garment. Whilst working with the tapestry I produced shape and distortion with the steam from the iron. This distortion enabled me to think about exploring using the deformed shape in the lower half of the garment's structure which could produce new ideas (refer to fig. 3.9:7 and 3.9:8). I was drawn to a raglan sleeved jacket I had collected from an opportunity shop because the raglan sleeves delivered a distorted shape I could work into the new garment (refer to fig.3.9:3). I unpicked the jacket seams (except for the centre seams) of the sleeves, as this was where the distortion was positioned. After exploring many options in moulaging (fig.3.9:4), I decided to place the two sleeves on the left hand front side of the skirt to achieve the distortion (refer to fig. 3.9:5). I quickly discovered the outer edge of the raglan sleeve shape formed two pockets (fig.3.9:6), that were bagged out⁷ with previously-made hand-crafted doilies. The bra straps and fasteners were stitched with wool thread, and I then explored how I could blend the two items together when they were situated on the one garment. I used wool thread and hand-stitched



Fig. 3.9:4 Sept. 2007. Sue Walker. Moulaging.

⁷ Bagging out of the pocket is when a lining is used to form the inside facing and pocket bag making the pocket usable.



Fig. 3.9:5 Sept. 2007.
Sue Walker. Moulaging sleeves.



Fig. 3.9:6 Sept. 2007. Sue Walker.
Front pocket shaped by raglan sleeve.

the garment together. Each stitch was individual, unique, and intrinsic to the structure of the garment. The seams and edges were stitched with frayed edges; these edges supported the reduction of bulk within the garment's structure.

In evaluating this garment, I recognized that I had allowed myself to work in an uncontrolled manner, causing the garment to evolve into an unpredictable design. I encouraged the pieces of fabric from the unpicked garment to lead the way, freeing me from my formerly pre-determined way of working.



Fig. 3.9:7 Sept. 2007. Sue Walker.
Exploring a deformed shape in the lower skirt.



Fig. 3.9:8 Sept. 2007. Sue Walker.
Exploring a deformed shape in the lower skirt.

3.10 Project 10. *Crafted Fashion*

This project gave me the opportunity to consider using the previously made hand-craft as part of a fashion garment. As opposed to not being led by 'fashion' in the others. In this project I thought more about the customer and about constructing a garment that was wearable but displayed quirky construction methods.

I chose to remake a woollen pleated skirt and a crochet table runner (figs. 3.10:1 and 3.10:2), as I felt they conventionally compliment each other in weight. I draped the table runner over the tailors model allowing form interesting features and shapes across the front and the back of the bodice. The front features an uneven neckline and the front fastening is positioned on an angle, while the back displays pleats that form interesting elements of design (figs. 3.10:3 and 3.10:5).



Fig 3.10:1 Nov. 2007. Sue Walker. Original skirt to be re-made.



Fig.3.10:2 Nov. 2007. Sue Walker. Original hand-crafted table runner.



Fig. 3.10:3 Dec. 2007. Sue Walker. Moulaging front bodice.



Fig. 3.10:4 Dec. 2007. Sue Walker. Hand Stitching shoulder.



Fig. 3.10:5 Dec. 2007. Sue Walker. Moulaging bodice back.

I seamed together the shoulder seams and pleats by hand; I took my inspiration for this method from the stitching displayed in the table-runner and it added interest to the garment's construction methods (fig. 3.10:4). I chose dark brown thread so that the stitches could make a statement alongside the beige crochet. The crochet table-runner successfully molded into a bodice, as I moulaged it over the tailor's model (figs. 3.10:6, 3.10.7 and 3.10.8). Its inherent ability to stretch allowed this molding to occur naturally. The lower section of the resulting dress was made up of the woollen pleated skirt that I turned upside down and inside out (figs. 3.10:9 and 3.10:10). I frayed the seam that contained the zip ensuing in a mixture of shaded threads that added to the garments composition.



Fig. 3.10:6 Dec. 2007. Sue Walker.
Front bodice uneven front panel.



Fig. 3.10:7 Dec. 2007. Sue Walker.
Back bodice pleated and hand-stitched.



Fig.3.10:8 Dec. 2007. Sue Walker.
Side view of bodice.

The success of this final garment reinforced in me the confidence that I had gained by allowing myself to experiment with creative construction methods. The garment has original features that would not have been achieved if I had worked in my traditional manner.



Fig. 3.10:9 Jan. 2008. Sue Walker.
Front view of dress.



Fig. 3.10:10 Jan. 2008. Sue Walker.
Back view of dress.

Exhibition of Work:

An exhibition of my practical work was situated in the Edith Collier Gallery at Whanganui Universal College of Learning on the 26th of March 2008. The work was shown and discussed with the examiners. The exhibition was then open to the public, until the 4th of April 2008.

The work on display was made up of six experimental projects; they were not a fashion collection. The projects consisted of a series of individual garments that were displayed on tailor's models. They demonstrated the development of my research surrounding creative garment construction methods.

The exhibition was a successful method of presenting my work as I was able to participate in discussion with the examiners and then public, and most importantly my students about the passion and understanding I have gained from taking part in this research project.



Exhibition March 2008. Project 5.
Exposing the silences of domestic hand-
craft.



Exhibition March 2008. Project 6.
Revealing the mechanics of the garment.



Exhibition March 2008. Project 7.
A new life on the outside.



Exhibition March 2008. Project 8.
Manipulating crochet.



Exhibition March 2008. Project 9.
Distorted structure.



Exhibition March 2008. Project 10.
Crafted fashion.

Conclusion:

This research project has allowed me to explore new approaches to garment construction processes; processes that traditionally sit within a very technical area. I was able to experiment with and examine entrenched conventions, giving me the opportunity to relax and change some of the rules that are associated with the traditional garment construction process. I engaged with my practice in a creative relaxed manner. My experiments were inspired by hand-craft and the moulding and re-making of fabric pieces. This way of working encouraged my garments to possess interesting and quirky features, something that wouldn't usually take place in my work, because I don't see myself as a designer. While challenging this process I have constructed garments that promote the garments structural elements.

I looked for new ideas that would persuade me to think about other ways of practice. In contrast to my previous practice, driven by time and efficiency, was able to use time to stop and think about what it was I was trying to achieve. The interior construction details that would previously have been hidden using traditional methods of making have now been exposed as part of my finished garments. Deconstruction and construction became united as a functional objective: both remain crucial to the garment's structural integrity, and both are essential to the garment's shape and structure.

Simultaneously, I took the opportunity to explore new approaches to traditional women's hand-craft, re-interpreting time-honored techniques such as hand-stitching. My applied hand-stitching became integral to the garment's structure; it had a purpose and a function in holding together the structure of the re-made garment. This use of stitching individualized the garment and provided an element of decoration. Incorporating hand stitch was important to me, as a means of illustrating its value as a skill and the risk of that skill being lost, as its use is limited in modern manufacturing.

The decision to re-make used garments, (another form of women's domestic craft), challenged my thought processes as I was forced to work with limited resources. The silhouette of each garment was influenced by the limited resources available in the original garment, causing many unpredictable combinations. The garments have all been re-made with small pieces of salvaged fabric, influencing my focus and attention solely to where the stitches held these fabrics together. My garments are not governed by mass production methods; they are one of a kind. They have been individually made from used clothing and hand-craft that has been discarded. The intrinsic value of utilising used clothes and hand-craft, is contained in the diverse influences that led to the creation of re-made garments that contain the histories of their earlier lives and incorporate layers of meaning that speak to the experiences of a diverse audience.

This research project has encouraged me to examine the practice of garment construction, with reference to literature, and through exploration, and the application my own background knowledge. I discovered that there is little research written about apparel manufacturing and garment construction and my research will contribute and add to this area of study.

Garment designers and constructors are generally very pragmatic and instinctive practitioners who have little enthusiasm for documenting their methods, preferring to move on to the next design opportunity or physical element of practice. Therefore, this exegesis, and others emerging from the area of practice-based research in the fashion discipline, seek to redress that lack of documentation and to establish a resource for fashion design researchers and students. My teaching role has gained significantly from this research, as I now encourage my students to experiment with creative methods of garment construction. I found that the methods of practice that I employed for this project encouraged me to extend my abilities analyze, think and evaluate, and now I am now using these skills with my students when reflecting on their work.

My future plans look forward to further exploration around the concepts discussed in the exegesis, encouraging practical experimentation and further progress and development with garment construction methods. I have plans to share my experiences within my teaching role, to inspire others to promote shared learning experiences.

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