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Timely/Timeless: The New Bespoke







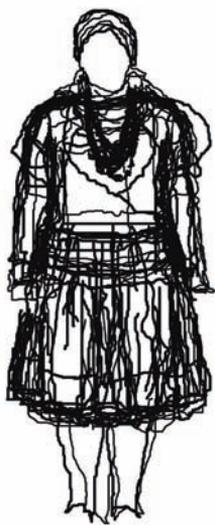












Timely/Timeless: The New Bespoke

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Design
At Massey University, Wellington
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Charlotte Little
2009



Abstract

Mass-production and consumption is causing mountains of waste, overwhelming our fragile world. Since the fast fashion industry is one of the major contributors of waste, it is vital we change the way we produce, consume and market clothing in order to address concerns such as global warming. We need to consider how we can make clothing within a closed cycle to minimise waste. The garments should either be biodegradable and become nutrients for the earth, or be able to go back into the technological cycle, i.e. to be stripped of components and reused, or else up-cycled with zero waste; a cradle-to-cradle life cycle (McDonough & Braungart, 2002).

This project explores how a more sustainable relationship can be created between the designer, consumer and their community, in an attempt to slow the fashion industry down. Drawing upon sustainability theories I apply a new system of design, production and consumption that fosters relationships and active participation in the garment manufacturing process, as well as making clothing that is tailored for an individual's lifestyle. In this project I have created bespoke clothing items *for* and *with* three people. The clothes are conceived as treasures that my clients can keep forever. Instead of simply being fashionable and of the time, the New Bespoke clothing is both timely and timeless. Through a series of consultations I develop an understanding of my clients personality and lifestyle, and through photographic explorations I develop a silhouette from their current wardrobe from which to design the garments. The transparency of this production system is aimed to educate my clients about environmental issues in the fashion industry, and to change their perception of the value of clothing.



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9. Charlotte Little. 2009. *Sale Signs in Window Frontage*. Photograph.

Introduction

The voices of an eager shop assistant trying to make a sale to a customer looking for her season's pair of jeans.

Shop Assistant: No good?

Customer: No, no good.

The customer hands the shop assistant a mountain of denim, and in what seems like an embarrassed rush, she leaves the store.

I witnessed this brief encounter while waiting for a friend in a local clothing store. There are many reasons for this failure at the 'point of sale'. As Kate Fletcher says,

While mass-manufacturing and cheap high street stores have provided us with more products to choose from, these choices are more restricted (ask anyone who is different to the 'standard' body shape about the difficulty of finding clothes to fit). The products on sale in our high streets are becoming homogeneous and this lack of choice erodes our individuality and dulls our imagination, limiting our confidence about what clothes can be (Fletcher, 2008, p.186).

By homogeneous Fletcher means that clothing has become standardized and uniformed. Chain stores sell clothes that barely differ from each other leaving customers with limited variation in choice. This leads to consumers becoming bored and valuing what they purchase less. There is both a standardization of style and standardization of fit. My project tries to understand and explain why the customer is left in the disheartening position of either not being able to fit these jeans, or just not liking their style. The anecdote also illustrates how many tonnes of new clothes are wasted every year. This is becoming a major issue in the fashion industry. It also raises the question, where do all of these unsold new clothes go?



10. Waste products from a garment factory in Dhaka. Mike Donenfeld. (n.d.) *Untitled*. Photograph.

Mass-production of what we desire and consume is causing mountains of waste to overwhelm our fragile world. The United Kingdom alone is accumulating 2.35 million tonnes of wasted clothes each year with only one quarter of this being reclaimed (Fletcher, 2008; Allwood, 2007). Since the fashion industry is one of the major contributors of waste, it is vital that we change the way we produce, consume and market clothing to address concerns such as global warming. With glaciers melting, animals being forced from their habitats and increasing severity of storms and droughts there is no doubt that we need to lower our levels of carbon emissions (“Climate Crisis,” 2009). We need to consider how we can make clothes within a closed cycle, to minimise waste. The clothes should either be biodegradable by becoming nutrients for the earth, or be able to go back into the technological cycle, i.e. to be stripped of components to be either reused or up-cycled with zero waste. We need clothing to be designed for a cradle-to-cradle life cycle.

The designer and consumer need to become conscious of the products and waste that they are creating. This is not going to be an easy process but it is necessary and attainable. Ethical production, consumption, and use of clothing will not be possible unless dreamed of or imagined first. Without the dream the reality cannot become achievable. David Harvey explains, “Revolutions are not about sudden breaks. Revolutions mean a turning of the wheel. It means taking those things that exist in the present and reconfiguring them into something different” (Harvey, 2009). Environmental concerns cannot be addressed unless massive transformations occur. For the current fashion system to be transformed

to address environmental and ethical values we need social change, change in production systems and changes in consumerism (Harvey, 2009).

To address climate issues fashion needs to slow down. Clothes are designed with “built-in obsolescence,” which in the fashion industry is only six months (McDonough & Braungart, 2002, p.28). Fast Fashion is the name that has been given to this process, a term that is derived from Fast Food (Claudio, Luz, 2007). Clothes are the cheapest they have ever been in the history of fashion (Allwood, 2007). Consumers are deprived of quality in the clothes that they buy. Nevertheless, in terms of price, at present a majority of consumers are satisfied with the clothes that they purchase (Fletcher, 2008). Even if the clothes do not fit perfectly, they are cheap and accessible enough for it not to seem to matter. In Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, written in 1931, a futuristic dystopia is introduced where people are brainwashed to consume and are obsessed with the ‘new,’ “But old clothes are beastly...we always throw away our old clothes. Ending is better than mending, ending is better than mending...the more stitches the less riches...I love new clothes, I love new clothes, I love new clothes...” (Huxley, 1952, p.50-53). It appears that Huxley’s fiction has become fact. Consumers don’t need to dwell on mending clothes because they are so cheap to buy, but mending also takes skills and tools that take time and can be unattainable or expensive. Mending clothes also has associations with “poverty and need” (Clark, 2008, p.435). “Second-hand clothing has historically been associated with low economic status and class; the second-hand clothes trade clothed the poor long before there was a ready-to-wear industry” (Evans, 1998, p.81). Systems can change so that the mending of clothes becomes part of a service provided by a fashion company. The mending of clothes can also be achieved in a way that adds to the aesthetic quality of the garment. This is apparent in Maison Martin Margiela’s garments, in which:

Implicit care for the material object and sartorial techniques...suggest the impossibility of a simple destruction or anarchy; for instance, the look of distressed or unfinished tacking around an arm hole is executed by the tailor’s hand with, paradoxically, a quality “finish.” In Margiela’s guiding of the tailor’s hand one can see a desire to leave a “trace” in an albeit reconceived, fashion tradition of techniques, patterns, and details (Gill, 1998, p.31).

Design houses need to restructure the way they make clothes so their products are of a higher personal value, yet can still compete financially within this current market. The clothes can be thought of as something that the customer treasures for a lifetime. Instead of being fashionable and of the time, they should be both timely and timeless. "...when the product is an investment, has longevity, and also remains 'in fashion', it retains its attraction for the particular consumer or user beyond the fashion season" (Clark, 2008, p.440). The relationship that a consumer creates with their clothing gives the designer an opportunity to make clothes that trigger memories and emotional attachments. Textile design educator Rebecca Early observed, during UK Crafts Council's 2006 exhibition Well Dressed: Eco Style in the U.K., that:

Consumers often wear garments too little, wash them too often, and at too high a temperature. All bad news for the environment. Can designers help to change the situation? Can clothes be designed that help us develop an emotional attachment to them. That have stories and origins that make us want to cherish them and look after them (Clarke, 2008, p. 441)?

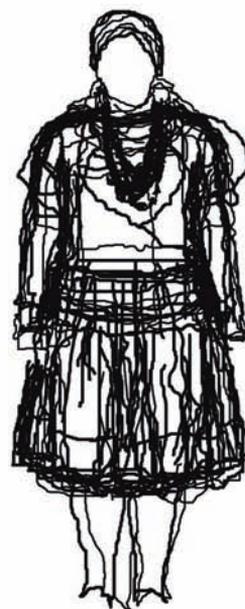
When the designer and consumer work together in a 'co-design' relationship, the consumer is allowed to generate a desire and an attachment to the piece of clothing. "For this to happen the subject-object relationship needs to be more substantial than that of the typical transitory, fashion item, which appeals largely through its visuality or image" (Clarke, 2008, p.440).

Chapter One — Project Overview

In the honours year of my Bachelor of Design Degree, I investigated the concept that for clothing to be sustainable, it should be able to be worn everyday. If clothing was designed and tailored specifically for an individual and able to be worn everyday it could allow the wearer to develop a relationship with the garment, and possibly create a desire to keep and treasure the garment forever.

The idea of wearing a garment everyday as a way to eliminate over-consumption is not new. Alex Martin is a contemporary performance artist, based in America, who is interested in confronting consumerism through personally involving herself in sustainability projects. Martin has addressed this concept in two projects entitled, 'The Brown Dress Project' and 'Recycling Project.' In the former, Martin wore the same brown dress for an entire year in an attempt to discard "the economic system that pushes over-consumption" ("LittleBrownDress," n.d.). The Recycling Project consisted of Martin wearing clothing that she had made from materials that she already owned, once again for a year. A similar project to Martin's 'Recycling Project' was Jill Danyelle's 'fiftyRx3'. Danyelle was interested in "the relationship we have with our clothing and how others perceive who we are through what we wear" ("fiftyRx3," 2007). Danyelle also wore only clothes that she already owned, and experimented with reworking clothes and materials into new garments. Andrea Zittel is another contemporary designer who makes works that attempt to make our lives more pared down and simple. She tries to get people to reflect on their experiences as consumers. Her designs constantly cross the design barrier, to function as both personal experiences and a simple way of living. Her 'A-Z Uniform Dresses,' were intended to be worn for six months at a time, with instructions provided with the garments for the wearer to undertake (Morsiani, 2005). Martin, Danyelle and Zittel all show compelling evidence that these approaches to fashion can be attained, yet they are all artistic explorations and are not direct interpretations of how sustainable fashion can be made available for the consumer. However their approaches to recycling clothing or wearing a garment for a long period of time represent sustainable ways that people can approach dress, and ignite exciting questions for the world of fashion.





11. Charlotte Little. 2009. *Wardrobe Photographs and Amalgamated Silhouette from Pickled '08*.
Photograph and Illustration.

In my honors degree proposal I designed a dress that I wore everyday for 209 days, from March 29th to October 24th, 2008. The dress was designed from a silhouette that I found reoccurred in my wardrobe. Following a process used by artist Jason Salavon, I developed an amalgamated silhouette of my outfits ("Jason Salavon," 2009). This unconscious preference inspired a collection of clothes (titled 'Pickled') that were specific to my lifestyle and me. Wearing clothing can become repetitious and creates a sense of the familiar and habitual, "...'like a second skin'...clothing can be thought of as a 'habitus,'a space of everyday inhabitation, dwelling and self configuration" (Gill, 1998, p.43). Maison Martin Margiela embeds this concept of 'habitus' through the repetition of designs that vary only in colour or detail. Margiela does not always design clothes that are 'new' and for the 'now'. His 'new look' is a return to the familiar, which emphasizes a garment's structure and inhabitation, "a reconfiguring of self and transfiguration of body over time and place" (Gill, 1998, p.43). I realised with 'Pickled '08,' if I could wear this dress everyday for as long as I had, the base silhouette of the dress obviously suited my lifestyle, and the structure of the garment had become my 'habitus'. Using this idea, my wardrobe was created by using the reoccurring silhouette over all of the garments in my collection.

In the Pickled '08 project I approached three lines of sustainability. One, the wearer could create a love for their garments so they keep them forever and minimise waste. Two, the materials I used were organic and dyed using vegetable dyes so they could biodegrade back into the earth providing nutrients for the soil, instead of leaching toxic chemicals that become harmful to surrounding life. Three, the by-products from the dyeing process were able to be up-cycled to create food, i.e. pickling the beetroot that was boiled to extract the dye.

Wearing the dress everyday changed my life significantly. It changed the way that I approach designing and consuming fashion. At the end of this project I felt as though it wasn't over. As a designer I hoped that I could educate others about the fashion system so they too could realise how the fashion industry is affecting the world and give them an alternative to buying mass-produced clothes, by engaging with a new approach to consuming fashion through a new system and process. In my masters project I have challenged myself with the question: Can my bespoke design system be applied to a

community? In terms of this research I have looked at my immediate local community, Wellington, New Zealand, for ease of physical relationships with my clients. I wanted to convey the idea of a relationship that goes beyond standard ideas of a market. My project has aimed to embed ethical, environmental and ecological principles within a 'New Bespoke' system of clothing design. Is it possible to create a business model that embeds these principles?

Kate Fletcher argues "...we cannot radically cut consumption of clothing until we begin to understand its significance as a satisfier of human needs" (*Designers, Visionaries and Other Stories*, 2007, p. 129). By using my New Bespoke design system I hope to inject meaning and purpose into clothing consumption through the development of relationships and community interactions, and hopefully educate and increase awareness to reduce our desire for mindless purchasing.



(Opposite) 12. Julia Keddell. *Pickled '08*. From Top Left. 1-2. *Natural Dress worn with Crochet Fox and Tea Leggings*. 3. *Natural and Tea Dress worn with French Knitted Scarf*. 4. *Turmeric Dress*. 5. *Turmeric Dress worn with Organic Alpaca Kimono Jacket*. 6. *Beetroot and Coffee Dress*. 7. *Beetroot Dress worn with Tea Kimono Jacket*. 8. *Coffee Dress worn with Crochet Skirt*. Photograph.

Chapter Two — The New Bespoke

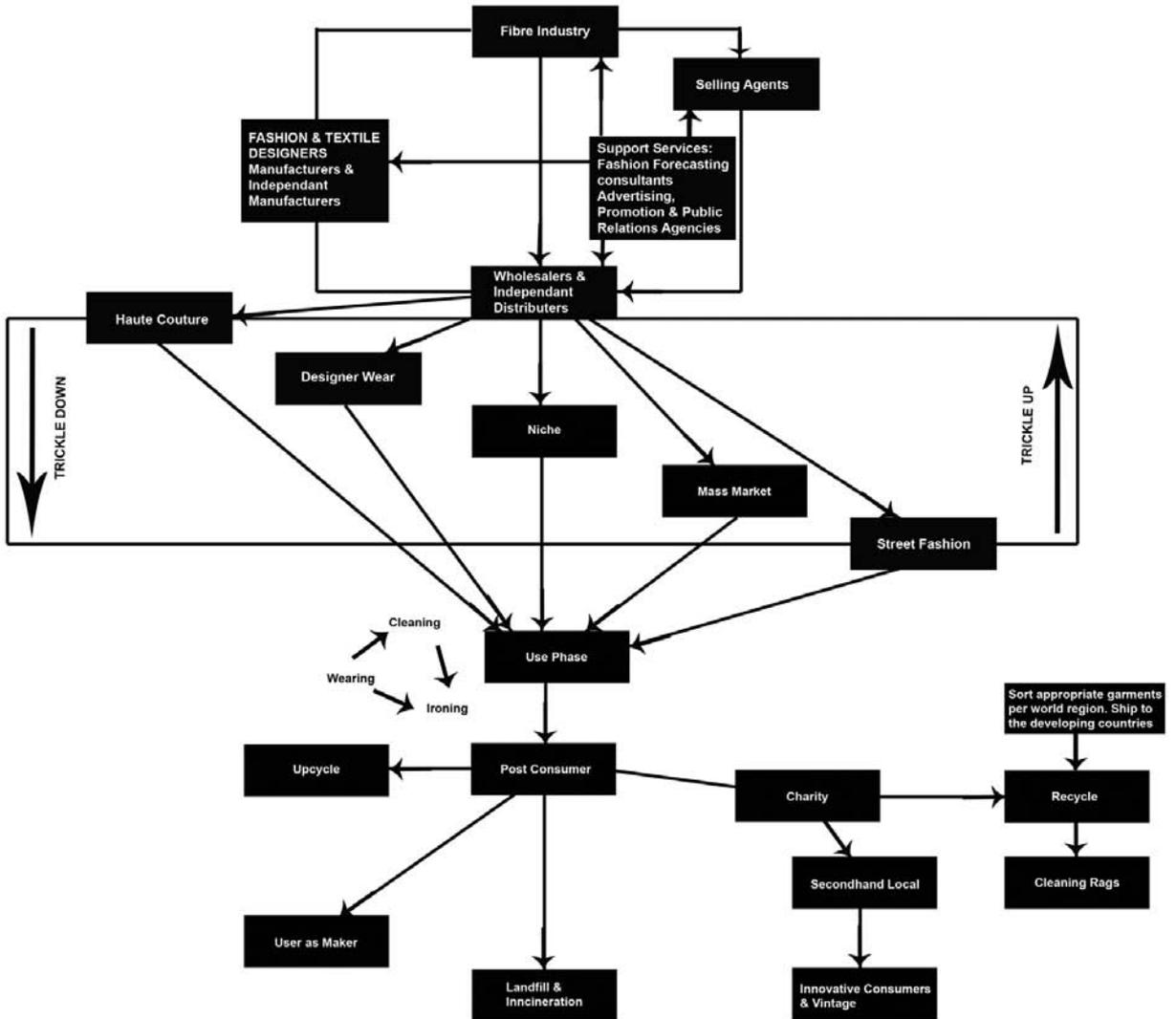
In this chapter I want to explain how clothing production has become standardized for mass markets. Clothing that was once designed for the individual is now made at an accelerated speed and sold to the consumer rather than being made specifically for a client. This was not a direct decision of the fashion designers and marketers but a whole series of influences including politics and urbanization that affected “manufacturing and its technologies; distribution, retailing, marketing, and consumer demand” (Breward, 2003, p. 21).

Where Design Fits into the Current System

The fashion designer’s role is shown here in a diagram to clearly indicate the current fashion system to see where design fits in.

Accordingly, the role of the designer was to ease the risks of producing things that no one wanted. But is this still true? Oscar Wilde described fashion to be “...a form of ugliness so intolerable that we have to alter it every six months” (Wilde, 1887).

“Design facilitates mass production and rapid turnaround of new styles ensuring shorter product (market) life cycles and encouraging consumption for fashion’s sake rather than for real need” (Clark, 2008; Fuad-Luke 2004, p. 14). The apparel industry needs to become more intelligent, designers of mass-produced garments have been restricted to the aesthetics of how a garment is produced rather than the ethics of production. This is no longer solely what consumers’ desire. Yet 80 percent of the impact a product will have on the environment is in the design stage (Thackara, 2005). If the fashion industry would support more sustainable practices at the design stage we would have a chance to design our way to environmental solutions. The designer, manufacturer and consumer need to become conscious of what we are creating, in terms of both product and waste. All parts of a product’s life can become interconnected to create a closed cycle of production, use and disposal; as McDonough and Braungart call it, a cradle-to-cradle lifecycle (Mc Donough and Braungart, 2002).



13. Charlotte Little. *Where Design Fits in Diagram*. Illustration.

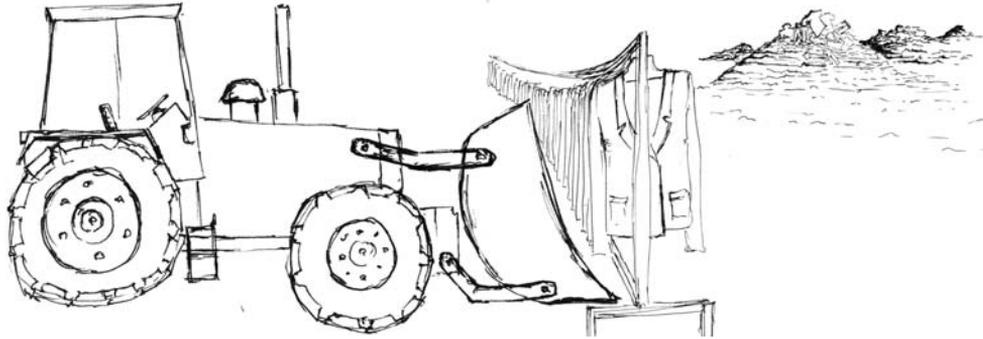
Manufacturing Clothes

During the 20th century, as technology advanced at a rapid speed and the assembly line allowed goods to be easily accessible to the consumer, the price of products plummeted as less time was spent manufacturing and shipping. But what was unknown at the time, or ignored, as some philosophers like Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels would argue, was the effect that the Industrial Revolution would have on the environment. As William McDonough (architect) and Michael Braungart (chemist) state in their book 'Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the way we make things', the Industrial Revolution created a system that:



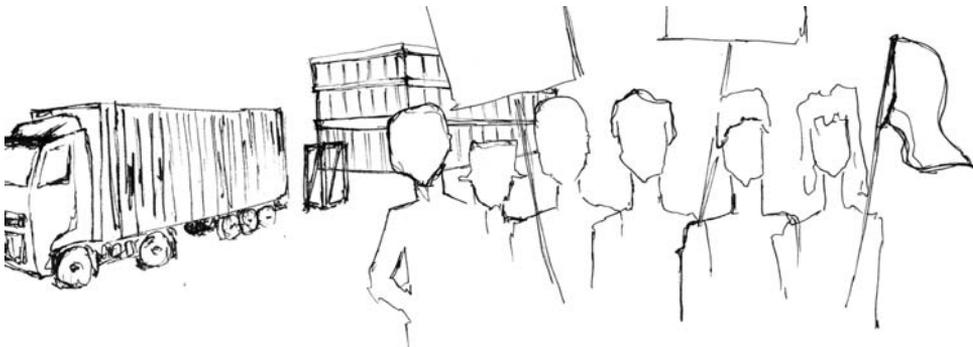
14. Charlotte Little. 2009. *Cotton Plantations Drying up Land and Factories Releasing Carbon Emissions*. Illustration.

“Put billions of pounds of toxic waste material into the air, water, and soil every year” (McDonough & Braungart, 2002, p.18). Chemicals used in the production of textiles and clothing is causing major degradation to the environment, “... cotton, one of the most popular clothing fibers, is also one of the most water and pesticide dependant crops...polyester and other synthetic fabrics is an energy-intensive process of requiring large amounts of crude oil and releasing emissions including volatile organic compounds, particulate matter, and acid gases such as hydrogen chloride, all of which can cause or aggravate respiratory disease” (Claudio, 2007, p.450).



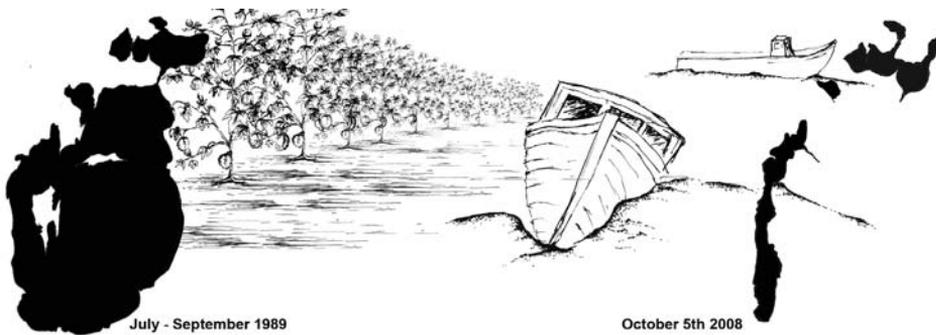
15. Charlotte Little. 2009. *Wasted Clothing*. Illustration.

“Results in gigantic amounts of waste” (McDonough & Braungart, 2002, p.18). As stated earlier the United Kingdom accumulates approximately 2.35 million tonnes of wasted clothes each year, roughly 40kg per person per year and only one quarter of this is reclaimed, with “13 percent going to material recovery and 13 per cent to incineration” and the rest going to landfill (Fletcher, 2008, p.98).



16. Charlotte Little. 2009. *New Machinery Putting Laborers out of Work*. Illustration.

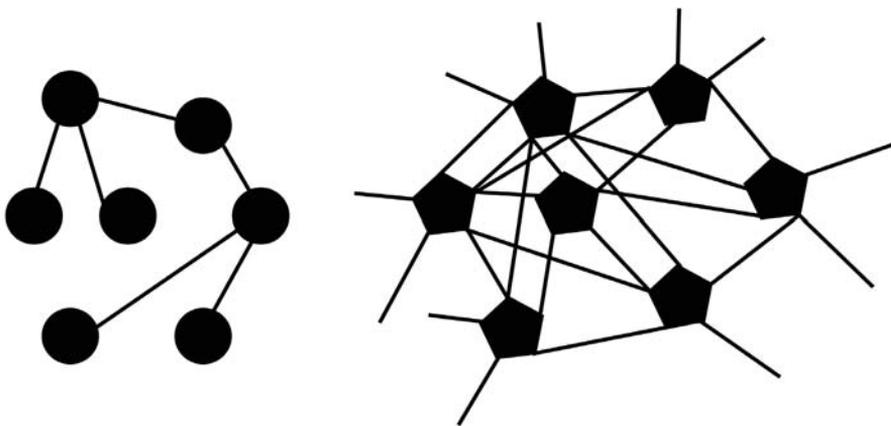
“Measures productivity by how few people are working” (McDonough & Braungart, 2002, p.18). Introduction of new machinery makes work for labourers repetitious and does not require much skill. Global competition in the apparel industry has led to poor working conditions in developing nations (Claudio, 2007; “China Blue,” 2005).



17. Charlotte Little. 2009. *Drying of the Aral Sea (represented by the solid black shapes) from July-September 1989 to October 5th 2008.* Illustration.

“Erodes the diversity of species and cultural practices” (McDonough & Braungart, 2002, p.18). The Aral Sea used to provide a living for communities around its water edge. The communities were home to fishing industries however around the sea’s edge cotton plantations contributed to the drying up of the sea (“Aral Sea,” n.d.). Now the community is left with no sea, no fishing, and no industry.

Co-design



18. Charlotte Little. 2010. *System Views: Mechanical Structure, emphasis is on the individual components. Co-Design Structure, every component is seen as a network of relationships.* Illustration.

Co-design can produce waste just as much as any other system of design. However I think that if people participate in the process of designing then they can feel more connected to the product and will be less obliged to throw the item away. This will cause less waste as products would be kept and treasured and have the opportunity to be treated like a piece of art as with Haute Couture.

As Marx and Engels discuss in *The Communist Manifesto*, the Industrial Revolution led to labourers being exploited as new machinery took over their jobs, so they were left with monotonous work that deprived them of their individuality. The working class succumbed to a vicious cycle. No sooner did the labourer receive their wage than they had to spend it on consuming to live (Marx and Engels, 1848). Design theorists now believe there are opportunities for ethical systems and services that allow “people to interact more effectively and enjoyably. These platforms and infrastructures will require some technology and a lot of design ” ...and are not just required in industries but also in social structures so that new relationships can reinterpret how people engage with each other and products (Thackara, 2005, p.6). When workers and consumers participate and interact in the making of a product, it will have more depth, more meaning and new sense of value. “Co-design embraces multi-stakeholder involvement, where the stakeholders-as-designers, and the designers themselves, learn and create together” (*Designers, Visionaries and Other Stories*, 2007, p. 39). In terms of clothing, “...the wearer is no longer a passive audience, but rather a co-creator and partner” (Fletcher, 2008, p.193).

Co-designing and participatory design can result in one off products. The idea of a product being bespoke means that no one else has the same item, and it is this rarity that helps initiate a higher personal value. There is also the idea that the wearer has “participated in the making of the garment so they can feel proud of what they are wearing” (von Busch, 2008, p 35). Fletcher writes about a study that looked at favourite clothes in which,

Handmade items were highly represented. It is suggested that having some control over our garments, either in a practical way through making, or more conceptually through influencing the design, brings people pleasure (Fletcher, 2008, p.190).

Desiring Sustainability

As David Harvey says, "...revolutions mean a turning of the wheel" (Harvey, 2009). As a society, to make ethical changes in the fashion industry will take social action. We need to change society as a whole to address environmental concerns. I guess the question is: How can change be made desirable? "...It took the culture of modernity, a culture of speed, to make mobility desirable. The same is true today. A more balanced temporal regime will not emerge on its' own. Multiple tempos – some fast, some slow – can coexist, but they have to be desirable, and they have to be designed" (Thackara, 2005, p.48). Social networking websites and activities on the streets are becoming popular ways to show people how sustainable ways of living can be addressed and allow possibilities for people to actively involve themselves and change their lifestyles. However, McDonough and Braungart (2002) argue that:

Eco-efficiency is an outwardly admirable, even noble concept, but it is not a strategy for success over the long term, because it does not reach deep enough. It works within the same system that caused the problems in the first place, merely slowing it down with moral proscriptions and punitive measures. It presents little more than an illusion of change (McDonough and Braungart 2002, p.62).

Yet if we look historically at how transformations in social systems occur, as Marx, Engels and Harvey argue, changes don't happen unless there is social action and meaningful conflict. "I believe that a desirable future depends on our deliberately choosing a life of action, over a life of consumption... future depends upon our choice of institutions which support a life of action" (Fletcher, 2008, p.188).

When confronted with new fashion we can find ourselves, almost unconsciously and often unwillingly, electrified by the brilliance of its very newness. This burst of intensity is how a new fashion 'hits' us, how we are temporarily 'blinded' by its luminosity, and how 'immune' to it most of us are to it after the last epidemic craze has passed (von Busch, 2008, p.34).

I believe it is necessary for a person to experience the same satisfaction and excitement as they would when they engage in new challenges or buy something new, for the desire

to be created to change the social structure (Thackara, 2005). However, sustainable living has connotations of hippie culture and it is relationships like this that makes the movement look uninspiring to some demographics. We do not need to become hunter-gatherers but create “an understanding of our world through craft and quality, not only for production, but also for a more insightful consumption” (von Busch, 2008, p.55). Sharon Zukin argues that the current “consumer lacks the production knowledge that earlier generations commanded” (Zukin, 2004, p.185). Consumers need to recognize a product's quality and cultural history. A knowledge of what differentiates one product from another, what makes a product of a higher quality than another, might allow a consumer to get excited about a product in the same way a connoisseur recognizes perfection. It could create an appreciation of technique. Production would need to become transparent so the consumer could understand it. If local resources are valued through transparent production they have a longer usable life and become more than typical consumables (Clark, 2008).

The possibility for participation and co-design allows the generation of new knowledge, which creates new challenges for the consumer and constant new challenges for the designer, as every new client would create new obstacles. “This shift in emphasis from what things look like to how they behave – from designing on the world to designing in the world – is a big one for design” (Thackara, 2005, p.214). Allowing eco-fashion to become one with people's lifestyles needs the interaction and participation of the consumer, who should be able to integrate ecological material choices into the garments, and thus be able to choose “fashionable design clothing...with eco-conscious properties” (Winge, 2008, p.519). Kate Fletcher points out that these properties, in pieces “...that value process, participation and social integration... that advance relationships between people and the environment” will allow us to see the beauty and greatness of these garments (Fletcher, 2008, p.125). This is a slow approach to fashion, similar to the slow food movement. “Slow fashion, designing with needs and development of local products among others, are types of design activism and relate less to design as a creator of things and more to design as a promoter of social change” (Fletcher, 2008, p.185). Although the product may not yet exist and the consumer may not be able to see and desire it, they could develop a new desire for the process, a desire for the challenges and interactions that could be gained by involving themselves in a new system, a New Bespoke.

Chapter Three — Sustainable Approaches to Fashion

There is an ethical shift occurring in the fashion industry that can be seen through the work of contemporary fashion designers. There are high and low end fashion houses around the world that are adopting the use of organic materials, up-cycling second-hand clothing and restructuring the way that they approach making clothes by using the community and local resources to participate in their products.

Up-cycling

Gary Harvey launched his collection of nine dresses made from up-cycled second-hand clothes at London's Esthetica fashion show in 2007. The collection entitled 'Fashion with a Conscience' was to initiate just this. By using second-hand clothing Harvey hoped to change people's perception of discarded goods and create clothing that enables the wearer to question the history and production of a garment. Harvey's intention was to portray how the life cycle of a garment is much longer than the average consumer uses it for ("Gary Harvey: Couture Fashion with a Conscience," 2007). The dresses show the potential that second hand garments have for up-cycling, however they are created as artistic, haute couture pieces, that have no intention to be worn as everyday wear.



19. Gary Harvey. 2007. Left to Right: 1. Black T-Shirt Dress - Made from 37 black logo tees.
2. 18 Trench Coats attached to 'Burberry' check Corset. Photograph.



20. Junky Styling. Left to Right. 1. 2007. *"Three Habits" Spring Summer '07*. Photograph.
2. Duncan Bone. 2009. *"Junky Coated" Autumn Winter '09*. Photograph.

Junky Styling (Annika Sanders and Kerry Seager) also showed at Esthetica alongside Gary Harvey. Sanders and Seager rework second-hand clothes to give them a new life and as a means of reclaiming some of their community's discarded clothes. The second-hand clothes regain value by being one off originals, allowing their clients to not conform to fashion trends. Compared to Harvey, Junky Styling remains in the middle of the fashion market, making clothing available for a range of demographics. They not only take clothes from thrift shops but also allow their customers to bring them their own unwanted clothes to be deconstructed and transformed into something new ("Junky Styling," 2009). By allowing their customer to participate in the production system they become a co-producer of their garment and the client can appreciate the process undertaken. The designer is shifted down the hierarchy of fashion power structures and becomes someone who works alongside fellow employees and with their client. In the New Bespoke, I incorporate this idea as it creates customer loyalty, minimising the need for advertising ("The Next Revolution," 2001).

During 2002-3 Kate Fletcher and Becky Early made a project entitled '5 Ways,' that used five inter-connected approaches to ecologically making clothing and textiles, called: No wash, Updateable, Local, Nine Lives and Super Satisfiers ("5 Ways," 2002-3). These approaches are all inter-connected so it is hard to decipher how they would differ from each other as a design system. It is possible that all five approaches could be merged so that one garment can stem from the application of all methods.

Two of the five methods introduced in the 5 Ways project, 'Updateable' and 'Nine Lives', create garments by following a series of instructions given to the consumer by the designer. In 'Nine Lives' the alterations are pre-designed into the garment. The instructions are derived from trends and allow the consumer to up-cycle their garment but keep it fashionable. Both 'Updateable' and 'Nine Lives' consider the causes of over-consumption, however the two concepts would be more effective together in one product. Otto von Busch has also made a series of 'cookbooks' that provide the consumer with a series of instructions allowing them to up-cycle a garment. Von Busch continued to develop the concept into a "more delicate DIY kit in a book-format (I) called 'Abstract Accessories' that could be sold in retail shops alongside clothing (von Busch, 2008, p.97). As these instructions involve time, skills, knowledge and possibly machinery, they could merely become mundane tasks for some consumers and may never be undertaken. Instructions, or adaptations for up-cycling a garment can also be provided as a service within a business structure. I aim to capitalize on this notion by leaving up-cycling instructions as an option for the consumer, but also a service provided by the business.



21. Kate Fletcher and Becky Early. 2002-3. *5 Ways Project, Updateable*. Photograph.

Use Phase

There are assumptions that an unwashed garment is unhygienic. When I wore the same dress daily in Pickled 08' I was asked regularly, almost in disgust whether I ever washed the dress. In 'No-Wash' Fletcher and Early create a jersey that is to never be laundered. It is designed to not resist dirt or repel dirt, but for it to be worn like a badge ("5 ways," 2002-3). The impetus behind this project was the effect that laundering clothes has on the environment. After they analysed the wear of a jumper, Fletcher and Early decided to add wipe-able surfaces and ventilated underarms so it could be worn without washing and remain generally clean. The No-Wash approach to clothing should be addressed when designing a garment, however even minimising the laundering of a garment would be a useful starting point. Untouched World, a New Zealand outdoor clothing company, have developed organic merino and possum materials. They can be worn for long periods of time with minimal washing due to their breathable fibres and weave ("Untouched World," 2009). The garments are simple in design and have proven to be highly popular as they wear nicely and don't lose shape. Due to the harm that laundering has on the environment in the use stage of a garment, it is vital that we consider care-friendly adaptations for garments in the design stage.



22. Kate Fletcher and Becky Early. *5 Ways Project, No Wash*. Photograph.

Emotional Longevity

Another approach used by Fletcher and Early involved ‘Super Satisfier’ garments that are designed in response to a person’s identity, affection...and to show emotional needs through clothing (“5 ways,” 2002-3). Fletcher and Early state “...emotional needs are triggers for dissatisfaction with ourselves, our clothes and lead to an escalation in what and how we buy” (“5 ways,” 2002-3). The New Bespoke addresses a person’s individual emotional needs, specifically in response to their lifestyle. I will focus on generating clothing that suits their figure by using their silhouette as a base for design. Individuality will be addressed through the materials my client and I choose and features that express and reflect characteristics of their personality.



23. Kate Fletcher and Becky Early. *5 Ways Project, Super Satisfier*. Photograph.

Producing Locally

The most effective of Fletcher and Early's five sustainable methods of design in my opinion was 'Local', for example a bag made from scrap pieces of leather that were attained locally from a manufacturer ("5 ways," 2002-3). Local was the backbone to all five of the approaches. Keeping my project local, shaped what materials I would use in the New Bespoke. Originally I planned to utilise organic materials that I would dye with vegetable dyes in consideration of the 'Cradle to Cradle' lifecycle (McDonough & Braungart, 2002). However this would have meant sourcing the majority of organic fabrics from overseas. Also, an economically viable process of natural dyeing requires much time and extensive knowledge that I have only explored in Pickled 08' yet would require more in depth study. Research is being done to commercially colour fabrics in ways that are environmentally and economically viable and non-toxic. Sally Fox, for example, is an organic cotton breeder who describes how coloured cotton can be made from naturally coloured cotton bolls (Fox, 2007). The Eco Textile News, an online database, also describes innovative dyeing technology that is close to being released. The dyeing process "involves the use of simple colourless molecules, some derived from natural raw materials, which are then linked together by a clever catalyst, and the colour develops as the polymer chains grow" ("Novel Eco-Textile Dyes due for Release," 2009). Until these dyes are available locally I will continue to use donated second-hand fabrics and end-of-line materials, that allow me to design garments that have a long lifetime within a closed cycle.

Carlos Miele is a Brazilian fashion designer who has worked with a company Coopa-Roca, a group of women sewers, to make garments that use traditional Brazilian craft techniques. Miele and other designers such as Tord Boontje have been able to publicize the company by using their textiles so that Coopa-Roca can expand their techniques and generate new relationships with other designers. The company Coopa-Roca has allowed women of the community to learn new skills and become financially independent (Clarke, 2008). The garments emanate a sense of trust, emotion and aura, which allows the customer to value and treasure the garments and extends the life a customer might have with their clothing. Similarly, by embracing this philosophy I have sourced local knitters. I hope to make relationships with them and gain a sense

of aura in my garments that my clients can hold onto. The garments have an element of difficulty as they are one-off and I am experimenting with new techniques of embedding images into the knitting. I hope that this can further the skills and knowledge of the knitters and myself. Their work will also be publicized through my website and could generate more work for them as currently they only hire out their knitting skills after hours from their day job.



24. Kate Fletcher and Becky Early. *5 Ways Project, Local*. Photograph.

25. Trend Land. 2007. *Team at Coopa-Roca*. Photograph.

Transparency

Otto von Busch has explored different ways to alter the role of the designer. "It is a role that experiments with how fashion can be reversed, engineered, hacked, turned and shared among many participants as a form of social activism" (von Busch, 2008, p. 24). All of von Busch's projects are under "...copyleft licenses to be freely copied and developed by other practitioners" ("Self_Passage," n.d.). For social action to occur new approaches to design need to be activated by many and altered to peoples own desires. We will be able to see shifts as people take hold of new creative measures, challenges and participate in new endeavours. With my business structure I think it is important to trademark the New Bespoke brand, however the design processes and production system should become transparent to diversify knowledge.

Transparency is used "to address fashion practices that do not seek to obscure the origins of the product and producers" (Clark, 2008, p.435). I will also provide a transparent business through my labeling which will show whom the garments are owned by and tell stories of the garments production. 'Italian Avlusu' is a project by Otto von Busch and artist group Oda Projesi who used labeling as a form of transparency. Their concept was to up-cycle donated clothing, and allow the history of the garments to continue. The previous owner of a garment was made to fill out a brief questionnaire of the items history. The clothes were then deconstructed and made into something new with the questionnaire attached to the inside so that the new garment could sustain its history (von Busch, 2004). Icebreaker is a New Zealand outdoor clothing company that prides itself on being a transparent business. By using a system that they call 'baacode' the company has enabled their customers to trace the history of their merino garment back to the farm where the sheep was grown ("Icebreaker," 2009). The garments have a 'baacode' on the label, which can be entered into a system on their website that educates their customer about the conditions of the farm that the sheep was grown ("Icebreaker," 2009).



26. Otto von Busch. 2004. *Attach Stories Carefully*. Photograph.

27: Icebreaker. 2009. *Baacode*. Web Page.

Optimizing Technology

Issey Miyake's innovative 'APOC (A Piece Of Cloth)' collection, designed in collaboration with Dai Fujiwara in 1997, was an original development of manufacturing technology and effectively a new system for making clothes. "APOC is essentially a long tube of machine-knitted patterned fabric that can be cut by the customer to create a whole wardrobe of garments. No sewing required" (Mitchell, 2005, p.73). Even though the 'APOC' collection does not have a direct link with sustainable fashion the restructuring of the way to make clothing leaves the customer with no waste. Being able to use an entire yield or length of fabric with minimal waste is a constant battle in the fashion industry. The less waste the less expensive a garment can be, and, for the environment, the fewer materials used the better.

The 'APOC' collection can be individualised by the customer as they can take certain garments and wear them how they like. However I suspect the relationship between the customer and their clothing would not be strong. By buying off the rack, or in this case the tube, the customers are possibly exposing themselves to an impulse purchase that could lead to throwing away the garment and causing waste. However Miyake is a leading Japanese fashion brand. Being able to buy a garment from his 'APOC' collection could allow the customer to develop a connection with the clothing through his status. This may not be because the customer still enjoys wearing the clothing but they treasure the garments because of the brand. This reflects the analysis of clothing by Kate Fletcher and Mathilda Tham, who state in their 'Lifetimes' project:

There are many different types of clothes, bought for a variety of reasons and purposes. Some are 'basics' and are worn time and again. Others are 'classics' and are bought for the long haul. Others still are 'fashion items' and are bought in a fashion moment, they are rich in the signs and symbols of 'now' and are quickly relegated to the back of the wardrobe ("Lifetimes," n.d.).

Keeping clothing because of a brand suggests an affiliation between the clothing designer and customer. However I want to create a relationship between both the designer and client, and client with their clothing. The relationship with the clothing designer will develop over time, not because the designer holds a reputation. The



28. Issey Miyake. 1999. *APOC King and Queen*. Photograph.

29. MaterialByProduct. 2009. *Autumn Winter '09/'10 Collection*. Photograph.

relationship between the customer and their clothing will develop through the designing process. The client will have their say in the design with individual characteristics incorporated into the clothing so they can feel personally connected to their wardrobe.

MaterialByProduct, designed by Susan Dimasi and Chantal Kirby, have also developed a unique technique for making clothing that uses an entire length of material ("MaterialByProduct," 2009). Their technique does allow their customer to create a personal connection with their clothing. When altering a garment to a size, fabric is either suppressed for fit or let out for ease. Dimasi and Kirbys' method evolves these procedures, although instead of cutting the suppression out of a garment they print the sizing on the garment. For each size an individual can tuck the garment where needed. There is minimal sewing required to make the garments and they all bear their signature ribboning around the neckline. The garments are reasonably exclusive as they are made to order through retail, private clients and also from the street. A customer is able to ask for a garment from a previous collection as it only involves changing the print and fit of a piece to change the garment. Authenticity and trust can be gained, as the customer knows how their garment is being produced. A relationship can be achieved with their garment because they can choose the print and they can style the garment how they please.

Sustainable Approaches in the New Bespoke

In the following chapter I will illustrate how my business model will incorporate all of these methods to sustainably design and produce clothing, however these methods still generalize and standardize a customer's desires. By designing specifically for an individual I hope to eliminate this aspect and by including a policy that involves my client bringing me their old clothes to be up-cycled, I will have a business structure that provides a cradle-to-cradle lifecycle (McDonough & Braungart, 2002). My business model should be viewed as a structure that I hope to pursue in the future, post masters study.

Chapter Four — My System Our Process

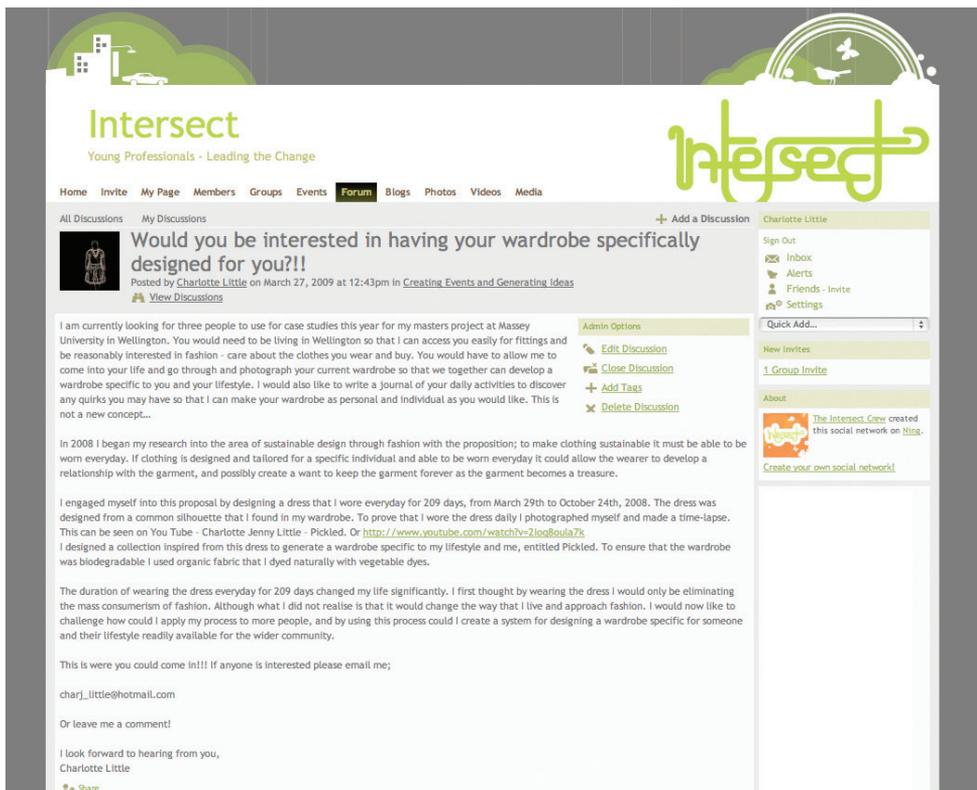
This chapter introduces the system that I have used to design bespoke clothing. The chapter is in six parts; My System Our Process, Cost, Relationship, Materials, Transparency, and Evaluation. Together these describe how my design system addresses global concerns within the fashion industry.

My System, Our Process

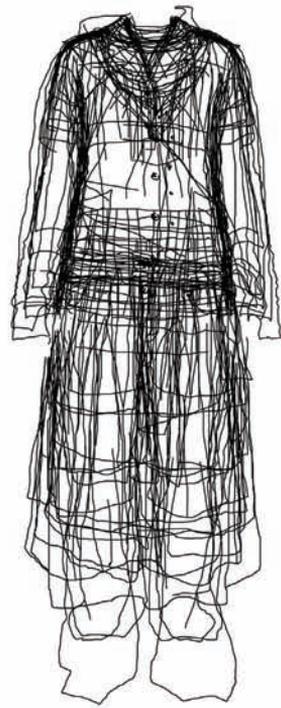
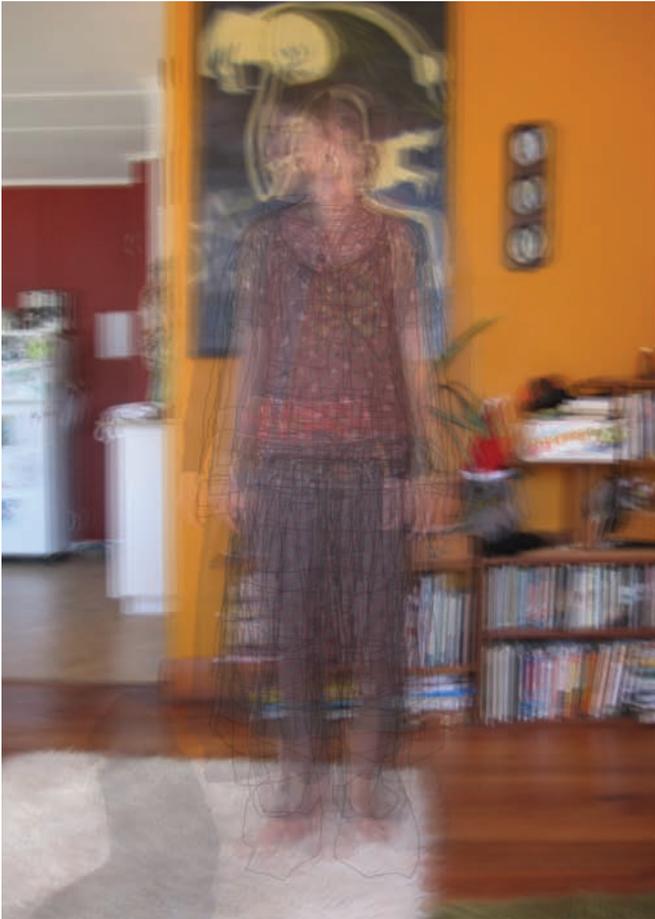
John Thackara describes how in today's consumer culture endless products are made for people with a generalized view of what they desire. Mass sizing systems and the planned obsolescence of the seasonal silhouette creates huge amounts of waste. So designing *with* the consumer is one way the designer can know exactly what their customer wants, which leads to fewer unnecessary products (Thackara, 2005). In my project I propose the question: Can my bespoke design system be applied to a community? I realised early into my research that essentially I am creating a business model for a fashion house that encompasses environmental and ethical values that will hopefully create "social change... and change in production systems and changes in consumerism" (Harvey, 2009). In order to elicit tangible results I have used my process to design bespoke clothing *for* and *with* three clients, within my accessible community. Through a series of consultations with my clients I develop an understanding of their personality and lifestyle. By taking photographs of my clients' wearing their current wardrobe I invented a way to create a silhouette from which to design their garments. Following a process similar to artist Jason Salavon's amalgamations where he composes time based images using a customised computer software, I generated a process that involved taking photographs of outfits, drawing around them, then compositing the multiple silhouettes, resulting with one amalgamated silhouette. I then follow a rigorous process of sampling or 'toileing' to ensure that the clothes fit and suit my client.

I found my three clients through a New Zealand social networking website called Intersect. Intersect is dedicated to sustainable living and attracts people who are interested in involving themselves with their local communities ("Intersect," 2009).

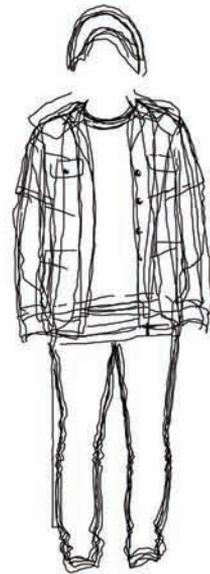
Although there has been a subsequent interest in my project within and outside of Intersect I chose the first three people who responded to my advertisement. I thought that it was important to find people who would be potential future clients to make my project authentic, and were living in my community. Three people provided me with a sufficient range of variation in size, shape, style, and idiosyncrasy to test my design process and provide initial guidance for developing a business plan in the future. I planned to create several garments for my clients to provide me with a range of fitting and styling obstacles. My clients all varied in age and demographic, yet all shared an interest in ethical and environmental issues and importantly, my project.



30. Intersect. 2009. *Personal Advertisement*. Web Page.







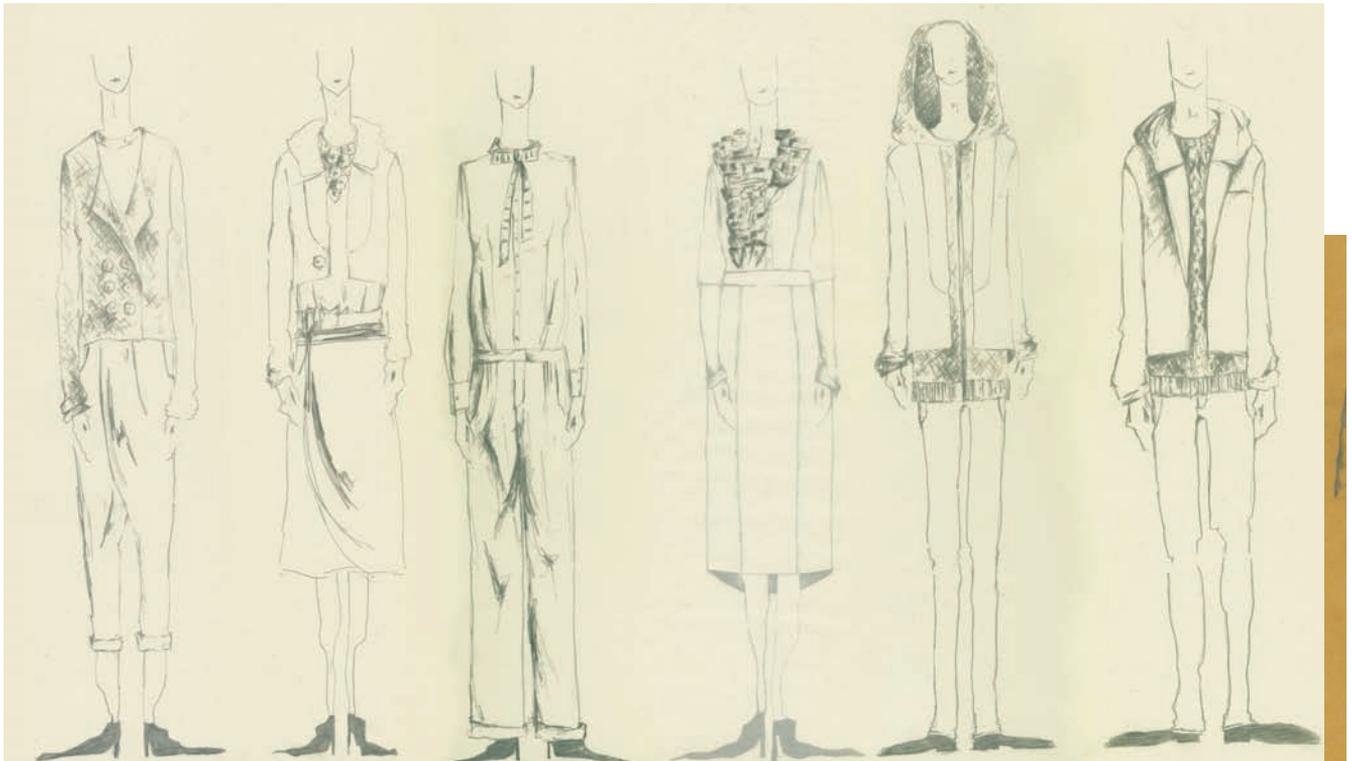
(Previous and Above) 31: Charlotte Little. 2009. *Clients' Wardrobe Photographs and Amalgamated Silhouette*. Photograph and Illustration.

I began my process by going to my clients' houses and photographing them in all of the outfits that they currently wear. The photographic experience created some interesting results. The process educated the individuals about their own wardrobes. Suddenly they were taking note and questioning the clothes they own. Two of my clients even screened their wardrobes by prior sorting. From the photographs I found each person's reoccurring silhouette by tracing around the garments, and I used these as a base for the design of their clothes. The silhouettes became an interesting source as although they may not have been strongly consistent, and potentially not flattering, they were an accurate reflection of the individuals' personality and the aesthetic of their wardrobe in terms of fit and how they wear their garments. Unconsciously we all have our own personal style and we know what clothes we feel most comfortable in, as this is a habitus we have gathered over time. Annette Lynch and Mitchell Strauss (2007) observe:

The self is more than what appears on the surface. It is a slowly developed sense of who and what we are both externally and internally, with the process beginning in early childhood and continuing to develop throughout the life span. It is of interest to us in the fashion field because the clothes we wear are believed to be fundamentally integrated with our sense of self (Lynch and Strauss, 2007, p.13).

Through consultations I obtained an understanding of my clients' sartorial identity. By using the idiosyncratic information that I gathered from our consultations, simultaneously with the silhouette, I was able to pull together imagery from street fashion and contemporary fashion designers to help support my clients' aesthetic. Fit and comfort were important for one of my clients so I needed to find examples of tailoring that would allow for fit yet provide ease for comfort. Designers like Dries van Noten, Zambesi and Vivienne Westwood, who incorporate these aspects through drape, inspired me for my client's pieces. I was then able to sketch the initial designs of the garments for my clients. Usually when designing clothes I draw the sketches on fashion figures (the 'nine head alien' forms), which I unconsciously used when I began designing the New Bespoke. I soon realised that this wouldn't work. I needed to use the clients' personal silhouette, not an idealised figure, to understand how the garments would work on their body. By using the personal silhouette I was able to get a real indication of my clients' proportions and surface areas to decide where design lines should be placed to flatter the figure and break up a garment or outfit.

In meetings we were able to discuss and compromise what we thought worked, to come up with the final designs. I found this an integral part to my process as it allowed my clients to have their say in the design of their clothing. They were able to make comments like “that is too feminine” or “that’s just not me.” In saying this, overall my clients were impressed with how well I had interpreted them and considered their needs through my designs. When I came to drawing the final designs I unthinkingly came back to the typical fashion figure. It wasn’t until I showed people the entirety of my work that it became obvious that these designs should in fact be drawn with the silhouette of my clients. I had been so drilled with the processes of designing clothing for an idealised image that it was natural for me to slip back into the norm of these almost alien fashion figures. This illustrates just how deep the standardization process is embedded in the conventions of fashion designing.



32: Charlotte Little. 2009. Initial Final Designs Drawn on Fashion Figures (the 'nine head' alien forms). Illustration.

As I photographed my clients I was able to ask them questions along the lines of what their favourite garments were and why, and what they look for when buying clothes. I found it important to not recreate these favourite pieces but to reinterpret them. I also noted this through the design development of my Pickled '08 project. The point of making clothes you are to treasure, is not to recreate similar garments, but to expand on them. The clothes are garments that can work as outfits but importantly also work within my clients' current wardrobes. For example, one of my clients has roughly twenty of the exact same top in every colour available. These particular tops, because of their fit, style and material content were important to my client. So all of the garments that I designed for her were made with the intention that she could wear these tops, layered with the new garments.

The 'toileing' process provided me with the most significant design experience for my clients.

Knowing about things because of an experience is recognized as one of the 'four ways of knowing' used to explain how we know something beyond the traditional reaches of scientific and academic study. The four ways of knowing are experimental, presentational, propositional and practical (Fletcher, 2008, p.126).



33. Charlotte Little. 2009. *Final Designs Drawn with Clients Silhouette*. Illustration.

“Learning relies on personal interaction and, in particular, on a range of peripheral, but nonetheless embodied, forms of communication more than it enhances them. Understanding, relationships, and trust are time-based, not tech-based” (Thackara, 2005, p.99). It is hard to know exactly how a garment is going to look until it is on a body. This couldn't be truer then when you are dealing with people who are not involved in a fashion environment and who therefore find it hard to visualise how the final garments will look on them. Instead of starting with a sized block made from a sizing system I made blocks from my clients' own measurements. This meant that once I had the blocks fitted to my clients I could continue using the block as a base for all of the garments and in doing so the same silhouette continues over all of the pieces. It made the process longer, although it also meant that I would always have these blocks that are a perfect fit for my clients, and if they ever want garments from me in the future they know that I have all of their blocks to assist me to make clothes that are tailored for them. Inevitably, much time was invested into making sure the fit was right and I believe this bewildered my clients. They found it hard to understand how much time and detail went into making a garment fit properly. “Emphasis on quality gives rise to different relationships between designer and maker, maker and garment, garment and user” (Fletcher, 2008, p.168). It also reassured me that everyone is individual and when looking back at my earlier anecdote, where people find themselves in clothing stores unable to fit any of the garments, it became obvious that to tailor a garment, there is a lot more to it than just adding 2cm per size, as in fast fashion pattern grading systems.

This client relationship established in this project can be seen in dressmaking businesses, which have a long history in creating relationships with the people they make clothes for. The dressmaker's occupation has slowly whittled away during the current fast fashion scene, however the dressmaker still pops up for the wedding, ball or ballet costume occasions. I propose with my system I am bringing the dressmaker back into the foreground of fashion as an artisan designer. If the dressmaker has been able to maintain a place within the fashion industry with dedicated clients then the dressmaker surely sets a legitimate precedent for my business plan to follow. “For those who preferred dressmakers, there were many different kinds. Proust describes most of the Paris couturiers as mere dress-makers, bar a few who were top haute couturiers ...But there were dressmakers to suit almost every budget...” (Watt, 2000, p. 307).



(Above and Overleaf) 34. Charlotte Little. 2009. *Toileing Images*. Photograph.





Cost

Since I have used an enduring, time-based approach to tailor bespoke clothing for an individual, cost becomes an issue when serving a range of demographics. As there is so much more time, effort and skills needed to create bespoke clothing the price quickly escalates. Allowing customers to bring in materials they have sourced or already own, or using materials I have been donated will help lower costs. Bartering is also a method that could be used to help this problem. In my project one of my clients offered to make my website in exchange for the clothes that I am making him. Similar transactions to these are becoming popular and I am willing to consider bartering products or services in the New Bespoke.

The New Bespoke is service based, meaning I will be charging for my time making mass manufacturing cost sheets irrelevant. Cost sheets involve pricing a garment according to how many pieces you are able to get out of one length or 'yeild' of material, the more the better. In saying this there are standard overheads that need to be charged to cover costs of production. The business will be home based which allows for areas to be tax deductible. So although initially there may not be a large profit, areas of the home can be written off through the business paying for portions of the mortgage or rent, phone lines, Internet, power and cars. This will off set costs for the day to day living of the designer.

Usually the base price of a product is multiplied by two or three depending on wholesale costs to determine what percentage is added to cover overheads. This is an area that I cannot determine until the business is running as I cannot know how much power or rent etc. I will be paying. However I do know that the price of a garment will be expensive, I worked out that just the cost of a digitally printed t-shirt came to \$382.75 and a fully lined jacket came to \$952.85. Although this price can be justified as the clothes are tailor made and will be pieces of longevity. Their value does not lie in the form of money but as an item of significance to be treasured as a piece of art.

In the New Bespoke I have created several garments for my clients, although when my business is in practice a client would determine the amount of garments created. The details in a garment can also be specified by a client to accommodate how much money they are willing to pay, for example, whether a garment has lining or not. All of these considerations can be tailored to a customers desires, so like the dressmaker, I too can "suit almost every budget..."(Watt, 2000, p. 307).



35. Charlotte Little. 2009. *Fabric Given by Client*. Photograph.

36. Thomas McQuillan. 2010. *Dress made with Fabric Given by Client*. Photograph.

Relationship

A key aspect to the dressmaker's survival is the relationship they have been able to build and maintain with their clients. Through the New Bespoke I have been able to create a relationship with my clients and this has become important to me, as it has allowed my clients to engage in their clothing process. In order to understand the current relationship between the clothing designer and consumer, I wanted to look at how we have come to be in an environment where a void exists between the two. Manufacturers used the designer to bridge this void by making sure products were desirable. However my earlier anecdote shows that in fact piles of garments do not always fit the desires of the consumer. The designer's role was intended to fill this void, but it hasn't. As a consumer, you feel almost deserted by the clothing designer. In the process of buying clothes you are abandoned in a cubicle, to try on a selection of clothes that you are intended to create a relationship with, to then purchase. The word relationship suggests connection, love, and romance, and so, I ask, where has the romance gone in the process of buying clothing?

With fast fashion there is no relationship between the designer and their customer, and the relationship between the customer and their clothing is only random or hit and miss. So when clothing is designed and tailored specifically for an individual the consumer can develop a relationship with the designer and their garments. Clothing is co-designed by an individual, for an individual, with the individual. Inevitably this slows the design process down, although as Kate Fletcher notes, "Slow design enables a richer interaction between designer and maker; maker and garment; garment and user. A strong bond of relationships is formed, which permeates far beyond the garment manufacturing chain" (Fletcher, 2007). Garments can become ingrained with an individual, and constantly evolve into a new relationship.

This emphasis on strong roots and active partnerships means that key sustainability values include: community, where a new relationship is fostered between designer, producer and consumer; empathy, that is the capacity to share what another is feeling and to recognize this understanding as being part of a connection to the bigger system; participation, where we devolve

fashion's power structures and take a more active role in its production; and resourcefulness, where we find opportunity in reducing the consumption of materials, energy and toxic chemicals" (Fletcher, 2008, p.127).

Throughout my project I have been able to become well acquainted with my clients. I feel as though I have been able to make design decisions on their behalf, confident that they will agree with my choices. For example I was having a fitting with one of my clients, working on her jacket, when she told me she hardly ever wears jackets. So I questioned whether I should be making this garment for her. She reassured me that the design of this jacket was different because it didn't have a tailored collar and so was more comfortable, although the sleeves were still restricting. I worried about this garment for several days and then proposed that I should make the exact garment but in a Merino knit. This way the garment would be a lot more comfortable and I thought that my client would get a lot more wear out of the piece. She was really excited about the idea, and so the garment developed into something that suits her lifestyle more, and she was able to implement this change.

These scenarios have continued to happen throughout the toiling process. It has been great for me to see that my clients have the ability to express what they want in a garment, and our relationship is at a point where they are not intimidated to say what they want. By making changes with my clients I feel as though they are able to feel connected to their garments as they can hold onto the memories of these design decisions that they have participated in. "...it is not enough for a product to provoke an emotional response in the user on one occasion; it must do this repeatedly. In effect a relationship must be developed between user and object over an extended period of time" (Fletcher, 2008, p.168).



37. Charlotte Little. 2009-2010. *Toile Sequence for Merino Jacket*. Photograph.

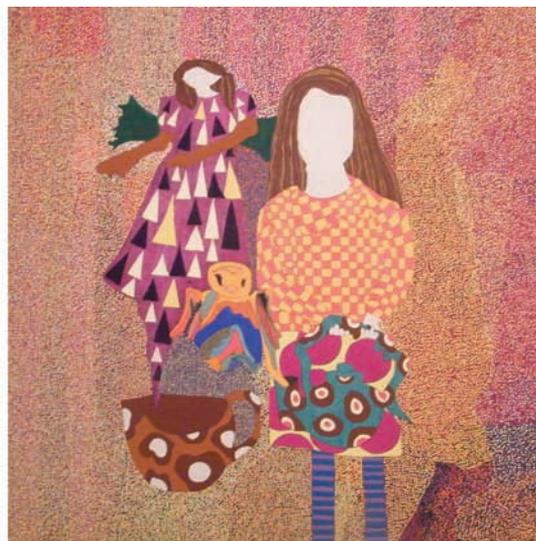
38. Thomas McQuillan. 2010. *Knitted Cardigan and Knitted Jacket*. Photograph.



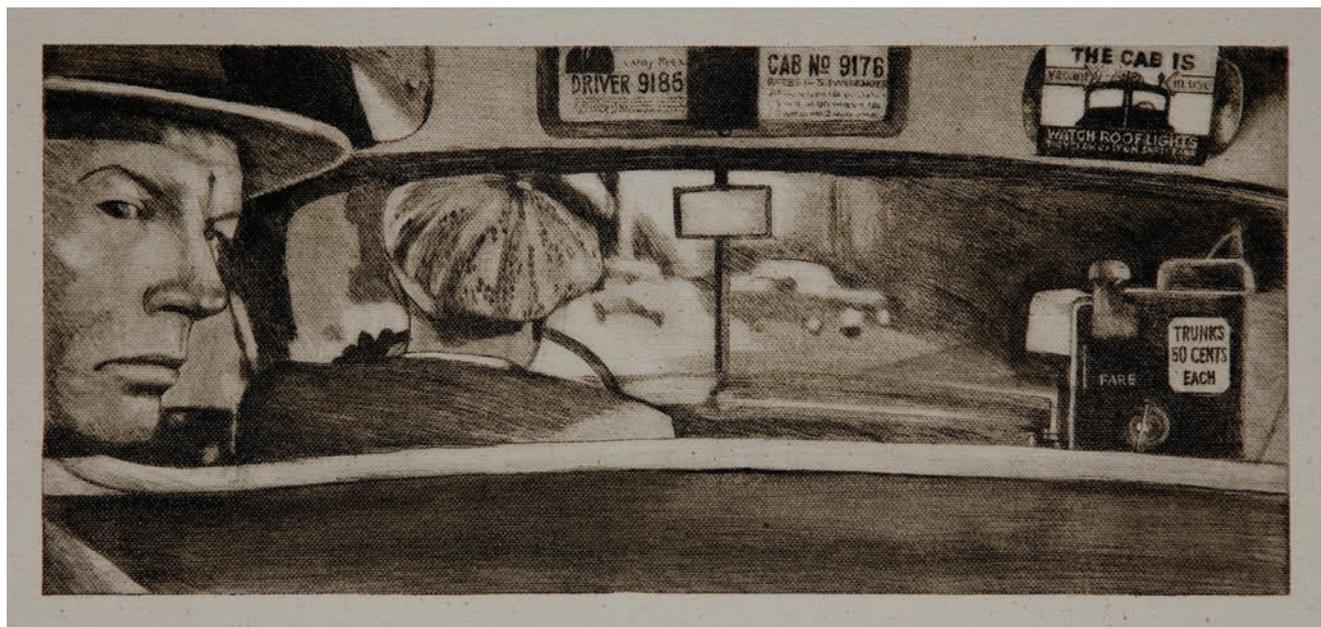
39. Thomas McQuillan. 2010. Knitted Jersey with Tree. Photograph.

The knitted garments and t-shirt prints best describe how my clothes have affected the local community. Working with the community has given the New Bespoke not only a user and maker relationship but also a maker and maker relationship. I have had three garments knitted by two women in a local knitting shop. They work in the shop during the day yet out of shop hours they hire out their knitting skills. Similar to how Carlos Miele works with Coopa-Roca I am able to publicize the knitters' work and further their traditional knitting techniques. I had one jersey knitted with a tree in the front. Instead of making the tree different colours I had the knitter use different knitting styles so that the tree became a texture. This was an unusual request for the knitter and it took her several attempts to get it right although she enjoyed the experience. She explained that when she works with young designers she always has new challenges that only further her (already extensive) knitting skills.

I decided to use local artists artworks for the imagery on the t-shirts. This created another opportunity to interact with the community as the artists became connected with the garments and it also allows the young artists to be publicized. Since the t-shirts will be one-off items it means that the artworks will not lose their aura. I have used two images by Nicola Kurton from paintings she exhibited in her Massey University 2008 graduate exhibition. The first is of a tree that will be used on a t-shirt print and was also used as a guide for the knitted tree, the second is of an owl that I have embroidered for an accessorising piece. The second artist, Stephanie Chalmers, is based in Hamilton and works as the Exhibition Designer 3D at Waikato Museum. I have used a drypoint of hers (titled 'Taxi Interior') that was exhibited in her final year at Otago Polytechnic in 2001. I wanted to integrate the images into the piece, so I used the entire image dispersed around the t-shirt. I had the images digitally printed onto organic cotton by a local printing company Digitex. I cut the t-shirt pattern out of this, allowing the image to be broken and distorted over the entire garment. By having a maker and maker relationship experiences similar to these can be continued and give the garments a sense of trust allowing them to be treasured for a lifetime.



41. Left to Right: 1. Nicola Kurton. 2008. *Tree*. Painting (Enlarged section).
2. Nicola Kurton. 2008. *Painting with Owl*. Painting.



42. Stephanie Chalmers. 2001. *Taxi Interior*. Drypoint on canvas.



Materials

The fabrics I used were a combination of second-hand, new and organic. I have been collecting fabric gifted to me by the local community and this has become a way to gain public interest in my project and create a maker and community or contributor relationship within the New Bespoke. To source fabric from the community I put up posters, delivered flyers in letterboxes, and put up a forum on Intersect, the same website that I used to find my three clients. I had an overwhelming response and still continue to be given fabric. Unraveling the bags of fabric was like a treasure hunt. I was able to find the majority of my final fabrics within the bags of donated material. Another element to this was that I could also use a lot of the fabric through the toileing process. When toileing it is best to use materials that are as close to the final fabric as possible to gain the closest rendition of how the garment will fit. This can become extremely expensive and be seen as a huge waste of new materials. Although by being able to use secondhand/ disregarded materials it has made this process less wasteful. All of the fabrics also hold memories and stories that I will be able to pass onto my clients, again providing depth and connecting them to their garments.



(Opposite) 43. Thomas McQuillan. 2010. *T-shirt Close Up*. Photograph.

(Above) 44. Charlotte Little. 2009. *Fabric Gifted from Local Community*. Photograph.

By working with the community new relationships can grow. These relationships have an emotional aura of trust, which allows the customer to value and treasure a garment and extends the life a customer might have with their clothing. The perception of the value of clothing can change and possibly be referred to as a piece of art. Walter Benjamin (1969) argued that the process of mass-production caused works of art to lose their aura:

Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence. This includes the changes which it may have suffered in physical condition over the years as well as the various changes in its ownership (Benjamin, 1969, p.3).

I tried to resist buying new material as much as possible, meaning that I only brought material that I needed for the final garments that hadn't already been donated. I had originally assumed that I would only use certified organic materials although I began to question the necessity of this, as I thought it was more important to source all of my materials locally to reduce carbon emissions. Although New Zealand has a growing amount of organic products and suppliers, the demand is still small and so the fabric choice is limited. A couple of local businesses exist; Stansborough is a company based in Petone, Wellington. They produce certified organic merino and alpaca ("Stansborough," 2009). They have a beautiful range and although I have not had a use for their product in any of my garments in this project I did use an organic alpaca for a jacket in Pickled '08. Levana Textiles is a wholesaling company located in Levin who this year brought out a certified organic cotton and merino knit range ("Levana," 2009). I was able to use their t-shirting for all of my t-shirts including the ones that were digitally printed. These are the only organic elements in my garments. Until the New Zealand textile industry expands their organic products I will continue to source organic materials that are available within New Zealand.

I do not feel as though this is a negative element for my fabric choice as there are so many contradicting considerations that need to be taken when deciding on what materials will have the least impact on the environment. As Kate Fletcher (2008) explains:

For textile products such as furnishings, where the production phase is the dominant source of impact, most benefit is brought by making products last longer by, for example, using design strategies that improve both physical and emotional durability. This does not mean that choice of fibre is unimportant – on the contrary it is central to what a textile garment is – only that it is one amid many interconnected factors influencing overall product sustainability (Fletcher, 2008, p.5).

This is why I thought that by having a diverse mix of materials I am able to address several different factors of environmental concerns. If our fabric choices are varied then we are not putting a heavy strain on one fibre type. “This strategy of material diversity involves replacing some of the dominant or high impact fibres with alternatives, including low-chemical and organic cotton, hemp, lyocell, wool and PLA” (Fletcher, 2008, p.37). We still need to consider the life that the fibre will have and what its environmental impact will be. For example if I use organic cotton I can be assured that its fibres will have the ability to decompose into the soil without leaching toxic chemicals. This is assuming that the material has not been dyed using toxic dyes. Yet if only organic cotton fabrics are used, an overuse of the one fibre type could have a lasting effect on the cotton growers and their environment. Cotton uses an enormous amount of water to grow and it has had toll on surrounding environments and economies (“Aral Sea,” n.d.). There have been many new fibre types developed as alternative choices to cotton, for example, bamboo, which takes a third of the time to grow compared to cotton and requires much less water. However a lot of bamboo is being sourced from areas where ethical working conditions are unclear. Therefore I am sourcing my organic materials locally or from a certified supplier.

I cannot know the conditions of production of the fibres of the new fabrics I have used. This emphasizes the need for consideration of the life that the garment will have and how the garment is going to be used, therefore what materials will best suit the physical conditions that the garment will endure, in order to create a garment that can sustain a long lifetime. Also the product should hold “emotional durability,” which I am hoping that the New Bespoke will address (Fletcher, 2008, p.5).

When considering the life a garment will have, laundering is where the biggest environmental impact lies. So where possible I have made the garments care-friendly. For example, the jackets have detachable linings so that the lining can be washed separately. Modular design enables a product to be taken apart piece by piece. This means these parts can either be reattached to make a new object or if one part is destroyed it can easily be replaced without having to make an entire new product. In my project I have taken into consideration how a garment deteriorates, and how can this be considered in the design so that it becomes part of the garment. The garment is designed for its ability to be disassembled and to deteriorate aesthetically.

Transparency

A transparent production line is an authentic way for a customer to know the exact life that their garment has had. "More transparent production systems and less intermediation also provide greater opportunities for collaborations between designer, producer, and user, which, in turn, can bring new definitions to those roles" (Clark, 2008, p.435). There are several reasons why this can be difficult within the fashion industry. One being that not all materials can grow in certain communities and so they have to be shipped from international sources. Production of clothing is constantly moving to countries where clothes can be produced cheaper. This can cause ethical problems, as there is little way of knowing what conditions the materials are grown in or how garments are being made. So by keeping the sourcing of materials and manufacturing local, or from a certified source, a company can know exactly how their products are being produced.

To make my clothing transparent I too have used labeling, and a personal logon in my website for my clients. The labels explain whom the garments were designed for. This is to enable the garment to be traced back to my clients if the garments were ever lost. For my clients privacy this action will be carried out through me. The garment will ideally be sent to me and in my database I will hold the contact details of my clients so that I can send their garment back to them. This may not be deemed a direct form of transparency although the act of knowing that a garment belongs to someone, and the fact that this is embedded into the garment, will show anyone who finds this particular piece that it has more importance or value then a garment that bears only a label of a manufacturer or designer.



44. Charlotte Little. 2010. Clients Personalised Labels. Illustration.



garments

jacket

knitted jacket

jersey

t-shirt

trouser

content

these t-shirts are made from 100% certified organic cotton. this was sourced from Levana Textiles in Levin, New Zealand.

story

both of the t-shirts prints are by local artists. the tree is an image by Nicola Kurton from a painting she exhibited in her Massey University 2008 graduate exhibition. the second image titled 'taxi interior' is by artist Stephanie Chalmers, this was exhibited in her final year at Otago Polytechnic in 2001.

care

hand wash the t-shirts in cold water and line dry inside out to avoid fading. to remove smell you can also try hanging the t-shirt in a steamy room (shower) or freezing the garment, I suggest to put it in a bag first.

links

it happened in bhopal - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?vXz=BfXlJQ9c>
china blue trailor - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=roy&CUk28uo>
5ways - <http://www.5ways.info/docs/intro/intro.htm>
remove perspiration odor from clothes - <http://www.thathomesite.com/forums/load/cleaning/msg0907393314668.html?23>

about projects contact client login



The labels also detail a quirky story behind either the fabric of the garment, production of the piece or in terms of the t-shirts, who the prints were by. This is to allow the garments, on their own to maintain a brief description of their history. A more detailed version of these stories accompanied with photography is also featured through my clients' personal logon in my website. Having the stories online will allow my clients to refresh the memories that they experienced with their clothing and myself.

Through the logon function my clients will also be able to find the laundering instructions for their garments. I have chosen to leave the care instructions for the website to again address the use phase in clothing. I feel there is more to care instructions than the typical; Hand Wash in Cold Water, Dryclean Only, Do Not Iron, Do Not Tumble Dry, etc. I feel that the instructions would be more effective if they had links to show the effects that detergents do to the environment, but also include tips and alternatives that are more ecologically friendly such as Fletcher and Early's 'No Wash' project, or tips to getting the smell out of clothing without washing. "If customers fail to see a problem with their existing solution, there is a very low level of motivation to change and an accompanying high level of scepticism about the alternative" (Fletcher, 2008, p.158). Using imagery with care instructions to educate people about the reasons to change the way they launder or use clothing will reiterate why ecological practices need to be undertaken.

Evaluation

To test whether the New Bespoke has worked or not, whether these garments become something that my clients will treasure for a lifetime, requires time. Time will show whether my clients get a lot of wear out of the garments, and whether they choose to undertake what I have suggested for their clothes, for example to detach the linings to wash them separately. I realize that I have not had much time to see how the clothes work in my clients' lifestyle. However I have been able to interview one of my clients one month since gifting them with their clothes. The other two were interviewed straight after gifting them their garments. I arranged a set of questions asking them about my process and our journey over the past nine months. I wanted to document how my process and their garments have affected them, and whether it has changed the way that they buy and approach clothing, since this is where the success of my system will lie.

I wanted to clarify if the process was something that fitted in with my clients' lifestyles, and if this was a business in practice, would it be something they would journey through again. The interview started by simply asking my clients how they found the process, "...it (has) been fun. It's pretty cool seeing (the garments) take shape and seeing them designed for you as well...and finally getting them (and) wearing them and the whole process." Although my clients enjoyed the process and would "definitely" do it again, cost became the one factor that would hold them back. The garments were gifted to my clients at the end of the process as a way of thanking them for their time, so cost was never an issue. However creating alternatives to lower costs and being a local designer made the process more inviting, "I'm getting more of an appreciation for buying...good quality made for me...garments...there are the other factors like... paying someone who is local to make (the clothes) and as you were saying if you do find some fabric that is getting reused or found at the op-shop...that's good stuff..."

Following on from this, I found it important to know if the clothes felt different to other garments my clients own, because of the memories they have absorbed. If my clients have developed a connection with their garments I figured they would be less likely to discard the clothes.

It has definitely added value (to the garments) from doing (the process) and ... they fit me really well...and...being a part of the process rather than just picking them up from a store...It is more enjoyable to be a part of the process than to just buy something.

“I think that the process...made me have more of a relationship with (the garments) and also the finishing on the garments (is) a lot better than other things that I have purchased and you know that they will last better.” This illustrates that allowing a customer to participate in the design process gives garments more value making a customer treasure and use an item of clothing for a long time.

Throughout the process I became concerned if I had made clothes that encapsulated what my clients wanted. Even though I had been working with them and we had co-designed the garments together it is difficult to decipher how honest a person is being with you:

I think for myself...I was interested to see what someone else would design for me. I feel like sometimes I wear quite standard clothes all (of) the time so even though I...obviously got input into (the designs), which I wanted, I also wanted to have something slightly different to what I would normally wear.

Allowing a participatory design practice in the New Bespoke still requires the designer to come up with the designs and do the research, although the design is always clarified and rendered with the client:

Yea that's why it was so enjoyable because there was a lot of stuff there that I really really liked and I think you did get a pretty good idea of what I wanted... as a designer it's your privilege and right to do the design thing.

Design as a service is still important as the designer facilitates new ideas, and has the ability to see what is required to change or adapt the 'now,' and consideration of sustainable approaches to design, in a small business, the designer has the ability to oversee what is created.

As my clients were people who were not familiar with the fashion industry I wanted to know if the process made them appreciate how long it takes and what is involved in making garments fit properly. "...definitely, took longer, but then when you see the way the clothes fit they are...better for your body then just buying something cheap... that never...fits quite right." Considering this I wanted to know if the process changed the way my clients now approach buying clothes. My client who had been wearing the clothes for a month felt little need to shop now that he had a range of new garments, however he stated "I definitely have changed in how I would purchase clothes." Another response was:

Previously I did buy a lot of cheap clothes, and I have sort of being looking at not buying them so much because they are just throw away fashion...I buy more op-shop stuff now...But I think it does make you appreciate if you buy a lot of good pieces of clothing that you can wear for quite a while then (they have) more value...rather than cheap clothing that fit some fad.

Clearly, providing an insight into the fashion industry through the New Bespoke has changed the way that my clients approach fashion. By buying from opportunity shops and mixing garments with clothes that are of a high quality fashion could see a turn as people reduce their fast fashion purchases. One of my clients was already "staunch" about the clothes she purchased so instead of the process changing the way she buys clothing the New Bespoke gave her an insight into how the fashion industry could be. "...It has totally changed my take on the fashion industry and...where it is now but how it could be and how (clothing) could be (made) and...taking in the whole life cycle of the garment...Taking that into account during the (production of clothing) has been really inspiring because I have a whole lot more respect...for the potential of fashion."

I also wanted to know to what extent our designer and client relationship affected the way my clients respected their clothes:

Having someone make (the clothes) for you...also changes my perspective of shopping (compared to) going into a shop that buys in bulk and you know is factory made. It's much nicer to (create clothes) with someone else and have

that relationship...it's more like art I guess, it's more appreciative of being creative, definitely is a big part of the enjoyment of (the process).

Participatory design has allowed my clients to respect their clothing, giving them a stronger relationship with their garments and with me, the designer. The clothes have become items that they will keep for a long time minimising their amount of clothing waste. The New Bespoke may or may not change the way my clients purchase clothing, as this requires time, although the process has given my clients a new found respect for the fashion industry and its "potential." In one years time I will meet my clients again to re-ask these questions as I feel I have not had a sufficient amount of time to test what significance the New Bespoke has played on my clients' lives.

Conclusion

Fashion conventions have standardized the figure from illustrations through to mass manufacturing sizing systems and cost sheets. By using my amalgamated silhouettes as a base to design I have been able to use an individual's figure to create bespoke clothing for their body shape. The unconscious 'habitus' embedded in an individual's wardrobe of clothes is reflected through the amalgamated silhouette and guide me, the designer, with design lines that accompany an individual's taste.

By generating clothes that are designed for and with clients, so the clothes address their needs and suit their lifestyle, I am able to ensure I am making clothes that are not generic. Co-designing with clients allows the designer to personalize their clothes so clients can feel more connected to their clothing, and value, appreciate and understand the production of their garments. It has provided an education into how the fashion industry operates and an insight into the potential of sustainable fashion.

Participatory design also helps to generate a transparent business, although this can be further addressed through the labeling and website. By adopting a system similar to Icebreaker's "baacode" the customer can learn of their garment's material history and care instructions through a website. Creating alternative ways for customers to obtain care instructions educates them about laundering, care and the use phase of clothing, and the effects it has on the environment. This allows for the opportunity of social change.

Using cradle-to-cradle practices within the New Bespoke I will guarantee that the clothes I generate are not abusing the environment and causing problems for future generations. This can be achieved by allowing all of the products produced to be returned back to me when they are no longer wanted by my client, so that the garments can be up-cycled or down-cycled properly. This is an area in the New Bespoke that needs to be furthered, I have not had a chance to address this stage in this project. However with designers Gary Harvey and brand Junky Styling I know it can be successful. By again allowing a client to participate designing during this section of

a garments life I will be able to create clothes *for* and *with* them to still ensure that a garment is not generic.

Being a business that accommodates my clients' desires will open up the market that I serve, allowing my business to be more community driven and help spur an ethical economy. The price of garments is also an area that I would like to explore more. I realize \$382.75 for a t-shirt will be difficult to justify to a customer and this is a major obstacle to embrace the New Bespoke. I will have to research further ideas that validate personal tailoring against fast fashion from a cost perspective. I feel that the clothes can become financially viable to the client as they are of personalized quality, requiring a wardrobe where less is more than mass. The items have as identity where the client can relate to their provenance and that I feel, is where the value is placed.

I mentioned that bartering is a way to lower the cost of garments and that this is becoming popular. However there are issues and mixed opinions that arise in this area that would need further investigation. The New Bespoke will remain as a business model that is open for changes so not only the clothes but the system also is tailored for the community and the environment.

The garments that follow illustrate the end of my journey with my clients and their clothes and the beginning of theirs. The future life of the garments will be carried over moments and time until one day when they may return to me with stories to be told and a new life to begin. I feel I could develop my research further by keeping in contact with my three clients used in this project, and follow the lifecycle of their garments and their relationship with them.

I believe I am on the wheel of a new revolution where tailoring bespoke is not new, but where I can discover a new and relevant approach to a New Bespoke. Ultimately this is a journey that I feel our generation is on, a deep and desperate sense of saving our planet. Who would of thought there is a place for sustainability and fashion, where fashion has been seen to be something that is so frivolous and disposable. I hope through my studies there is a window open to a new perspective and consciousness.

My Clients' New Bespoke

46-64. Thomas McQuillan. 2010. *The New Bespoke Photoshoot*. Photograph.







































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