Kimono unfolded and reimagined— An exploration of Japanese aesthetics in Western fashion design

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Cover: *Wearing a kimono at primary school*, 2003, Personal Photograph.

Thesis declaration

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Abstract

Fashion is a strong visual language that transcends cultures, and in this globalised era, has increasingly become a place of conflict and contemplation. As a New Zealand born designer with Japanese heritage, cross cultural design, cultural misrepresentation and appropriation have become topics of interest in my fashion practice. Japonism, a late nineteenth century aesthetic movement affected the arts throughout Western culture. It opened up new design concepts to early twentieth century European fashion designers, and continues to influence contemporary fashion houses in the twenty-first century. In order to gain an insight into how Japanese fashion design is perceived by Western society, this research project looks into Japanese aesthetic principles and their impact on contemporary fashion. Late twentieth century Japanese designers Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo in addition to contemporary fast fashion brands such as Uniqlo have made their break into the Western market in an age where consumers are becoming more aware of the social and environmental impacts of fashion. The Japanese kimono continues to be worn and adapted by many people around the world and has also been a source of inspiration for many artists and designers. In this research project, the silhouette and structural form of the kimono are analysed alongside autoethnographic research methods, reflective practice, iterative design and sustainable design methods. These concepts are translated into *Kiru*, a contemporary fashion collection.

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The reason behind my cultural appreciation

My Grandfather Tadashi Hasegawa
Who was a great teacher, who continues to motivate and inspire me to keep learning

My grandfather in his study, ca.1980, Family photograph.

Contents

Introduction

Born in the 1990s to Japanese immigrant parents in New Zealand, I grew up being influenced by two cultures. The Japanese kimono has been a significant garment in my life as wearing it made me feel I was representing my culture. I recognised a difference in the Western designers interpretations of the kimono in comparison to my experiences growing up with it. This has led me to analyse the relationship between Japan and the West in the context of fashion to gain an insight into how perceptions of Japanese fashion has changed over time.

Using the terms Western and non-Western reiterates dichotomies such as "tradition versus modernity, local versus global, and the West versus the Rest in fashion studies" (Jansen and Craik 2). Unfortunately, this terminology is unavoidable. In this study, the West refers to Europe, North America and countries such as New Zealand and Australia, which are heavily influenced by British and American culture. The terms 'tradition' and 'local', are concepts regarded as stagnant and less progressive from a Eurocentric view. These are better viewed as evolving concepts and should be appreciated as individual systems.

Japan has been an inspiration to designers and artists since the late nineteenth century, particularly following the isolation period in Japan. A new wave of interest exposed a multitude of artefacts in the West. Western artists of the time depicted their Japanese collections in paintings while fashionable women adopted the kimono as a tea gown. Whilst the West was fascinated by Japan, Japan looked to the West for modern advancements. According to Toby Slade in his chapter titled "Neither East Nor West: Japanese Fashion in Modernity" in the book *Modern Fashion Traditions'* Japan was "the first non-Western nation to fully engage with euromodernity" (25). In the 1970s and 1980s, Japan became one of the first non-Western countries to enter the international fashion scene. Interestingly, the most impactful and globally successful Japanese designers did not have styles that visually related to Japanese culture, but instead an avant-garde style, grounded by Japanese aesthetic sensibilities. This innovative thinking changed the course of fashion globally.

Globalisation has led to the modernisation of many countries around the world. This has affected fashion systems worldwide and it can be seen that a global fashion style has emerged (Maynard 1). The loss of culturally specific clothing can be seen as an opportunity for fashion designers to assume the role of preserving designs for future generations to depict contemporary versions of their culture, telling story to a global audience.

The borrowing of culture is known as cultural appropriation, which has become a global issue in fashion. The most appropriated item in fashion may be the Native American headdress. It has been used in countless fashion shows including Victoria's Secret 2012 Runway Show. Caucasian model, Karlie Kloss walked down the catwalk in fringed leather

lingerie, and an extravagant Native American headdress, one which only respected male tribe leaders wear in Native American culture. As this symbolic and valued item was used out of context in a provocative lingerie campaign there was much outrage, leading to this design being cut out of all broadcasting and marketing material (International Business Times). When issues like this arise, it is not only disrespectful and devaluing, it also resurfaces the historic and on-going conflict and discrimination between two cultures. Cases like these have been gaining more Western media attention in recent years, particularly on the internet (Green and Kaiser 145). This has resulted in a significantly increased awareness around cultural appropriation. The kimono is not a sacred artefact however Western portrayals of Asian women in media have an appropriative nature, misrepresenting and reiterating an image of a submissive exotic female. These stereotypes have caused some Western interpretations of the kimono to be sexualised. Breaking down this ethnographic information is crucial in understanding the relationship between Japan and the West.

The adoption of Western clothing at an early stage has let Japan foster internationally recognised brands such as Uniqlo to contribute to the global mass of fast fashion. “Fast fashion—low-cost clothing collections based on current, high-cost luxury fashion trends—is, by its very nature, a fast-response system that encourages disposability” (Joy et al. 275). This type of low-cost production is damaging to the environment and the well-being of garment workers. Fast fashion giants such as Zara and H&M have been exposed for their unethical and unsustainable practices. In comparison, the Japanese company Uniqlo has not been criticised to the same extent. Perhaps the answer lies in the association consumers have with Japan and high-quality products.

The kimono is a cultural symbol and has come to be a staple fashion item for women around the world. The word *kimono* is made up of two words; *kiru*, to wear, and *mono*, thing. This has inspired the title of the fashion collection, *Kiru* where aspects of the kimono have been taken to inform design elements. In conjunction with this collection, this exegesis explores the intersection of Japanese and Western fashion from the late nineteenth through to the twenty-first century. Through autoethnographic research, reflective practice, iterative design and sustainable design methods, I explore these two cultures associated with myself, through the lens of fashion.

Chapter 1

Japan and the West – A cultural intersection

1.1 The Japanese kimono

The kimono is one of the worlds most recognised items of national dress. Despite Western clothing being introduced to Japan over a century ago, the pride attached to the kimono is ever-present. Throughout time the term *kimono* has come to describe the *kosode* (Fig. 1) which wraps at the front, has sleeves that hang down and is tied closed by an *obi*, a thick woven belt that is skilfully tied in an ornamental manner at the back of the wearer. The modern term *kimono* can also describe a *furisode* worn by unmarried women. The shape of this garment is the same as the *kosode* but with longer sleeves and is more colourful and ornate. The kimono derived from Chinese robes from the Sui and Tang dynasties from the seventh to tenth century (Dalby 28). From its Japanese adaptation the kimono has evolved throughout time, but has never had drastic changes to its form. The robe or dress-like kimono is often seen as solely womenswear however it is worn by men and women. Sleeve lengths, fabrication, patterns and styling differentiate occasion, age and gender.

The kimono is made from a bolt of cloth which has a standard width of thirty-six to forty centimetres and is twelve meters in length for a typical adult size. It can be bought ready-made or as a bolt of cloth and made to measure. The kimono is adjustable as the fabric width is retained in the seams in keeping with tradition where they were taken apart to be cleaned and refitted (Dalby 20). Centuries after its inception this versatile garment has come to influence many artists and designers on a global scale.

1.2 Japonism

In order to understand how the kimono has come to be so well recognised by the West it is important to understand the historic relationship between Japan and the West. Early relationships between Japan and the West show that Japanese culture adopted aspects of Western culture, while simultaneously the West were fascinated by Japanese artefacts including the kimono.

The history of Japonism started when Japan opened up to the rest of the world in 1868, the beginning of the Meiji period (1868-1912). Japan had been in isolation since the beginning of the seventeenth century due to the fear that the rise of Christianity could lead to the resistance of the *bakufu*, the military government of the time (Jansen 23).

During isolation Japan was limited to minimal trade with China and the Dutch. In 1853, Commodore Matthew C. Perry entered Japan in an attempt to persuade Japan to re-open trade with America and the rest of the world. Although not immediately the Japanese were convinced it

Figure 1. The Met Museum, *Furisode*, ca. 1900, Textile, Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 1975.1.2452.

was in their best interest to come out of quarantine and trade began once again. Japan saw the industrialisation and technological advancements that the West had been through in the previous century. They "assigned new importance on the West" (Geczy 116) using them as an example to better themselves. At the same time this was a chance for the world to see the mysterious goods Japan had been keeping behind closed doors.

Japan officially started displaying at the International Exhibitions 1862 (Kramer 6). These exhibitions were held in London, Paris and in some states in America and brought diverse cultural artefacts to the West. The interest at these exhibitions brought Japanese art and artefacts into the West becoming a source of inspiration to many artists and stores which specialised in these artefacts opened up in Europe (Geczy 117). It is evident in the works of nineteenth century artists James Tissot and James Whistler that Japanese goods of pottery, screens, prints and kimono were of great fascination and were regarded by the artists as beautiful artefacts. Impressionist painter Claude Monet was also an avid collector. His most famous works were of his Japanese garden at his property in Giverny, France inspired by his collection. Monet's *Water Lilies and Japanese Bridge* (1899) (Fig. 2) is often compared to the celebrated Japanese printmaker Katsushika Hokusai's *Under Mannen Bridge at Fukagawa* (ca. 1830-32) (Fig. 3) (Richmond-Abdou). The French term *Japonisme*, or in English, Japonism was first used in 1872 by French author Philippe Burty, meaning "to designate a new field of study of artistic, historic and ethnographic borrowings from the arts of Japan" (Lambourne 6).

1.3 Introduction of kimono to the West

There are only a few recorded cases of the kimono travelling abroad before the isolation period. One case was in 1639 where the kimono became a popular item as a domestic robe for men in Holland (Fukai 2). Then in the late nineteenth century Japonism widened the popularity of the kimono in Europe and became an inspiration for artists and fashionable tea gowns and robes for women of the upper classes. There have been many different ways to wear the kimono in Japanese history as fashions change throughout time. The Western interpretations were quite different to those as they were worn over Victorian dresses or as loose gowns. The popularity of the kimono in the West arose from its physical freedom and reinforcement of "an aesthetic ideal of languid femininity" (Kirk 112). This can be seen in the artworks of Tissot and Whistler. *Tissot's La Japonaise au bain* (1864) (Fig. 4) depicts a naked young woman wearing what looks to be an *uchikake*, an outer layer kimono. Her stance is relaxed and coy. Similarly, Whistler in *Caprice in Purple and Gold: The Golden Screen* (1864) (Fig. 5) depicts woman surrounded in Japanese objects and wearing a black kimono with a loose tie. The leisurely atmosphere, and feminine poses within these paintings may

Figure 2. Claude Monet, *Water Lilies and Japanese Bridge*, 1899, Oil on canvas, From the Collection of William Church Osborn, *Princeton University Art Museum*, artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/31852.

Figure 3. Katsushika Hokusai, *Under the Mannen Bridge at Fukagawa*, ca. 1830-32, Polychrome woodblock print, Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Metropolitan Museum of Art*, JP1332.

have been suggested by *ukiyo-e*, Japanese woodblock prints or *shunga*, Japanese erotic art. This type of art work was popularly traded and sold in Paris and London. The females in the *ukiyo-e* and *shunga* would not have represented the majority of Japanese women but more likely people of wealth, courtesans or from imagination, portrayed as examples of the ideal beauty.

According to Akiko Fukai, director and chief curator of the Kyoto Costume Institute, Western women saw the kimono as "an ease and a liberation as well as exoticism and consequently adopted them as dressing gowns"(4). As seen in Whistlers painting, the *obi* was loosely tied around the waist making the kimono very comfortable in contrast to the corsets and bustles of Victorian fashion at the time. When the kimono started being advertised in women's magazine in the 1880s they were called 'Japanese matinees' or dressing gowns however around the turn of the century the term kimono came into use (Fukai 4).

The power balance between Japan and the West is seen as one reason why the kimono was never adopted as every day wear. When the *bakufu*, visited England for the first time in 1862 (Kramer 6), local newspapers reported how Japanese men's fashion, the kimono, resembled that of a woman, thus implying the superiority England perceived over Japan. Showing a desire for potential exploitation of this culture, it is unsurprising that they gave Japan a feminine attribute (Kramer 6). Edward Said's concept of Orientalism can be applied here as the West view the Orient or the East as the opposite of themselves, the West always being the more civilised and powerful of the two. The power balance reflected through dress drove the Meiji emperor to enforce Western dress on the Japanese elite as further discussed in sub-chapter "1.4 Introduction of Western clothing in Japan".

The Silk Road was the world's longest trade route which introduced silk from China to Japan. In the early twentieth century Japan surpassed China in the production and trade of silk and also became the second largest producer and exporter of cotton goods due to the efficiency in production and technological innovation (Kiyokawa 31). Another reason for this success is attributed to the mass employment and exploitation of young female workers who were "considered to be more dexterous, docile, obedient and cheap" (Macnaughton 2) in comparison to males. This is how Japanese women came to be in the workforce in pre-war Japan, with their skill and hardworking nature contributing to the success of the Japanese textile industry (Macnaughton 8).

The textiles of Japan went on to influence theatre and fashion in the late nineteenth century. *The Mikado* (1885) was a comic opera by Arthur Sullivan and W.S. Gilbert. First performed in the midst of the Japonism movement, this play presented an impressive collection of imported

Figure 4. James Tissot, *La Japonaise au bain*, 1864, Oil on canvas, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon, *Wikipedia Commons*, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Japonaise_au_bain_James_Tissot_1864.jpg.

Figure 5. James Abbott McNeil Whistler, *Caprice in Purple and Gold: The Golden Screen*, 1864, Oil on wood panel, Freer Art Gallery, *Wikipedia Commons*, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:James_McNeill_Whistler_-_Caprice_in_Purple_and_Gold-_The_Golden_Screen_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg.

Japanese items and costumes. The opera comments on the British love for bureaucracy, however set in a Japanese fictional town of Titipu, with characters Nanki-Poo, Pooh-Bah and Yum-yum often portrayed by Caucasian actors, *The Mikado* continues to be a racially controversial play. *Madame Chrysenthéme* (1887), *Madame Butterfly* (1898), *Madama Butterfly* (1904), *Miss Saigon* (1989) and *Memoirs of a Geisha* (1997) are all stories by male authors depicting young Japanese women in love. Aside from *Memoirs of a Geisha* all of these young women have Western love interests. In *Madama Butterfly* by Giacomo Puccini "…men are men, women are women, Japanese Japanese, Americans Americans, as defined by narrative conventions. And the predictable happens: West wins over East, Man over Woman, White Man over Asian Woman" (Kondo 10). These famous plays broadened the exotic, obedient and sexualised image of Asian women. Misrepresentation can affect the way children of immigrants and of minority cultures perceive their ancestral homes, cultures and people. This is expressed by Yoko Kawaguchi in the book *Butterfly's Sisters*:

> I used to be greatly irritated that the geisha appeared to be one of the chief images associated with Japan and its culture. That mincing, simpering personification of female subservience to the male infuriated me. I was annoyed at the persistence of such an anachronistic image of Japan. … I felt that the geisha was being held up to me as a standard of exotic glamour that I could not possibly hope to live up to. But then what did I know about real Japanese geishas? What I was reacting against was a western construct – a western image of oriental femininity based upon reports...of the Japanese pleasure quarters... (1)

Kawaguchi describes this memory from America in the 1970s, nevertheless, many would still be able to relate to these perceptions of their own culture being portrayed inaccurately by a more dominant culture. Globalisation, the internet and accessible travel assists in unveiling these misconceptions that are still prevalent in the twenty-first century. The misconceptions have affected how the kimono is seen from a Western perspective. As seen in the paintings of Tissot and Whistler, the kimono is depicted in an exotic and hyper-feminised manner.

Known as the founder of Haute Couture, Charles Frederick Worth and celebrated French designers, Madeleine Vionnet and Paul Poiret were among the first Western fashion designers to take influence from the kimono. Worth made garments with asymmetric Japanese-style motifs where the "entire surface of the garment is treated as a single design field of canvas, a mode of decoration common in Japanese kimono" (Fukai 6). Asymmetric design is a characteristic of Japanese art and the kimono, it was rarely seen in Western clothing design at the time (Fukai 6). In the 1890s Lyon silk manufacturers emphasised Japanese motifs such as

flowing water, birds and waves, the most popular being chrysanthemums and blossoms which continue to be used in Japanese inspired fashion collections (Fukai 6). In the late nineteenth century there was a shift in women's fashion as British dress reformers criticised the unnatural and uncomfortable fashions, in particular the corset (Kramer 14). Poiret introduced a new silhouette free of the corset, which draped from the shoulders and like the kimono, celebrated textiles with a rectangular cut (Fukai 7) (Fig. 6). Vionnet also took inspiration from the cut of the kimono, she "found inspiration in the structure of the kimono itself. Stressing the loose fit and flat construction of her dresses, she created clothing that flowed over the three-dimensional form of the body from pieces cut almost entirely along straight lines." (Fukai 9) As discussed later in "Chapter 4: Methods and Processes" the collection *Kiru* is similarly informed by the structure of the kimono. As the form of the kimono is minimal, naturally Vionnet's designs were too, again being radically different from the Victorian dresses in fashion roughly a decade ago. She went on to experiment with her famous bias cut dresses which have come to influence many contemporary designers.

1.4 Introduction of Western clothing in Japan

While the West looked to Japan for artistic inspiration, Japan looked to the West as an example of a progressive society. The judgement of the British did not go unnoticed by the Japanese. The Meiji Emperor insisted that Western dress be adopted in the Imperial Courts and by elites of the port cities of Nagasaki and Yokohama, to show signs of civilisation and enlightenment to the world (Fig. 7). There was a shift in thinking as the term for clothing had previously been known as *fuku*, or *kimono*, with its original meaning 'a thing to wear'. When Western fashion was introduced there became a division. *Wafuku*, came to describe Japanese clothing including the new meaning of kimono, the *kosode* or *furisode* and *yōfuku*, to describe Western clothing. *Wa* means peace but it also signifies Japanese origins when placed at the beginning of a word (Hara 9). *Yō*, on the other hand describes Western origin. Words that describe food, *washoku* and *yōshoku* to types of rooms *washitsu* and *yōshitsu* use *wa* and *yō* to differentiate its origin. This can be seen as a Japanese resistance to becoming completely assimilated with Western culture.

Unlike Western women who wore their kimono as domestic garments, Japanese men and women only wore their Western attire outside. This was due to the domestic setting of low tables and a culture of sitting on *tatami*, traditional straw flooring instead of chairs and high tables. The excessive fabric and bustles of Victorian dress made sitting on the floor impractical. Another reason for wearing Western attire outside only was because Japanese households do not wear shoes inside, nor did they wear covered shoes. Japanese footwear was traditionally *waraji*, straw sandals

Figure 6. Paul Poiret, *Mantle*, ca. 1913, Wool lined, with silk chiffon, hand sewn, Victoria and Albert Museum, *Victoria and Albert Museum*, T.165&A-1967.

Figure 7. Yōshū Chikanobu, ca. 1889, *"Ceremonial Attire" from the series An Array of Auspicious Customs of Eastern Japan*, Triptych of polychrome woodblock prints; ink and color on paper, Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Metropolitan Museum of Art*, JP3198.

or *geta*, a type of wooden sandal with *tabi* socks which have a split between the first and second toes. *Waraji* and *geta* were easily taken off when entering indoors and slipped on when going outside.

The West, uncomfortable with the modernising Japan, would find amusement in the Japanese with their ill-fitted suits (Kramer 11). At this time the skill of tailoring was new to Japan and many of the imported accessories such as hats from Europe were too big for Japanese men and women. Unaware or overlooking these remarks the Meiji government deemed the kimono impractical for modern life and new professions such as police, army and postal workers adopted Western uniforms (Kramer 10). The adoption of Western clothing for the majority of Japan was a gradual process as political events and war often changed Japans relationship with the West.

In the twenty-first century, the kimono is worn as a symbolic item rather than everyday wear. Regarded as the national dress of Japan it is worn mainly on festive occasions such as New Year, *Seijinshiki*, Coming of Age Day, *Shichigosan*, which celebrates the growth and well-being of children who are three, five and seven, weddings, funerals and for traditional arts such as *chanoyu*, tea ceremony or *ikebana*, flower arrangement.

The Coming of Age Day celebrates the beginning of adulthood. Women and men turning twenty gather locally together to celebrate this event. The kimono clad woman is a symbol of Japan and the Coming of Age Day is a day where many girls put the kimono on for the first time in their adult lives to celebrate (Fig. 8). As the traditional kimono loses its popularity there become fewer people who own and know the customs associated with it, therefore families may spend hundreds of dollars to rent a kimono and have their daughter photographed for this day. Despite young women and their families spending excessive amounts of money to create an ideal Japanese woman, young men who attend the event usually wear Western suits which can be worn again in their future jobs. Women are seen as ornamental and men as rational (Goldenstein-Gidoni 352). This gender inequality emphasises how conservative the Japanese way of thinking of women is. Ideas such as *ryosai kenbo*, a good wife and good mother has held women back in terms of equality in homes and workplaces. Despite these facts it could be argued that the kimono symbolises strong and beautiful women who are proud of their culture. My grandmother (Fig. 9) is my cultural teacher and is the woman who introduced me to the beauty of the kimono. She was a good wife and a good mother but also an independent woman who had a successful career and has a love for Japanese traditional arts. My image of the kimono was shaped by her and I continue to learn from her to someday pass her knowledge to someone else.

Figure 8. Supla Supla Photography Studio, *Coming of Age celebration*, 13 Jan. 2015, Personal photograph.

Figure 9. *Wedding photograph of my Grandmother and Grandfather*, 22 Nov. 1964, Family photograph.

For decades, the decline in the popularity of the kimono has been putting a strain on the kimono making industry. In order to maintain business, kimono makers branch out to more contemporary fields such as artist collaborations and dynamic designs to engage with the new generation (Okazaki 30). Notably when En Isomoto, the director at Chiso, a 460 year old kimono company, was asked what aspirations he has for the future, his answer was that he would like to see European, American and African women wearing kimono (Okazaki 26). The popularity of Japanese culture and the kimono among foreign people may be what keeps kimono culture alive.

Chapter 2

Japan and contemporary fashion in a globalised world

2.1 Globalisation and identity

"It is culture that allows us to make sense out of sensation, to find meaning in a universe which has none" (Davis 19). Anthropologist and National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence, Wade Davis emphasises that as biodiversity in animals and plants is diminishing, so too are cultures. Clothing is affected by this decrease. Clothing specific to cultures is being replaced by a global style which is described as a t-shirt and jeans (Kaiser 119). Western clothing was a symbol of a civilised and modernised Japan in the Meiji Period and in the twenty-first century younger generations from non-Western countries are rejecting their own cultural dress and adopting a global style. Much like the kimono, culturally specific dress can be impractical for an active lifestyle especially for women. This rapid change is resulting in the loss of knowledge and skills associated with the kimono. Designers can play an important role in preserving their local fashion. Jansen and Craik state that:

> Contemporary fashion designers are increasingly tapping into their local cultural heritage (tradition) for inspiration to create distinctive design identities, while simultaneously reinventing/modernizing it. On the one hand, in a globalized world, this allows designers to differentiate themselves in a highly competitive international fashion market, while on the other hand, on a national level, it makes them successful as a result of a general revaluation of local cultural heritage as a counter reaction to cultural globalization (4).

If this is successfully achieved, these designers can help their local communities in numerous positive ways. Helping local artisans and craftsmen continue their work, training and upskilling local people, reviving garments that are no longer worn and informing the world about local culture. As a fashion designer, connecting the history of dress with political relationships between the West and Japan has been and an interesting way to study my own heritage.

Designer Angel Chen was inspired by John Galliano's Spring Summer 2007 Madame Butterfly collection and decided to become a fashion designer (Chen). She moved from China to London to attend the prestigious Central Saint Martins. After graduating in 2014, she launched her eponymous label aiming to change the low quality and mass manufacturing image of 'Made in China' where she proudly manufactures her garments (Chen). Her vivid colours, intricately designed prints and imaginative accessories are often inspired by "Chinese literature, opera, songs or traditional handcraft and heritage elements" (Chen). She has been "coupling Chinese tradition with contemporary Western ready-to-wear" (Chen) in order to make it easier for Asian and Western audiences to understand her work. Her beautifully designed and executed clothing is setting a new standard for 'Made in China' products.

Chen's idea of coupling tradition with contemporary design is similar to *Kiru*, where elements of the kimono are made into contemporary garments appealing to a wider audience.

In speaking of culture and fashion, cultural appropriation is an inevitable issue. According to Veronica Strang and Mark Busse, appropriation is:

> "the act of making something one's own .... Appropriation is also a part of the process of owning objects that previously belonged to others. In this expanded sense, *appropriation* covers a range of actions, from those that can be framed positively in terms of agency and creativity… to others (such as theft) that are more negative, and still others (such as enslavement and appropriation through violence) that are nefarious." (4)

As a New Zealand born Japanese designer using the kimono as inspiration, it is important to be aware of the cultural and political issues that surround my work. The ownership of culture has no clear distinctions therefore issues around cultural appropriation must be understood to avoid misinterpretation and causing offence. "Designers like Yves Saint Laurent and John Galliano, who owe their success, to a large extent, to their collections inspired by Eastern Europe, North Africa, and Asia, while the actual designers from these regions have rarely succeeded in truly penetrating the global fashion industry apart from the Japanese" (Jansen and Craik 4). It can be said that all contemporary designers appropriate in fashion design even if it is appropriating Western culture which is difficult to recognise in such a Eurocentric industry. The terms West and Non-West perpetuates a dichotomy and disregards the very diverse and complicated relationships of cultures around the world (Jansen and Craik 2). The aforementioned history of Japan and the West, particularly nineteenth century England and France, can be summarised as an exchange of politically charged decisions which have become the constitutive elements for the following histories and thought of clothing. Considering each country or groups of people have their own unique history, the simplification of cultures can be avoided through research and respect.

Cultural appropriation can be a complicated issue as people find things offensive in varying degrees. In 2015 Boston Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) hosted an event called 'Kimono Wednesday'. This was an event celebrating the painting *La Japonaise* (1876) (Fig. 10) by Claude Monet. It depicts his wife Camille Monet wearing an *uchikake* with many *uchiwa*, a type of Japanese fan hanging from on the wall behind her. Commissioned by a Japanese company, a replica of this kimono was made in Japan to try on and engage with the painting in an alternative way (Valk 380). It had successfully travelled Japan before reaching Boston MFA. Soon after the event started Asian American protestors started

Figure 10. Claude Monet, *La Japonaise, Madame Monet en costume japonais*, 1876, Oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, *Wikipedia Commons*, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Claude_Monet-Madame_Monet_en_costume_japonais.jpg.

showing up holding signs claiming "this is racism. This is appropriation. This is orientalism" (Valk 381). Japanese people were not offended by this event, however Asian Americans felt otherwise. This was due to the racism and negative experiences of being a cultural minority in daily life along with ancestors who may have had traumatic pasts in countries such as America due to the history of war and internment. Japan, a relatively ethnically homogeneous society, views Caucasian Americans trying on the kimono as a sign of cultural appreciation, and therefore unsurprisingly, counter protestors were at the event holding signs that said "I am Japanese. I am not offended by Kimono Wednesdays." (Valk 382).

Another reason the Japanese audience was not offended may be due to self-orientalism. According to Hiroshi Narumi "Self-Orientalising, … is the other's gaze diverted to themselves through an appropriation of the Western gaze and Orientalism directed at other Asian countries. These gazes cannot be explained by the unilateral dominance of the West over the non-West" (313). Japan self-orientalises utilising artefacts like the kimono or cuisine such as sushi to sell their culture and cultural experiences to themselves and foreigners. Magazines and advertisements often use the idea of finding the lost Japan or experiencing the old Japan as a way to capitalise their own culture (Kondo 79). The increasingly Westernised Japan may not care about the kimono being used as a tool of communication as it is often used in this way.

> "While appropriation has been a cog in the fashion machine as long as people have engaged in trade and communicated cross-culturally, it has recently become foregrounded in pop culture and mass media. Consciousness and criticism of appropriation have proliferated throughout the blogosphere, social media, and other online and print outlets..." (Green and Kaiser 145)

Though this consciousness is a positive movement there is no definite distinction between what faces critique and what is simply seen as inspiration. Harmful cultural appropriation can be avoided by taking some time to study the current and historic political issues of the countries involved, researching meanings behind prints or specific garments to make sure they are not sacred or disrespectfully used.
In conjunction with these ideas it is also important to include people of these cultures into the idea generating and making process. This can be achieved by respectfully collaborating with local artisans and giving back to the communities who inspired the project, ensuring all monetary gain and credit does not go solely to the designer or company who may be at an economic advantage.

2.2 A new wave for Japanese design

The loss of World War II (1939-1945) shattered the Japanese economy. A few decades later however, Japan began to make its mark on the Western fashion world, this time with their own designers. Hanae Mori who grew up during the war began making clothes for the wives of American military personnel (Mori). Mori travelled to New York in 1961 where she saw clothing made in Japan sold cheaply on the basement floors in the big department stores (Mori). There she became determined to see her clothing on the top floor with the high end designer clothing, which she achieved and went on to become the first Asian female to have joined *La Chambre Syndicate de la Couture Parisienne*, an exclusive group of haute-couture designers (Kondo 61). Another great post-war designer is Kansai Yamamoto, most famously known for his collaboration with David Bowie in the early 1970's. He was the first Japanese fashion designer to show in London in 1971. Both Mori and K. Yamamoto took influence from Japanese culture. Mori with her famous butterfly motifs and K. Yamamoto for taking inspiration from Kabuki theatre and Hokusai prints creating a colourful bricolage of shapes and textures. Unlike their self-exoticised designs (Skov 216), designers Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo from Comme des Garçons became famous for their avant-garde prêt-à-porter, ready to wear designs which shocked the Parisian fashion scene in the 1970s and 1980s. The shock came from many aspects such as using the colour black, not following Western beauty ideals and their techniques of deconstruction. Often lumped together as 'Japanese designers' they were marginalised, having their names misspelt, only being associated to their culture and being overly criticised in whatever they did (Kondo 68). The Western criticism again, came from wider economic and societal issues.

Their designs did not utilise their Japanese heritage visually, nevertheless they had concepts of Japanese beauty and values ingrained in their work. Bonnie English in her book refers to Earle M. Yoshida's four key traits of Japanese art which differentiates itself from Western:

> He points out that the Japanese developed their own particular form of symmetry, as they used a diagonal rather than a centrally placed horizontal or vertical line when dividing a rectangle. Secondly, they attempted to achieve a balance based on an inner meaning rather than shape or proportion. Thirdly, they placed a greater emphasis on negative space in their compositions, a technique adopted from the Chinese in the sixteenth century, to create a sense of depth. Finally, Japanese art reflects an intense sympathy with nature, evoking an emotional response inherent in the beauty of the natural world. (18)

In 1984 at the Japan Today Conference, Miyake explained that his lack of Western heritage was a disadvantage but also an advantage as he was free from Western convention and combined with the rich history of

Japan, he hoped to create contemporary and universal fashion (Kondo 60). Carrying similar ideas and cultural pasts, this contemporary and universal fashion created by these designers had ingrained Japanese aesthetic sensibilities which differentiated them from other designers. This type of synthesis of Western and Japanese aesthetic traits is what *Kiru* aims to achieve.

Miyake's alternative methods of pattern cutting and innovation in pleats and folding garments were studied while designing this collection. *132 5.* by Miyake (Fig. 11) has three dimensional garments that can be beautifully folded into flat shapes. This play on dimensions is a connection to the Japanese history of clothing, where the kimono can be folded into a perfect rectangle and stored flat. This example of a traditional Japanese concept interpreted in contemporary fashion led me to think similarly in the design process of *Kiru*, taking structural elements of the kimono and applying it to contemporary garments.

From the late nineteenth century Japanese fashion was defined by the kimono, to some extent it still is, however the influence of the three incredibly forward thinking designers Miyake, Yamamoto and Kawakubo changed the parameters of fashion and because of their heritage, the perception of Japanese fashion.

2.3 Contemporary Japanese fashion

Miyake, Yamamoto and Kawakubo had successful debuts in the 1980s and are still very active and creating more innovative garments for the world. They have come to inspire many designers locally and globally and have contributed to Tokyo becoming the first epicentre of fashion in Asia.

Despite having innovative and highly talented local designers, like other globalised countries, fast fashion dominates the fashion market in Japan. Since the adoption of Western clothing in the Meiji era, Japan has corresponded with the West in terms of manufacturing technology and the cost of clothing. Uniqlo, a Japanese owned brand, has become one of the biggest fast fashion companies in the world. The Japanese label is known internationally for its affordability, good quality and simple everyday garments. What is not as well known in the West is that locally Uniqlo and its larger group Fast Retailing is known to be a *black kigyou*, a dubious company which carries out unethical practices in the workplace. Generally, *black kigyou* are known for overworking their staff, unsafe work environments and low wages. Despite Fast Retailing having a positive brand image when it comes to social and environmental responsibilities, an investigation carried out in 2016 by War on Want (an anti-poverty charity and organisation based in London), and Students and Scholars against Corporate Misbehaviour (SACOM) show that

Figure 11. Toshihiro Gamo, *Issey Miyake Aoyama*, 7 Dec. 2013, Photograph, *Flickr*, www.flickr.com/photos/dakiny/11303381505/in/photostream/.

their overseas factories were not complying to the Code of Conduct they had set for themselves (Narayanasamy 1). They were underpaying and overworking factory workers in hazardous conditions with no appropriate safety gear (Narayanasamy 12). Uniqlo's retail stores in Japan have also been scrutinised in the last few years by journalist Masuo Yokota working undercover and publishing a book entitled *The Glory and Disgrace of Uniqlo*. Fast fashion brands such as Zara and H&M are constantly in the international media for their unethical and unsustainable practices. Despite this H&M are partners with the Copenhagen Fashion Summit, which primarily focuses on issues around sustainable practices in the fashion industry. Their efforts are questionable as what they present at these events are not yet apparent in their stores.

In comparison Japanese owned Uniqlo has not had as much bad press in Western media. Is there something about the polite and non-confrontational perception of Japanese people and sense of trust Western consumers have with Japanese products that keeps Japanese brands from criticism? A study carried out by database company Statista in 2017 shows that Japan is ranked eighth equal with the United States and France out of forty-nine countries for their reputation for quality goods made in their own country. The majority of Uniqlo products are not made in Japan nevertheless associations with Japan may be enough for consumers to favour the brand. Ironically, China which came second to last in the Statista study is one of the brands main manufacturers (Statista).

This study is telling that Japan has come a long way in terms of the perception of Japanese products since Mori Hanae's experience in the 1960s and their products are received well globally. Unfortunately this has bought along a sense of trust and consumers are not always buying what they are led to believe. This is a matter of changing consumer habits to look more deeply into a products origin, buying what aligns with their ethics and for companies to have transparent supply chains.

2.4 Japonism in the twenty-first century

The culturally rich romanticised Japan and the avant-garde futuristic Japan are two main narratives portrayed by Western designers and in popular culture. Designer John Galliano is known for historic and cultural referencing in his work. The John Galliano 1994 Fall Ready to wear collection and the 2007 Spring Summer Couture collection for Christian Dior were both successful and referenced the kimono and Japanese culture. The 1994 collection was referencing 1920s Paris with fur, black silky slips and kimono inspired shapes. He looked to Poiret and Vionnet who were both leading fashion designers in the Japonism movement. An Another magazine article states "The collection itself was a study of Kiki de Montparnasse, a beacon of 1920s sex appeal, and the

occidental fantasy of the Orient as a fertile land of erotic-exotic impulses." and the muse was an "oriental kittenish princess" (Ahmed par. 5). Just over a decade later Galliano, designing for Dior, created a spectacle of a show inspired by a recent trip to Japan and the love affair depicted in the opera *Madame Butterfly*. He brought the folded shapes of origami to life through bold and feminine dresses with Japanese prints and detailed floral motifs (Fig. 12). These collections were very successful and well received, nevertheless words such as "oriental kittenish princess" describing Galliano's muse are problematic in reiterating the fetishisation of submissive Asian women which continues to be a problem in the twenty-first century.

Prada in Spring 2013 and Alexander McQueen in Spring 2015 presented a new decade of Japanese inspired collections. Their colour palettes were red, black, pink and white, often used in Asian inspired clothing. Satin fabrics and floral motifs along with futuristic elements appeared in both collections. Prada with their silver, gold and red *tabi* socks and *geta*-like shoes and McQueen with black lacquered frames bordering the faces of the models. As high fashion influences fast fashion trends, the Westernised kimono has been a popular fashion item sold in stores globally.

Since the late 1990s Japanese fashion took on another look from the Western perspective, the Harajuku girl. This was due to the rise of the fashion magazine Fruits and Italian American pop-star Gwen Stafani's back up dancers, the Harajuku Girls. Harajuku is a district in Tokyo which is the home of many independent fashion boutiques and second hand stores. Typically Harajuku fashion is an eccentric bricolage of colours, eras and different subcultures. This fashion has put Harajuku on the map for tourists from all around the world and added another definition as to what could be described as Japanese fashion.

Maximalism is embedded in the Japanese urban landscape with its towering buildings, colourful advertisements and overcrowded trains. This concept of maximalism is reflected in Harajuku street fashion and can also be seen in the works of famous Japanese artists such as Takashi Murakami, known for his vibrant anime inspired creations and Yayoi Kusama, whose iconic dot paintings have travelled around the world. On the contrary Japan is also associated with minimalism. In the mid-fifteenth century, a cultural resetting took place, where after the civil war known as the Ōnin War, the notion of simplicity began. This was a mass destruction of many art and artefacts and consequently was an immense cultural loss. "Perhaps due to a philosophical resignation arising from enormous cultural loss a taste for the simple and quiet – a sensibility favouring bleak, rustic beauty – had emerged" (Hara 11). Ashikaga Yoshimasa a *shōgun*, chief military commander of the time with a good sense of aesthetics began appointing talented people of all social status'

Figure 12. Marc-Henri Le Noir, *John Galliano pour Dior*, 19 March 2017, Photograph. *Flickr*, www.flickr.com/photos/mhlenoir/33372810572/in/photolist-SR3m7Y-SR3nTJ-TPsRDx-4Z4YB8. Reprinted by permission of Marc-Henri Le Noir.

as *dōbōshu*, cultural advisors. They each had a talent, some of which are familiar to Western society such as *ikebana* and *chanoyu* (Hara 11). Zen Buddhism from China was introduced around the same time and therefore the word zen has come to be associated with a lot of Japanese art, design and architecture (Hara 11). Although now there are many other aesthetic categories in Japan, this notion of simplicity has progressed through to the twenty-first century popularising an association with Japan and minimalism. The term *wabi sabi* is a Japanese principle that has gained popularity globally among many fields such as lifestyle, art and design. The term is specifically undefinable but breaking down the words, *wabi* means tranquil simplicity and *sabi* is the patina of age (Itō 7). Simply put it is about embracing impermanence and imperfection.

Chapter 3

Methods and processes

Figure 13. Sally Young, *Front view of Yama Dress*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 14. Sally Young, *Back view of Yama Dress*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 15. Sally Young, *Front view of Sasa Top and Hakama Culottes*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 16. Sally Young, *Back view of Sasa Top and Hakama Culottes*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 17. Sally Young, *Front view of Ran Top*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 18. Sally Young, *Back view of Ran Top*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 19. Sally Young, *Front view of Momo Shirt Dress*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 20. Sally Young, *Back view of Momo Shirt Dress*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 21. Sally Young, *Front view of Bow Coat*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 22. Sally Young, *Back view of Bow Coat*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 23. Sally Young, *Front view of Bralette and Bow Pant*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 24. Sally Young, *Back view of Bralette and Bow Pant*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 25. Sally Young, *Front view of Oblong Top (Master in Design version)*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 26. Sally Young, *Back view of Oblong Top (Master in Design version)*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 27. Sally Young, *Front view of Maki Jumpsuit*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 28. Sally Young, *Back view of Maki Jumpsuit*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 29. Sally Young, *Front view of Kiku Dress*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 30. Sally Young, *Back view of Kiku Dress*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 31. Sally Young, *Front view of Kami Dress*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 32. Sally Young, *Back view of Kami Dress*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 33. Sally Young, *Front view of Ten Vest*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 34. Sally Young, *Back view of Ten Vest*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 35. Sally Young, *Front view of Yama Pant and shorts*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 36. Sally Young, *Back view of Yama Pant and shorts*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 37. Sally Young, *Green Obi Bag and Momo Shirt Dress*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 38. Sally Young, *Yellow Obi Bag and Bow Coat*, 2018, Photograph.

3.1 Autoethnographic method

As this research project evolved from my bicultural upbringing, autoethnographic methods are appropriate to bring together lived experiences and opinions with contemporary design. Self-observational, self-reflective and personal memory data are autoethnographic methods that help to convey an author and designer's lived experience and personal voice (Chang 90). According to Heewon Chang, "Self-observational data from the present, when compared with personal memory data, can reveal changes and continuity in your life over time" (90). Personal memory data from my past is woven throughout relevant chapters of this exegesis in order to bring insight into the origins and the close relationship I have with the topics surrounding this project. Self-reflection is carried out through researching and understanding experiences and thoughts of other authors in a comparative study with my own.

3.2 Reflective practice and iteration

Reflection and iteration have played a crucial role in the development of the final outcome of this fashion collection. During each step of the design process, garment and silhouette analysis has helped to develop the concept and overall aesthetic. Pattern making software, Gerber was used to create an initial base pattern or shape and then alterations were made when draped on a form. This was then translated back onto the digital pattern and then physically sampled again. Designing in both two dimensional and three dimensional forms meant there were changes at every step of the process. There was a constant reflective element of taking what worked from the first round of sampling to further modify in keeping with my concept and research.

3.3 Reflecting on two cultures

Every phase of the research, design, making, styling and communication was informed by a personal bicultural perspective. Much like a visual symbol of myself, there are Japanese kimono elements such as the geometric shapes, emphasised sleeves and use of ties, as well as obvious Western influences such as set-in sleeves or a classic shirt collar. This method of reflecting on two cultures allowed the collection to become a hybrid of cultures engaging with topics such as cultural appropriation and issues around race. These topics were expressed by the author Yoko Kawaguchi and the protestors at the 'Kimono Wednesday' event. Issues around ethical values in the fashion industry have been taken into consideration throughout the whole process.

3.4 Sustainable fashion production methods

Zero-waste pattern cutting, as a means of alternative pattern cutting, is a respected and well-known aspect of kimono making. Many historic garments were zero or minimal waste due to scarcity of materials. As fast fashion is distorting value systems and spreading the problem of disposable clothing, the importance of valuing materials is becoming revised. Zero waste pioneers Timo Rissanen and Holly McQuillan note "Where conventional design process often conclude in the pattern, zero waste fashion design can begin with it" (42). This was the method for designing many of the garments in *Kiru*. Rather than sketching a design, the fabric and pattern drove the process of design and production resulting in minimal waste patterns.

3.5 Processes

A process that was used in the designing and making stage involved taking a three dimensional geometric shape and translating it into fabric, then draping it over the body. This process was inspired by contemporary Japanese brand, Anrealage in their Spring Summer 2009 collection titled "○△□". Their website states:

> The theme is transforming symbols into apparel using globes, pyramids and cubes. These garments modeled over three-dimensional forms, transform utterly into new shapes when they meet the human body. I pursued the potential of creating clothes based on the most geometric forms, ○△□. (Anrealage par. 1)

These garments were unique to this method of designing through creating a desired shape first, rather than prioritising the fit on the body. The method explained in 4.4 used a combination of Gerber software and draping to originate minimal waste and geometric shaped garments. This method was an effective way to obtain the geometric shapes and angles that are reminiscent of the kimono. It was also effective in creating minimal waste garments, starting with the pattern and the width of the fabric to tessellate the shapes resulting in economic use of fabric. One of the most successful pieces using this method was the Oblong Top. It is made out of a light blue organza and is made of only rectangular pieces excluding the neck band (Fig.39). The choice of fabric along with the sculptural and angular shapes created a garment that became a centrepiece of the collection. During the iterative process I developed the pattern to use a tie closure at the centre back of the neck. Developments in design no longer included the bamboo button closure as the laser-cut buttons did not give the desired outcome practically or visually (Fig 40). In order to experiment with the drape of the garment I used a lighter silk organza than the previous version, in a similar light blue tone in keeping

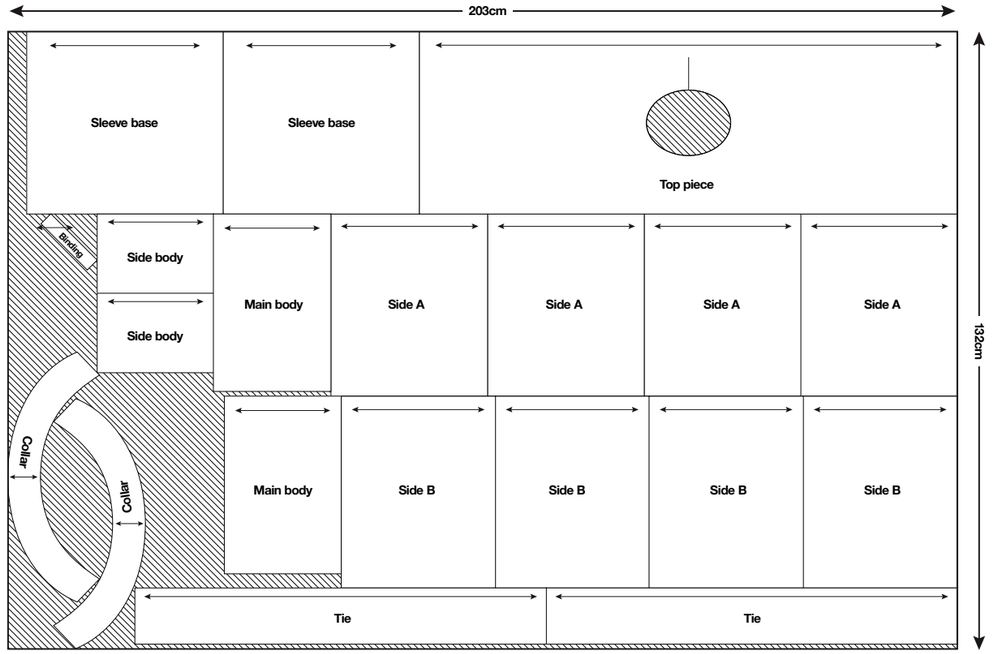


Figure 39. Yoshino Maruyama, *Lay plan of Oblong Top*, 2019, Illustration.

Figure 40. Sally Young, *Comparison of back closures, Bachelor of Design with Honours pictured left and Master in Design iteration pictured right*, 2019.

Figure 41. Sally Young, *Comparison of drape and opacity of fabric, Bachelor of Design with Honours pictured left and Master in Design iteration pictured right*, 2019.

with the colour palette (Fig 41). The overall effect was a much softer transparent blouse-like top which created a visual connection between a familiar garment of the West using Japanese inspired techniques. The junctions of the french seams in the corners of the sleeve created a point resulting in a subtle sculptural quality. An iteration of this style is the golden silk chiffon Kiku Dress. The silhouette of this dress is similar to the kimono as it is very straight through the body and has long sleeves like the *furisode*. The simple split in the neckline allows all the pieces in this dress to be rectangles, again allowing the pattern to have minimal waste.

Western garments that have similarities with Japanese garments have been taken and altered to further become a collaboration of the two cultures. To me, culottes resemble the Japanese *hakama* (Fig. 42), a garment worn over the kimono for better movement. Pleats in the front and a flared A-line silhouette are paired with a thick waistband to subtly show the placement of an *obi*. This garment styled with the Sasa Top has a silhouette similar to a *hakama* worn over a kimono (Fig. 43). The collar of the Ten Vest references the kimono, purposefully very straight and parallel to the break line in order to achieve an effect like that of the kimono neckband. The closure is a thick tie that is again reminiscent of the *obi*. The gathered detail in the back gives a sense of the pulling that is a big part of putting on a kimono (Fig. 44). A very tactile memory from my childhood was my grandmother tugging at my *obi* making sure it was tight enough. The thick band was always a relief to take off. The kimono is held to the body only by ties therefore, the wearer or dresser must ensure that all the ties are tight to avoid unraveling. The Ten Vest has an asymmetric hem and detailing in the back, as does the Bow Coat. Yoshida's four principles of Japanese art extends into fashion with symmetry not only being horizontal and vertical but also diagonal. The shorter hem has a longer tie and the longer hem has a shorter tie balancing both sides, demonstrating the same sense of diagonal balance that many kimono artworks have.

Another detail of the collar can be seen from the back of the Momo Shirt Dress and Bow Coat. The nape of the neck is one of the most erotic areas of the body that can be displayed when wearing a kimono. It is usually only *maiko*, young *geisha* and *geisha* that expose this area (Fig. 45). My grandmother would tell me that young girls should only have a gap the width of three fingers at the back of the neck or else it is too promiscuous. Despite having no knowledge of kimono customs, my younger self had subconsciously constructed an image in my head that adult women or beautiful women wear their kimono with the nape of their neck showing. This idea came from seeing images of *geisha* on tourism advertisements and films. Liza Dalby in her book *Kimono*: *Fashioning Culture* says that "the signifiers of sexiness in the language of kimono are obvious" (206)

Figure 42. Ken Lee, *Graduation Spring 2009 20*, 23 March 2009, Photograph, *Flickr*, www.flickr.com/photos/kenleewrites/3384252653/in/photostream/.

Figure 43. Sally Young, *Hakama Culottes*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 44. Sally Young, *Back view of Ten Vest*, 2018, Photograph.

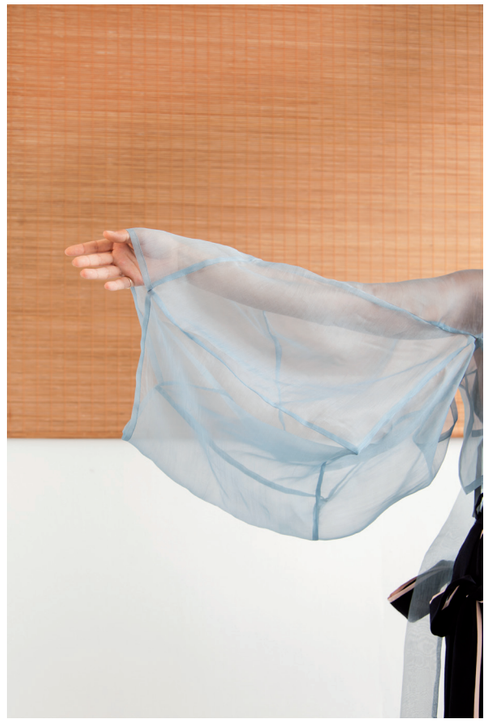
Figure 45. Ayaka Yamada, *Geisha in Ponto-chō Kyoto*, 2017, Photograph.

Figure 46. Sally Young, *Nape of neck on Momo Shirt Dress*, 2018, Photograph.

and that “Napier is definitely sexier” (207). As a conservative country, older Japanese women would be unimpressed at young Japanese women wearing their kimono in the geisha style. I took this aspect of my personal memory and incorporated it into the Momo Shirt Dress (Fig. 46) and the Bow Coat. I draped a collar that sat away from the neck at the back. When the shirt dress and coat are worn together the layers of colours are visible at the nape of the neck, as seen on a kimono. Beauty in relation to the nape of the neck has been ingrained into my aesthetic values through my association with the kimono.

“Sleeves have always been a main focus of kimono-age and gender differences are expressed in their length and form, human passions are swept into their folds.” (Dalby 62) As told by Dalby the sleeves are a significant aspect of the kimono and is acknowledged throughout my work. I developed each sleeve with an element of difference, considering the whole garment and the overall feel of the collection. The extended cuffs of the Momo Shirt Dress (Fig. 48) can be worn folded back as a regular sized cuff or longer unfolded, reminding the wearer of the impracticalities within different dress codes and cultures. The Sasa Top (Fig. 49) has some intricate detailing with the sleeve only partially attached to the bodice and then to the cuff, emanating the kimono sleeve. The gap between the under arm of the kimono allows for ties to pass through, to secure the garment onto the body. The sleeves are suspended from the arm and are closed on the outer side, but open on the inner side leading to the design featuring a half detached cuff on the Sasa Top. The Oblong Top (Fig.47) and the Kiku Dress both have detached under arms to keep the patterns rectangular and the sleeve shapes parallel. The patterns of these sleeves create a cube and a three-dimensional rectangle. When translated into fabric and draped across the arm it forms interesting and unconventional shapes; the Kiku Dress has elongated sleeves similar to that of a *furisode* and the Oblong top more like a *kosode*. The kimono sleeve has become its own term in Western fashion “A straight, deep armhole like that of a kimono is called a kimono sleeve, different in cut from a Western-style armhole, which is curved to fit the shoulder and arm. Directly related to Western fashion, this meaning emerged in the early years of the twentieth century.” (Fukai 5) The sleeves are one of the key features that differentiates Japanese clothing from Western clothing and it is an aspect of historical Asian clothing that informed new methods of pattern cutting such as zero-waste.

The closures that I used on my garments varied from contemporary Western clothing closures to alternative kimono inspired methods. Initially in an earlier part of my post graduate project, garments had custom made laser-cut bamboo buttons. The bamboo grain added another aesthetic dimension to the garments as well as being a natural resource. After evaluating the garments I came to the conclusion that



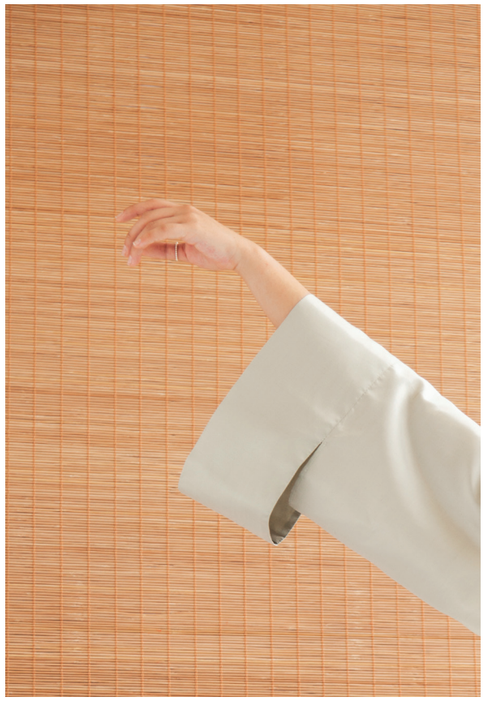


Figure 47. Sally Young, *Oblong Top Sleeve*, 2018, Photograph. (Top left)

Figure 48. Sally Young, *Momo Shirt Dress Sleeve*, 2018, Photograph. (Top right)

Figure 49. Sally Young, *Sasa Top Sleeve*, 2018, Photograph. (Right)

the bigger scale of the closures presented issues by allowing the garment to move unintentionally when closed. The focus shifted to utilising more tie closures, mixing these with contemporary zips and buttons for practicality but keeping them concealed for a simple design. The waist band design for the Yama Pant simply follows the line of the waistband into ties that come to each side of the body. The gusset in the side body allows the pants to sit over the hips. It is a continuation of the strip that runs along the side of the leg down to the hem (Fig. 50). The Maki Jumpsuit followed the idea of wrapping a garment to the body. Researching Thai fishermen pants and *monpe*, Japanese women's working pants popular in the mid-twentieth century, I translated these established patterns into something contemporary. Extending the width of the pants provided sufficient fullness enabling gathering to make this adjustable to different body sizes. The splits down the side of the legs are only activated when the wearer is moving much like the split at the front of the kimono. The process of tying resembles a ritual around dressing which is unique to the kimono (Fig. 51). An element that I purposefully left out of *Kiru* was the wrap across front and a wide belt similar to the obi. This was because I felt that many kimono inspired collections by Western designers heavily focused on these two elements. Growing up with the kimono I appreciated the finer details, the way it was put on, constructed, the touch and weight of the fabric.

The Meiji revolution created a diverse textile industry which became one of Japan's most prominent exports. Aware of the environmental impacts of fabric manufacturing and waste, I chose to use only natural fibres for my main fabrics. Silk organza was widely used in this collection as the fabrics transparency worked well with exposing the structure of the garment and the plain surfaces emphasise the space between body and cloth. This is the *ma*, meaning space, which is a crucial aspect in Japanese simplicity. It is the void that lets the wearer or viewer express their own emotion towards the garment. Graphic designer Kenya Hara calls "…the simplicity of Japanese design 'emptiness'. Instead of disseminating a precise, articulate message, extreme plainness - emptiness - can invite a variety of interpretations, just like an empty vessel" (Hara 10). The transparency of silk organza is reminiscent of the fine paper which is used in Japanese furnishings such as *shōji* doors, wooden sliding doors with rectangular windows sealed with fine paper (Fig. 52) and paper lanterns, which have been a part of Japanese and Chinese culture for thousands of years. The hardness of the wood at play with the transparency of the fine paper is an aesthetic heavily influencing the internal structure of my garments. As the doors and lanterns protect something behind them, the layer of organza on the body is a veil, where the body is visible but also covered. The transparency also brings into play the light and shadow and adds delicacy to the otherwise heavy or overpowering garments. To emphasise form and

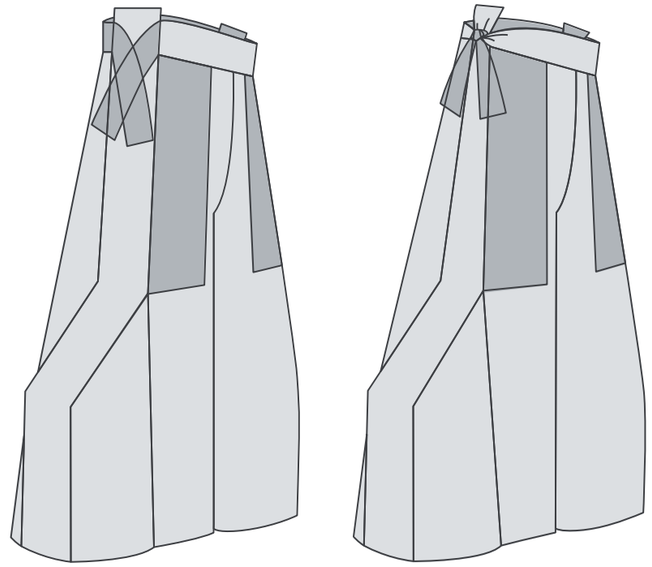


Figure 50. Yoshino Maruyama, *Diagram of Yama Pants*, 2019, Illustration.

Figure 51. Sally Young, *Steps to wear the Maki Jumpsuit*, 2018, Photograph.

structure there are no prints on any of the fabrics, I focused on the seams and pocket detailing to create depth to the garments. Other silks that were used were silk dupion and a linen-silk blend which have natural slubbed yarns and irregular lines through it. These naturally occurring lines are imperfections embraced by the concept of *wabi sabi*. The flat surfaces celebrate these imperfections by becoming a feature texture of the garment. Additionally woolen fabrics are used in both the Bow Coat and the Bow Pant. Along with the introduction of Western dress, woolen fabrics were brought to Japan. It became utilised in their newly acquired Western dress and also in winter kimono and overcoats such as *uchikake*. The weight and body of wool was an interesting contrast beside the light silk organza. In using luxury fibres such as silk, the wearer can feel the same smooth and unique feeling as when they are dressed in a kimono. The initial cold touch and the sense of wearing a delicate fabric activates an awareness around the garment. As a child wearing cotton and knit fabrics as everyday wear, putting on delicate fabrics such as silk made me feel and act in a distinct way. The delicacy and beauty of the fabrics used help reinforce the idea that the garments should be treated with care to ensure longevity and encourage the passing down to younger generations similar to the way the kimono is.

The choice of fabrics for *Kiru* is based on a range of ethical considerations. Using natural fibres is important to me as a designer especially in New Zealand as the New Zealand textile industry is not yet able to recycle synthetic fibres. Therefore naturally biodegradable fabrics are a better option at this current time. Silk and wool are animal products and there are some ethical challenges in production where silkworms are often boiled and killed while still in their cocoons in order to obtain finer silk. However compared to cotton which uses 8000 litres of water per 1kg (Fletcher 7) silk uses a lot less. It also uses less pesticides and fertilisers in the process as the worms are sensitive to chemicals (Fletcher 11). Wool can also be problematic in terms of the maltreatment of sheep to keep insects away from them and minimise infection. In New Zealand, organisations such as ZQ Merino ensure high quality wool and welfare of the sheep. As the fabrics I sourced were largely from retail outlets, information about the supply chain and manufacturing processes are difficult to trace. Working with companies like ZQ Merino to have a transparent supply chain is something I am working towards as a designer in this currently exploitative industry

The colour palette in *Kiru* is a soft colour palette reflecting a calm and humble nature, grounded with darker colours of yellow and navy. My intention was to create a sense of nature, one of the four principles by Yoshida (English 18) with the materials and colours referencing *shiki*, the four seasons. *Shiki* is big part of Japanese culture as nature is tied closely to everyday life, in festivals, food and clothing. The only

Figure 52. Hideyuki Kamon, 障子越しの白熱灯の明かり。 表具師でよかったなぁと思う瞬間。, 31 Oct. 2005, Photograph, Flickr, *Wikipedia Commons*, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shouji_(Paper_Sliding-Door).jpg.

Figure 53. Sally Young, *Yellow Obi Bag with Bow Coat*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 54. Sally Young, *Green Obi Bag with Yama Dress on Chair*, 2018, Photograph.

patterned elements of my collection are the subtle stripes in the Ten Vest and the two Obi Bags. The Obi Bags are make from recycled *obi* which I sourced from antique kimono suppliers. Visually, the golden yellow and pale green and silver *obi* serve the same purpose as an obi on a kimono, adding a vibrant colour or a complimentary colour to the palette. My idea was to create bags which gave these *obi* a new purpose. This aligns with my environmental and ethical values, repurposing and creating longevity of an object or garment (Fig. 53 and 54). Dalby explains the Heian Period (794-1185) was a time where Japan was establishing its own culture learning from the Chinese and Korean and the dress was also a part of this.

> Like poetry, dress was a vehicle for the expression of artistic sensibilities…The Heian courtly elite created a culture of nature in which plants, insects and other animals, weather, color and especially the seasons became the terms of a poetic idiom defining cultured existence and sensibility. (Dalby 12)

Irome no kasane is a phrase established in the Heian period specifically naming the types of colour combinations of kimono worn by elites through the different seasons. The garments from *Kiru* can be styled through layering and accessories to create their own seasonal colour stories.

3.6 Styling and communication

Styling and communication are an essential aspect of fashion design and based on these aspects one can perceive garments in completely different ways. This collaborative part of the process brings people together. *Kiru* was a personal project, to utilise my skills in fashion to create something that brought together my identity, culture, values and contemporary aesthetic. It was not targeted or marketed to a specific audience, not compromised to make money or become a best seller. Fortunately people who shared a vision or resonated with the collection came forward after I presented my work at New Zealand Fashion Week and posted images on social media (Fig. 55 to 58 showcase their works).

Figure 55. Ashley Church for Capital Magazine, *Your Best Self*, Sept. 2017, Photograph, Capital Magazine Issue 44.

Figure 56. Joshua Sagar, *Photo shoot styled by Samantha Gan*, Aug. 2018, Photograph.

Figure 57. Ruth Baron, *Photo shoot styled and shot by Hair and Make-up Artist Ruth Baron*, Feb. 2019, Photograph.

Figure 58. Elizabeth Tan, *Photo shoot styled and shot by Elizabeth Tan*, Nov. 2017, Photograph.

Conclusion

Kiru is the coming together of Japanese and Western cultures translated in a fashion collection. Autoethnographic research methods create a unique perspective on this liaison. As I grew up in New Zealand, my appreciation for my Japanese cultural heritage has been emphasised. While equally being distanced enough to critique it, such as the idea of *ryosai kenbo*, held by the older generation which is hindering women from living a life equal to men or the unfortunate declination in the popularity of the kimono. The extensive research into the relationship between Japan and the West has informed my understanding of how fashion systems intersect and come to influence each other in direct relation to political and social climates. This has increased my awareness of other cultural fashion systems, reiterating the dichotomy between the West and the non-West as inefficient in representing global fashion systems. It also emphasises the importance of these different fashion systems in relation to the success and diversity of what we see in the contemporary Western fashion industry.

Iterative design processes were successful in seeing which aspects of the collection could be further explored and taking these ideas to create the concept of a new garment. Reflection and iteration led to a refined body of work. The process of pattern to design and two dimensional to three dimensional prototyping were successful methods, in devising the shapes seen in the Oblong Top, Kiku Dress and Kami Dress. This process and the choice of materials created garments that are reminiscent of folded paper.

The collection uses angular shapes and ties which visually reference to the kimono. Through the response received about the collection, these aspects are proven to be identifiable as having kimono or Japanese influences. Despite having no knowledge prior to seeing my work it is a positive sign that people can make associations to its origins.

Taking subtle aspects of the kimono such as the nape of the neck showing in the Momo Shirt and Bow Coat and also having the gaps in the underarms of the sleeves in the Sasa Top added detail to the uncomplicated garments. This gentle nod to the kimono reflected a subtlety. This was something I did not see in the Western kimono inspired collections, pointing to my unique relationship with the kimono. Translating the beauty of the kimono into a contemporary fashion collection has allowed me to share my identity as a designer, connecting me with other designers and artists who have interpreted the collection in their own way through styling and photography.

The growing awareness around unethical practices in the fast fashion industry is heartening for contemporary designers like myself who aim to make a positive impact in the fashion industry. I look forward to contributing to re-shaping an industry which is more inclusive, ethical and environmentally sustainable. Researching the relationship between Japan and the West has increased my interest in fashion systems around the world, where globalisation can encourage collaboration and learning between cultures. As Davis states “Other cultures are not failed attempts at being us. They are unique manifestations of the human imagination and the human heart” (18). *Kiru* tells a contemporary story of the intersection of two cultures, emphasising the importance of research and understanding towards a more positive fashion future.

Figure 59. Sally Young, *Oblong Top with Yama Pant*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 60. Sally Young, *Kiku Dress with Maki Jumpsuit*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 61. Sally Young, *Yama Dress*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 62. Sally Young, *Ten Vest with Kami Dress*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 63. Sally Young, *Bow Coat with Momo Shirt Dress*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 64. Sally Young, *Momo Shirt Dress with Bow Pant*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 65. Sally Young, *Sasa Top with Hakama Culottes*, 2018, Photograph.

Figure 66. Sally Young, *Sasa Top with Ran Top and Hakama Culottes*, 2018, Photograph.

Glossary

bakufu (06, 10)
military government of Japan from 1192-1868

black kigyou (25)
a dubious company which carry out unethical practices in the workplace

chanoyu (15, 30)
Japanese tea ceremony

dōbōshu (30)
ancient cultural advisors

fuku (13)
clothing

furisode (06, 07, 13, 44, 48)
kimono with sleeves hanging long worn by unmarried women

geta (13, 15, 28)
a type of wooden sandal

hakama (32, 44, 45, 68, 69)
Japanese garment worn over kimono for better movement

ikebana (15, 30)
Japanese flower arrangement

irome no kasane (55)
a phrase established in the Heian period specifically naming the types of colour combinations of kimono worn by elites through the different seasons

kiru (04)
to wear (when beginning with a capital letter, it is the title of a fashion collection by Yoshino Maruyama for her Master in Design)

kimono (04, 06, 13)
a term that described general clothing before the Meiji Period. Post-Meiji Period it describes a kosode or furisode. The term is used for the singular and plural context.

kosode (06, 13, 48)
kimono with sleeves hanging short

ma (50)
space

Maiko (44)
a young Geisha

mono (04)
thing

monpe (50)
Japanese womens working pants popular in the mid-twentieth century

obi (06, 10, 38, 44, 50, 54, 55)
a thick woven belt tied ornamentally over the kimono

ryosai kenbo (15, 60)
the Japanese concept of a good wife and good mother

Seijinshiki (15)
known as the Coming of Age Day celebrating the beginning of adulthood the year of ones twentieth birthday

Shichigosan (13)
a day which celebrates the growth and well-being of children who are three, five and seven

shiki (53)
four seasons

shōgun (28)
chief military commander of the bakufu

shōji (50)
wooden sliding doors and windows sealed with a fine paper

shunga (10)
Japanese erotic art

tabi (13, 28)
socks that have a split between the first and second toes

tatami (13)
Japanese traditional straw flooring

uchikake (08, 21, 53)
an outer layer kimono

uchiwa (21)
a type of Japanese fan

ukiyo-e (10)
Japanese woodblock prints

wabi sabi (30, 53)
the concept of embracing impermanence and imperfection

wafuku (13)
Japanese clothing

waraji (13, 15)
straw sandals

washitsu (13)
Japanese style room

washoku (13)
Japanese food

yōfuku (13)
Western clothing

yōshoku (13)
Western food

yōshitsu (13)
Western style room

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Appendix

FlickrMail / Sent

To: MhIn
No real name given

Subject: Using your imagery

Hello

My name is Yoshino Maruyama and I am studying a Master of design at Massey University in Wellington, New Zealand.
I am writing a thesis titled "Kimono unfolded and reimagined: An exploration of Japanese aesthetics in Western fashion design" and was wondering if I am able to have permission to use one of your copyrighted images?

www.flickr.com/photos/mhlenoir/33372810572/in/photolist-SR3m7Y-SR3nTJ-TPsRDx-4Z4YB8

It is for non-commercial use and would only be published on Massey University's internal web catalogue and 4 internal physical copies.

The image will be credited to you/your account here on Flickr.

Regards,

Yoshino Maruyama

DELETE

Or, return to your sent mail.

FlickrMail / Inbox

From: MhIn
No real name given

Subject: Re: Using your imagery

HiYoshino,

I'll be glad to permit you to use this picture, send me your email and i'll send you the original.

Best regards
Marc-Henri Le Noir

SEND A REPLY DELETE

Or, return to your message list.